

SUMAÚMA COP30

A M A Z O N I Z I N G C O P



**VOICES OF
THE FOREST**

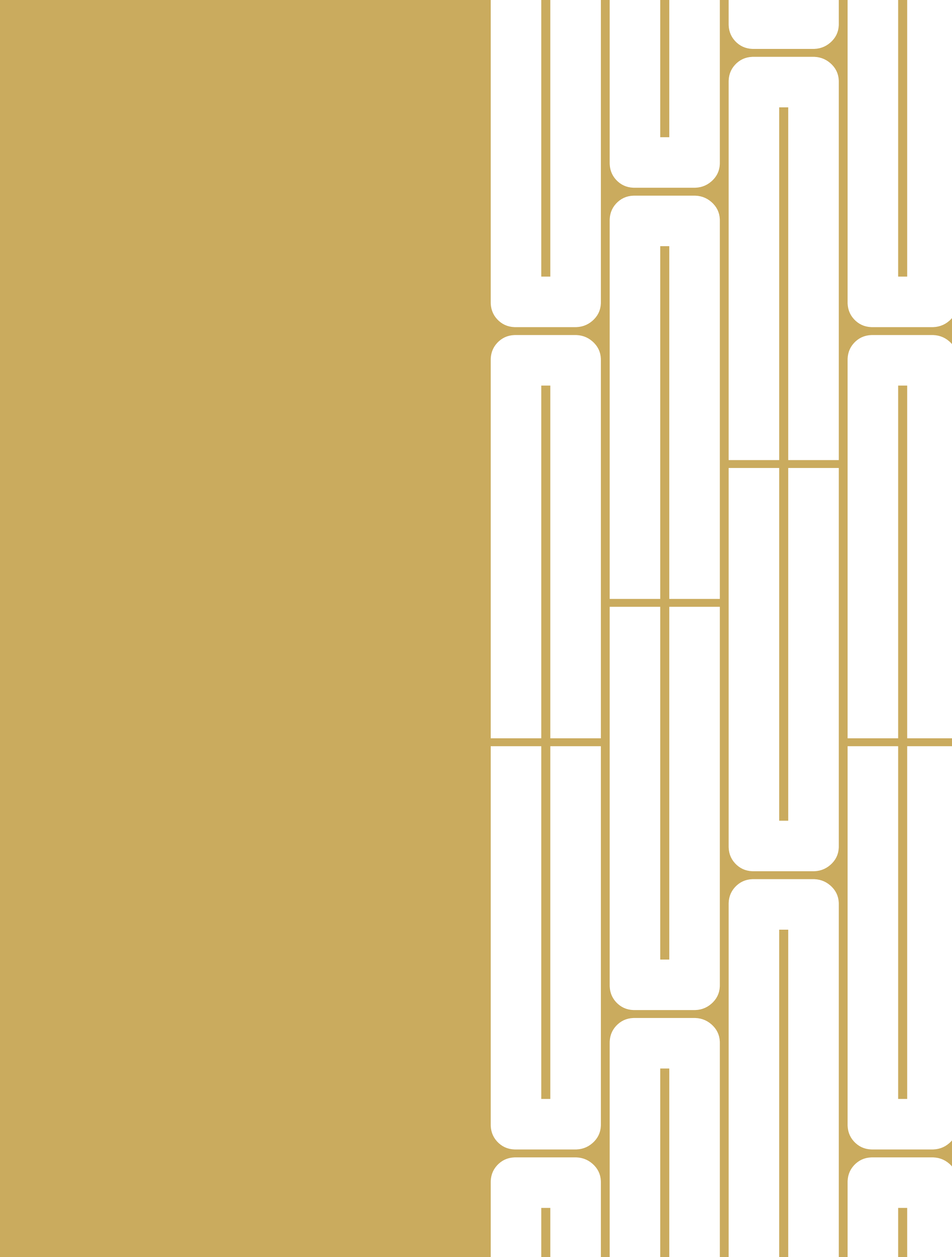
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Straight from the trenches

Recentering the world, Amazonizing COP

Eliane Brum, Jonathan Watts, and Talita Bedinelli

Xingu River, Altamira, Amazon

We at SUMAÚMA are war correspondents, reporting on the war against Nature. It is a lopsided conflict, in which Nature is being slaughtered and humans head toward extinction. In November 2025, we arrived at COP30 ready to dispute a playing field rife with lobbyists from the oil, mining, soy, meat, and carbon credit industries. For a journalism platform based in the Amazon, this dispute meant telling the COP story through the best practices in journalism, accurately, honestly, and responsibly, while approaching from the perspectives, values, and language of peoples who had little space in the negotiations. Were it not for these peoples, no standing Forest would be left—and the planet would already be uninhabitable.

Since its founding manifesto, SUMAÚMA has defended the position that the legitimate centers of the world are where life is—the Amazon and all biomes. Nature therefore comes first. This includes Nature’s peoples, not just the ones called human but all other humans as well: animals, plants, fungi, mountains, rivers... “The Forest first” has formed the trunk of our coverage for three years. Based on this value, rooted in ancestral knowledge, we release flying rivers to irrigate the debate that will define our life. And that is what we did at COP30.

As we hurtle toward extinction, we need to be bold. And we have been. From March through October, we prepared ourselves by participating in a high-level weekly course. We arrived in Belém by boat, along with nearly 100 Forest leaders plus scientists, artists, journalists, attorneys, physicians, and psychoanalysts who had also embarked on the journey we entitled “Voyage to resist the end of the world,” undertaken in partnership with the Health and Happiness Project. It was a kind of pre-COP, where we discussed the issues we consider most relevant to the Forest. On the waters of the Tapajós River we also re-launched Radio SUMAÚMA, which broadcast a daily program during COP.

All of this was to cover COP from the perspective of



the Forest. Our readers were able to follow our live coverage through our online platform, where we reported on what was happening in the Blue and Green Zones—the space for negotiators and official events—and at the Peoples’ Summit, held on the streets and waters of Belém, where civil society, Indigenous peoples, and activists from around the world gathered.

The COP Nobody Sees was reported on by young forest-journalists from our Mycelium co-training program. Coming from the states of Amazonas, Amapá, Rondônia, and Pará, the Wawi (Mato Grosso) and



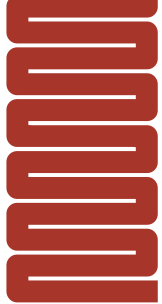
Taquaritiua (Maranhão) Indigenous territories, and the Lago Grande Agro-extractive Settlement Project (Pará), these journalists roved the streets of Belém to listen to the conference's real protagonists, people generally confined to the margins. We posted on social media and even had a Dream Midwife, who collected the dream-lives that were circulating there.

At this first COP in the Amazon—marked by the symbolism of a crownless kapok right at the entrance to the Blue Zone—we thus laid our roots: the Forest first, any solution must involve the Global South, the focus must

be on the periphery, and maximum pressure must be brought to bear on the negotiators. SUMAÚMA's coverage was carried out by almost 40 journalists, in addition to administrative, financial, and logistical support.

The magazine now reaching your hands—and, we hope, your heart—is SUMAÚMA's contribution to the fight against extinction, and a sample of our coverage of COP30. We fought at COP—and will continue fighting because we fight to live.

We hope our coverage will help us build a world for all of us, together. ■



Coverage diary

At COP30, time is linear

Eliane Brum, Viviane Zandonadi, Talita Bedinelli, and Fernanda da Escóssia

Tapajós River, Amazonas; Guamá River; Alter do Chão; Marajó Archipelago; and Belém, Amazon

nov 2

‘Voyage to Resist the End of the World’

In Alter do Chão, Pará, we set off for Belém on the Karolina do Norte, the boat carrying – in partnership with Projeto Saúde e Alegria – some of SUMAÚMA’s reporters and nearly 100 Forest leaders, Indigenous and academic scientists, artists, researchers, journalists, archeologists, psychoanalysts, physicians, and activists to COP30. We became (re) cognizant and aware of the large scale of the collective fight for life, of the common desire and need to defend the planet-home and Nature, of which we are a part.

We asked permission to sail the rivers and, on this first day of traveling, we listened and thought about ways to

confront the collapse of the ground and inside ourselves. We were touched and moved by the Ribeirinho stories of their fight against the Belo Monte Dam, by the Quilombola stories of struggle against extractivist projects in Barcarena, and by the Indigenous stories of violence suffered. We sought to understand the role of dreams in the climate crisis and to escape the trap of the new “disease” they’re calling “climate anxiety” or “eco-anxiety.” Finally, we embraced, reminded by scientist Antonio Nobre of the power of this analog “wi-fi of love,” which has no interference and literally brings hearts together.

nov 3

‘The Forest is a Woman’

The way each traveler traversed the swirling waters of the Tapajós River’s before the dawn was the hot topic of conversation at breakfast aboard the Karolina do Norte. We awoke to a day when women, young people, and human-others of the Forest took center stage in talks on sexism, patriarchy, and silencing – and on how the climate collapse is fed by the bizarre notion that humans are more important than Nature. “We, Yanomami women, birth our children on the Forest ground,” said artist, researcher, and writer Ehuana Yaira Yanomami, the first to speak at a talk about how “The Forest is a Woman.” “[...] We care for the Forest, we protect her. We protect the trees, the water, the animals and the *xapiri* too [xapiri are helper spirits who are all over the Forest and help the pajés and the shamans; they help to treat people, to treat the ill, and to cure the Forest and they hold up the sky as well]. [...] we don’t want the *napë* [non-Indigenous people] to come near our territory. For us, the Forest is generous, because she feeds our children. [...] We want the forest protected. So our children can keep being born on the Forest’s ground.”

nov 4

The archeologist who unearths roots

Journalists, scientists, and Forest communicators shared their strategies for bringing traditional knowledge together with the journalism and academic research done in territories, calling out what the massive destroyers of the Amazon are trying to hide. Thinker-archeologists – real archeologists, not any Indiana Joneses – discussed how archeology confronts history-erasing colonization. They also talked about how archeology “doesn’t unearth ruins, but rather roots.” They covered the occupation of the Amazon that made the Indigenous people refugees in their own territories.

The nearly-full moon was already vying for everyone’s attention when the journey’s last talks began, with discussions about life, poetry, science, the power of imagining worlds, and the urgency of keeping the “dream machine” alive and healthy. Prompted by a traveler’s dream, everyone helped make a word cloud, a flying river that rained like a wish on COP30 with the desires of our journey: awaken, land, network, resistance, persistence, lucidity, smile, affection, regeneration, resistance, forest, lesson, live, joy, mother, enchantment, freedom, empathy, wisdom, utopia, destination, connection, challenging, collectivity, belonging, reforest, love, revolution, liberty, and celebration.

nov 5

We arrive in Belém to reforest journalism

Our boat docked on Guamá River on the eve of the Leaders Summit, at the port in the COP capital. The water continued to rock and the heat in Belém dilated skeletons in some of the recently arrived bodies – here we are taking a cue from Mario de Andrade (1893-1945), a creature who was hopelessly in love with the city and its sensuality. Nostalgia for the sunrise over the river and the days of conversations aboard the Karolina do Norte gave way, little by little, to the sensation of firm ground: on this bright day, we strolled through Parque da Cidade to finally pick up the press credentials that would let us into the Blue Zone to cover COP30 from the pavilions. Badges and pens in hand, to use in our fight as a forest.

Before starting our live coverage, however, with stories from the streets, the water and the belly of the COP, we offered a reflection from SUMAÚMA's special reporter, Claudia Antunes: "It is much easier at the COPs for people to get wrapped up in the technical discussion, filled with acronyms that are incomprehensible to most, and they forget what is happening in the outside world. In addition to asking for the gas emissions heating the Earth to be cut, there must be a rebellion against the wars and injustices to preserve life on the planet – a goal that can only be achieved collectively."

nov 6

Torn from Nature, inside COP30

Maybe you're familiar with the TV show *Severance*, in which the people working at a company named Lumon decide to undergo a surgical procedure to separate their personal lives from their work lives. As soon as they put on their ID badge and walk into the company elevator, everything else is left outside (the severing of consciences is part of the plot). The employees don't know what the weather is like, they have zero views of Nature, no fresh air.

The atmosphere was similar when coverage began on the COP30 Leaders Summit, which took place on November 6 and 7. We saw some likenesses with the unnatural environment in *Severance*: after passing through the metal detector to enter the main space for diplomatic negotiations, the temperature was artificially freezing, the walls and lights were glaringly white in the press room, the constant noise of machinery came from every which way (as if we were on an airplane mid-flight), animals were imprisoned in photographic panels, and a smattering of displaced plants attempted to simulate Nature.

The bathrooms were not in proper working order, with a doorknob that fell off into our hands. The meeting rooms and many country stands were still being assembled. The Blue Zone reproduced the calamity of Belém's failure to process trash, with everything tossed into cardboard boxes and black bags without any sorting.

In this strange reality, where the perception of what is real was left outside, leaders from around the world began to determine the planet's future. President Lula gave a strong opening speech, but his words begged for concrete action. At the day's end, we wondered: Would it be possible, like this, to achieve the urgency experienced where there is life?

nov 7

Lula's surprise fund

Mothers who traveled 10 kilometers to find water in Somalia, the Palestinian genocide in Gaza, and a country, Tuvalu, at threat of disappearing under the waters of the Pacific. Stories like these, conveyed by representatives from Global South countries, were told one after another throughout the second and last day of the Leaders Summit in Belém, making explicit the unequal responsibilities for the climate crisis and its effects, which hit precisely the most vulnerable populations the hardest. The most repeated call was for the energy transition, needed for the planet to lower its dependency on fossil fuels. President Lula caused some surprised when he announced the creation of a Brazilian fund to funnel oil

profits to the climate. This was done under pressure following criticism of a new front for oil exploration being opened along the Amazonian coastline. If it really does become a reality, the fund could be a positive measure to channel earnings from the oil already being produced in the country. However, this does not offset the cost of destroying the new frontier.

On the streets of Belém, SUMAÚMA noticed and told stories that connected causes and people. Such was the case of the workers who talked about how hard it was to use public transportation, as they waited for buses that were long overdue or were already packed to the brim once they reached the bus stop, while the special and comfortable COP buses were only for use by those holding credentials. The sign-boys were also prohibited from entering. Hustling to survive, they didn't even know what cause their work was supporting. In exchange for money, they rode their bikes around the entrance to the Blue Zone, carrying protest signs asking for an end to fossil fuels.

nov 10

Messages from the Forest and Radio SUMAÚMA

We started week one of our COP30 coverage with the voices of Forest women. On the "Voyage to Resist the End of the World," writer, researcher, and artist Ehuana Yaira Yanomami said she was bringing COP30 a message from Omama, the creator of the Yanomami. A message that came to her in a dream. Now, on this day, Ehuana shared Omama's message, as a guest on the first installment of Radio SUMAÚMA's "Direct from the Center of the World." "[...] And he told me: 'Don't destroy the Forest, don't destroy it, it was me who created it [...] if you all ruin the Forest, everything will be destroyed, everything will end' [...] I came here to con-

vey my message. Because I will not allow the Forest to be destroyed. We want to continue to have a living and protected Forest. So, this is my proposal."

Ehuana, a Yanomami leader, spoke in her native language – interpreted by Ana Maria Machado, an anthropologist and translator of worlds – with hosts Eliane Brum, Paulina Chamorro, and forest-journalist Darlon Neres. That same day, the show featured an interview with Angela Kaxuyana, of the Kahyana people, born in Tumucumaque Indigenous Park. She spoke about the substantial violence suffered by her people and about her outlook on land return issues at COP30. "What I

have to say is connected to what my Yanomami relative said [...]. She spoke of the standing Forest, and there is no other way other than to guarantee Indigenous Territories to keep the Forest standing."

Meanwhile, in the Blue Zone, Quilombola women called out the political invisibility of and violence against those defending human rights – and Indigenous Amazonians demanded a bigger share of the forest fund for their territories. The message sent by countries considered as "developing," which are more vulnerable to collapse, as well as to Indigenous peoples, who are the biggest protectors of humanity from destruction, was that more money needs to be put on the table – and directed to the protectors of life.

nov 11

Protests, fights, and criticism

Demonstrations inside and outside the Blue Zone marked the second day of the Climate Convention, in the lead-up to the Peoples' Summit. One of the planet's biggest leaders, cacique Raoni Mëtyktire, raised his voice and called on Indigenous peoples to stop the drilling of oil from moving forward in Foz do Amazonas. "Without women, there's no climate," demonstrators said in the Blue Zone – women are the ones most affected by the climate collapse, often leading the fight for their families' survival. Activists advocating for Palestine stood up against the "genocide fed by fossil fuels" and called for Israel's expulsion from COP30. At the end of the day, part of a group that crossed Belém as part of the Global March for Health and Climate managed to make it through the metal detectors in the Blue Zone and break down the doors into the main area, where a badge would be needed to enter, making it clear that the Indigenous peoples are the protagonists in the fight against the collapse and they are the ones who should be in the Blue Zone. The group, led by Auricelia Arapiun, was made up of Indigenous peoples, activists, and young people from collectives connected to left-leaning political parties.

NOVEMBER 11 BONUS 'With Nature, I learned to live'

On the afternoon of November 11, everyone who watched the conversation between Eliane Brum, Gilberto Gil, and illustrator Daniel Kondo felt a little lighter. They smiled. They got emotional. We spend our days deep in the fight, while fending off worry as we work on this coverage that puts the Forest at the center, chipping off little bits of language in order to sculpt meanings at COP30, watching and trying to translate the back-and-forth of the discussions, negotiations, and politi-

cal contortions, looking through packed schedules without having panic attacks, the whole time dealing with the feeling of not being able to handle all the things nobody sees. We're formulating strategies (we're at war!) while still loving, washing dishes, and missing our children. And then, out of nowhere, a comma pops up in the middle of the way: Gil's song Refloresta (2021), adapted into a new book, with the collaboration of Daniel Kondo, and published by Elo Editora, had a launch event

at the Teatro da Paz in Belém, with a conversation moderated by Eliane Brum.

"Howls, murmurs, ancestral pleas... Why won't we leave our world in peace?"

The first question Eli asked Gil was: "You said Nature taught you to listen. What was that like?" To which he answered: "I don't remember... There was a pre-respiratory moment, which was the

nov 11

The urgency of those watching the catastrophe arrive

On day three of COP, the Guamá River and Guajará Bay were converted into territories of resistance from the Amazon and the world. A flotilla took to the waters in Belém at the start of the Peoples' Summit, a parallel popular movement that gathered over 1,000 organizations who are in the fight.

While diplomats in the Blue Zone were trying to hit their marks behind closed doors (there was a continued impasse regarding who will pick up the bill for the climate collapse), in the corridors and on the streets people from around the world put voices, faces, and urgency to what needed to be resolved. In addition to the stories told by reporters Rafael Moro Martins and Marcos Miranda on pages 64 and 112 of this magazine, editor Fernanda da Escóssia brought the more-than-human

tragedy reported by Adi Kayany Xukuru de Ororubá to our coverage: fireflies have vanished, bees are disappearing, and river wellsprings are running dry in Pernambuco's Agreste region. Fernanda also spoke with Vitor Moconan, of the Xokleng Laklãnõ community, in Santa Catarina. Planting times for crops had to be changed in his territory because of changes to the calendar in terms of rainfall and heat. One impact on health and culture is that with less food being grown, his people have turned to eating tinned and industrialized food.

nov 13

Disinformation, greenwashing, and a certain optimism

On day four, the diplomatic discussion about the planet's future continued without any major advances in official circles. Yet there were whispers in the corridors of an unexpected light starting to emerge, one that could become a milestone for the COP in Belém. Brazil, the same country that 24 days earlier had authorized the drilling of oil wells in the hyper-biodiverse Foz do Amazonas region, proposed that countries negotiate a roadmap to gradually eliminate the use and production of oil, gas, and coal (not to be confused with the Baku-Belém Roadmap, concerning finance). And the idea gained traction, according to special reporter Claudia Antunes, despite lacking any guarantees the proposal would be included in the final documents, which would be approved by all the countries.

moment in my mother's womb, where I was already Nature, then came living..." And then Nature made itself into Language – and here, on purpose, I use a capital letter prompted by the beauty of his words: "[Then came] the development of consciousness, the development of language. I began to babble; I began to form Ooos and the Aaahs, the B's and the P's. Bah, Bay, Bee, Boh. Bah, Bay, Bee, Boh.

Language began, which was another moment of closeness to Nature, with the

explosiveness of sounds, the explosive sounds, soft sounds, hissing sounds. [...] And then, finally, a relationship with Nature that was a little more complete. And that was over time. After [I was] 1 year old, 2 years old, 3 years old, now walking, now able to discover, now going to the front of the house, now going to the back of the yard, now seeing the trees, now seeing the animals, now seeing the chickens, now seeing the birds and everything else. This natural, transconscious, and transun-

conscious notion of Nature, all this stuff brought by language, was putting me in front of her [Nature]. And she, of course, was teaching me things. What I gave to Nature came back to me in the form of improvements in my way of speaking. In my language, my way of seeing, my way of feeling. So it was natural. [...] All of this is life; all of this is living... This learning to be natural, to be natural is a lesson that comes naturally, necessarily, through living. So, I learned to... with Nature, I learned to live."

nov 14

The negotiating table is Indigenous

Demarcation of their territories is at a near standstill. Soybeans, cattle, and major government projects are advancing. Illegal mining is invading and contaminating their rivers. In light of this reality, Brazil's Indigenous peoples decided COP30 negotiations must include them. On day five of the climate conference, at the gate to the Blue Zone, where the bureaucracy happens, Munduruku people gathered at dawn to perform a ritual. At around 5:30 in the morning, around 100 Indigenous people from the Middle and Upper Tapajós region blocked the main entrance and demanded to speak with President Lula. "We don't have many opportunities to speak with the government. COP30 is happening right in our home, on our doorstep, but we have no voice," Alessandra Munduruku, one of the main organizers of the demonstration, said. Many Indigenous people brought pictures to the protest of rivers polluted by illegal mining. Some of the women were carrying small children, journalist Hyury Potter reported. "The children here suffer at the most basic level, with mercury in their bodies, with agrochemicals in their bodies. Enough of using our image to say something is sustainable. Our river is contaminated," she said.

COP president André Corrêa do Lago spoke with the demonstrators – but not before asking the security guard in charge about how a protest had once again managed to get so close to the building. Corrêa do Lago took the Munduruku to a private area, far from the press, for a conversation that then included Brazil's environment and climate change minister, Marina Silva, and the Indigenous peoples minister, Sônia

NOVEMBER 14 BONUS

Taperebá ice cream

On this day, in this Belém full of life and sound and fury and beauty, under the effects of a heat that dilates sentiments and senti-monsters, we put away our Blue Zone badges and took a break for some devouring. Part of our group was given a few precious minutes of the day to ponder and savor the historic moment that SUMAÚMA, all of us, were experiencing. We chomped down on some ice cream. The verb might seem wrong, but it's not. We bit off chunks of creamy, dense taperebá ice cream (it is so substantial that slurping isn't enough, licking isn't enough, you must simply demolish such an exceptional ice cream, made from the fruit of this land and Nature). This tart, orange-colored little delicacy is also called cajá or cajá-manga. It was the first after the many days of newsletters and coverage that began with our voyage downriver to resist the end of the world and that continued in Belém. This COP (against the end of the world, we'll never tire of repeating) could not have happened anywhere else. The amazing capital of Pará, of waters and Forest, where Indigenous peoples began the day by changing the history of the most re-

Guajajara. Shortly afterward, however, another Indigenous group again blocked the entrances, as photo editor Lela Beltrão and forest journalist Marcos Miranda reported.

This time, it was the communities of the Lower Tapajós, in Pará, who have also been affected by illegal mining, agribusiness, and government projects. The protest lasted around 30 minutes and the protesters were also received by government representatives. The auditorium of the Pará State Court of Appeals, located in front of the Blue Zone, was then transformed into an area for hearing demands. At a meeting

cent COPs, because their demonstrations showed the power of the voice of the Forest and of democracy.

Claudia Antunes, our reporter who knows everything about climate conferences (and what she doesn't know, she'll hunt down), wrote: "The first climate conference in the Amazon – and the first in a democratic country since 2021 – is already different from the three previous COPs. What makes the difference is popular participation and the mobilization of social movements to influence negotiations, through protests and the debates outside the Blue Zone, an area supposedly protected from the noise of the streets, where only those with credentials are allowed to enter."

Look to the stories we discovered for The COP Nobody Sees, to SUMAÚMA's more in-depth reports, to our videocast Direct from the Center of the World, and to our social media to see what the Amazonization of COP is all about.

Another bite of taperebá ice cream and we'll be back on Saturday, November 15, when the streets of Belém are swarmed by the Global Climate March, organized by the Peoples' Summit.

permeated with political tension, environment minister Marina Silva promised to bring the demands presented to president Lula. "It's your government, and we're his ministers, and that means we're working for you," Marina said. The minister, who is the head of Brazil's COP30 delegation, left the climate conference negotiations along with other government authorities in order to speak with Indigenous peoples, according to special reporter Claudia Antunes. Marina said that Lula had telephoned Sonia Guajajara to understand the situation and ask for dialog.

nov 15

COP is where life resists. COP is the transgression of COP

Struggle is celebration, this is what the Amazon's people teach us. And celebration is a very serious thing. What was seen at the Global Climate March, which gathered tens of thousands of people from different territories of Nature and urban territories, was the best of Brazil, this joy that is an instrument of resistance, that is the power to act. What burst forth onto Belém's concrete streets was the living struggle. And the living struggle has dancing, it has singing, it has music – the living struggle can only be fought by living bodies. And which bodies are alive in a world of paralyzed people, a world of depressed people, a world of zombie-people, who shut their bodies and gestures down with the expectation that, if they don't move, everything will be fine?

The living bodies are the ones resisting the capitalism leading us to extinction, and they resist because they move, and they move every part of their bodies in a gesture of expression. These are the bodies of the forest-peoples, of the bi-ome-peoples, who protect the planet every day, but these are also the bodies disputing the cities by advancing through the cracks and bursting into colors. There

has been so much discussion about this COP in the Amazon, so much criticism heaped on Belém, but what emerged and was asserted in this march was a Belém that doesn't belong to Helder Barbalho, a Belém not represented by the projects financed by the Forest's destroyers, a Belém that didn't turn its back on Nature. In an amalgamation with so many Indigenous peoples, Quilombolas, Ribeirinhos and small-holders, in all their diversity, Belém's cultural, political, and social movements burst onto the pavement with their parade gear and turned the march into a dance of many bodies and many voices. It is the manifest understanding that it is not one fight and another fight, but the same fight. It was in the name of life that these bodies moved on this November 15.

The men wearing neckties in the Blue Zone, that mix of a spaceship and a couch that landed on Belém to give negotiators a climate-controlled and supposedly aseptic environment, might understand what COP is if they had ventured out to the occupied streets. COP is where life resists. COP is the transgression of COP. We will keep dancing. And advancing.

nov 17

The ‘COP of Truth’ is the COP of the streets

A few months ago when Lula said COP30 would be the “COP of Truth,” perhaps he was not aware that the truth would, indeed, assert itself from the streets, and not from the Blue Zone negotiating space, where the leaders of countries who are living behind bunkers can continue to weigh whether it’s time to act yet or if they’re

going to let the planet burn some more. Those whose own bodies understand the urgency are shouting at the top of their lungs. So loudly that it started to drown out the noise of the air conditioning. Today, a new march wound through the streets of Belém, organized this time by Indigenous peoples. These peoples carry

the stories of the violence they have experienced in their territories with them, along with the resistance of the fight for a Forest that must remain standing for the planet to keep existing. “I carry two bullets in my body. They tried to silence me three times,” Vilma Vera Caletana Rios, a member of the Avá Guarani people, from the Tekohá Guasu Guavira territory, in Paraná, told forest-journalist Wajã Xipai. “Our people are tired of being driven out by the State. Enough! Why don’t you want us to preserve Nature?” Amökanewy Kariú, of the Kariú people of Maranhão, said to reporter Catarina Barbosa. “Wherever we step, plants are born. Wherever we step wellsprings are born. Our people are of the water. Wherever our people are, there is pure water. [In the places] where our people leave, there is devastation.” While Alessandra Munduruku noted that there will be no climate justice without justice for Indigenous peoples. “The solution is us,” she reiterated to forest-journalist Shayra Cruz. The march was the second major demonstration at this COP. As special reporter Claudia Antunes recalled, this COP is fairly different from recent conferences, which were held in non-democratic locales. Yet other protests at the doors to the Blue Zone also stressed the Indigenous peoples’ urgency over the last week. It is still impossible to know whether the pressure from the streets will lead to practical effects. Brazil, however, reacted to its own slow pace. The Indigenous peoples minister, Sonia Guajajara, announced on the afternoon of November 17 that the Justice and Public Safety Ministry had signed off on demarcation of ten territories, Rafael Moro reported. The demarcations will still need to be certified by president Lula.

NOVEMBER 17 BONUS

The body is a flute

Philosopher and educator Cristine Takuá, of the Maxacalí people, and Carlos Papá, a filmmaker and spiritual leader of the Guarani Mbya people, of the Rio Silveira Indigenous Territory in the Atlantic Forest, were interviewed on Radio SUMAÚMA – Direct from the Center of the World by journalists Paulina Chamorro and Eliane Brum and forest-journalist Darlon Neres. Cristine and Papá talked about how the diversity of beings, the textures of listening and language, and time all expand ways of being and thinking about worlds. They spoke about the body-flute and about the conferences among forest beings who are not invited to climate conferences, but who have a lot to say. They chatted about how important it is for the Forest to continue to exist so that children can dream.

Cris and Papá were in Belém to take part in a number of conversa-

tions about the Flourishing Diversity Manifesto, a book by anthropologists Jerome Lewis and Chris Knight, with a Portuguese language edition released by Editora Dantes and the Selvagem Association, illustrated by various Indigenous artists from the Living Schools of the Amazon and Atlantic Forest.

Papá explained what speech is: Our body is a flute; our body holds water, it holds iron, it holds earth. And when we go to speak, when we go to express ourselves in our body, it is lubricated by saliva. And when our body speaks, something warm comes from within and our vocal cords begin to have this connection with what we want to express. [Our body-flute] begins to play. It begins to play the way we want to express ourselves [...]. This is how our speech comes out. It’s the [moist] breath of this sound. Then comes the soul [...]. And then it’s the touch, and the breath that comes, and it’s played by our tongue too. [Our speech] comes from here [inside] to the outside and it means love. You express something loving [in your choice of words].”

nov 18

Don't drill, baby. Show me the roadmap!

With the main topics of negotiation stalled due to deadlocks over climate financing (so-called “developing” countries want to reopen the discussion while those who need to pick up the tab do not), an unexpected issue has taken center stage in the final stretch. And who would have guessed that it would be oil, the good old elephant in the room and the very thing the Lula administration, host of the Climate Convention, decided to begin extracting from the Foz do Amazonas basin right before COP. In the very first days of this

climate summit, the Brazilian government suggested adopting a roadmap for reducing fossil fuels. Roadmap is a confusing term for those following this issue, since it can refer to anything that needs a plan: the most well-known is for climate financing (Baku-Belém), and then there is the roadmap to achieve zero deforestation by 2030, and there is this one, which deals with how countries must move towards the “phasing out of fossil fuels” that was agreed upon at COP28 in Dubai.

Brazil's proposal gained support throughout COP30 and negotiators in the Blue Zone estimated at this point that around 80 countries had already decided to back it. This is still far from a majority

of the more than 190 governments with voting rights in Belém. However, Brazil's push to make the fossil fuel roadmap the hallmark of the Belém COP does not erase the internal contradictions within Lula's government. The decision to drill in the Foz do Amazonas region a few days before COP began caused major rifts, as Luene Karipuna explained at a press conference in the Blue Zone. “Many say the project hasn't had an impact yet, but we're already seeing direct impacts,” she said. “It's contradictory to stand on a podium and say the world needs to move towards an energy transition if you're not setting an example. You need to be an example at home in order to lead others.”

nov 19

A trip around the world in eight hours

With two days until COP30 ends, Lula arrived in Belém to try to unstick a sticky agenda. The president's official schedule was only released early in the afternoon, and it showed the mission of transforming the Brazilian climate summit into a success would demand not only diplomacy, but also lots of handshaking by Lula throughout the day. By mid-afternoon, reporters had grouped around the door to the VIP room and were trying to get information out of anyone on their way out. Journalists were taking statements from German diplomats without knowing how to speak German and from French-speaking negotiators despite having no understanding of French, sending the recordings to their newsrooms in hopes of a friendly translation. There was so much confusion in the search for news that special reporter Claudia Antunes, a COP veteran, noted that “not even the diplomats know what's happening.” The diplomats – and Claudia – know a lot. It usually really is a mess right before negotiations end. The impression is that nothing is going to work out. The words “failed COP” start to be tossed around. Sometimes, that is what happens. Yet there are instances where everything

turns around at the last minute and the negotiators pull a Paris Agreement out of the diplomatic hat, as they did in 2015. These are moments of adrenaline rushes, when everything is moving very quickly. Drafts of final texts are shared at night and by morning there is already a new draft. There is barely time to read it. Yet Lula's visit added extra confusion. And by late in the evening on Wednesday, nobody knew if his handshaking would pan out for the negotiations. The Belém Conference depended on the success of these talks, Claudia said. The roadmaps would be the big legacy, since containing the planet's rising temperature depends on conserving the forests and radically reducing the burning of oil, gas, and coal. A bigger commitment from wealthy countries, by increasing the funds disbursed to poorer nations, is essential for freeing up other documents being negotiated in the Blue Zone, since poorer countries have no interest in continuing discussions on how to adapt to a hotter world or how the energy transition can be done unless they have more money to do it. The elements for this big agreement are in the so-called “Mutirão Decision,” the document COP30's leaders released on

November 18. A new draft of the “Mutirão Decision” should come out on November 19, but with Lula's arrival and his meetings running into the night, what remained was a big question mark..

At 8:00 PM, Lula held his highly anticipated press conference. He was in good spirits, taking a photographer's giant camera lens in his hands and cracking a joke. He later called on leaders to align with the expectations on the streets of Belém, which have seen a series of marches in the last two weeks. “The issue of the climate isn't just another academic view, held by intellectuals, [or] half a dozen environmentalists. It's a very serious issue, which puts all of humanity at risk. Caring for the climate means knowing that rich countries need to help poor countries, to put up money so the people who keep the Forest standing continue to keep the Forest standing,” he said, stressing that at COP, nobody can force anything and everything needs to be done through consensus. Yet he said he is happy. “I'm going back to Brasília with the certainty that my negotiators will get the best result a COP can now offer planet Earth.” And he left the room without taking any questions from the press.

nov 20

The fire is not a metaphor

There were less than two days on the official calendar until the end of climate summit negotiations when, early in the afternoon, the little time there was became even shorter. A fire broke out in the country pavilions and tall flames licked the ceiling. The Blue Zone ended up evacuated: according to official information, 21 people received medical care – 19 for smoke inhalation and two for panic attacks. There were no serious injuries. The fire was soon extinguished, but the uncertainty regarding the negotiations' future lingered. The incident caused additional damage to Brazil's reputation as the host country. In a quick interview, tourism minister Celso Sabino, a native of Pará, did not answer reporters' questions about the impact on the agenda of negotiations, according to special reporter Rafael Moro. But he did ask the press to remain faithful

“to what is happening,” to keep Belém's image from being negatively impacted. “It's important to note that this is the most inclusive COP in recent years,” he said. The infrastructure the Brazilian government assembled for the conference had been the subject of criticism since it opened. Restrooms and air conditioning never worked properly and the building flooded a few times after heavy rainfall in Belém. At one point, the UN Climate Convention's executive secretary, Simon Stiell, sent the government a letter complaining about a lack of adequate structure.

Special reporter Claudia Antunes said negotiations had already snarled even before the fire, and the texts on the main decisions expected had not moved forward. COP30's Brazilian leaders were frantically carrying out consultations to try to publish new drafts and hold an initial plenary session with country representatives. Up to this point there has been no consensus on the roadmaps proposed by Brazil for phasing out fossil

fuels and ending deforestation. Common ground has also been lacking on climate finance, which continues to threaten two other agreements: one on defining global indicators for adaptation and another on a working program for a just transition from a polluting economic model based on oil, natural gas and coal to one with fewer greenhouse gas emissions. At a press conference in Belém, UN secretary-general António Guterres was asked about whether COP could be headed for “failure:” “This is not the moment to talk about the possible failure of the COP. It is the moment to guarantee that failure doesn't occur.” By nighttime, there was no information on when discussions would resume. In theory, the Belém Conference was set to end at 6:00 PM on Friday, November 21. All of the fires must be put out, however, not just the real ones.

NOVEMBER 20 BONUS

The heat of the moment

At around 2:00 in the afternoon on Thursday, November 20, the first voice messages arrived from forest-journalist Wajã Xipai: a fire in the Blue Zone pavilion at COP30 in Belém had caused the UN to evacuate the negotiation spaces. There was fear, a commotion, “COP30 was closed” and talks were interrupted. There were no serious injuries. At the SUMAÚMA house in Belém, we started getting bits of information, videos, and audio clips from our reporters on site at the COP Hangar. Wajã, Claudia, Catarina, Lela, Rafael, Jon. They were all fine. That was the most important thing. Then there was a rush to find

out if there were any injuries, how the fire started, if it was under control. And what would an incident like this mean in the final moments of the first climate conference in the Brazilian Amazon? Wajã was there the day before for a report he was working on. He was following the story of a child who was part of the Chinese delegation and had credentials to access the Blue Zone. Wajã was at the door of the Chinese pavilion, waiting to enter, when he noticed unusual activity, which escalated into widespread commotion. It crossed his mind that someone important had arrived (could it be Lula?) and then that it might be a terrorist attack. He tried not to lose sight of the child; the two were going to meet up later. He didn't hear any alarms until a woman

shouted “fire!” and the word spread like flames on kerosene: everyone started running and following instructions to leave. “[From outside, you could see] thick black smoke.” Most of the crowd remained relatively calm, says Wajã. But he noticed many people, particularly men, making nervous jokes and smiling at their cell phones. Suddenly, a flash of lightning signaled the arrival of rain. Thunder rumbled, and most people looked up at the sky and cheered, as if the water would extinguish the fire and carry their problems away. Magical thinking? Maybe. The flames were contained in the pavilion, the rain fell outside, and uncertainty hung over the negotiations: COP30 caught fire on its second-to-last day, but no one can say yet what that really means.



nov 21

‘Leave it to me to leave it’ pushes the planet into a corner

A draft of the final text crafted by Brazil led to general discord and prolonged a Climate Convention decision. In the corridors of a Blue Zone debilitated by fire, people slept on couches and on the ground. Joined in solidarity and in exhaustion, they paid unexpected compliments and handed out organic chocolates with messages of protest. They exchanged knowing smiles to soothe themselves while awaiting a decision that would offer a response to the demands from the street and for the planet’s future. Yet inside the room where a possible result for this COP30 would be determined, the mood was tense, as the conference president, André Corrêa do Lago, told reporter Wajã Xipai by mid-afternoon – the agreement Brazil had stitched up over the last two weeks was dissolving into thin air. “The countries are split down the middle,” special reporter Claudia Antunes wrote by evening. And this laid bare the risk of the meeting ending without any decision. After two weeks of discussion, the countries had yet to agree on what should be considered a priority: mitigation measures (preventing the planet from further heating, such as eliminating greenhouse gasses) or increased climate finance. In the late night and early morning hours of November 20 to 21, after a fire set discussions back a day, Brazil announced a package of 15 draft texts that managed

to make everyone unhappy – countries, scientists, and the organizations following the negotiations. Early on, the leaders of ten countries called the group of texts “criminal,” according to special reporter Rafael Moro Martins. The roadmap away from fossil fuels was left out because of how hard it was to reach consensus.

NGOs labeled it “imbalanced” and “empty,” Catarina Barbosa and Talita Bedinelli reported. The Climate Observatory said the proposals were an unacceptable result of the conference. “The drafts submitted are weak on points where advances were made and fail to cover a crucial topic: they don’t fulfill president Lula’s determination to provide a roadmap to implement the transition away from fossil fuels.” While scientists spoke of a “betrayal of science” because of the lack of roadmaps on fossil fuels and deforestation. “This is a betrayal of science and people, especially the most vulnerable, as well as being totally inconsistent with the reaffirmed goals of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. It is impossible to limit warming to levels that protect people and life without gradually phasing out fossil fuels and ending deforestation,” they said in a joint statement. Shortly after Corrêa do Lago opened a final plenary session to approve the proposal, he soon brought it to a close. There was no way to approve anything. It seemed as if everyone was

running in circles and asking themselves “What is going on?” as if it were a meme. The European Union, island nations, and several Latin American countries, such as Colombia, Panama and Mexico, said they would not approve anything if fossil fuels and deforestation were not put back on the table. The oil-producing Arab countries, African nations, and the group of 44 countries the UN classifies as “less developed” said they would not accept more obligations as long as there were no guarantees of finance to adapt to climate change and do the energy transition while combating poverty at the same time. A climate of “leave it to me to leave it” (it being the planet catching fire) soured everything. By the afternoon, the countries had broken up into small groups to try to find common ground on the themes dividing them, Claudia Antunes reported. In the end, the Arab nations and others that had initially opposed a group to discuss the roadmaps to end fossil fuels and deforestation reluctantly gave in. And over the next few hours nobody had any more information on anything. Negotiations should continue on Saturday. Without the noise of the peoples, who had already returned to their lands, perhaps the conclusion of the “COP of Truth” announced by Lula is that multilateralism is collapsing and is no longer capable of getting anywhere.

nov 22

COP has ended but the fight has not

If the main document makes no progress on forests, fossils, or financing, then where is the progress?

There has never been a COP like the COP in Belém. A COP in the Amazon with nearly 5,000 Indigenous delegates is progress, but it is still very little for those who play a leading role in Nature conservation, ancestral knowledge, and the struggle – around 900 of these 5,000 Indigenous people held UN credentials to enter the Blue Zone.

A COP in which those who keep Nature alive used their bodies to surround and occupy the front of the Blue Zone, not just demanding answers but affirming that they are the answer. Because they are, because if we are still breathing and debating, it is because Indigenous and traditional peoples protect the biomes with their bodies. A COP in which the Climate March was the celebration of those who resist, showing that in the struggle of peoples and collectives, joy is the power to act. A COP in which the Peoples' Summit, representing 1,100 organizations and more than 25,000 activists from 60 countries, delivered its statement to the COP presidency. One in which life laid siege to the inflexibility of structures – and demanded to be let in

But unfortunately there have been many other COPs like the COP in Belém. Ones in which the final document reflected setbacks in relation to what was under discussion at the conference itself, with no consensus about what is obvious, and subjugated by pressure from countries that profit from oil and deforestation, the countries that continue to further the collapse. Unfortunately, once again, progress was minimal, while our risk of extinction is increasing at a time of acceleration. This is what happened with the so-called Mutirão Decision, proposed by the Brazilian leadership of the conference as a way of including urgent topics that were not on the original agenda. This is what happened with the main document,

which left out the roadmaps for eliminating fossil fuels and deforestation.

As reporter Claudia Antunes explained, with no agreement possible, the COP presidency was unable to override a blockade by Arab oil-producing countries, with the support of African nations. To avoid total disappointment, COP's Brazilian leaders announced the creation of these two roadmaps and internal discussions on them. Yet what will happen to them, if anything at all, is another story, according to reporter Rafael Moro Martins. "We dreamed of much more," Marina Silva, minister of the environment and climate change, said.

If COP30 has left any legacy, it is the recognition of what is obvious: that actions to fight climate change must respect the rights and knowledge of Indigenous peoples and traditional communities. The final document also reinforces these peoples' right to prior, free, and informed consultation before any action is taken inside their territories. For Adriano Kari-puna, leader of the Kari-puna people, of Rondônia state, this recognition is important but insufficient, considering the power of corporations and the absence of concrete guarantees. "There is a gulf between the official discourse of the 30th Conference of the Parties and the real lives of Indigenous peoples," he said. "We don't want to be a stage. We want to have a voice," he said. "We want to say what our real needs are. We are the ones who know our own reality."

The document also includes an unprecedented mention of the rights of African descendants – for the first time, the diaspora of enslaved Africans has been cited in texts coming out of a climate conference. Considered a historic victory, it merely serves to make us realize the level of today's colonialism. COP leaves "a thread of hope but much more disappointment." This was the assessment of organizations working in the socioenvironmental and human rights

areas, who spoke with reporters Catarina Barbosa and Guilherme Guerreiro Neto.

Scheduled to end on Friday, November 21, COP was extended for another day. A fire on Thursday delayed the outcome, leaving negotiators, activists, and journalists in exhaustion mode. "I didn't sleep" explained COP president André Corrêa do Lago, apologizing for not noticing when some delegations asked for the floor during the last plenary.

For SUMAÚMA, this was a decisive COP in several ways, because we were covering the first climate summit in the Amazon, grounded in the centrality of the Forest and its peoples and the centrality of urban peripheries and their collectives of resistance. Eleven forest journalists reported on the COP Nobody Sees. We produced a daily radio program that amplified the voices of creators of life. We launched a new feature called Junior Jaguars, with a story written by children. Howler and Tuca, characters from our comic strip, also attended COP. And we gathered dreams. For us, it should be noted that COP began when the Pará state department of education was occupied on January 14, in Belém, as Indigenous peoples allied themselves with teachers and forced governor Helder Barbalho to retreat. This was the first act.

And just as it began long ago, our COP does not end here, on November 22, when we are the last ones to leave the Parque da Cidade press room, watching as the structures that never seemed to be totally ready are disassembled... and practically turning out the lights on the Blue Zone. We are merely finalizing our live coverage here, a critical diary that has borne witness to and documented the lived experience of these recent days. This is not where our fight began, nor is this where it ends. We fight as a Forest, through journalism, and we keep going.

Thank you for recognizing our movement. Thank you for your company.



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In the belly of COP, my time is Forest time

With the incessant rushing of non-Indigenous people, the Blue Zone feels like a stomach ingesting the future of Earth, while Indigenous people are living the time of the rivers and Forest

Wajã Xipai

Guamá River, Belém, Amazon

I feel like I've been swallowed up. And inside this creature's belly, I have the impression I'm being drowned. My nose hurts, the same pain we feel when we are drowning. This is my perception of the COP30 Blue Zone: the architecture makes me think of the belly of some beast and nothing else.

My eyes hurt, seeing so many people going up and down the main corridor. Yet here in this same place where so many come and go, another scenario is visible:

a make-believe Forest. Hanging on the walls are large pictures of a jaguar, a monkey, an anteater, a calango lizard; in the middle of the hall there are big plants resembling açai palms, with smaller foliage arranged beneath them. In the Blue Zone, Nature occupies a merely decorative space.

People are always running, never walking, always in a rush. This accelerated pace penetrates my body. For a moment, I walk faster, think faster, breathe faster.



BLUE ZONE CORRIDOR WHERE HURRIED BODIES CROSS MY PATH, WHILE MY FOREST TIME FOLLOWS ANOTHER RHYTHM

The rush seems contagious. Then I realize: I can't let myself speed up. My reporting isn't rushed, my writing isn't rushed, my listening isn't either. Non-Indigenous society's monster of haste did not devour me; it vomited me out. But I fear it.

Before arriving in Belém, where COP30 is being held, I took a bus from Altamira to Alter do Chão. From there, I caught a boat as part of the program organized by SUMAÚMA, the Amazon-based newspaper where I work, and the Health and Happiness Project. It was a three-day journey, together with scientists and Indigenous and Ribeirinha leaders. We left the Tapajós to sail down one of the planet's largest rivers, the Amazon. When I disembarked, it was as if I had left a world where time opens up to enter a world where time narrows.

Here at COP30, everything seems urgent. Voices speak of the future, of targets, of financing. Always going,

always returning, hurrying like someone who has a clock in their soul. In the Forest, nothing is rushed. Trees have a right time to bear fruit; when we plant our crops, seeds sprout whenever the soil is ready. Each bird sings in their own time. One bird, the tinamou, only sings at dawn, noon, and dusk, and she never starts early. She never starts before, or after. The Forest understands time as a pact between beings.

I have sensed another crisis inside COP30, involving not just the climate but time. Time doesn't flourish here; it is consumed. People hurry so much they don't realize what is being lost between one step and another. So I ask myself: is it possible to save the planet without relearning the rhythm of Earth? Without listening to the time of the rains, of seeds, of rivers? The time the world tries to measure in targets is the same time the Forest feels in its skin. But the rush within these corridors becomes

sluggishness when it comes to the fast changes needed to avert the climate collapse.

The resistance meets in the Blue Zone

In the corridors of the Blue Zone, I run into Indigenous kin from various corners of Brazil; some faces I know, others are new. Indigenous people are taking part in the debates, round tables, and meetings, but it is curious to see how their presence is both intense and silent. The representative of the Regional Organization of Indigenous Peoples of Amazonas, or ORPIA, José Gregorio Díaz Mirabal, of the Guarinuma community (Venezuelan Amazon), said: “What is worrisome here is that, first of all, we are still observers. Very few of us are involved in the negotiations.” Mirabal is also coordinator of climate change and biodiversity for the Coordinating Board for Indigenous Organizations from the Amazon Basin, or COICA, and is participating at COP30. “We want the Amazon to be defended; together, we ask that the Amazon not be destroyed, our home not be destroyed, that it be respected, that fossil fuel and monocultures be stopped, and that we have a living Amazon, alive for Indigenous peoples and the world.”

Raquel Tupinambá, of the Tupinambá Indigenous people, from the Tapajós River region in Pará, is inside the Blue Zone. She obtained accreditation through the Association of Agroextractive and Indigenous Inhabitants of the Tapajós. Raquel’s perception of the Blue Zone is very similar to mine: “This space really looks like a big market, a space full of many things [...]. The madness of the globalized world. So I feel like there is a lot going on, but we need to have a focus. And we’re also here to ...” But she cannot finish her sentence, because at this precise moment we are both overrun by a rushing group of people, mostly white men, who appear to have some kind of authority in this world of white people.

Meanwhile, outside the Blue Zone, the city is also “welcoming” COP Village, a space where more than 3,000 Indigenous people from across Brazil are gathering. This is the first time so many Indigenous people have come to a COP. It is the Forest’s collective body in motion. The power vibrating outside these halls seems greater than the sound of the panel discussions and negotiations. Here, time has another rhythm: the pace

“

World leaders and representatives must be aware of the need to be concerned with traditional peoples. They can’t just show up and say: ‘I’m going to donate, but I’m going to keep on mining, killing our rivers, drying up our headwaters, making our people sick.’ Our people are sick, and they’re drinking water contaminated with mercury

Anália Tuxá

Cacica of the Tuxá people

of conversation, sharing, listening.

This is why I feel like something is in motion in Belém this week. There is a difference between being present and being heard. Our kin are here—and they are opening pathways. Forest time has reached COP, even if its leaders have not yet learned how to listen to it.

Anália Tuxá, 62, is a cacica of the Tuxá people in the state of Minas Gerais. She said: “World leaders and representatives must be aware of the need to be concerned with traditional peoples. They can’t just show up and say: ‘I’m going to donate, but I’m going to keep on mining, killing our rivers, drying up our headwaters, making our people sick.’ Our people are sick, and they’re drinking water contaminated with mercury.”

It is worth remembering that the Tropical Forests



Photos Wajá Xipai/SUMAÚMA



JOSÉ GREGORIO DÍAZ MIRABAL AND ANÁLIA TUXÁ WANT TO SEE TRUE CONCERN FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND TERRITORIES

Forever Facility, or TFFF, plans to direct 20% of its resources to Indigenous and traditional communities. This type of allocation is interesting to see and important to have. But it is still very little. The problem is that this type of initiative cannot be accepted without a real, critical posture on the part of the authorities. Especially because the president of Brazil recently opened the door to the oil lobby; Petrobras, for example, has been authorized to drill for oil in the Foz do Amazonas Basin, an extremely sensitive, biodiverse region. COP30 is taking place in an endangered Amazon. This exemplifies how useless it is to head in one direction but continue to destroy in another. This is hypocritical.

A territory that insists on speaking out

Last Tuesday, several news reports from Brazil and around the world said Indigenous peoples and social movements had “invaded” the Blue Zone at COP30, in Belém, following a demonstration. This word—“invaded”—penetrated me.

In 2022, a mining barge installed itself next to my village, drilling and eating away at the bottom of the river and contaminating it. My people called this an invasion. When mining contaminates a river, invading the river’s body, this is an invasion. When mercury affects fish, invading their bodies, this is an invasion. And we eat these fish. At this very moment, there must surely be some degree of mercury in my body. This is an invasion.

Last Tuesday night, here in Belém, I got out of a rideshare vehicle after the driver made several racist comments to me, because he saw the ancestral designs of my people painted on my face. The last thing he said before I exited in the middle of an avenue was: “Indians are invading Belém.” I felt bad, as if the ground had briefly been pulled out from under me.

The Indigenous people who had entered the Blue Zone were from the Lower Tapajós—peoples who know what it means to be invaded because they live with illegal mining and mercury inside their territories and bodies. What happened in the Blue Zone was not an invasion. It was the cry of someone who is invaded every day—an appeal to be heard, which the world of the kara—the non-Indigenous—still does not know how to hear. ■



In COP30's Belém, even shade is unequal

Exclusive data obtained by SUMAÚMA reveal a gap in access to green spaces and a difference of up to eight degrees Celsius between rich and poor neighborhoods. A food delivery biker takes us along his arid journey through streets where 82% of residents walk on roads without trees

Lorena de Paula

Ariiri River, Belém, Amazon

The sun hangs in the sky like the blade of a guillotine. It is almost noon when 19-year-old Júnior Neri crosses the threshold of his house. Apart from his flip-flops, his body is completely covered: long-sleeve shirt, leggings plus shorts, and a baseball cap. This choice of clothing might seem strange in the 30-degree heat, but when the young man leans his bike against the side of the house to adjust a bulky thermal backpack, it all makes sense. Minutes before, his cellphone had blared insistently: “iFood!”

Just like thousands of other young people devoured by the city, delivering meals to strangers is how Júnior helps put food on the table. A table he shares with his mother, brother, uncle, and grandmother in a modest two-story house in the Benguí neighborhood, in the marginalized periphery of Belém.

Without sunscreen, a helmet, or other protective equipment, he obeys the app's call and gets on his bike. His grandmother's watchful eye follows him. Maria Rodrigues Duarte stays inside, framed by the plants clinging to the bars of the entryway. She knows saying little is also a form of care.

“I'll be back!” he says, in his low, rhythmic voice. She looks back at him apprehensively, as if wishing her grandson a brighter path, more filled with flowers, like those printed on her dress.

Júnior leaves. Turning away from the green of affection to face the gray of concrete. He pedals with the ease

of someone who knows the way without having to look where he's going and the skill of someone whose father taught him how to ride when he was five. His earring shines when the sunlight hits it, and soon his sweat is also shining and burning his eyes. But Júnior keeps going; he learned long ago that sweat on his face isn't optional, it's part of the grind required to earn a living.

Right, left, right, he pedals, and the cap on his head pivots to one side, to the other, then backwards. The handlebars also pivot, turning to the right at the end of the street. He keeps going.

He knows the route. Júnior grew up unsupervised, running through Benguí's streets, climbing mango and plum trees to eat their fruit, and swimming in the stream where his grandmother washed clothes. But this childhood was replaced by an adolescence on a treeless street next to a canal polluted by runoff from a dead tributary whose name no one can remember.

Júnior, for his part, still remembers playing near the edge of the Pará Olympic Stadium, among the leafy trees that led Belém to be called the “city of mango trees” and gave the mango-shaped stadium its nickname: “Mangueirão.”

But time passed, the boy grew up, the state government implemented construction and development projects in the area, and concrete swallowed vegetation, leaving leaves, branches, and stems on the ground. And now the green of the stadium's grassy pitch stands



FOR A PLACE OUT OF THE SUN IN COP30'S BELÉM: JÚNIOR BIKES ON HOT CONCRETE IN SEARCH OF HIS DREAM ROOTS

in contrast to the exterior of the stadium, where few trees remain. And the “Mangueirão” name, intended as a homage, has since become ironic, as little remains of the mango trees that used to surround the stadium apart from its shape, name, and a kind of nostalgia.

In the shadow of inequality

The Benguí where Júnior played has also ceased to exist. It has become one of the least tree-covered neighborhoods in the host city for COP30, the 30th UN climate conference. According to data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, IBGE, only 18% of residents

live on streets with at least one tree. In other words, 82% of residents walk in full sun, on roads without shade.

The numbers, calculated for each neighborhood at SUMAÚMA's request and now published for the first time, come from the Survey of Urban Housing Environments, part of the IBGE's 2022 census. More than just statistics, the numbers expose the inequality of access to shade in Belém, the geography of heat, and the contrast in color between the center and the marginalized periphery of the COP30 capital.

Benguí is the third least tree-covered neighborhood in Belém, according to the IBGE data, behind just two other



ON WROUGHT IRON OR DRESSES: LEAVES AND FLOWERS CLING WHERE THEY CAN WHILE MARIA ANXIOUSLY WATCHES HER GRANDSON LEAVE

neighborhoods on the outskirts: Brasília in the Outeiro district, with only 14% of the population living on streets with trees, and Miramar, where merely 2% of residents live on a street with at least one tree. That means 98% of Miramar residents live on streets without greenery.

At the other extreme of the map, Belém's landscape changes color and income level. Apart from neighborhoods with rural sections on the island Mosqueiro, the remaining green spaces are concentrated in Belém's city center. The majority of people in Nazaré, Umarizal, and Batista Campos live on streets with trees. In Nazaré, 84% of people live on streets with trees; in Umarizal, 77%; and in Batista Campos, 73%. There, in the neighborhoods with the most costly square footage in the city, lush green treetops stand postcard-ready, extending over sidewalks and framing balconies. The trees absent in places where life is hardest burst up where the asphalt is most expensive.

"You can see this inequality so clearly... It demands your attention," said Luiz Claudio Martins, a research analyst at IBGE. He clicked something on the computer, and his glasses reflected the screen, displaying the unpublished data he compiled. "We can already see in the diagram the inequality of access to trees for part of the population."

Luiz explained the research only considered urban and inhabited areas. Rural areas, areas without housing, and trees on private property were not included in

calculations. Only trees found on public thoroughfares and at least 1.70 meters tall were counted.

Luiz knows the reality of this inequality from more than plots and digital maps. Every day he walks more than four kilometers to work, seeking shade along the way to lessen the heat. But he finds very little.

In Belém, more than half the population walks under the hot sun: 55% of residents live on streets without a single tree—a proportion far greater than the national average of 34%. At the crossroads between forest and asphalt, out of Brazil's 26 state capitals, the host city of COP30 is the 6th least tree-covered.

Greenery loses against asphalt

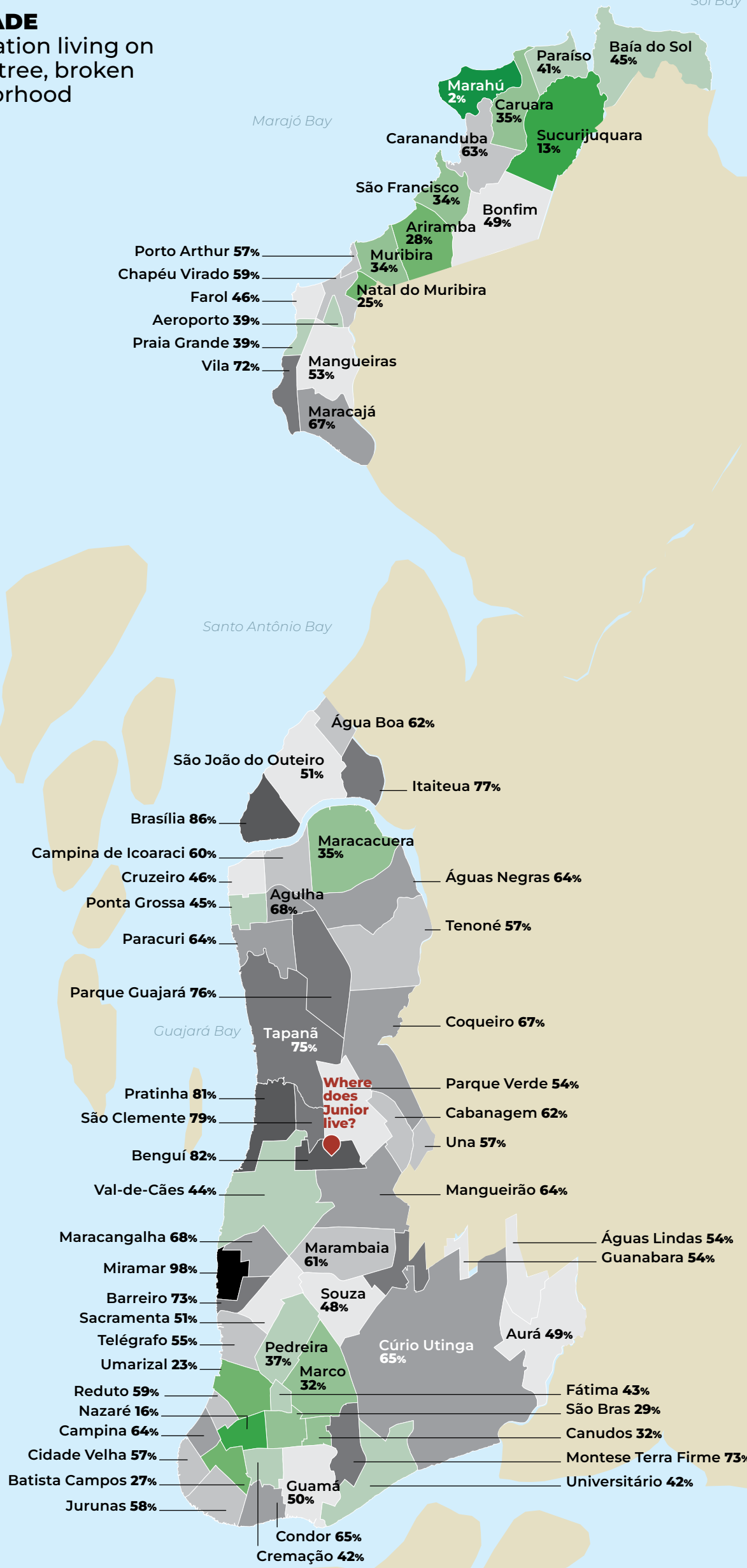
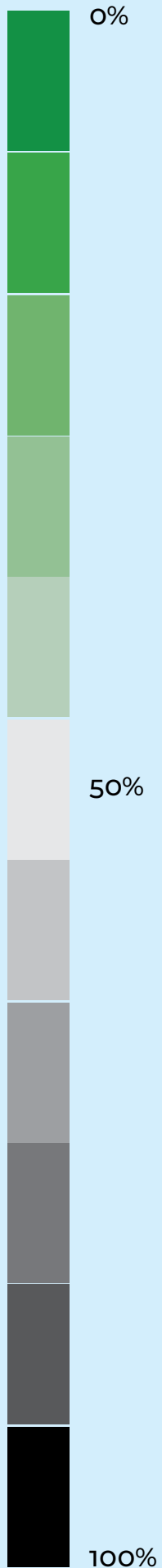
Júnior's body does not need the data to know: the sun burns his skin, blinds his eyes, and makes sweat run down his face. "One time I was pedaling and the sun was really, really bright... I started to feel sick; I got dizzy. I stopped and asked the customer for some water. Then I felt a little better." Since then, he always carries a bottle of water. He points at his arms, now covered by thermal clothing. "At the time, I didn't use these yet. It's to protect me from the sun; it gets hot, but I don't get burned. [...] I just sweat, but I don't get sunburned like before. The sun doesn't hurt my skin as much as it did before."

Júnior feels what the sensors confirm. A study by the Seeds of Tomorrow Project: Greener Belém, an initiative by the Federal Rural University of Amazonia in partner-

UNEQUAL EVEN IN SHADE

Proportion of the population living on streets without a single tree, broken down by Belém neighborhood

The greener the space, the more trees there are



The more gray, the fewer trees

ship with Belém's city council, used thermal cameras to measure the temperature of sidewalks. Using the devices, researchers observed the inequality evident on the streets: in Belém, at the same time of day, the average temperature difference between areas with and without trees reached 8 degrees Celsius. This temperature disparity reflects an urban policy that did not consider tree cover to be a universal right.

One of the project coordinators at the university, Professor Cândido Neto, sums it up: "The center was more planned, you see. We feel it in neighborhoods like Batista Campos, Nazaré, parts of Marco... Those areas were well planned, with wide streets and sidewalks where trees were planted. Whereas the outer areas grew haphazardly, populated by people who didn't have places to live. At the time, the government didn't provide structural support or urban planning; it just started carelessly sticking people in those spaces, without any plan for planting trees."

This is the opposite of what Cândido tries to foster, including at the Federal Rural University of Amazonia. As he walks through campus, he is reminded that the university itself ceased planting trees, even when there was vacant land. And, with almost paternal pride, he points out a few of the more than 200 saplings he helped plant in previously barren soil.

But even in those places, the rustling of the leaves seems to echo the professor's lament: "Unfortunately, people often don't understand the importance of planting trees in a city, because some don't need trees as much; they live in places with better weather or with air conditioning. [...] But not everyone has those advantages."

The effect of this lack of green is alarming. The professor warns that in neighborhoods with few trees, houses accumulate heat throughout the day and remain hot at night, which especially affects children and the elderly. While collecting data for the Seeds of Tomorrow project, he met ladies who left their stifling homes every day around 4 p.m., when the heat became "almost

unbearable." They went out carrying chairs with a clear destination in mind: the neighboring street where a group of four trees endured. And only there, under the dappled shade, could they find any relief.

Júnior does not have better luck on the streets where he works. Despite this, he prefers the heat of the outskirts he knows to breezes in the unfamiliar city center. "This is an area I already know [...] I don't know the center. I rode around there once and got totally lost. So I used [iFood's] map, but sometimes it would glitch. I'd be on my way somewhere and then have to do a huge loop!"

In this unfamiliar landscape, each wrong turn adds to the more than 50 kilometers he estimates he bikes per day. As if the longer distances weren't enough, it's harder to get water because the center, cooler in temperature, is downright frigid in character. "The water thing is difficult in the center. Here there's a mall close by where I can fill my bottle. Or I make a delivery and go home and fill [the bottle]. Over in the center, no. It's rare for someone to give you water there," he said.

If the lack of vegetation causes thirst and heat, the presence of trees, by contrast, enlivens everyday activity: more socialization, less isolation; more business activity, fewer illnesses. More life. As Professor Cândido Neto, who describes each tree as an "individual," explains: "When you increase tree coverage, you create biodiversity. The tree is a being who hosts numerous other living beings: birds, insects, fungi, bacteria, mistletoes, epiphytes [plants that grow on trees without being parasitic to their hosts]." He continues: "Tree cover also supports socialization. In greener areas, people start to go for walks, getting physical activity; they sit under trees to read while their children play..."

Green spaces bring more than shade, he says. They increase real estate value, attract small retailers, and stimulate business. They also act as medicine: according to Cândido, studies show where there are more trees, there is less depression and anxiety, and people breathe easier. And when heavy rains fall, greenery acts as a buffer, absorbing the water and preventing the city from drowning in floods.

The municipal government of Belém told SUMAÚMA it is aware of the problems caused by lack of tree cover. In a message, city representatives said it is planning to plant 200,000 trees with the support of the government of Pará and the Brazilian Development Bank but did not give a timeline for completion. The city referenced the Greener Belém project, which has planted 7,000 saplings in the city, 500 of which were planted on the banks of the Tucunduba "canal," a polluted river that runs through four peripheral neighborhoods in the city.

The city also referenced a joint effort with the Seeds of Tomorrow project, the objective of which is to make an up-to-date tree inventory of Belém. The city also mentioned growing saplings at the Granja Modelo park, "destined for urban landscaping and green areas in the

The host city of COP30 talks about climate but not about the young man who delivers food he won't eat. Or about his thirst and dizziness in the sun. Or about the trees that became memories and childhoods that have faded. Nor does it talk about the inequality measured in heat and drops of sweat



DEFORESTATION FOR COP30: BELÉM HACKS DOWN TREES TO ENSURE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE CLIMATE CONFERENCE

center of Belém and districts of Mosqueiro, Outeiro, Cotijuba, and Icoaraci.” The city did not say if the project was considering the major marginalized neighborhoods of the periphery affected by the lack of urban trees, the very subject of this article.

Despite promises for a greener future, the recent actions of the government of Pará are moving things in the opposite direction. To open up space for the Avenida Liberdade highway and widen the Rua da Marinha, two of the large infrastructure projects for COP30, the government of Helder Barbalho deforested one of the most densely forested parts of the metropolitan area, chopping down thousands of trees and violating the rights of traditional populations living there.

After leveling 35 hectares of forest and proposing to cut another 68 hectares, instead of setting down new seeds, the city set up fake trees: rebar wrapped in vines, topped by a crown of potted plants. The government called them “ecotrees,” claiming they were eco-friendly since they were made of leftover materials from construction projects in the city. “Ecotrees,” however, failed to displace the popular nickname “fake trees,” a riff on the English “fake news,” which satirized the artificiality of the project.

The Amazonian metropolis promising reforestation is sacrificing the green that still exists.

Dreaming of a place out of the sun

The host city of COP30 talks about climate. But it doesn’t talk about the youth who sweats to deliver food he won’t

eat. It doesn’t talk about his burnt skin, his thirst, and his dizziness in the sun. It doesn’t talk about the neighborhood where trees became memories, childhoods faded, and green turned to grey. Nor does it talk about the inequality between the center and the periphery, measured in degrees of heat and drops of sweat.

In the same way, Júnior does not talk about COP30. He has heard of COP but cannot say what it is. “I never tried to find out what that is. I’ll look it up later,” he says. “A lot of people keep talking about it, but I don’t pay attention to all that. Does it have something to do with the Amazon?”

Doubts vanish when he talks about the future: “I don’t want to do iFood forever; that’s not what I want for my life. [...] I want my own business, something that makes a lot of money. I want to be my own boss,” he says. And, as he talks about his dream, for the first time his voice grows like a root, albeit a root in a sidewalk—controlled, cut back, and watered by eyedropper in the economic landscape he was planted in.

Júnior does not run after his dreams: to achieve his dreams, Júnior bikes. After crossing streets without greenery, he arrives at a restaurant in the Parque Verde, literally “Green Park,” neighborhood. There he picks up the first delivery of the day. He packs the food away, puts the bag on his back, and climbs on his bike. He turns his hat again, losing the hip backwards-cap look. The brim shades the young face from the punishing midday sun.

The asphalt extends out in front of him, burning like the desire for a Belém where boys don’t sweat for a place in the sun and can, finally, dream in the shade. ■



Shayra Cruz/SUMAUMA

The truth about COP30

Those who understand the need for urgency with their very bodies raised their voices loudly at rallies and marches outside the Blue Zone, where leaders of countries living in ivory towers pondered the future of the planet. In addition to the People's Flotilla and the Porongaço headlamp march, acts like those that took place on November 15 and 17 brought Indigenous peoples, Quilombolas, forest-peoples from around Brazil and the world, Ribeirinhos, embroiderers, coconut breakers, women's groups, and people impacted by dams into the streets to protest the collapse of life. They turned joy into the power to act and COP into a transgression of COP.





Soli/SUMAÚMA



Lela Beltrão/SUMAÚMA



Khumta Suya/SUMAUMA



Lela Beltrão/SUMAUMA



Eliane Brum/SUMAÚMA



Khumta Suya/SUMAÚMA



Khumta Suya/SUMAÚMA



Khumta Suya/SUMAÚMA



Guilherme Guerreiro Neto/SUMAÚMA



Lela Beltrão/SUMAÚMA



Lela Beltrão/SUMAÚMA

Antonio Nobre: The Amazon's Climate Engine is Dying

Why COP30's Carbon Obsession
is a Catastrophic Blind Spot

As COP30 convenes at the heart of the Amazon, the world's focus is narrowly set on carbon emissions and net-zero pledges. Yet, this tunnel vision blinds us to the most important elephant in the room: Ecosystem destruction is not a carbon problem alone—it is the systemic sabotage of the planet's most powerful climate control mechanism.

Since 2023, extreme weather events have shattered IPCC model projections, and meteorologists are now grappling with this new reality. Standard climate models were designed in a stable world that we have irrevocably left behind. But wait, even in the stable climate there was an inexplicable omission: the dynamic land-atmosphere water cycle—powerfully mediated by living forests—relegated to a mere footnote in the carbon story.

When Trees Hold Up the Sky

Indigenous knowledge has long understood what science is only now proving. Davi Kopenawa Yanomami once told me based in his *The Falling Sky* book: “Don't white people see that if they cut down the forest, the rain will dry up?”

This isn't metaphor—it's native wisdom summing up the physics of the Biotic Pump. Forests function as the beating heart of the hydrological cycle. Trees transpire vast volumes of water vapor, which rises and rapidly condenses into clouds, aided by cloud-seeds also emitted by the plants. When vast amounts of water vapor rise and condense back into liquid droplets (clouds), that liquid takes up vastly less volume than the gas did. This sudden shrinkage creates a low-pressure area—a massive

natural vacuum—that efficiently pulls humid air from the oceans deep into the continents.

The Biotic Pump theory was pioneered by Russian scientists Anastassia Makarieva and Victor Gorshkov, in close cooperation with Brazilian researchers, including myself. Our studies have revealed this mechanism operates globally. In the Amazon, the pump pulls trade winds from the North Atlantic across the equator, penetrating deep into South America. In Siberia, boreal forests maintain the Eurasian flying rivers—crucial atmospheric moisture sources for vast portions of Europe, China, and Central Asia. This profound, life-or-death physics—the Biotic Pump—is not a newly formulated hypothesis; it is a solid mechanism, a published theory, rooted in fundamental physics. Yet, for nearly two decades, this critical dynamic has been missing in the dominant global climate models. This omission has allowed models to wildly underestimate the Amazon's vulnerability and the speed of climate collapse, precisely due to the reluctance to integrate a truth that challenges the carbon-centric foundation.

Destroying a Friendly Climate

Remove the trees, and the pump breaks. Transpiration stops, dry air falls, humid air is no longer drawn inward, clouds vanish, the natural cooling system collapses, and menacing, massive bubbles of hot air settle over deforested regions, further blocking humidity circulation and triggering desert-like conditions across vast continental areas. Where dense white clouds over the Amazon once reflected up to 70% of solar radiation back to space, bare ground now absorbs that heat. This process dramatically

amplifies regional warming, generating vicious climate consequences far beyond what carbon emissions alone can explain.

Beyond Carbon: A Paradigm Shift for Climate Action

Here is the uncomfortable truth: Even if we zeroed out carbon emissions tomorrow—a goal certainly worth pursuing—without massive ecological restoration the climate emergency would persist. While carbon dioxide is key to long-term warming, ecosystem destruction introduces a dangerous short-term multiplier. By damaging the ocean-atmosphere-land water cycle we drastically amplify the climate's sensitivity to CO₂. Forests aren't just carbon sinks. They are the planet's primary climate regulators, its freshwater generators, and the very foundation of continental habitability.

The Path Forward: Protecting and Restoring the Biosphere

The good news is that Life has the regenerative power. Over 400 million years, the biosphere has conquered continents through unconceivably complex and incredibly sophisticated mechanisms. Spores, seeds, shoots, branches, leaves, eggs and precious cultures of Indigenous Peoples hold the secrets of life to maintain and safeguard the climate. Recognizing this natural prowess must become the gauging sign of our own existential intelligence.

This mandate requires fundamentally reforming agriculture and cattle ranching—currently the main vectors of destruction. Furthermore, the failure to model the Biotic Pump has a direct financial consequence: It allows billions to be funneled into bogus, short-term

carbon offset schemes—such as tree farms that fail to replicate the complex hydrology of native forests—which look good on a carbon ledger but do nothing to restore the planet's water cycle.

Think of it like treating a liver disease. The first thing a doctor tells the alcoholic is to stop drinking—that is, stop polluting, stop destroying. This is essential, but it is wholly insufficient. The damaged liver needs healing. If we continue losing and degrading our forests, no amount of monoculture replanting or carbon offsetting will preserve planetary health. A damaged liver can regenerate—but it needs help. Nature had eons to spare; we do not.

COP30's Historic Opportunity: The Final Mandate

Hosting COP30 in the Amazon is more than symbolic—it's strategically essential. The challenge for Belém is clear, yet momentous: Will we finally acknowledge the elephant in the room? The world is watching to see if the rhetoric of 'preservation' will trump the 20th-century craving for reckless development. Will we give up political convenience and overcome economic cynicism? This is the critical juncture where the world must finally elevate ecosystem protection and recovery from a peripheral concern to the core of global climate action. New humane partnerships must recognize the extraordinary capacity of intact land ecosystems to cool the surface—magnificently converting water vapor into clouds and rain, an ultra-complex function that no man-made technology can replicate or substitute.

The mandate for COP30 is not about if we value the Amazon, but how we value it. We must enforce, fund, and model policies that

recognize the forest not merely as a carbon repository, but as the planet's irreplaceable air conditioning and freshwater generation system. The stability of the world's food, water, and climate depends on whether Belém elevates biogeophysics—as shown by the new science of the Biotic Pump—from a peripheral concern to the core of global climate law. Give diverse forests a chance, give native territories a stand, and they will heal the climate. This conviction is not naive optimism; it emerges from the practical application of physics, deep ecology, ancient wisdoms and four billion years of evolutionary genius.

Will we finally commit—without compromise—to fully respect, protect and restore our marvelous planet? ■



Soil/SUMAÚMA

Antonio Donato Nobre

is a retired researcher from Brazil's National Institute for Space Research (INPE), now Scientific Director of the non-profit Institute Biotic Pump Greening Group. He is a specialist in the Amazon and Earth System Sciences, known for his work on "flying rivers" and the biotic pump theory of forest-driven climate regulation.



The women using thread to fight agribusiness and mining

The embroiderers of the Tapajós River turn needle and thread into gestures of struggle to defend their territories

Soraia Joffely

Guamá River, Belém, Amazon

It is exactly 2:00 PM on the day before the Climate March when 20 women from the Tapajós River begin to weave life. The embroiderers are wearing their green Women Entrepreneurs of the Forest shirts, emblazoned with an image rooted in a tree, along with açai seed art on their necks and their ears. At the Peoples Embassy, in Belém, a cloth is spread to the edges of a table, the women positioned in the middle are holding tight to the thread that will become the memories, stories, and meanings they have carried for years. After each says her name and where she is from, a tangle of threads begins to populate the white with colors and beings. Roused by

the stories, by the experiences and elements that build the daily lives of these women as Ribeirinhas, farmers, and Indigenous women, the river reborn through thread to take part in the march is a gesture of struggle.

Fish, rivers, lakes, trees, fishing nets, and homes are embellished in embroidered lines, but they also call attention to the urgencies in these women's territories. They serve as a stage for their protests against the advance of agribusiness and for the creation of a flourishing yard to bring food to families and guarantee income for residents on the islands and in the communities along the Tapajós.



Soraia Joffely/SUMAÚMA

ROSA VASCONCELOS, MARILENE ROCHA, AND NIRACI SOUSA ARE CULTIVATING AN ECOLOGICAL FUTURE

The embroiderers of the Tapajós, women who are mostly part of the Movement for Popular Sovereignty in Mining, have long dreamed of attending the 2025 United Nations Climate Conference. They wanted to do this not just for popular participation by women, but also to raise the banner of embroidery as resistance and art. The art of weaving and demanding their rights to access land and territory free of agrochemicals.

Irene Domingas is a diminutive woman from Mojuí dos Campos, Pará, where she is not only the city's secretary of elder rights, but also a farmer. She wears a lilac scarf on her head with a phrase sewn into the fabric that reflects her outlook on life: "Don't sweep it under the rug. Protect. Report." The band tied around her head, bearing the name of the Women's Ministry, carries a slogan in the fight against domestic violence. In her conversations, she speaks in a way many associate with feminism, but to her it represents a defense of the basic rights that every woman needs, especially rural women: education, health, and stronger family farming. Irene, who was born in Maranhão but has lived in Mojuí since 1980, would rather not embroider the river that would be on display the next day at the Global March for the Climate, on November 15. Surrounded by women's hands and different embroidery ideas, she says it is hard

to embroider while standing around a table. So, she prefers talking about her struggles.

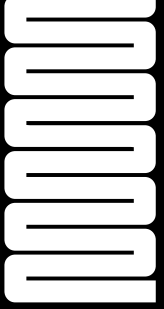
"Land is life. Because without land, what are we?" she asks, immediately responding about what she expects from the Summit in the Amazon: her hope rests on the rupture that she believes needs to happen between agribusiness and the government.

COP30, which is in its second and last week, is holding the highest level of discussions on the future of the climate and the measures countries should adopt to keep from overshooting the goal of 1.5C. Meanwhile, mining corporations, like Vale and Hydro, continue to promote the direct exploration of the Blue Zone. These mining interests, which are encroaching on the Summit with their lobbyists, are also discussed by the women of the Tapajós who are preparing for the march. While drawing the fish that will be embroidered on the cloth, many of them are adding a new ingredient that, since mining's advance, has become part of the poisoning of communities by infecting food. This character, omnipresent in illegal gold mining, is called mercury.

Going straight from the room in the Peoples Embassy to a gathering in front of São Brás Market, women, teenagers, and people young and old get ready to march in defense of their beliefs. Under the sweltering sun on Avenida Almirante Barroso, they stood out as an entirely female group, raising the items embroidered by the Amazon, art that, since the entrepreneurial women's group headed by Suelem Vinhote began, has welcomed and celebrated the people living along the Tapajós. A literature and language teacher, she began embroidering in the classroom, showing how language and writing can intertwine with needle and thread, turning fabric into embroidered phrases, words, and stories.

Irene and Suelem fondly recall when the embroidery workshops began, delicate and quiet lessons on how to handle the needle and thread, with the ability to create over 100 different stitches. They returned to that first night of learning in their minds: embroidering in the light of the Amazonian darkness, at the edge of a stream. The silence and care reverberated through the trees, and in the middle, a group of women gathered to build a fabric that spans fashion, drives politics, and challenges the large corporations bringing the planet's largest rainforest to the point of no return. A work of resistance, one that fights to guarantee their territories.

At the Climate March, a collective catharsis where Nature and culture ripped down the walls that separate them, the women of the Tapajós are embroidering another chapter of the life that resists to exist. ■



HER ROOTS PLANTED IN THE AFRO-INDIGENOUS TERRITORY OF OIAPOQUE, MAYARA TEODORO DELIVERS A MESSAGE ABOUT ANCESTRY AT THE EXHIBIT "ASHES OF THE FOREST."

The ‘Mother of Water’ crying tears of crude oil

A portrait of “Mãe d’Água” was among the myriad perspectives in the exhibit “Ashes of the Forest,” at the COP People’s House during the climate conference in Belém. The works reflect how art can rise above forest fires

Soll (text and photos)

Guamá River, Belém, Amazon

Before entering or leaving the water, no matter where, Mayara Teodoro knows she has to ask permission. She does so silently, in her mind, at the first and last contact of her body with the body of the river.

“Every place has its owner,” she repeats.

I say “repeat” because Mayara inherited this conviction from her grandmother, Maria Francisca. It is something she heard as a child. By the age of 4, she knew how to swim in the Oiapoque River.

Thirty years later, Mayara turned the memory of this conviction into a flame of inspiration for one of her works featured in the project “Ashes of the Forest,” on exhibit since November 11 at the COP People’s House, where her vision hangs alongside the visions of 284 other artists from over 20 countries. Launched during COP30, this manifesto of struggle, drawn from diverse biome-bodies, decries the destruction of sacred territories in the name of greed.



REEXISTENCE

A path of learning lies between her first and second works of art.

It begins with a portrait of Dona Onete, a drawing in uniform tones imprinted on paper.

Her body had to adapt to the radical, challenging harshness of the pigment used in this creation—the death of entire forests, the end of entwined lives, of “everything that was destroyed by fire,” she says.

This “everything” might be butterflies, ants, fungi, jaguars, mycelia, pollen, beetles, flowers...transformed into the ashes left behind by the criminal fires that have been set in Brazilian biomes—the Amazon, Cerrado, Pantanal, and Atlantic Forest.

In the second painting, the Ribeirinha artist achieves greater contrast.

She made the journey.

Through light and shadow, Mayara brings Mãe d'Água to life. The artist sees herself in the Mother of Water, with her wavy hair and big eyes, crying tears of crude oil.

“

In their experience and ways of taking action, the elders, Indigenous peoples, extractivists, and older communities already know what people hope to discover at COP. They already know what to do

Mayara Teodoro

Artist



These tears of anger reveal one of Mayara's concerns: "The Oiapoque is at the epicenter of the discussion over oil exploration," she says, referring to the petroleum industry's interest in the Foz do Amazonas Basin. Just 21 days before COP30 opened, Brazil's environmental regulator Ibama authorized the drilling of a test well in block 59.

While the block may not be located precisely on the Oiapoque, Mayara feels the river - and those who depend on it for sustenance - might be threatened in the event of an oil spill, because she sees the River and Ocean as interdependent. "The fishing route extends from here, in Vigia, Pará, and follows the entire coast until reaching the mouth of the Oiapoque," she explains.

The fact that an environmental catastrophe might occur at the mouth of the Amazon ignites a feeling of revolt in the artist, translated in Mãe d'Água's eyes. A message has been inscribed around the whirlpools and thick hair of the Owner of the Waters: "Save, protect, and care for those who live in the Amazon. Our future is ancestral, and we need to listen to those who have been reXisting in this world for longer."

Mayara's message is accompanied by many other stories. The exhibit brings together works by such visual artists as Mundano, one of the project's creators, and curator Moara Tupinambá. But it also features thinkers

and activists like Ailton Krenak and Jurema Werneck, the latter a key figure in Brazil's Black movement.

Rapper, poet, and writer GOG, stricken by the ashes, expresses the essence of the exhibit in his poetry, fashioned from the same ancestral pigment: "Ashes are the fertilizer of the manifesto."

One of the goals of the exhibit, which remained open to the public until November 20 at the COP People's House, is to raise funds for Brazil's national volunteer brigade, made up of hundreds of *brigadistas* from 15 organizations involved in environmental education, fire prevention, and firefighting in affected regions of the country.

Mayara hoped this message would also reach "the suits" at the negotiating tables during the Conference of Parties in Belém. "In their experience and ways of taking action, the elders, Indigenous peoples, extractivists, and older communities already know what people hope to discover at COP. They already know what to do," she says.

For her, Mãe d'Água's rebellious eyes hold the answer to our future, which is ancestral. Those who come from outside also need to see and hear this answer so they can learn, like her, that they must ask permission from both people and *encantado* spirit-beings before entering, leaving, or making any important decision within this territory—which is sacred and has multiple owners. ■



Fotos Soli/SUMAÚMA

Dreaming of the Forest means remembering we're not alone

The reveries of the people who gathered to hold up the sky at COP30

Mariana Leal de Barros

Guamá River, Belém, Amazon

I am arriving in Belém by water, in the company of nearly 100 people who have joined the “Voyage to Resist the End of the World”, an event held prior to COP30 by SUMAÚMA and Saúde e Alegria. In the morning, I open the door of my room in Alter do Chão, our point of departure, and the first dream to come to me is Ehuana Yanomami’s. The artist and writer, who is accompanied by Ana Maria Machado, an anthropologist and translator of worlds, tells me: “The walls of this place toppled, it was scary.”

I listen. And, days later, sharing the boat with a world of forest-people, including Indigenous peoples, Ribeirinhos, community leaders, scientists, and journalists, I wonder to myself: What walls will topple, taking us with them, and what walls must topple so that we can continue together? I hear the portent, but Ehuana’s dream opens the question for me.

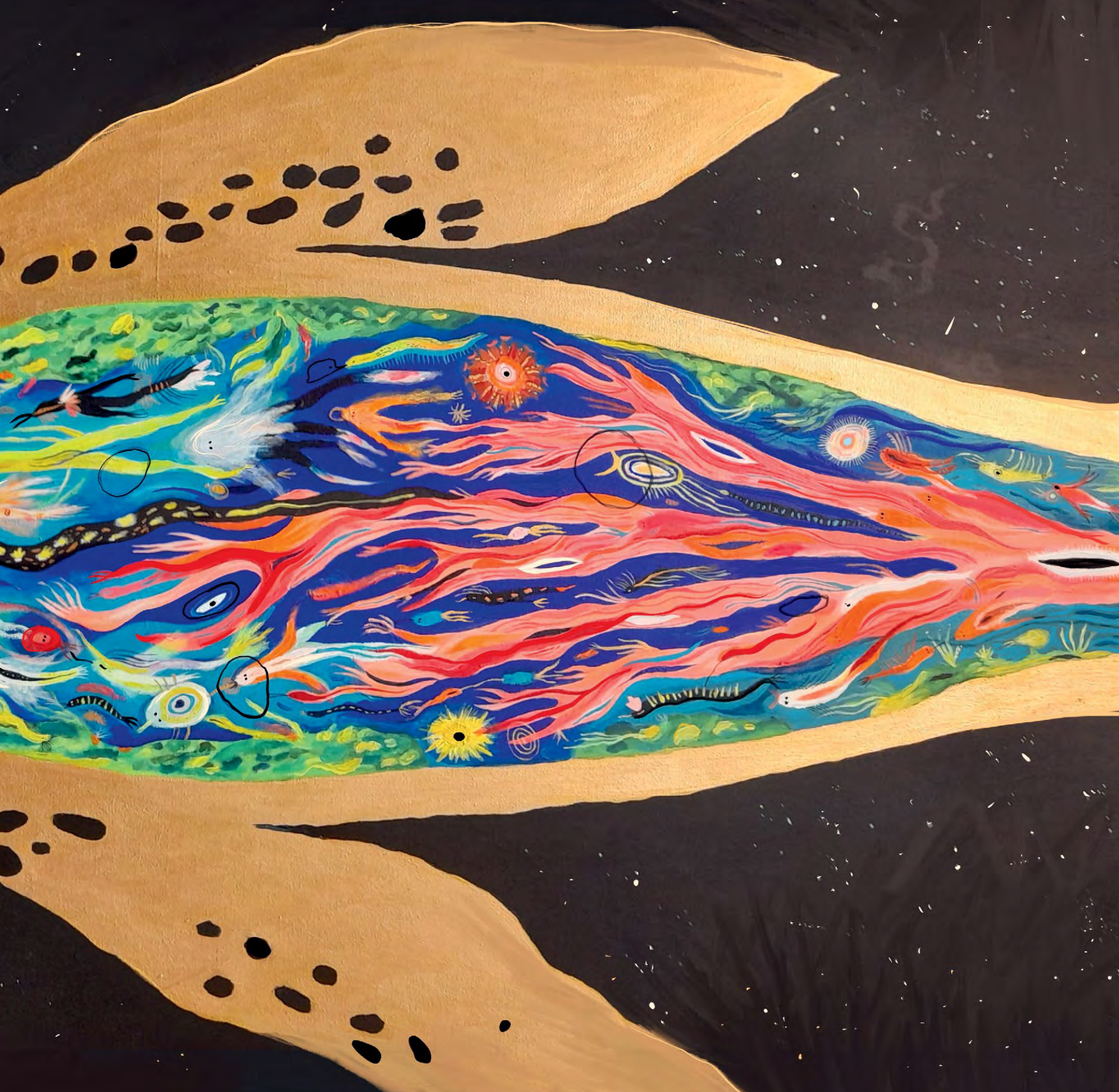
I beg a poetic (or dreamlike) pardon of her and of everyone who confided their words and dreams to me over these days. When a dream is told, part of it is lost in the attempt to put it into words. Another part grows wings and forms a network with those listening. Unpredictable paths will be awoken for those now reading what I heard, and it is this seam with the invisible that I hope to convey.

SUMAÚMA called me the “Dream Midwife,” a name that gave me direction. More than listening to dreams, it is about occupying the place of someone helping



to birth new worlds. Every day at COP30, I carried a sign with me that said “Talk here about your dream for the world” and I set up two little chairs in different spots in Belém. Some dreams came from folks near me, whom I had the fortune of getting to know on the boat during the days of talks. Yet many others came from the plethora of peoples who went to COP30 because of their insistence on life, to show the world there are other ways to live. I wanted to know which dreams might visit their nights in Amazonian territories. Or which came with them, stashed away in their memories.

The more I listen to dreams from the most diverse



corners of the world, the more I understand that they join in the invisible, like flying rivers. The dream circles I have coordinated for some time show this. We dream together, our dreams are connected, and this is not foreign to me or to Indigenous peoples or to psychoanalysis, or perhaps to science, even if there is no rational explanation for this. What is new to me is what the Amazon teaches: This “together” is amplified, because it is not just our inner selves that speak in dreams. Animals, plants, rivers, and mountains speak.

On the waters of the Tapajós, on the way to COP30, Juma Xipaia, a cacica in the Middle Xingu River region

and a leader in Tukamã Village, tells me she dreamed about us two months earlier. She was in Santarém and a man asked her to hold tight to his shoulders. Juma trusted him and he dove into the water, turning into a river dolphin. They traveled many rivers until they came to a place where a group of people had gathered. The river dolphin, an enchanted being in Amazonian territories, asked: “Do you hear what they’re saying?” Juma said she did not. Everyone was talking at the same time about sky, ground, rivers, and seas. It was just a bunch of talking up to that point, but he reiterated: “Pay attention, to hear you have to want to listen.”

From Juma's dream, I hear the river dolphin asking us to listen carefully to all of these people gathered. Jansen Zuanon, an expert on Amazonian fish, says the river dolphin is an animal whose forehead holds an advanced ability for echolocation, allowing for travel through muddied waters and narrow paths. They send out a sound that hits another point far away, causing this echo to return to the animal, positioning them on a mental map and letting them see in the dark of the Amazon's waters.

Creating means of seeing in the dark has moved me as I listen to dreams. When the future is so uncertain that it threatens our ability and courage to want to live, being able to dream in the dark awakens life in the light of day.

I tell Gabriela Carneiro da Cunha, an artist and dreamer who I am also learning from, about the river dolphins. And I listen: "The eyes must die to learn to see," she quotes Yanomami shaman Davi Kopenawa. When I had the chance to meet him, this time on the waters of the Guamá River, in Belém, aboard the same boat, I asked him if it is possible for us to pick our ability to dream back up. He says it is, but uses his hands to explain that dreaming is not like this (he draws a straight line in the air), it's like this (his finger moves forward in a curve, like the path an arrow takes). "That is how I dream far," I hear from Davi, and this took me to something Manoel de Barros said: "A straight line is a curve that didn't dream."

"Dreams are like the Forest, they have no borders," Jama Wapichana told me. And "in the Forest, it is impossible to walk in a straight line," Carlos Papá said in an interview with Radio SUMAÚMA.

Because they do not answer to straight lines and they deviate from the laws of explanation, our dreams were confined to the private realm and to the fantasy of Western subjectivity. And more and more the city folk, tired and medicated, dream less and less.

I must say that every Indigenous person I spoke with during this time said: "Of course, I dream a lot!" Among the non-Indigenous, most answered that they did not dream or did not remember.

With this invitation, little by little, some people began to seek me out to tell me they had begun to dream again. Others lamented that they didn't have a dream to share, and I began to hear this lament with more appreciation. When dreaming once again occupies a place of importance, not dreaming has effects. Not remembering and lamenting mean knowing the world is not in our hands. Dreams are this land in which we live as life really is when we do not allow ourselves to be deceived by the protection of walls: no control, no border, visited by what is intimate as well as by strangers, with neither guarantee nor meaning.

Enlightened capitalism placed our dreams among the unimportant things in life. Bringing back this time

experienced in the dark is an effort of resistance. It reveals and cures. I may seem persuasive, but anything I say here is said in company and as an apprentice; if dreaming is a school, as Davi Kopenawa says, as with other references around the world, we need to sit back down at our desks and re-learn to "dream-with," which means going beyond yourself. This is what lets us remember that our bodies are made of many and we exist in intrinsic relation to everything around us.

The nighttime dream awakens the daytime dream, and what appears to be ours can be seen. As the COP was held, I was told dreams about negotiation, conflict, blood, and death. In the light of day, the temperature of the demonstrations held by the people whose lives are violated in their territories also exuded warmth.

When Renato Araujo, a student in medicine attending the Federal University of Pernambuco through the National Agrarian Reform Program, saw a poster at the Peoples' Summit that said "Tell your dream to the world here," he said: "I'm a dreamer." Upon hearing that I was there to hear nighttime dreams too, he offered me his most recent one, despite supposing a lack of interest on my part, since it was highly "personal." He was talking to a colleague with whom he was no longer close. They were trying to resolve a conflict about this person's father. Both were angry and hurt, but they couldn't reach a consensus about what to do. "Thirty minutes later," they both received news that the person in question had died. Renato was scared when he awoke. He wondered about the "time for forgiveness, uncertainty about the future," and why he didn't try to understand the other person when there was time. It was November 14, the end of week one of COP30. I ask if he associates this prolonged negotiation in the dream with what we experienced during the days of the conference. Renato's eyes grow wide: "This is the time we have for a significant change in the world, of this imbalance that we're experiencing and that could be intensified. [...] In this context of the COP, I realize it could have been the experiences we're having here. It applies to a nightmare where we're unable to design a future because it's so uncertain; there are projects being disputed, people locked in a room discussing the directions the world will move in, just like there are peoples organizing here (at the Peoples' Summit) to find what this alternative would be for the world. [...] We're many, we're spread out, but we're joining together," Renato said. And he added: "We see the project walking toward humanity's extinction, and we're here dreaming of the future as if we were in a parallel world, but we're not." Let's be the rock in their shoe, pointing the finger and proposing alternatives, he said, recalling something he heard in the movement he is part of: "We'll be the nightmare of those who don't let us sleep."

A few days earlier, Guilherme Pretti, an attorney and environmental consultant who was on the boat for the

“Voyage to Resist the End of the World,” told me: “The only thing I dreamed about was an anthill. There were thousands and thousands of tiny ants coming out of the anthill.” The day after Renato told me about his dream, at a march on the streets of Belém, the song many folks were singing connected to the image of the dream: “Step light, step light, don’t poke the anthill if it’s the ants you don’t like.”

Today, as I write this, we are experiencing the pain of confronting a perverse National Congress that enacted the Devastation Bill as law, striking down president Lula’s vetoes, and I am thinking about how we can join these efforts that were united in their differences to keep these people from having any rest until they hear that we want to live. The ones who want to explore without asking permission, who do not know what it is to remove your shoes before entering a house of worship, bowing before an elder and asking for a blessing from those who came before, like the River and the Forest.

We’ve heard that Indigenous peoples treat Earth like a mother, which is why they respect her, but to some extent this is also true of the non-Indigenous people, except they treat Earth like they treat their mothers and wives: they take possession, explore, silence, pave over, and kill. They preserve some, which they call “virgin forest,” expecting Nature to be quiet and passive, arms always open, infinitely offering and nourishing. Yet coming to a body without asking permission, without consent, has a name: it is abuse, it is rape.

When Aline Matulja, a socioenvironmental communicator, tells me about a dream she brought with her, I hear both the abandonment of those who claim to want to protect and this stitching of separate worlds

Dreaming about other animals is a way of learning from them and an exercise in growing smaller. A time experienced when we can vividly understand that there are many non-humans who know things we do not know

that is already happening: She was lost on a road, alone, a man appeared and picked her up on his motorcycle. He said he knew the way, but he was going too fast. She fell off the back and he kept going in a hurry. Aline met two other women and they ran into three jaguars. It wasn’t right away, but she realized it would be better to “negotiate with the danger,” and walk with them and as them, rather than being alone or looking for that man again.

Dreaming about other animals, for Indigenous peoples in different places around the world, is a way of learning from them and an exercise in growing smaller. A time experienced when we can vividly understand that there are many non-humans who know things we do not know.

Gabriela Alves, a social scientist and activist, told me two months before COP30 that she dreamed of a place where she met lots of activists. They went into houses made of plants, with huge leaves, bigger than people. Gigantic mushrooms grew out of the walls and she understood: there will be a way. As I listen, I associate her dream with the upcoming COP30. What could come from all the people gathered that lends itself to learning from animals, plants, and vegetables like the Amazon can teach us?

“Our dreams tell us when to shift the direction of the canoe,” Juma Xipaia says. We have some here, we can continue hearing others, endlessly, while we exist. We delude ourselves that we are alone, we forget what collectives around the world still remember. Many of them were at COP30; they sang, prayed, and taught. “To awaken this memory, we need to dream,” Cristine Takuá said during these days in Belém. I learned from her that those who don’t dream have an anemia of the soul. Here I wonder: How are we going to live in this time of so many challenges if our souls are weak? Anemia is a wise word to describe the condition of one who has stopped dreaming, who has lost the red part of their blood, which carries oxygen to the lungs for all the other bodily tissues. We really are at risk of losing the chance to breathe.

It is start, middle, start. Negotiations continue outside the walls, they were not finalized with the official final document. If they are now traveling along the streams and spreading like sumaúma seeds, they will go far. During those days we saw lots of people dreaming with their hands, as Txai Suruí said, people who know that rivers also dream of people. Realizing this relationship means perceiving that we are not alone anywhere on this planet. When I hear archeologist Carlos Augusto da Silva say the Forest is a “family network,” I think planting the Forest means knocking down so many walls and rebuilding the bonds with the most brilliant relatives we’ve ever imagined having. We knew once, we’re re-learning and we can wake up. Anyone is pregnant with ancestry. Anyone is pregnant with dreaming and time. ■



RESISTANCE

“

As long as there
is one woman
still standing,
no ecogenocide
will silence us

Teacher and activist Mônica Brito,
a leading voice of resistance
in the Middle Xingu,
fights for reparations for
those who lost their fields,
homes, and very history
to the Belo Monte dam

MÔNICA BRITO:
'OUR BODIES WILL
NOT BE SILENCED'



Catarina Barbosa

Guamá River, Belém, Amazon

Mônica Brito's hands still make the automatic gestures of someone who has painted countless protest signs in the early morning hours of the Trans-Amazonian Highway—they are always moving through the air, as if they are writing. This is an old habit, one she acquired when she was not yet 16 and decided her body would be a tool for struggle. She spent her adolescence participating in the Catholic Church's grassroots communities and discovering injustices that cut her to the quick—and that she would not accept in silence.

"I was a dreamer but also determined. My mother used to say a snake who moves around too much ends up taking a beating. And I would say: 'I'll take the beating, but I'm going to keep on moving.'" Mônica was starting down a path that led her to become a prominent voice of resistance in the Middle Xingu.

Born and raised in a region characterized by structural violence, Mônica saw her territory lacerated by the arrival of Belo Monte. The hydroelectric power plant project, heralded as progress, built resettlements that lacked water, schools, transportation, and security. "They relocated families there but didn't relocate any public assistance programs," she says. Even today, these people live suspended between trauma and growing insecurity.

Belo Monte forced farmers to abandon their fields, affected traditional riverside communities, and frayed the cultural ties that sustain life. Mônica saw neighbors fall ill, leaders abandon their lands, single mothers have to choose between paying for a ride on a motorcycle taxi or buying beans and eggs to feed her children. She saw the level of the Xingu drop—and the government turn a blind eye.

But there was something Mônica never saw in her own life: the act of giving up.

At the age of 16, she was already traveling neighborhoods on the poor outskirts to listen to women nobody else did. She would go into their homes, have a cup of coffee, ask what was hurting them. Transportation was way too expensive, so Mônica would walk kilometers in the hot sun or early morning mist. "I wasn't ashamed. I always said if I didn't move, nobody would move for us."

Motivated by this drive, she made education her trench and became a teacher, union member, and fierce defender of antiracist policies inside and outside of school. She failed the college entrance exam three times—enough for many people to give up—but for her, every failure fueled her determination. The fourth time, she passed. Then she also passed civil servant exams for both the state and the municipality. Forty years in the classroom, almost always in poor neighborhoods on the periphery.

"They thought they were punishing me by assigning me to the periphery. They didn't know that was exactly where I wanted to be," she says, laughing at the irony.

Wherever she went, Mônica would launch campaigns to combat hunger, distribute sanitary pads to girls and

women, mobilize young people to attend school, organize community kitchens (during the pandemic), and empower single mothers who had been rendered invisible by the State. She brought Black women living on the periphery into spaces where they had never before set foot. During COP30, many came to Belém for the first time in their lives, thanks to the work of the People's Forum of Middle Xingu Leaders for Climate and Environmental Justice, led by Mônica.

But Mônica's story cannot be compressed into a list of achievements. It is also a story made of loneliness, of nights carrying her young daughter in her arms as she faced the police, of men who walked away from her because "they thought she was too feminist," and of love renounced until later in the name of the struggle. Mônica, who raised two biological children and a third who had been abandoned, also learned that providing care is revolutionary—and painful.

Her entire life, she was told she was "crazy"—for wearing what she wanted to, for speaking without asking permission, for not conforming to the role expected of a Black woman from the periphery. But this criticism was like a talisman to her. "I am a political crazy," she says proudly. "Crazy because I know where I want to go."

Today, her daughter is an activist who, with documents from the movement in hand, walked into the Blue Zone—seen as the center of COP30—and delivered these accusations to the authorities who control the money and fate of the Amazon. Her youngest son, 22, calls her every day to ask if it was a "day of struggle." That's how he learned to measure time.

On Thursday, November 13, Mônica's voice echoed through the auditorium of the People's Tribunal against Ecogenocide, part of the People's COP—a space where communities denounced forced expulsions, environmental racism, mega-projects, and violence. She was heard as a witness in the first case, which dealt with the impact of the Belo Monte dam on the peoples of the region.

"We are here to say 'no' to all forms of aggression, genocide, and destruction of the Forest. Our bodies will not be silenced," the teacher said before the tribunal's judges.

Twenty-one cases were presented. Stories of expulsions, cultural disruptions, persecution, and territories destroyed by false climate solutions and big projects. Stories like hers.

For Mônica, reparations are not about promises; they are a demand. Social, economic, and territorial reparations. Reparations for farmers who lost their cropland, women who lost their homes, families who lost their very histories.

"I dreamed of three things in my life: becoming a teacher, earning a wage, owning my own home. I achieved them all. What remains now is to fight for what belongs to our people. As long as I can move, I will."

She smiles, adjusts the clothes she considers part of her politics, and says in conclusion: "They can try to erase our territories, but they won't erase our women. As long as there is one still standing, no ecogenocide will silence us." ■



The Belém of COP is not Ana's Belém

Despite the millions of dollars spent on a facelift for the city hosting the UN climate conference, the people of Belém most affected by the climate collapse have been excluded

Leandra Souza

Maguari River, Belém, Amazon

On an ordinary Monday in June, after a Sunday's rest at home, Ana Cristina Santos got out of bed to follow the same morning routine as nearly every day: she woke up between 5:00 a.m. and 5:30 a.m., showered, put on a knee-length skirt and pastel blouse, and headed into the kitchen to fix breakfast and lunch for her two children and partner. She doesn't usually eat anything herself. Eating would take up precious minutes of time that she would need later in the morning.

Ana works as a cleaning lady in Belém, capital of Pará state. She goes to a different house every day, some closer, some farther from where she lives. That Monday, she was going to one farther away, where the work was heavier—where they sometimes would ask her to clean the same place twice. And lunch time was always late. So that day, and only that day, Ana decided to change her routine. Instead of taking a shower, getting dressed, making food for her family, and going straight to the end of the bus line, she sat down to eat. And because she did, there were no empty seats when she got to the bus.

Long trip. Packed bus. Sweltering heat.

Ana's vision got blurry and her head and stomach started to spin. Someone gave her their seat, but she found she couldn't get up at her stop. She headed straight home on the same bus and looked for a pharmacy. "I had to stand that day because I couldn't get a seat at the end of the line. It was hot, and the bus was full. When it came time to get off, I couldn't; I went back.

I felt sick to my stomach," she says.

Ana Cristina is a 43-year-old white woman who completed nine years of schooling. She moved in with her partner at 15 and had her two children while still a teenager. Her eldest is blind. He lost his sight when he was still a baby. She has lived for 26 years in Sideral, a poor neighborhood on the border between the cities of Belém and Ananindeua, at the end of a dead-end street that runs into the Ariri River. The Ariri receives sewage from area residences, which, like eight in every ten homes in Belém, lack sanitation. Her street has no trees on it, making the heat even more unbearable. There aren't enough buses for the population and none of them are air-conditioned.

The neighborhood has seen almost no changes in 26 years, and its needs are not met by any effective public policies aimed at the population's well-being. It is located in a Belém that is very different from the city dressed up to host COP30. Government administrations have plowed millions of dollars into the Belém of COP, money Ana has watched being spent from the window of the hot bus she rides every day. The Belém of COP is not Ana's Belém.

The Belém of COP developed projects like Porto Futuro Urban Park, Nova Doca Linear Park, and Nova Tamandaré Linear Park, concentrated in central areas of the city that offer an array of leisure options. Together, the state and federal governments spent roughly 843



ANA SMILES FOR THE CAMERA WITH WEARY EYES AFTER A DAY OF WORK

million dollars on infrastructure works in preparation for the UN climate event, not to mention another 187 million dollars that the mining giant Vale paid to build the area that hosts the official negotiations, in Parque da Cidade, an amount the company used to offset part of the taxes it owed Pará for extracting ore—and destroying the Amazon.

For someone like Ana, who lives on the city's poor outskirts and has limited freedom of movement due to the lack of buses, these places are nearly inaccessible. Parque da Cidade, which will be available for public recreation after COP30, is more than six kilometers from her home. It is a place she is unlikely to ever visit.

Danila Cal, a professor at the Federal University of Pará, says this logic is grounded in a hierarchy that dictates “who has value and who does not” in society. “Why do certain projects, the majority of them, favor the city's upmarket areas? Because that's where the people at the top of this social hierarchy are,” she says. Cal did her doctoral dissertation on how traditional media outlets frame domestic work in Brazil. In 2020, in collaboration with professor Rosaly Brito, also at the Federal University of Pará, she published a book on communication, gender, and domestic work (*Comunicação, Gênero e Trabalho Doméstico*), which offers a compilation of scientific articles on the subject. She says the poorest and most marginalized people are “excluded or included” from public policies at random. “So when central areas

Leandra Souza/SUMAÚMA



Sol/SUMAUMA

RESIDENTS OF SIDERAL LINE UP TO BOARD THE BUS AT THE END OF THE LINE

are prioritized, it is above all an aesthetic priority—about making the city more beautiful, not about changing living conditions for the population, for those who need it.”

Since December 2023, when it was announced Belém would host COP30, the city has been one huge construction site. Sewage channels and avenues have been expanded and historic monuments restored, including São Brás Market, Belém Cathedral, Ver-o-Peso Market, Chapéu do Barata square, and the architectural complex Conjunto dos Mercedários. But city beautification efforts for the big event were only focused on wealthier and middle-class neighborhoods.

Not enough “Subzeros” to go around

That Monday’s series of unexpected events meant Ana missed work. She makes 28 dollars a day. With the money she failed to earn that day, Ana could have bought enough protein at a store near her home to feed her family for at least eight days. Two kilos of round steak, for 15.70 dollars, would last four days; four kilos of chicken thighs, for 3.37 dollars, would cover the next four.

Danila Cal believes the fact that Ana ended up feeling ill on the bus because she spent a few more minutes at home having breakfast is related to the “culture of servitude,” in which employers subject their employees to degrading work conditions, based on a colonialist mentality. “I think this kind of attitude is very petty and reinforces a relationship of power and exploitation, [such

as] prohibiting a domestic worker from eating or creating difficulties so they can’t eat. Unfortunately, this is very common in the workers’ reports.”

To further complicate Ana’s daily life, bus lines to Sideral are few, slow, and always crowded. “When it gets later, it seems to slow down. On Saturdays it’s the same, because there are no students, right? So you have to take your time, because if you try to get there at your usual time, it does no good, you won’t get a place,” she says. In 2025, Belém began offering free bus service on Sundays and holidays, something that could improve Ana’s life, since she works on holidays and only takes Sundays off, but that hasn’t been the case. “They came up with this idea of holidays free and Sundays free. They run very few [buses]. You wait two hours and not a one goes by. Two hours of your time,” she says. According to Ana, on Sundays and holidays, only two buses operate.

In April 2025, the Pará state courts issued a preliminary injunction ordering the City of Belém and the Municipal Department of Security, Public Order, and Mobility, or Segbel, to make urgent improvements to buses serving the city’s population. The decision was prompted by a lawsuit filed by prosecutor Mariela Hage, with the Pará State Public Prosecutor’s Office.

Among the main requests made in its lawsuit, the Public Prosecutor’s Office asked for more inspections of all bus fleets by the competent agencies, the removal of irregular vehicles from operation, the revocation of



All of this contributed to our having a set of narratives and specialized studies that showed Brazil and the world that there are unique impacts on women that need to be taken into account when we talk about the climate crisis

Thaynah Gutierrez
Researcher

service orders for companies that are not investing in improvements to public transportation, and withdrawal from circulation of vehicles unfit for traffic or more than 10 years old.

For Ana, simply adding more vehicles to the bus fleet serving her neighborhood would be enough to solve her problems getting around the city. She also said Sideral is not served by any of the air-conditioned buses purchased by the city and state governments in late 2023 and early 2024. Nicknamed Geladões, or Subzeros, these would alleviate the discomfort of crowded vehicles. At least these newer buses haven't been added to the lines she uses most often: Sideral-Pátio Belém and Sideral-Presidente Vargas.

SUMAÚMA made three phone calls and sent four emails to the Segbel municipal department inquiring about the number of mass transit buses circulating in the city, the estimated timeframe for allocating the remaining air-conditioned buses, and the number of these vehicles that will serve the neighborhood of Sideral.

In its reply, the department said its "responsibility is focused on overseeing public transport services, ensuring that authorized lines operate regularly and within established standards." The department also said assigning air-conditioned buses to each line is the responsibility of bus companies themselves, under the coordination of the Belém Passenger Transportation Company Association, or Setransbel. It also said Setrans-

bel is responsible for defining timeframes and assigning air-conditioned vehicles to specific lines. However, it did not provide any information on the number of buses currently operating in Belém.

SUMAÚMA contacted Setransbel, but the association had not responded at the time this article was published.

In times of crisis, women take the lead

Since 2003, Ana has spent her days on her feet doing the heavy tasks of a domestic worker. She goes to bed around 9 or 10 p.m. and averages seven hours of sleep per night.

One of her few sources of entertainment are her nightly soap operas. The rest is all work. She jokes that her middle name is "work." This is Ana's life. Not much different from so many other domestic workers who sell their labor power every day in Brazilian homes. In May, the labor ministry released an analysis of the evolution of domestic labor on Brazil's formal market from 2015 to 2024. The study found 1.3 million people employed by this market, with 89% of the jobs held by women.

Ana is part of a social class, made up mostly of women who usually are financially poor, have low levels of formal education, live in marginalized peripheries, are single mothers, and Black. These women are part of both the formal and informal labor markets, working outside, at markets, and in homes. They are the most impacted by all kinds of structural injustice, including climate injustice. The 2022 Census reported women were the heads of 49% of Brazilian households.

Ana is the main breadwinner in her household. Her husband gets sporadic landscaping work with his string trimmer and does not have a steady income. Their youngest son is also unable to contribute towards household expenses because, although he already works, he is still finishing college. As a result, most of the money he earns goes toward paying the tuition for his physical education degree. Only her eldest son has a steady income to supplement hers. As a person with a disability, he receives roughly 280 dollars a month from the Continuous Cash Benefit program. This helps Ana cover the household's regular expenses.

The details of Ana's life reflect the vulnerable social position she occupies in Brazilian society. The Paris Agreement, which marks its tenth anniversary at this COP in Belém, recognizes that improving conditions for people in situations similar to Ana's means implementing climate adaptation strategies that are compatible with social justice and climate justice.

Article 7 of the agreement says nations need to reduce social vulnerabilities in order to achieve sustainable development and ensure adaptation to global warming. The incident where Ana felt unwell on the bus, for example, is already a reflection of climate change, one which may very well become more frequent in the daily

lives of Belém's population. As she said, "The weather was hot, and the bus was full." That all occurred around 7 a.m., when the temperature in Belém was already hovering around 25, 26 degrees Celsius.

Researcher Thaynah Gutierrez points out that debates and research presented at UN conferences about the impacts of climate change on the lives of the most vulnerable people are a recent development. Gutierrez is a former member of a group of researchers at the Climate Observatory that discusses the impacts of climate change from a gender perspective. "All of this contributed to us having a set of narratives and specialized studies that showed Brazil and the world that there are unique impacts on women that need to be taken into account when we talk about the climate crisis," she said.

Gutierrez emphasized that one of the main factors that exacerbates women's vulnerability is their role as primary caregivers and sustainers of family and social life. According to Gutierrez, this role prevents them from saving emergency funds to deal with moments of crisis. "The lack of financial stability, of financial capacity to secure emergency resources, also applies disproportionately to women, because they have less income of their own to support themselves in the event of a disaster and get their lives back on track in that context," she says. Ana, for example, is registered with INSS, Brazil's national social security administration, but of the 22 years she has worked as a day laborer, she has paid into the system for just 12.

An even hotter future

Sideral, the neighborhood Ana lives in, came into being after Augusto Montenegro Highway was built in the mid 1970s. The new road opened the way for the construction of several housing complexes in the area to encourage people to move there. Over the years, the neighborhood expanded beyond the Jardim Sideral complex. Today, Sideral includes areas along the Ariri River, like the street where Ana lives, Passagem União.

A 2022 study by researchers at the Federal University of Pará (UFPA) reveals urban growth in the Belém metropolitan area has impacted the local climate. The research shows the urban expansion of most Brazilian metropolises occurred through an "improvised peripheralization of cities." This emerged from the formal or informal occupation of formerly rural lands concentrated near the capital, or through the establishment of housing complexes, as was the case of the Sideral neighborhood.

According to the study, the effects of local climate change are still largely understudied by science and are caused by urban expansion, especially in metropolitan areas of the Amazon. Implementation of government strategies to minimize the advances of the climate emergency is also progressing slowly. In April of this year, the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics released

data from the 2022 census showing the percentage of cities with trees in Brazil. In Belém, the so-called "City of Mango Trees," only 40.8% of residents live on a street with one or more trees, even though the city is located in the heart of the Amazon. Passagem União, for example, does not have a single tree on its sidewalks, which, incidentally, are not accessible to people with disabilities, such as Ana's son.

The UFPA study, which analyzed data from 1985 to 2020, shows changes in land use over this period have increased periods of drought and heavy rainfall. It has also altered temperatures. The state capital recorded a one-degree Celsius increase in maximum temperature during the time period analyzed: from 32°C to nearly 33°C. This difference may seem small, but with advancing deforestation and longer periods of drought, this rate of temperature increase could grow. In 2023, the NGO CarbonPlan and The Washington Post published a survey of temperature trends in Belém. The analysis by the two institutions shows Belém could become the city with the second-highest number of hot days in the world by 2050, potentially reaching an average of 222 days of intense heat with maximum temperatures of 32°C or higher.

The results of the UFPA study show that controlling urban expansion could help curb the impacts of climate change in each municipality in the metropolitan region, as part of social and political climate adaptation strategies. However, in September of this year, MapBiomas showed, using satellite image analysis, that the Amazon has lost more than 50 million hectares of forest in the last 40 years within Brazilian territory alone. In Belém, deforestation is evident in the construction of two highways: Rua da Marinha and Avenida Liberdade. Promising to improve traffic in the city, the highways are devastating the local fauna and flora. These projects affect traditional communities and their territories, destroy vegetation, and displace unique animal species from their habitats.

This situation has direct consequences for the most vulnerable populations in the Amazon. A recent study published by the scientific journal *Nature Climate Change* indicates that deforestation of tropical forests, which has intensified in recent years, may be associated with approximately 28,000 heat-related deaths annually.

Most of the interviews with Ana for this article were conducted on the Sideral-Presidente Vargas bus. Fridays are one of the days she commutes to the city center. And one of her most exhausting days. Ana's bus line runs through the Sideral neighborhood to Augusto Montenegro Highway. Next, the route takes Avenida Centenário, turns onto Desembargador Paulo Frota Highway, and then follows Avenida Júlio César. Avenida Júlio César will see heavy traffic during COP, as it is the main route to the airport, Parque da Cidade—where the negotiations area is located—and the COP Village. This will proba-



THE ARIRI RIVER RUNS ALONG THE END OF THE STREET WHERE ANA LIVES

bly impact Ana's commute to work, since she will not be taking any days off during this period. "I imagine it will be a hassle in terms of the bus, but I also think my employers will understand; they'll go through this too. I think we'll figure things out," she said.

Although in her daily life she has been sensing the impending arrival of the mega climate event for two years, Ana only just learned about it on television. There has been no major effort by the government to communicate the importance of the negotiations in November. "I heard about it on TV today. That they're going to try to improve things with the water by 2033. That's also going to be talked about now at COP. Because, like it or not, clean water impacts the planet. There are other issues for people's health, stuff like that... I think [COP] is meant to make things better, right?"

Ana, however, said she personally believes the city still needs to make some improvements in order to host the event. She mentioned a basic measure that various administrations at Belém City Hall have been trying to resolve for years, without success: garbage collection.

"You know what I think? If the garbage collectors can't handle [garbage produced by] the the people from here in Belém... Imagine how much trash there will be with all those other people here too. It's kind of complicated. You can beautify all of Belém, right? Everywhere you look you construction. But then if you don't take care of the trash..."

Although she understands very little about the topics covered in the Paris Agreement, Ana knows what she needs for her own well-being and that of the city she lives in. However, when mega-events are held or public works are undertaken in Brazil, authorities show little concern for listening to society. In the COP announcement video, Governor Helder Barbalho stated: "The state of Pará and Belém will be eager to welcome everyone. We will show that the Amazon is ready to welcome the planet." However, Belém missed the opportunity to receive its own residents better. After COP, Ana will continue riding the same sweltering bus, looking out at a city that only made itself more beautiful because it knew the world would soon be watching. ■

The meeting of world leaders: why do we care about COP30?

An urgent message direct to those who care about our future! What's this whole COP business?

Lavynnia Firmino Lima da Silva, Arthur Ribeiro de Sousa, and Juan Carlos Sena Martins

Maracanã River, Rio de Janeiro, Atlantic Forest

Belém welcomes people from many countries to discuss how to care for the Earth, and the Amazon is the heart of the conversation. The city is filled with voices and flags. People from all corners of the world walk the streets, looking up at the cloud-heavy sky and the seemingly endless greenery. It is here, in the middle of the Amazon, that COP30, a huge meeting about the planet's climate, is taking place. And this time, the world has come here to speak right inside our home.

COP is the most important meeting in the world to do with our future. It's like a big meeting of our whole community, but with the presidents and leaders of almost every country in the world.

Each COP is a new attempt to find ways to reduce pollution, preserve forests, and ensure that everyone has a real future. It's like a giant discussion circle, but with almost 200 countries sitting in the circle. And in the end, everyone has to agree.

They get together to talk about our planet, which is getting very sick (global heating). They promise to stop polluting, get rid of smoke, and take good care of Nature. This promise has been around since before we were even born, way back in 1992!

OUR TAKE If they made this promise so many years ago, why does the planet just keep getting worse? They're fooling with us! We have to keep our eyes on these big shots to see if they're actually going to do something!

What's happening in Belém?

For two weeks, scientists, leaders, artists, young people, and forest peoples are getting together to think about how to reduce pollution, protect the forests, and make sure everybody has a good future.



How does this meeting of leaders work?

The meeting lasts for two weeks, and there are two ways of getting in:

1 Only people with fancy UN badges (diplomats and ministers) can get in. This is where they argue and make deals, without us being able to watch them.



WHAT WE THINK Why are decisions about the air we breathe being made behind closed doors? Our future can't be secret!

2 Green Zone (outdoor park area): Anybody can get in here—scientists, activists, and us too. It's where you can share ideas and protest real loud so the big shots in the Blue Zone can hear us.

Belém has a mixture of accents and hopes today. But above all, what's happening here reminds us the planet needs care and unity.

Why is the Amazon so important?

The Amazon is the green heart of the planet. It helps make rain and cool the air, and it shelters thousands of plants and animals. There are people living there who have taken care of the Forest for a long time: Indigenous peoples, Ribeirinhos, Quilombolas, and so many other communities.

Hosting COP30 here is a way of saying to the world: the Forest isn't just ours, she belongs to everyone—and we are a part of her.

Are they actually sorting out this mess or just pretending to?

Truth is, the mess is getting worse.

THE WORST PART The planet is now hotter, and we have polluted more in the last ten years than ever before! This proves they talked a big talk but didn't do what they promised.

THE EXCITING PART At least after these meetings they started having some good ideas: cars that don't produce smoke (electric), energy from the sun and wind, and, most important, the promise to stop cutting down the Forest.

OUT IDEIA The rich countries, who have more money, should have to take the first step. They polluted more; they pay the bill. Full stop.

Why don't they just sign the agreement already and be done with it?

It's like a fight over who made the biggest mess and who has to clean it up.

THE RICH COUNTRIES SAY "We polluted first, but you're polluting a lot now!"

THE POORER COUNTRIES REPLY "You guys got rich by polluting everything! Now, pay our bill and give us the money and technology so we can grow without making the same mess you did!"

THE RULE SHOULD BE If a rich country promised to help and it doesn't, it's betraying the rest of the planet. Rich countries have to be responsible and collaborative.

Why even keep having these meetings?

We need COP because it's the only place where they all get together.

If our neighbor (a country) decides to play loud music (pollution) all night, it will bother everyone's sleep (the climate). COP lets us say, "Hey, neighbor! We've got our eyes on you! Turn down the volume!"

THE FUTURE IS OURS TOO Us kids can't vote, but we can make noise! We need to know what they're deciding at COP30, because whatever they do in there, we're going to feel it out here.

What is Brazil showing the world?

Brazil has a lot to show and a lot to prove. The world's largest tropical forest is here, and the whole world wants to see if our country is really going to end deforestation, protect the rivers, and respect those who live in the Forest. Belém turned itself into a symbol of hope, a reminder that it's possible to grow and care for the world at the same time. ■

Elisiane Vieira



Lavynnia, Arthur, and Juan are the authors of this first story from the Junior Jaguars movement, a space where we will make the content we produce accessible to a children's audience—written for children, by children.

Concept and editing Ilana Katz (psychoanalyst and Mycelium-SUMAÚMA care coordinator). **Implementation** Elisiane Vieira (teacher with the Gol de Letra Foundation).



INNERVIEW :: GILBERTO GIL



GILBERTO GIL REFLECTS
ON TIME IN THIS SPIRAL
CONVERSATION

“

We need to move beyond binary thinking. We need to be ternary, quaternary

In an exclusive interview to SUMAÚMA during COP30, the composer and singer who has woven together so much of the best of the many Brazils reflects on humans, time, acceleration, and the collapse

Eliane Brum

Guamá River, Belém, Amazon

Gilberto Gil called this interview “shooting the breeze.” We agreed these kinds of conversations are the best. At 83, the artist who needs no introduction—and so won’t be introduced here—is, like the Forest, a creator of atmospheres. It is quite clear to anyone who listens to him that he lives in another dimension. Materially speaking, we are breathing in the same world; those who see us sitting face to face have no doubt. But Gil inhabits a different world, and I’m just visiting.

Talking is connection. So is music. And this connection is only possible if you let the atmosphere created by Gil engulf you like a river. And you have to dive in hoping to drown. On his “King Time” tour, during every two-hour-plus show, Gil managed to engulf an entire stadium. We stumbled out not quite knowing what had happened but certain it had.

Now here he is, present at the first COP held in the Amazon. As he has been present during the most challenging moments of all the Brazils. If you’re expecting an “objective” interview, better stop here. This one is spiral, spinning upward in òkòtó, opening to the infinite. Every curve, as Gil says, “curves to a new curve.” And his often entwine with an “etc.”—etcetera that there is always more...to say, to think, to imagine, to surprise, to grasp, to learn. He also interweaves open-ended ellipses and “anyways.” And laughter. Gil laughs without scrimping on the joy of open-endless wonderment at so many enigmas.

Curving to yet another turn with no return, there is no point prolonging an introduction that is already long, running off the screen. Let’s listen to this conversation spun in the breezes of a spiral time.



ELIANE BRUM How are you?

GILBERTO GIL Normal.

Is normal good?

Every stage in life establishes its own version of normality and abnormality, and the two end up in dialogue with each other while you go along your path. I’m 83 years old; 83 is an age that has a real weight to it.



BETWEEN ONE EVENT AND ANOTHER, GIL TALKED FOR 40 MINUTES AT HOTEL TIVOLI, WHERE HE WAS STAYING

I wanted to ask you about that. You have a real history; you have a piece of Brazilian history in your body. When you look back, what do you see??

Like everyone who, in some way or another, thinks about [Brazil] as one of their concerns—because while not everyone thinks about it, many people are almost obliged to care about what Brazil is, what Brazil is like, how Brazil is doing, how I am in Brazil, what Brazil is to me, what I am to Brazil, the whole history of the nation—although this is a subject many people think about, not everybody does. Many people live in the throes of everyday life, in the fight for survival. Others are on a permanent quest—as permanent as it can be—for tranquility, comfort, calm, and don't care much about other things.

Anyway, you're talking to someone and interviewing someone—you're asking this question assuming it matters to me. That's a correct assumption. I care about Brazil and all the rest.

Although, since I'm part of that other group I mentioned, I'm also becoming increasingly detached from matters related to things outside of myself. Because time, the passing of time, etc., forces me to think about myself a little or think beyond myself, which is even further beyond Brazil.

What is this “beyond yourself” like?

It's the beyond, it's the beyond me, it's the afterwards. It's the inevitability of extinction, of death—to use a word that says it clearly.

It's the after-everything-here. It means thinking about the fact that more than 84 years ago, there was no me. And in another 84 years, there will be no more me. And this, here, is a gap. This, here, is a passageway. And even though many people might see this as the most important matter in their life, it needs to be relativized. Because there is an after-this-life that might

be a sort of still-living or a not-living anymore. Anyway, I'm one of those people who contemplate these things. Especially when it comes to Brazil, nations, peoples, the collectivity, etc. This idea that, on an individual level, everything will come to be... Everyone will be propelled toward an afterwards.

But, returning to the question of whether I am, as you put it, someone interested in reflecting on Brazil, I think—and again this is a bit of my personality—[Brazil] is worse and it is better. I think it used to be much better in many respects, but it also used to be much worse.

Because not just Brazil, but the whole world has been in upheaval recently. Many things we considered settled and defined, such as nation-states, of which Brazil is one, etc., have headed in the direction of distortion, erosion, and decomposition. Brazil too.

There is something about the contemporary era that is very detrimental to the permanency of the historical perspective that brought us this far rather benignly. We see a lot of flirting with evil in today's world. This has been the case throughout history, but now it's... Maybe it's because the planet has become so filled with people, with almost 8 billion people in the world. And contact between these people has become more direct, more immediate. There is more conflict, more friction, between people because there are so many of them. Perhaps this has contributed greatly to the deterioration of the planet and of Brazil, as a consequence.

At the same time, I think it's beautiful to think how we live in a land, in a place, with a collectivity of peoples who are themselves, who have their own traits, their own way of doing things—traits and ways that can be good for the planet, can be good for the harmony of peoples and nations. Brazil has things to teach other peoples, such as how to coexist with each other.

This is the case, for example, of our gathering here to host a global discussion on the topic. Many people around the world believe a COP like this one in Brazil could make a difference, because Brazil is different.

We've been talking about death, right, Gil? In the Forest, death is contained in life, there's always a devouring, an interdependence, but also contagion, right?

Yes. I started by talking about people who are not very interested in the issue of the country's institutionality because they're just living their daily lives. Peoples of the Forest, if you consider their way of life, have always lived like this, haven't they? In constant contact with Nature, being part of it, belonging to it, along with the trees, animals, land, skies, rain—in short, with Nature in the broadest sense.

And that's the thing. Peoples of the Forest are traditionally like that. It's beautiful to see how—when they have to be concerned about something—they're concerned about their fight to remain as they are, remain as they have been.

It's about not changing...

It's about not changing. For someone like me, it's about changing. Because I'm not a forest person. I'm from the concrete jungle. That's where I've lived. Basically, the concrete jungle, the asphalt jungle, the jungle of transmission towers, right? I'm someone from that other jungle, for whom change is imperative. So, it's complicated for someone like me to position myself as an individual in the middle of all this.

Because I also have to defend my individuality. As a member of this other human species, right? Which is similar to the species of Indigenous peoples but is different. It's other... We've been mutants for a long time. We've been working on this mutation.

We were even fish once.

That's right.

Gil, we've been talking about the sequence of death. But there's a difference now, which is the real possibility of extinction.

This is one of the issues that most keenly affects the species I belong to. That is, this mutant species—modern-day mutants—living in this concrete jungle. Because we tend to be increasingly concerned with containment, more so than the forest peoples, who have fought to keep things as they are. Anyway... These days, we're more concerned with being a little more like the forest peoples. But we're also afraid of mutation. We are mutants, but we are increasingly aware of the threats that this acceleration of acceleration, this permanent vortex in search of change, brings us—the agony this causes us. I mean... This panic we're experiencing today, this fear of extinction, which threatens us. So, this whole field—that works with knowledge, with new knowledge, with new forms of information, with new forms of science, etc.—is increasingly concerned with the issue of containment. How can we contain this death drive, this Thanatos, in a planetary sense?

Because we can accept individual death, but we cannot accept the death of the planet—extinction. Because individual death is part of the promise of what's to come, the promise of what comes after me, after us. We believe in and fight for succession, for the possibility of succeeding. And succession is one of the things we want for the planet.

So, you see how complex it is, right? We are simultaneously estranged from this traditional way of conceiving the world [that of Indigenous peoples], but at the same time we have an ever greater need to understand these traditional ways. [We have] this zeal, this almost silent attachment to living out the promises of the planet, to living out the promises of history, what history has done for us so far, and how we conserve conservationism—this idea of preserving ourselves, of preserving ourselves in order to conserve ourselves. So, this is highly complex for people

like us, especially those of us who come from the city.

For example, you left the city at a certain point to join...

I'm reforesting myself. You talked about our being mutants, but it seems people don't want to mutate. They seem to be paralyzed.

That's what I was saying. Suddenly, we're pursuing containment. We need to contain ourselves and contain the planet's current eagerness to transform all the time—transform, change, and accelerate transformation more and more, mutating. I used the word to mean all this.

There is a concern today that wasn't there before. In this Western, modern, etc. world—industrial, technological, and so on—we suddenly want to pay attention to older technologies, from the past, which guaranteed life until now, because we feel life is threatened.

I keep thinking about this thing called time. I think one of the things that differs most in these humans who have taken dissimilar paths is their experience of time. We've adopted linear time, while Indigenous people have spiral time, like this [gesturing]. How do you deal with time, Gil? I remember Antônio Cândido, when he said time isn't money, time is the fabric of our lives. We keep going faster and faster, right? Even here at COP, we go to one event, then to another...

And we go faster on the treadmill of capitalism, of utilitarian materialism, of money, and so on. Children from the upper middle classes, from the elites, are raised to reproduce this model, right? Devouring, swallowing everything up, turning everything into gold. Turning everything into exchange currency, into capital. And now we're starting to realize this.

We, who are one of these children, who were raised by these upper middle classes and these elites—in a way we're the children of these children who are now starting to realize we have to go back a little to the spiral, right? To a more fluid time, more informed by itself, by its own dimensionality, without deferring too much to numbers, without deferring too much to calculations, without the efficiency of calculating, etc.

Anyway, it's all so complex, right? I belong to a world that invests in the vortex, in vertigo, but at the same time, I'm also one of those who is starting to pay attention to Taoist time, to the flowing time of things that flow naturally, without our overstimulating our way of moving forward, our way of continuing, without investing so much in speed. I'm a little bit of one, a little bit of the other.

Between worlds, between times.

Gil, if you could define one result of this COP, of the fight for this COP, what would you like to see come out of the conference?

What I would like to see is an ability to reflect at this level of complexity. An ability to understand things that

have multiple tips, multiple stems, multiple paths to movement and anti-movement, etc.

If you pay attention to the general language at COP, the average way participants voice things, you'll sense a bit of this concern—people concerned with working as fast as possible to slow down speed, working fast against being fast.

How can we do this?

That's the mystery. That's the challenge. How do you reconcile movement and anti-movement at the same time? Being new, brand new, modern, mutant, and being old, out-of-date, primal.

How do you reconcile this? I think COP in Brazil, because of when it is taking place, because of the moment when it came into the world—it encompasses all of these concerns more than previous COPs. That's because we have reached very extreme situations. If you take the image of the abyss, we've gotten closer to it.

Closer every day.

Closer every day. So this COP, more than previous ones, expresses this urgent need to counter urgency. This rush to counter rushing. Silence countering noise.

We're always talking about colonialism, racism, patriarchy, everything that's interlinked at the moment of collapse we're now living through. I've grown to understand from the Forest that binarism plays a very big role in this. We come from a world ruled by Cartesian logic, where things are either this or that. And in the Forest, everything is this and that—at the same time. How do you see this binary thinking?

It presents a threat. It forces us into confinement, into what is popularly called polarization today. Everything has to be polarized, everything has to be measured by weighing the forces on one side against the other. And we know we can't do that. We need to be ternary, quaternary. We need to move beyond binary thinking.

We have to move beyond this thing of numbers that math has given us. We need the ability to go through all the numbers—in the sense of exhausting the conflict between them as much as possible. The conflict between the fact that 2 is more than 1, that 3 is more than 2. Conflicts over quantity, conflicts over what is quantitative. You can tell I'm not binary... And I think the world is realizing it shouldn't be, it can't be, it can't continue to be binary.

We also have to consider the middle as a possibility between the extremes, just as possible as the extremes. What lies in the middle of everything is the possibility of one extreme or the other. Therefore, it doesn't do much good for us to want to lean more and more toward one extreme or the other. We have to walk in solidarity with the idea of the spiral that you raised. It's not a point on the curve, because there isn't just one single, permanent



curve. It curves to a new curve. It curves to the fact it's a curve and thus moves forward. It leaves the binary behind. This is complex. But that's how my heart feels. And I'm happy to see that more and more people feel as I do. I'm not defending my own particularism, on the contrary. It's a taste, a pleasure, found in what is multiple. A number isn't 1, or 2, or 3. It's the multiple of all numbers. That's how I am, that's how I grew up, that's how I was born, that's how I grew up... I'm Gabriela... [singing "Modinha para Gabriela"]

Gil, do you think this moment we're living in now is also a moment of crisis of the imagination?

Not the imagination. On the contrary. I think we're paying tribute, paying fair tribute, to the need to imagine. Imagination in the broad, loose sense of the word. Imagining in the sense of welcoming the idea of a multiplicity of images. In the sense that we need to believe in what we imagine. I think we're turning to this model more and more—if we can call it a new model. We're turning a little more to this plural, broad, symphonic model. Beyond melodic or harmonic or rhythmic compartmentalization, symphonic in that sense. Everything flowing,

everything in constant flux.

I don't know how to think outside of that. In this sense, I think imagination has to free itself, of course. It can't be left in the hands of entrepreneurialism. It can't be left, it can't be subordinated, to entrepreneurs, to their tastes. On the contrary, entrepreneurs have to let themselves be swept up by imagination and believe in their ability to venture inside themselves to find their own imagination.

What has this led to? It has led to important things, like science, which is grounded in our not knowing, the eternal not-knowing. It is this constant not-knowing that leads to knowing more. We are ignorant, which is something interesting. So I think imagination is alive.

Thank you very much, Gil.

Thank you.

What a delightful conversation.

Just shooting the breeze, right?

It's the best.

Agreed. Nothing beats it. ■



The voice of the oceans: the lives of the climate emergency's victims in the South Pacific

A fisher from the Philippines who was the victim of a super typhoon, a government minister from Tuvalu, a country being devoured by the sea, and a leader from the islands of Fiji who lost her home to the water tell their stories to SUMAÚMA

Rafael Moro Martins

Guamá River, Belém, Amazon

"My name is Trixy. I'm a fisher from Batasan Island, in the Philippines, I have two kids and I'm a survivor of a super typhoon." This is how Trixy Sumabal, 34, introduces herself when I ask her name and what she does. Trixy is a victim of the climate emergency, which almost killed her, destroyed much of what she had managed to build, and threatens her traditional way of life in the southern Pacific Ocean. That is why she is in Belém.

Once Odette had passed, nothing remained of the family's home. Even the boat they used for fishing had been consumed by the super typhoon. "All we had left was the clothes we were wearing," Trixy says. Nevertheless, they were lucky to have survived. The category 5 storm, the most devastating possible, according to the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, killed 111 people in the province of Bohol alone and caused damages assessed at around 1 billion dollars – making Odette the second costliest super typhoon in Filipino history. That wasn't all: it buried the island in plastic rubbish, swept in by the waves.

Trixy and her family never fully recovered from the super typhoon. The boat they lost had a motor; now, they fish from a rowboat. They rebuilt their house by taking out a loan they have yet to pay off – the only help the Filipino government provided was two kilos of rice, some tinned foods and, a year and a half later, an indemnity payment of 10,000 pesos, equal to about 170 dollars at the current exchange rate.

"We fishers work so much, we go out to fish even when it's blistering hot or the weather is bad, because we want to build something, and suddenly everything is gone," she says, her voice overcome with emotion. "What we lost wasn't material goods. It was our right to live in peace in the islands, the dignity we had. The poor are getting even poorer because of the super typhoons. We have no choice but to try to survive, to survive without dignity. We Filipinos are fighting to survive the climate crisis," Trixy says.

In Belém, where she is taking part in COP30 at the invitation of social and environmental organization Greenpeace, she carries the anguish of not knowing whether her family is safe from the new super typhoons that continue to hit Batasan. "Before I came, there were two in one week. We spent three days at an evacuation center. When I arrived in São Paulo, my husband said they had to go back to the shelter," Trixy says.

"I'm on the other side of the world, with a time difference of 11 hours. I wake up at three in the morning to talk to them – they're still at the evacuation center – without knowing what will happen to my home, the reconstruction of which we're still paying for," she vents. "I had to leave most of the money from the stipends I received to be here with my family, since my husband was unable to fish for several days, and we need the day's fish to keep going. If we have a good day of fishing, we eat well. Otherwise, we don't eat. And with global



BATASAN ISLAND, IN BOHOL PROVINCE, IS SINKING. IT IS BEING AFFECTED BY RISING SEA LEVELS



Rafael Moro Martins/SUMAÚMA

FISHER TRIXY SUMABAL, 34, IS A VICTIM OF THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND IS BRINGING HER STORY TO COP30

heating, it's getting harder to find good fishing."

Some of Batasan's corals, where the fish lay their eggs, are dying because the water is hotter. That's not all: the rising sea level, the result of the planet's polar ice caps melting and of the thermal expansion of water due to the higher temperature, is threatening to swallow the island. For all of these reasons, Trixy and her community have decided to sue British oil giant Shell for its role in creating the climate crisis. The case is being prepared and should reach the UK's courts by the end of the year. It is the first time a civil action has directly connected oil and gas companies to deaths and bodily injuries as a result of climate impacts in the Global South. "We need to attack the root of the problem," Trixy explains. "We want them to pay for the damage, and not just to my village." This time it's Shell, but she warns: other large oil companies will also be summoned to provide accountability for the climate crisis.

Life in a country that is slipping into the sea

"According to Indigenous knowledge, the land and the ocean define who we are. Those who came before us are resting in our land. Because of this connection, we can't simply leave," Maina Vakafua Talia says. He is a political leader and environmentalist who has served as Tuvalu's minister of home affairs, climate change and environment since early 2024.

The tiny country's territory consists of a group of small coral islands and atolls that cover just 26 square kilometers and are home to 10,000 people – most of whom are Indigenous, like Talia. Tuvalu is literally vanishing from the map because of the climate crisis. The combination of rising oceans and the islands' geography – the highest point is less than 5 meters above sea level – leaves the population of Tuvalu literally without any place to escape to within their own territory.

"Of course it's scary to live in a country whose days are numbered, where the the media says they're going to disappear," Talia tells me during an interview in the Blue Zone corridors at COP30, in Belém. The people of Tuvalu have always lived with king tides, which are brought about by rare alignments between the Earth and Moon and flood the islands once or twice a year. "But now, each full moon brings a king tide," the minister says.

In 2017, the local government started a project to adapt the islands to the invading ocean and to the increasingly frequent storms devastating the region. At an estimated cost of almost 40 million dollars, the project was financed by the Green Climate Fund, one of the main finance mechanisms in the Paris Agreement, which helps developing countries with money from contributions. It includes plans to build dikes to contain coastal erosion and to raise platforms on the islands so the country's citizens can take shelter from flooding caused by tropical cyclones and king tides.

Talia hopes the project will give Tuvalu the conditions to hold out for another hundred years. "It's very costly, but it's the only way to prolong [our permanence] and protect our means of subsistence on the island," he says. Yet many things are unlikely to return to how they were before the effects of the climate emergency hit – such as the traditional diet of Tuvalu.

"A traditional meal in Tuvalu needs to have fish and pulaka on the table." The fields of pulaka, a root vegetable reminiscent of cassava, are a central part of Tuvalu-an identity and are maintained as a heritage for future generations. Many, however, are not surviving the rising sea: the salt in the water kills the pulaka, which needs to be planted in deep pits so it can reach fresh water underground. "Many families no longer have pulaka," the minister laments. Others try to adapt, growing the plant in a sort of suspended garden.

In addition to the dark shadow over the present and future, the climate crisis destroys the past and memories. The rising sea swept away beaches and fields where Talia remembers playing as a child. It also swallowed the cemeteries where the ancestors of the Tuvaluans were buried. "It isn't just bothersome for those living on land, but for those who have been laid to rest in it as well."

Lavenia Naivalu knows about this. Two years ago, the sea invaded the small cemetery in the town where she lives on Nacula Island, in Fiji, another island nation in the South Pacific. The bones of her great-grandparents



Rafael Moro Martins/SUMAUMA

MAINA VAKAFUA TALIA (RIGHT) IS TRYING TO ALERT THE WORLD

were ripped from the earth and spread across the sand. Lavenia had to carry them to a high point on a hill so she could bury them again.

"I get emotional. They're [the remains of] people who hold a very special place in our hearts," she explains between tears. "In the Pacific, we believe in what we call mana, in the riches and blessing our ancestors left for us, for the future generations. Perhaps we've lost this now that their bones were taken by the water like this."

Although it was the most traumatic event, it was not the first time the climate emergency had devastating effects on Lavenia's life. To the contrary, she has been dealing with these impacts nearly her entire life. The sea reached the home where her family lived for five generations, for instance, forcing them to relocate. They weren't the only ones in town. "Two rows of houses on the beach have already been moved to the middle of the island [because of the rising sea level]. We've already lost 8 to 10 meters of our coastline," she says.

Located in the province of Ba, Nacula is home to around 600 people. Formed by volcanic eruptions, it has beautiful beaches and a couple of hills that are just



Lela Beirão/SUMAÚMA

LAVENIA NAIVALU HAD TO COLLECT HER DECEASED FAMILY MEMBERS' BONES AFTER HER TOWN'S CEMETERY FLOODED.

over 200 meters above sea level. It is a paradise – and yet another place that could become uninhabitable for human beings because of the climate emergency.

“Life isn’t the same anymore in the villages. We have longer and longer droughts because of global heating, which affect our sources of drinking water. The corals are bleaching. In the old days, my grandparents would find fish along the coast to make into an adequate meal for the family. Today, my children have to walk kilometers to be able to go harpoon fishing. Our soils have changed, they’re drier, which affects our crops,” Lavenia says.

Yet Lavenia is haunted by the fear of having to leave the town where she and her ancestors were born and where she is an elected representative – the only woman among Fiji’s 195 traditional districts. “I can’t accept the fact that I’ll be relocated because of the rising sea level,” she says. “This is the biggest reason why I participate in this type of conference,” she adds – she traveled 15,000 kilometers to Belém to take part in COP30 as an observer, sent by the government of Fiji. “I wanted to come and tell [my story], to challenge the leaders of countries with high emissions [of greenhouse gasses, the cause of global heating].”

It so happens that some of them aren’t even there. The biggest historical emitter of greenhouse gasses, the United States, didn’t even send any high level representatives to COP30. The country’s climate change and science denying president, Donald Trump, withdrew it from the Paris Agreement. “I was at the United Nations General Assembly where he called climate change a rumor,” Tuvaluan minister Maina Talia recalls.

The bloc joining the 30 island nations at the climate negotiations, the Alliance of Small Island States, has demanded greater commitments from developed countries to lower their emissions at COP30. They depend on the planet’s wealthy nations to have any chance. That is why Talia is happy that denialists like Trump are absent from Belém. “It’s a good sign, for us to be able to negotiate in good faith. If he were here, he’d just get in the way.” At the same time, they are holding the European Union to account, which has been falling short of its expected task of leading the world against the climate emergency. “They need to do more, so those living in Tuvalu and in other places can survive. Why do we have to suffer for something that isn’t our fault?” ■



BETWEEN-WORLDS :: ANTÓNIO GUTERRES

Exclusive

UN Secretary-General: Indigenous voices 'indispensable' to avoid climate catastrophe

In his only scheduled media interview before COP30 and the first ever exclusive with an indigenous forest journalist, António Guterres tells SUMAÚMA that humanity must change course or face 'devastating consequences'

Wajã Xipai and Jonathan Watts
Xingu River, Altamira, Amazon



ANTÓNIO GUTERRES (AT LEFT) WHILE GIVING AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW TO SUMAÚMA AND THE GUARDIAN: 'WE NEED TO END THE WAR AGAINST NATURE'

Global leaders need schooling from indigenous communities on the importance of a harmonious relationship with nature, the United Nations Secretary-General has told SUMAÚMA in a world exclusive ahead of COP30.

António Guterres said the voices of first peoples are vitally important if the world is to avoid climate catastrophes, including a tipping point in the Amazon rainforest.

The UN said this was the first time the secretary-general has given an exclusive interview to an indigenous journalist – Wajã Xipai, a SUMAÚMA forest journalist of the Xipai people.

Guterres said: “Political leaders at the global level must assume the defense of the rights of indigenous communities as an essential priority in their internal and external policies. It is absolutely indispensable that a world-wide awareness is gained that indigenous communities are our defenders of nature, they are our defenders of the planet.”

Speaking by video link from the UN headquarters in New York to SUMAÚMA and Guardian journalists in Altamira, in the Xingu river basin of Pará, he said COP30 needed to mark a change of direction by humanity. If not, he warned global warming will bring “devastating consequences” to the world, including tipping points in the Amazon rainforest, the Greenland ice sheets and coral reef systems.

“Let’s recognize our failure,” he said. “The truth is that we have failed to avoid an overshooting above 1.5 degrees in the next few years...We must do everything possible to make that overshoot as short as possible and as low in intensity as possible to avoid tipping points like the Amazon. We don’t want to see the Amazon as a savanna. But that’s a real risk if we don’t change course and if we don’t make a dramatic decrease of emissions as soon as possible.”

In the latter regard, the UN Secretary-General said he would talk to president Lula about oil exploration, after being asked about the Brazilian government’s plans to drill for fossil fuels in the Foz da Amazonas.

The Brazilian hosts of COP30, the first climate summit to take place in the Amazon rainforest, have promised to raise the profile of indigenous delegates, but a leaked draft agenda suggests there is only a “possibility” of one such intervention of up to three minutes at the two-day leaders meeting in Belém in November.

Guterres was asked if COP30 could help to “Amazonise” global thinking about humanity’s relationship with nature along local indigenous lines, which see rivers, forests and animals as relatives rather than resources. The secretary-general replied: “We need to end the war against nature. ...Political leaders are often more concerned with the day-to-day problems of society, especially at times when the economic situation is complex and aggravated by climate change, by disasters, by catastrophes. So sometimes there is no notion of the importance of a harmonious relationship with nature and therefore it is necessary to permanently maintain a pedagogy with the political leaders and there is no one better than the indigenous communities to do this pedagogy and I hope you have the opportunity [to do that] at COP”.

A transcript of the interview, translated and edited for clarity and length, follows below.



JONATHAN WATTS Secretary-General, On behalf of Sumaúma and the Guardian, thank you for taking the time for this interview. I am here with my colleague Wajã Xipai, and we are talking to you from Altamira, in the Amazonian state of Pará.

WAJÃ XIPAI Hello, first of all, I want to thank you for the interview. I am Wajã Xipai, a forest journalist with Sumaúma. I am an indigenous from the Xipai people, born and raised in Yupá village. My territory has been impacted by climate change, which affects the rivers, the fish and all of nature.

We are also threatened by people who are trying to destroy the forest. Today, the indigenous peoples of the Amazon are paying the price for global greed, but soon the world will come to our home for the first COP in the Amazon rainforest. How can you persuade leaders at the Belém summit to address the imbalance in which communities that protect the rainforest suffer violence and death, while distant countries continue to benefit from the destruction of our territories?

ANTÓNIO GUTERRES I think this is a central issue. Indigenous communities have a huge capacity to preserve nature, preserve biodiversity, and they contribute nothing to climate change. However, the truth is that the search for profit sometimes legally, sometimes criminally, has led to successive forms of aggression against indigenous communities to try to exploit the Amazon with illegal mining explorations, for example gold, or in relation to logging.

It is absolutely indispensable that a world-wide awareness is gained that indigenous communities are our defenders of nature, they are our defenders of the planet. The areas they control are the areas where Nature is most protected, where biodiversity is guaranteed and where carbon dioxide is still drawn down from the atmosphere.

Political leaders at the global level must assume the defense of the rights of indigenous communities as an essential priority in their internal and external policies.

WX I heard that indigenous representatives will have the opportunity to speak at the leaders' summit in Belém. In your opinion, what is the importance of ensuring that the indigenous voice is heard and is equal in these negotiations?

GUTERRES It is absolutely essential, and it is good that President Lula understood, that this COP, which must be the COP of truth, must hear what indigenous communities have to say about the way they protect nature, biodiversity and how they help to avoid climate change, but also the truth of the successive violations of their rights that we have witnessed in so many parts of the world. That is why the voice of indigenous communities is an essential component of COP and should inspire the measures that are indispensable if we want to avoid a climate catastrophe.

JW Scientists tell us a tipping point is approaching for the Amazon. How can you increase the sense of urgency amongst delegates of COP 30, the first ever in the Amazon to avoid this tipping point. What's your message to the international delegates and Brazilian organizers preparing for COP 30?

GUTERRES First of all, let's recognize our failure. We all agree that we must keep the temperature rise below 1.5 percent. And that going above 1.5 percent has devastating consequences.

Some of these devastating consequences are tipping points, be it in the Amazon, be it in Greenland or Western Antarctica or the coral reefs. And the truth is that we have failed to avoid an overshooting above 1.5 degrees in the next few years.

Let's recognize our failure. Countries are presenting their national determined contributions. From those received until now, there is an expectation of a reduction of emissions of 10%. We would need 60% [if we were to limit global heating to 1.5C]. So overshooting is now inevitable.

And so it is absolutely indispensable to change course in order to make sure that overshooting is as small as possible and is as less intense as possible. And this is a basic condition to avoid tipping points.

It is still possible if we accelerate to reach net zero and, if we become negative after the net zero until the end of the century, it's still possible to reach the end of the century with 1.5 degrees or below.

In between, we'll have an overshoot. And we must do everything possible to make that overshoot, as I said, as short as possible and as low in intensity as possible to avoid tipping points like the Amazon. We don't want to see the Amazon as a savanna. But that is a real risk if we don't change course and if we don't make a dramatic decrease of emissions as soon as possible.

WX The Tropical Forest Forever Facility (TFFF) is a new Brazilian initiative that will be launched at COP30. It promises to pay for protected forests, including 20% of the funds to go directly to indigenous peoples, which is a welcome step, But elsewhere, there is not enough money for everyone suffering from the impacts of climate change. How can COP30 mobilise more climate funding??

GUTERRES One of the fundamental things, obviously, is to invest more in emissions reduction. It is also essential to invest much more in adaptation, in the sense of increasing the resilience of communities everywhere. But one of the things that is absolutely fundamental is an investment in those who are the best guardians of nature. And the best guardians of nature are precisely the indigenous communities. And therefore, the possibility of financing programs that allow indigenous communities to optimize the work that, on behalf of all of us, they carry



FOREST-JOURNALIST: REPORTER WAJÃ XIPAI FROM SUMAÚMA DURING THE INTERVIEW

out, preserving biodiversity, preserving the forest, and at the same time contributing to reduce CO₂ emissions, and to capture the CO₂ that exists in the atmosphere, all these are obvious justifications for the need for much more financial support to indigenous communities, and not only financial support, political support, legal support, the guarantee that their rights are not violated, as unfortunately today happens in so many countries..

JW You have stated that countries investing in fossil fuels are sabotaging their own economies. How can you persuade nations like Brazil, the host of COP, which has just given the green light to sell exploration licenses at the mouth of the Amazon?

GUTERRES Well, what I've been telling those countries very clearly is that there is no way that the whole of the oil and gas that exists already verified in the world will

be spent. So any increase of capacity will lead inevitably to stranded assets there or somewhere else because it is clear now that the era of fossil fuels is coming to an end. We are seeing a renewables revolution and the transition will inevitably accelerate and there will be no way in which humankind will be able to use all the oil and gas already discovered. So all these investments are, from a global perspective, a waste of money..

JW And have you put this directly to President Lula?
GUTERRES Not yet. I'll take advantage of the COP (to do this).

WX I would like to ask you about the world's priorities. We, the Indigenous peoples of the Amazon, do not believe that human beings are separate from nature. For us, rivers, forests, and animals are not "resources,"

but relatives; they are part of us. As Secretary-General of the UN, what are your thoughts on this? Can COP30 Amazon-ise the world and regain this vision, after so many centuries of destruction based on the idea of human superiority over nature?

GUTERRES If there's anything I've learned from indigenous peoples that I've been in contact with in many parts of the world, it's this concept of Mother Earth. In fact, between nature and humanity, there's a single family. And it's fundamental that this single family is united and that the members of this family protect each other. Nature is what allows life.

We need to end the war against nature. Political leaders are often more concerned with the day-to-day problems, of society, especially at times when the economic situation is complex and aggravated by climate change, by disasters, by catastrophes. So sometimes there is no notion of the importance of a harmonious relationship with nature and therefore it is necessary to permanently maintain a pedagogy with the political leaders and there is no one better than the indigenous communities to do this pedagogy and I hope you have the opportunity at COP.

JW How do you think the COP process can be made more inclusive and effective? How can it be less dominated by fossil fuels and agribusiness lobbyists and instead more representative of future generations and other species?

GUTERRES This is the responsibility of governments. Governments must understand that they are there to serve the people, not to serve the lobbyists. and obviously it is impossible to avoid that economic interests express their positions, but it is absolutely essential that governments assume their responsibilities in relation to their own countries, to their own people, and to the planet. And for that, it is very important, and I believe in Belém, this hopefully will be achieved.

It's very important to have a presence close to the leaders of those that represent civil society and those who are committed to the fight against climate change. Indigenous communities are in a position to have more influence in the COP with their physical presence and to have more influence on decision makers than the lobbyists. We all know what the lobbyists want: It's to increase their profits, with the price being paid by humankind.

JW In many parts of the world, we are seeing an attack on multilateralism. On the far right, nationalism is on the rise. Even on the left, some people say the current COP system is not fit for purpose. I even heard somebody suggest we should scrap it and start again. How do you respond?

GUTERRES The COP is not perfect and the fact that decisions need to be taken by consensus is in itself a limitation that we all recognize but at the same time is

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It is absolutely indispensable that a world-wide awareness is gained that Indigenous communities are our defenders of nature; they are our defenders of the planet

António Guterres
UN Secretary-General

important to mobilize the whole world in the objectives that are defined, but I believe we can improve the COP process to make it more inclusive in relation to those who are vitally interested in making sure that we keep the 1.5 degrees alive.

But the question is what is the alternative? The alternative is a free-for-all.

Free for all means that there will be a small privileged elite -people and companies – that will be able to always protect themselves even if disasters spread and communities will be destroyed, there will always be a group of rich people and rich companies that will be able to protect themselves as the planet is being progressively destroyed.

So it is absolutely essential that the participation of the other stakeholders at the COP can limit the negative impact of lobbies and create more democratic forms of taking decisions..

WX Secretary-general, you are in a position where the whole world is looking to you for guidance. But I imagine the pain of the planet also feels heavy sometimes. When you look at the forest, the sea, or the sky, do you still feel humanity is part of all this? Or do you believe that we have crossed a line and need to relearn how to be part of nature again?

GUTERRES I think that we have not yet crossed a line that separates us from nature. Nature has a huge capacity for resistance despite the barbarism committed against it worldwide. We still have time to reconcile with nature, but for that it is necessary to end the war with nature and to value

the contribution that nature can make to the resolution of the climate change problem. So-called nature-based solutions are the best tool to combat climate change. And that's why it's not just about protecting nature, it's about recognizing the role that nature has in protecting us.

JW Next year will be your last as Secretary-General. Looking back on your nine years in this post, the climate and nature crises have worsened enormously. Have you ever felt frustrated, like being in the cockpit of a crashing aircraft but not having the authority to take the controls? Do you sometimes feel despair?

GUTERRES I feel frustrated many times, but never desperate. Jean Monnet (who was one of the founders of the European Union) used to say he was not optimistic nor pessimistic, he was determined. And I can guarantee that I am determined. I am determined to fight for a relationship between humankind and nature that is a relationship of brotherhood and sisterhood. And that will allow us, in the end, to defeat not only climate change, but to defeat plastic pollution, to protect our oceans, to guarantee that the war against nature ends. And one of the things that I also learned in my political life is that

only those that give up on fighting can be defeated. I will never give up on my commitment to climate action, on my commitment to biodiversity, on my commitment to the protection of nature, on my commitment to help and support all the democratic movements that around the world are fighting and fighting hard to preserve the most precious possession that we have, which is our Mother Nature.

JW If you could go back and change anything that happened over this period, what would that be?

GUTERRES I don't think I could change my decisions because the key decisions were not taken by me. But I would probably take on the climate battle in a more determined way at the beginning of my mandate. I was at the time very concerned with reform of the United Nations making it work better with problems of peace and security that were very dramatic and it took me some time to assume as an absolute priority the questions of climate change, the questions of biodiversity, the questions related to the relations between humankind and nature.

I think that I corrected the trajectory but I would like to have been front and centre on this earlier, as I try to be today, to make sure, that [even if I do not have] the power or the money to change things, I can at least use my voice – loud and clear – to make sure that those who are undermining our planet will feel they will not have an easy life.

WX There are so many crises in the world today, wars in Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, etc. How do you keep global attention focused on nature and the climate? Do you agree with the indigenous understanding that nothing is more fundamental than nature, and that if we don't have healthy air, we can't have happy lives?

GUTERRES ÉIt's impossible to separate things. The best way to guarantee peace is to guarantee sustainable development, to guarantee the protection of people and nature, to avoid the terrible inequalities that exist in the world, and to promote democracy and human rights. All these things are interconnected.

In my opinion, it is a mistake to say, as some say, that the United Nations should only deal with issues of peace and security, because climate problems, development problems and human rights are essential when we look at the conflicts that exist in the world.

WAJĀ XIPAI e JONATHAN WATTS Thank you for your time and your comments.

GUTERRES I want to thank you for the opportunity and to express my admiration for your devotion to the most dramatic existential threat of our times. Thank you very much for your work, for what you are doing in the Amazon, which is one of the crucial assets, one of the crucial goods that we have as humanity on the planet. ■

Greenwashing at COP30: 'The bill is coming'

Millions invested in infrastructure and events at COP30, all of which supposedly champion 'sustainability,' masked the interests of economic groups responsible for destroying the Forest at the planet's largest climate event

Hyury Potter

Guamá River, Belém, Amazon

While tens of thousands of people occupied the streets of Belém to ask for climate justice at the Climate March on November 15, a few kilometers away a group was discussing cutting CO2 emissions, one of the causes of global heating. A natural topic for a climate summit, if not for one detail: the debate was being led by Petrobras, the very same company that 20 days prior to COP30 began to drill another exploratory oil well in the Foz do Amazonas region, an extremely biodiverse area – a decision made counter to the “transition away from fossil fuels” agreed upon at COP28, in Dubai.

One speaker, the president of the Brazilian Institute of Oil and Gas and a former Petrobras executive, Roberto Ardenghy, started by referring to the “highly qualified” people who were there to hear about the wonders of fossil fuels in the Cumaru auditorium – a Brazil Pavilion space, like the Sumauma auditorium, which was named after a tree and featured some panel discussions on polluting activities that are being sold as “green.”

Ardenghy went straight to the point and connected the burning of oil to the generation of wealth: “It’s impossible to imagine an opulent, rich, comfortable society that doesn’t have high energy consumption, and therefore oil,” said the president of the institute lobbying on behalf of the oil industry. And he was not alone in his mission. According to a survey published by the Kick Big Polluters Out coalition, over 1,600 fossil fuel lobbyists were given credentials to take part in

climate negotiations at COP30. If they were a country, the oil group would be the second largest delegation at the conference, trailing only Brazil with its group of 3,805 delegates.

Demonstrators were still out on Avenida Duque de Caxias, some falling ill under the blazing sun, when Fernanda Diniz, a decarbonization manager at Petrobras, spoke in an air conditioned room about “a better carbon footprint” and “ethics,” while saying nothing about the peoples who will be affected by drilling. “Decarbonization isn’t just an ethical issue, but also one of competitiveness. The ones who brought a portfolio, a resilient oil, will be capable of playing the game in the future,” said the Petrobras manager. At the March for Global Climate Justice happening right next door, protestors held a funeral for oil. And Luene Karipuna, the executive coordinator of the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples and Organizations of Amapá and Northern Pará was calling attention to a lack of any consultation of Indigenous peoples before a license was granted to drill in Foz do Amazonas and about the threats leaders receive.

The greenwashing, the “green” marketing used by the companies destroying the Amazon, was apparent in the corridors and around the climate conference. Among coffees and croutons, cheese and wine, deals were cut on the corporate “green future,” which involves continuing to profit from Nature, while behind the scenes more ambitious rules to save human life on the planet-home



AT THE PEOPLES' CLIMATE MARCH, PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT NATURE TERRITORIES AND CITIES PROTESTED AGAINST THE GREENWASHING PROMOTED BY GOVERNMENTS AND CORPORATIONS AT COP30

were prevented from being approved. In the Blue Zone, the scene of the official climate summit negotiations, one of the most popular places for corporate representatives to visit was the National Confederation of Industry pavilion, a space split between chairs to sit and watch two simultaneous screens and tall tables for informal business talks.

At one roundtable discussion held by JBS, the world's largest meat producer, Renato Mauro Menezes Costa, the president of Friboi, one of the companies under the JBS umbrella, talked about solutions for more "sustainable" production. The Green Offices program was among the proposals, which advises partner livestock farmers on environmental regularization and provides technical and managerial assistance. According to the executive, a tall man with tan skin and neatly brushed hair wearing a shiny pair of loafers, the initiative is a hit and can be found in 11 states where the company operates.

The next day, the program included a COP sustainable

business award, promoted by the National Confederation of Industry. In recent years, however, JBS has been linked to meat purchased from areas connected to illegal deforestation as well as to Indigenous territories. According to a recent investigation by the NGO Greenpeace, from 2018 to 2025, JBS supposedly purchased 2,856 cows from a farm that was allegedly part of a scheme to triangulate illegal cattle raised in the Pequizal do Naruvôtu Indigenous Territory, in eastern Mato Grosso, one of the states where the company applies its Green Offices program. The Greenpeace report says JBS responded that "all purchases mentioned in the investigation complied with company policy and industry protocol." The company did however say that it had "preventively blocked" the farm implicated in the cattle laundering scheme. It is worth recalling that in 2024, JBS had the most tax exemptions among companies connected to agribusiness: the corporate behemoth was spared from paying 6.4 billion reais to the Brazilian government.



IN THE BLUE ZONE, INDUSTRY AND AG REPRESENTATIVES TALK ABOUT THEIR ‘CASES OF SUCCESS;’ ABOVE, THE NATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF INDUSTRY PAVILION

Munduruku warriors fight greenwashing

The sky was overcast on Friday, November 14, when Alessandra Munduruku boarded one of the two buses parked in front of the COP Village, both of which held around 100 Munduruku warriors. They departed punctually at 4:40 AM and in just over 15 minutes the two buses had traveled five kilometers to the area near the COP30 Blue Zone. They walked the last three blocks, with women, children, and men holding bows and arrows and carrying banners decrying the abuse suffered in Pará’s Tapajós River Basin. The Indigenous people point out how this river was “privatized” through a government decree from Lula that could turn it into a waterway for soybean distribution.

After determinedly making it through the COP’s security barrier, Alessandra, standing 1.5 meters tall and still half-asleep, grew in stature, organizing two defensive columns of men. From the median, she made her first speech about the protest, a cry that had been muffled since the start of the conference, calling out companies and countries that use Indigenous peoples for their greenwashing. “Enough of using our image to say you’re sustainable,” the Munduruku leader said.

Before the morning ended, Alessandra and her Munduruku people would also meet with Brazil’s environment and climate change minister, Marina Silva, and the Indigenous peoples minister, Sônia Guajajara, as well as André Corrêa do Lago, the COP30 president. While

they were talking, the schedule of corporate events started in the Blue and Green Zones. One, a panel at the Legislative Assembly of Pará pavilion entitled “The power of sustainable prospecting,” was being moderated by a representative from this legislative body, Wescley Tomaz (Avante party), an advocate for illegal mining in Itaituba, a city where he was previously a city council member. The Green Zone is an area of the COP that is open to the public and used for networking, demonstrations and exhibitions by uncredentialed members of business groups and civil society.

At the event, held inside the space funded by Pará’s lower house of congress, he said the only “environmental crime in the Amazon” is the list of mining requests that go unapproved by the federal government. For over ten years, the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation has been doing studies in the Tapajós region and has already identified serious health problems among the Munduruku people caused by mercury contamination. Mercury is a metal used to separate gold in illegal mining operations and studies indicate that it may be responsible for children being born with birth defects.

Yet not all the discussions happening in the public space of COP30 over these two weeks were very public. Some of the large corporate groups who set up pavilions in the Green Zone preferred to try to hold discussions in secret. To enter the stand run by Deloitte, a consulting and auditing company headquartered in the United Kingdom, with offices worldwide, you had to have an additional registration, even though it was in the open Green Zone area. Journalists also had to wait for the company’s press office to authorize them.

SUMAÚMA visited one stand that discussed the “sustainability” of business and the “environmental resilience” of companies. An explanation was given on how consultants help their clients to adapt to the climate-related financial disclosures required in the United Kingdom. It was a relaxed conversation, in which the panel members’ optimism stood in contrast to the scientists lamenting the lack of progress in official negotiations.

None of the information discussed on the panel was confidential, yet during the talk, a Deloitte employee tried to remove SUMAÚMA reporters from the room, because she said the “press couldn’t remain in this space.” We stayed in the area and later sent an email asking the company for an explanation. At the time this story went to press, we had yet to receive a response.

An agribusiness party

It wasn’t just on the walls of Parque da Cidade, in the Blue and Green Zones, that the companies played their self-cleansing game. Esfera, a group that brings together executives and politicians at events, organized a corporate events center on Avenida Nazaré, in an upscale area of Belém. A mansion was adapted to welcome 700 people. There are two stages for talks, along

with nine rooms for more private meetings. Partners include Chinese automaker BYD and Bradesco bank, which held a breakfast on Tuesday, November 18, in the guest space. Variations on Pará’s cuisine were served during the events, along with light beverages. Guests were given a copy of a magazine entitled “COP30 in Topics,” produced by the Esfera group and the Brazilian Institute of Education, Development and Research, a founding partner of which is Federal Supreme Court justice Gilmar Mendes.

Those visiting the manse at number 482 on Avenida Nazaré will not find a property boasting art nouveau architecture, but will rather see a glass and MDF panel with a blue banner. The façade of the over 100-year-old house, a property given protected heritage status by the National Institute of Historic and Artistic Heritage and which welcomed executives and politicians like brothers Helder Barbalho (Pará’s governor) and Jader Barbalho Filho (Lula’s minister of cities), was completely disfigured without federal government authorization, according to an embargo issued on October 7.

The embargo also shows the Esfera group’s lack of respect for Brazilian laws on the protection of heritage properties. In September, the group at one point requested permission for the changes, but this request was denied by the National Institute of Historic and Artistic Heritage in early October. A team from the heritage institute inspected the locale on October 24. An official order dated November 12 shows the Esfera group shrugged off the denial and continued to make changes to the heritage property, which has been protected since 1985.

When asked, the National Institute of Historic and Artistic Heritage told SUMAÚMA that it “did not authorize the interventions made to the property,” which is why it “embargoed the work site.” According to the federal agency, the administrative process moved in relation to the property is currently in the stage of assessing “the amount of the fine for damages caused” to the mansion used by the Esfera group.

In a statement, the Esfera group said it “will fully comply with the legal and contractual obligation to return the property exactly in the original conditions.” Regarding its failure to comply with the National Institute of Historic and Artistic Heritage embargo, the company said it “reaffirms its statutory commitment to strict compliance with legislation and to the preservation of the country’s historical, cultural, and aesthetic heritage.”

According to Transparency International Brazil, the agriculture industry, led by the National Confederation of Agriculture, made sure at least 30 of its members were among the Brazilian delegation at the COP. This was not, however, enough for the agenda they had prepared for the entire conference period. The industry bankrolled the Agrizone, a space set up by the government’s rural research agency Embrapa, turning it into a bunker for its greenwashing. Feeling at home, the executives did not



ALESSANDRA MUNDURUKU LED THE PROTEST OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES FROM THE UPPER AND MIDDLE TAPAJÓS IN FRONT OF THE BLUE ZONE AT COP30

insist on using the same discretion applied to meetings in the Blue Zone pavilions, for instance, and they also switched canapés and wine for grilled meats and a steady stream of beer and samba music on Monday evening, November 17

During the day, Embrapa released a document reiterating industry positions, such as that livestock farming “can be part of the solution to combat climate change.” According to studies by the Climate Observatory’s Estimated Greenhouse Gas Emissions System, livestock farming is the economic activity that most emits greenhouse gasses in Brazil, accounting for 51% of emissions, a total of 1.1 billion metric tons of CO₂ equivalent (GtCO₂e)

– a type of calculation that takes into account various gasses that cause the greenhouse effect and impact the climate. According to the Climate Observatory, if Brazilian cattle were their own country, it would be the world’s seventh largest emitter, ahead of Japan (1.068 GtCO₂e).

At COP, the industry argued for “low-carbon livestock farming” and stated a desire to use a different way of calculating emissions than the calculation used by the federal government’s Climate Plan – Mitigation. The vice president of the National Confederation of Agriculture and president of the Agriculture Federation of the South, Gedeão Silveira Pereira, made an unceremonious speech at the end of the panels, to be followed by a feast of grilled



Lela Beltrão/SUMAÚMA

meats, in which he attacked the federal government:

“I came here to this COP to defend us from our own, people who, financed by them [foreigners], come here to denigrate the image of Brazilian ag,” the executive said. He continued his speech by proposing a thorough scrubbing of the industry’s image: “We are the planet’s solution.”

This “solution” does not include new territories for the peoples of the Forest. During COP30, the federal government announced the certification of four Indigenous Territories and a decree declaring ten other territories. The next week, the National Confederation of Agriculture filed a motion to suspend with the Federal Supreme Court, arguing that the demarcations create “social in-

stability” until the court considers Law 14.701/2023, which establishes a cut-off date of October 5, 1988, the date of the Federal Constitution’s enactment, as a criterion for demarcating new Indigenous Territories.

Marta Salomon, a senior specialist with the Talanoa Institute, is critical of the reaction from sectors that insist on climate denialism. “Many of those working against the climate agenda still do not understand that it costs less to shift to a low-carbon and resilient economy than to deal with the impacts of a hotter planet. The cost of inaction is much higher,” she says.

The festival of grilled meats was the cherry on an agenda filled with authorities since the doors opened to the Agrizone, which over the previous days had welcomed federal deputies Arnaldo Jardim (Cidadania party, representing São Paulo), the vice president of the Agricultural Parliamentary Front, and Alceu Moreira (Brazilian Democratic Movement, representing Rio Grande do Sul), the president of the Biodiesel Parliamentary Front. Agriculture and livestock minister Carlos Fávaro was also in attendance, telling the press, between a hunk of meat and swig of beer, that he would not be giving any interviews that evening.

In a statement published before the start of COP30, the National Articulation of Agroecology criticized the space, pointing out that it represents a “corporate seizure of the climate agenda.” The memo put out by the organization, which joins state and regional networks, as well as social movements at the national level, mentioned the “sponsorship by the Confederation of Agriculture and Livestock of Brazil and by companies like Nestlé and Bayer, multinationals that produce ultraprocessed foods and agrochemicals.”

Throughout the night, the attendees, who were dressed in jeans, shoes or boots, with some wearing shirts inscribed with “Brazil Cattle,” enjoyed samba classics, including *O Bêbado e o Equilibrista*, by João Bosco and Aldir Blanc. Sticking out among the industry execs who were all smiles and speaking loudly were two uniformed employees wearing State Agriculture Inspection vests. These are the people who would the next day inspect farms owned by the people at the party.

The omnipresent Vale and Hydro

On the way from the airport to Parque da Cidade, it is impossible not to pass an advertising billboard or space financed by the Vale and Hydro mining companies. The park holding the Blue and Green Zones cost nearly 1 billion reais, paid for in Vale offsets. And the company also transferred funds from the Mining Resources Oversight Fee to build Porto Futuro 2, where the Museum of the Amazons is exhibiting the photographs of Sebastião Salgado. “There is a very big effort by these companies to try to convey an environmentally correct image. Everyone arriving at the airport in Belém passes several billboards for mining as well as agribusiness companies,”

“

These mining companies have many lawsuits for human rights violations, and what we've seen is a process of not holding these companies culpable and of cleansing their images

Thalia Silva

Youth leader from Parauapebas, a municipality directly impacted by Vale's iron ore mining operations

according to Renato Morgado, a program manager with Transparency International in Brazil.

Thalia Silva is a leader in the COP30 youth presidency who hails from Parauapebas, a municipality directly impacted by Vale's iron ore mining operations. At just 22 years old, she speaks confidently and in-depth about the impacts mining activities have on the culture and peoples of the Forest. "Mining is violating rights every day," Thalia says while recalling the case of the Xikrin do Cateté people during a Blue Zone panel discussion. Members of this Indigenous group were diagnosed as having heavy metals in their bodies, caused by Vale's Onça-Puma mine, as indicated in a civil public action filed by the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office in February of 2025.

The young activist also does not fail to challenge what she sees in the publicity initiatives by mining companies that explore the Amazon, such as concerts by recording artists like Mariah Carey and Fafá de Belém: "These mining companies have many lawsuits for human rights violations, and what we've seen is a process of not holding these companies culpable and of cleansing their images," she says.

Representing the Movement for Popular Sovereignty in Mining, professor Charles Trocate took part in a panel at the COP Village, on November 18, where he reiterated criticism of large mining company operations in the

lives of the Forest's peoples: "This money provided, with art and culture, covers up the ruins of mining," according to professor Trocate, who also sees the power relations between affected peoples and companies as "an unequal game."

The mining company organized several panels during COP30 at the Vale Technological Institute, in the swanky Nazaré neighborhood. Tables held snacks and soft drinks as we watched the presentation of a program to bring state governments together to lower greenhouse gas emissions. Governor Helder Barbalho (Brazilian Democratic Movement) was expected to attend, but he was in Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, to see Clube do Remo play a match that would help in determining whether it was promoted to the first division in the Brazilian Championship. He only returned to his COP30 agenda the following day.

In a statement, Vale said it does "not practice greenwashing," while adding that it "understands that cooperation with the government is a tool to support social transformation and it contributes to a lasting legacy for Belém and the state of Pará."

In the Freezone, an event held outside of COP30 at Praça da Bandeira, in the center of Belém, around 7 kilometers from the Blue Zone, Hydro and other aluminum industry companies, such as MRN, Alcoa, Albras, and the Brazilian Aluminum Association, invested in presenting mining as something "sustainable." In the space, visitors could also check out "The Fantastic World of Aluminum," a domed structure with lots of light and projections listing the wonders of the modern world that contain aluminum, such as cars and airplanes, all with "one of the world's smallest carbon footprints" – airplanes are among the biggest emitters of the gasses that cause global heating.

The space featured other attractions, like areas for shows and talks, and partners even included a group of Amazonian influencers. On Wednesday, November 19, during a panel on "responsible mining" at the Pará state government's Green Zone pavilion, Hydro's CEO, Anderson Baranov, said that "bringing young people" to partnerships is part of the "strategy of being a good neighbor."

This interest from Hydro in young influencers to promote the company's image is not restricted to the Amazon. SUMAÚMA spoke with an influencer from a different region, who preferred to remain anonymous, who said she declined to take part in a panel at COP30 when she found out her trip to Belém would be paid for by the mining company. As SUMAÚMA reported, Vale has also used influencers to bolster its own image.

With the brand new Parque da Cidade as a backdrop, with its newly planted trees and vibrantly colored playground equipment, Barbalho signed an agreement in the Green Zone with Norway-based Hydro, a shareholder in Alunorte, the company alleged to be responsible for tailings leaks in the municipality of Barcarena. The



Fernando Martinho/Repórter Brasil

AGRICULTURE MINISTER CARLOS FÁVARO ATTENDED THE PARTY HELD BY THE LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY INSIDE THE AGRIZONE DURING COP30



Marcelo Lelis/Agência Pará

HELDER BARBALHO, PARÁ'S GOVERNOR, TOOK PART IN THE OPENING CEREMONY FOR A PEACE BANK, IN THE GREEN ZONE, DURING COP30, AN EVENT PROMOTED BY THE HYDRO MINING COMPANY

agreement was aimed at cooperation on fighting fires and the opening of a Peace Bank. Made of aluminum, the project would represent "dialog as fundamental to resolving the world's biggest challenges," as explained by Kjersti Fløgstad, the director of the Nobel Peace Center, one of the initiative's partner institutions, at the opening ceremony.

It would have been another scene in a Hydro advertisement, but someone forgot to tell Auricelia Arapiun, a leader in the Lower Tapajós. After Helder Barbalho's speech on "social justice" and "environmental rights" for the peoples of the Amazon, she interrupted the ceremony and publicly asked the governor about the agreements with mining companies that have a major environmental and social liability in the Amazon: "Another project to destroy our lives," the Arapiun people's leader said.

The world of aluminum wasn't all that fantastic for the people working in the Freezone. On the evening of November 20, while the COP30 president was reopening the Blue Zone after a fire had frightened everyone earlier in the day, workers were protesting in front of the Freezone about payments stipulated in their contracts not being made. Hydro and the Brazilian Aluminum Association, whose chairman of the board is Baranov, are some of the space's biggest sponsors.

In a statement, Hydro said it "refutes any allegations of greenwashing," adding that "all social and environmental information reported by the company is based on concrete and measurable goals." In relation to environmental liabilities, the company said it is "not responsible for environmental damage in the municipality and there is no technical evidence that this has occurred."

Auricelia is critical of decisions like the attempt to privatize the Tocantins, Madeira and Tocantins Rivers through a decree signed by Lula in August, which could hand the private sector more than 3,000 kilometers of Amazonian rivers to ensure that agribusiness has "more secure distribution" of its products. According to experts and local leaders, large vessel traffic is likely to cause serious social and environmental impacts. Again, the Forest's peoples were not consulted, and Auricelia recalls this when she criticizes the conference being held in Belém. "Bringing the Indigenous peoples to take part is another type of washing, because we don't sit at the negotiating tables to confront the climate," she says.

Auricelia Arapiun looks to the future with worry. She is experienced in fighting for the rights of the peoples in the Lower Tapajós region and she notes the consequences these corporate washing actions over the last few days, with big campaigns and investments, will have on local peoples: "The bill for these mega-structures will come, and the one who's going to pay isn't Helder Barbalho, it isn't the state government. We are the ones who will pay." ■



FRONTLINE DISPATCH

Vale turns hundreds of millions in debt to Pará into publicity at COP30

The company wants influencers to show off the works at the park where heads of government and diplomats are being welcomed, built to write off its hundreds of millions of dollars in debt with the state's government

Adriano Wilkson
Tietê River, São Paulo



Marcelo Aguiar/MAB

ACTIVISTS FROM THE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE IMPACTED BY DAMS PROTEST OUTSIDE VALE'S OFFICES IN BELÉM

In May 2024, an e-mail with the word URGENT in the subject landed in the inbox of a young influencer from the state of Pará, in Brazil. With tens of thousands of followers on Instagram, the Artplan communications agency was reaching out to him about an ad campaign for Vale.

Brazil's largest mining company and one of the most profitable in the world wanted him to get out the word among his followers about the company's part in building Parque da Cidade and revitalizing Porto Futuro 2, in Belém, where COP30, the UN climate conference, is taking place.

The influencer agreed to show the e-mail to SUMAÚMA, but he did not want us to publish his name in this story to avoid harassment.

Based on the proposal, he was supposed to visit the park for at least six hours, making one reels video and three stories, while also allowing Vale to republish and boost the content on the company's social media. "We want to count on influencers [...] to affirm Vale's commitment to social and sustainable development in Pará," the employee continued before asking for a quote for the job and promising payment within 60 days.

Paying for influencers to heap praise on a company and then paying for social media networks to push this content to more users is, obviously, a common practice on social networks. What is not as common is the complex structure Vale and Pará's government have put together so that the company can drum up publicity based on a public project, as is the case of Parque da Cidade, a park in Belém.

With a stated cost of 184 million dollars, the park where the COP's meetings are being held was built because Vale owed billions to the state of Pará. In 20F1, the state created the Mining Resources Oversight Fee, a payment charged to mining companies to maintain public structures for oversight of their activities.

Vale was always opposed to this fee and was given support from industry trade groups to fight it. In 2012, the National Confederation of Industry filed suit with Brazil's Federal Supreme Court, claiming the fee was unconstitutional. While the suit was moving through the courts, the mining company racked up a debt with Pará that was only recognized in 2022, when the Supreme Court finally ruled the fee was legal.

Vale nevertheless took this lemon and made lemonade. The debt then became an opportunity to try to burnish its image with the public.

That same year, the company and Pará's governor, Helder Barbalho (Brazilian Democratic Movement), reached an agreement, announced in 2023 along with the regulations for the "Pará Structure Program." According to the agreement, instead of paying what was owed, Vale and other mining companies could funnel up to 40% of their debt into public works, projects defined along with the government. For example, in 2024 Vale announced it would spend approximately 206 million dollars on program projects. It was this money that the company used to build Parque da Cidade, in addition to other public projects.

And it is this infrastructure, built with public funds, which Vale has been using to drum up green publicity in the lead-up to COP. With the help of influencers and paid boosts on social media, the company is trying to position itself as a friend of the environment and the people of the Amazon, while at the same time minimizing the impact its activities have on the planet and region.

In the company's latest sustainability report, the



João Laet/SUMAÚMA

VALE'S MOST PRODUCTIVE OPERATION IS IN CANAÃ DOS CARAJÁS; ITS MARKETING AGENCY REACHED OUT TO AN INFLUENCER ABOUT VISITING AN ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT IN THE REGION

information in fine print reveals what Vale does not in its marketing campaigns: in 2024 alone, the mining company was responsible for 466 million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions. For the sake of comparison, that is 277 times the total emissions of the city of Belém (1.68 million tons) and exceeds the emissions of the state of Pará (277.7 million).

According to data published by the Office of the Treasury Secretary of Pará, Vale is currently debt-free in relation to the Mining Resources Oversight Fee. Nevertheless, the company still owes the state over 337 million dollars in taxes on goods and services, making it Pará's third largest debtor.

Marketing's attempt to scrub degrader images

The young influencer who was approached about publicizing Vale's initiatives turned down the advertising proposal. He is accustomed to doing ads for brands and had already decided years ago not to associate his image with mining companies, aware of the environmental impact they cause. Yet this did not stop Vale from reaching out to him again six months later. In another e-mail, this time the marketing firm invited him to visit an environmental project in the Carajás region of southern Pará. This is where the company's most productive operation is located, the S11D mine, which in 2024 alone mined 83 million metric tons of iron ore

from within the Carajás National Forest.

Vale's social and environmental projects are done as part of a trade-off established by law to "offset" the damage they cause to the environment. When these projects become the focus of marketing campaigns and attempt to draw attention away from environmental impacts, they lead to a practice known as greenwashing.

Every year, oil companies, petrochemical companies, the ultraprocessed products industry, agribusiness, and other markets the public regards as harmful to Nature invest increasing amounts of money in communications to make them seem more environmentally responsible.

For mining companies like Vale, the main culprit behind tragedies like the events in Mariana and Brumadinho, in the state of Minas Gerais, two of the biggest environmental disasters in Brazil, this kind of investment in cleaning up its own image is even more essential. The industry has created a term just for this, echoed by the communications departments and consultants who help these mining companies grow their activities: a Social License to Operate (SLO). A concept created in the '90s as mining activities were intensifying in Canada, it sums up a series of strategies and practices that give mining companies a "social license" to explore a region's resources. This intangible and informal authorization, fabricated by marketing companies, makes it easier to later obtain a formal license to open new mines.

"More than an official document, this license is a daily

achievement, a pact of trust established with society,” Leandro Modé, Vale’s communications director recently wrote in an article published to the Infomoney website. “Without it, the real license, the one on paper, becomes more complex and challenging to obtain and maintain.”

This is the context in which its new and spectacular marketing actions fit, with Vale sponsoring a show in September featuring pop star Mariah Carey, who sang on a stage shaped like a giant water lily in the middle of a river in Belém. Vale’s communications director saw the event as a “historical milestone” in the company’s relationship with the Amazon. The company’s sponsorships of museums, festivals, and social projects in the cities where it operates are also aimed at garnering it a Social License to Operate.

“Vale [...] is proud to show that it is indeed possible to reconcile economic development with environmental conservation and social progress,” the communications director wrote.

To spread this message, the company has relied more and more on the help of influencers. This is clear in the proposal made to a young man who was invited to visit environmental projects in Canaã dos Carajás.

“The results of the sustainability survey indicate that, although communities recognize Vale as an engine of local development [...], many of them are unaware of the specific actions the company carries out or directly supports in communities,” the agency wrote the content creator in its e-mail. “To increase the visibility of these initiatives, we are proposing an initiative with local influencers, which will include visits to social and environmental projects and Vale operations in the municipality.”

The content creator turned down the invitation.

The Ribeirinha butterfly of Brumadinho

On January 25, 2019, a Vale tailings dam burst, dumping approximately 12 million cubic meters of toxic sludge onto the city of Brumadinho, Minas Gerais. Three of the 272 people who died were never found. Children born after the dam broke have, to this day, alarmingly high levels of metals in their blood, including cadmium, arsenic, mercury, lead and manganese, according to a recent study by Fiocruz.

However, in 2022 Vale found some good news to report about Brumadinho. While visiting an area affected by the disaster, a group of the company’s biologists came across 60 *Parides burchellanus* butterflies, a rare and endangered species known as the “Ribeirinha butterfly.” This information was published to the company’s website and sent out in a press release to the media, which reported it.

In May of that year, the Artplan agency sent an e-mail to a very popular environmental educator on social media. This influencer, who makes videos about interesting facets of animal behavior, at that point had over four

Every year, oil companies, petrochemical companies, the ultraprocessed products industry, agribusiness, and other markets the public regards as harmful to Nature invest increasing amounts of money in communications to make them seem more environmentally responsible

million followers between Instagram and TikTok, most of them young people interested in biology.

“Vale wants to get the word out about a Butterfly Monitoring project in Brumadinho,” wrote a marketing agency employee. “They want influencers who are totally immersed in this world of biology and science and they loved your profile.”

The agency asked for the standard stories and reel combo and wondered what the price would be “for this job.” Because he did not agree with Vale’s attempt to improve its negative image through marketing campaigns, the influencer turned the offer down. A week later, the company posted an institutional video to its YouTube channel about the butterflies appearing in Brumadinho. “The Return of the Ribeirinha Butterflies” reached 554,000 views and is still the most watched video on Vale’s English language channel.

Being told no did not stop Vale from insisting on reaching out to the influencer. The following year, in 2023, Artplan once again extended an invite to the environmental educator, this time for him to take part in a campaign about preserving the Amazon, the relationship between animals and robots, and “mining’s correlation to the day to day.” The content creator again refused.

Beyond not wanting to associate themselves with a company that is such a huge environmental liability, these influencers rebuff Vale’s invites for another reason: negative repercussions among their followers. During

investigations for this report, we spoke with a creator in Pará who in 2022 agreed to be paid 4,200 dollars by Vale in exchange for doing an ad.

“I got a lot of hate, I couldn’t take the pressure and decided I don’t want this for myself,” she said, asking to remain anonymous to prevent blowback in the influencer market. The hate she is describing is negative comments. This creator, who specializes in local content, also said she received other proposals from Vale, for even larger sums, but says she turned them all down.

Perhaps in an effort to keep its influencers from getting so much hate, Vale lists an alternative in the proposals that SUMAÚMA saw: the chance to publish “dark posts.” In this specific type of advertising, companies like Vale can make an ad show up on predetermined target audience feeds, but the post isn’t available on the influencer’s profile or on Vale’s own profile.

This type of niche advertising makes tracking and external oversight difficult. In practice, the ad appears for some of the network’s users, but if they go to check the profiles posting it, it won’t be there.

Even after being told no by influencers, the company persistently uses these approaches with an awareness that, while some refuse to take part in the campaigns, many others say yes.

A journalist, history teacher, and poster boy

Thiago Gomide, who has degrees in Journalism and History, created a page about interesting facts on Rio de Janeiro that blew up in popularity during the pandemic. Through short comedic videos, he has become an expert at narrating notable events in the history of Rio and Brazil, through his unmistakable style of speaking,

characteristic of Rio de Janeiro natives.

In his posts, he commonly explains things like the etymology of the term “pé-rapado,” for instance, or he talks about how mate tea came to the beaches on the city’s south side. His work has taken him to the pages of O Globo, where he became a columnist, and to the CBN radio station. In June of 2025, he released “Tá na História Brasil” through Globo Livros, a book of curious facts about Brazilian history. One month later, his 1.6 million Instagram followers began to see a different type of content.

From July to October, Gomide published eight videos sponsored by Vale. In one, the historian went to one of the company’s mines in southern Pará and wore a company hardhat. Later, he went to Carajás National Forest and repeated a phrase the advertisers usually insist on in their marketing campaigns: “Mining coexists, it has to coexist, with preservation.”

While talking about the history of mining in Carajás, Gomide’s ad fails to provide information on the proven impacts these operations have on nature. In 2004, for example, Vale was fined 2 million reais (753,000 dollars per the exchange rate at the time) by the country’s environmental regulator, Ibama, for dumping tailings waste from the Sossego mine directly into the forest and for failing to comply with the conditions of its deforestation license. A report by Piauí magazine three years later said that had Vale admitted wrongdoing, but refused to pay the fine. The magazine also found that, since the company went private, it had been given 37 million in fines from Ibama. The ad also did not talk about how Vale is suspected of making irregular land purchases in the region, as SUMAÚMA reported in its Unsustainable series.

In another video from the series of ads, Gomide visited one of the trains that carries iron ore, fuel, soybeans and passengers on a line traveling from Carajás to the port of São Luís, Maranhão. “There are nearly 900 kilometers of track running through dozens of municipalities and communities that depend on this transport. The train is equipped with air conditioning and accessible spaces,” the historian rattled off. “The seats are comfortable and there is a plug to charge your phone.”

What the ad did not mention is that this railway cuts across the Mãe Maria Indigenous Territory, where communities of Gavião people have had to stop traffic to protest against the operation’s impacts on their territory. The advertising content obviously also fails to mention the Piquiá de Baixo community, in Açailândia, which for decades had to live with the iron dust shed by Vale’s train cars, the cause of a variety of respiratory illnesses among the population living near the railway.

A UN report called attention to the case and, in 2024, after over two decades of fighting Vale and the iron and steel mills in the region, residents in Piquiá de Baixo were removed from their territory so the train

During investigations for this report, we spoke with a creator in Pará who in 2022 agreed to be paid 4,200 dollars by Vale in exchange for doing an ad. “I got a lot of hate, I couldn’t take the pressure and decided I don’t want this for myself,” she said, asking to remain anonymous



Nilmar Lage/Greenpeace

ON JANUARY 25, 2019, A VALE TAILINGS DAM BURST, BURYING BRUMADINHO, MINAS GERAIS IN TOXIC SLUDGE AND KILLING 272 PEOPLE

carrying ore could continue running. They now live in a different neighborhood, built using funds from Vale and the federal government's Minha Casa Minha Vida low-income housing program.

No response from Vale to reporter questions and criticisms

In late October, we sent Vale four questions about the issues covered in this story. We asked about the company's total debt with Pará's government and how much of this debt was forgiven through "Pará Structure" public works, information that is not listed in its public financial reports. The company chose not to answer our questions.

We also asked about the use of online influencers in greenwashing campaigns. Vale responded with a statement.

"Vale does not practice greenwashing and has countless pieces of data and facts proving this. For example: the company has been in the Amazon for 40 years, where it, along with the government, helps to protect around 800,000 hectares of forest, equal to five times the city of São Paulo. Vale uses around 3% of this area for mining. The rest is conserved using Vale resources. Through the Vale Fund, the company has mobilized a network of 90 partners, and invested over 75 million dollars in the Amazon as a priority. As of 2024, it had

supported and accelerated 400 impactful businesses, through 146 initiatives, directly and indirectly benefiting 60,000 farmers, extractivists, and their families and generating the recovery of over 18,000 hectares of area."

Vale said that "it is the natural prerogative of any online influencer to accept or deny a work proposal." The company also criticized this story, saying it "laments and repudiates the use of such a noble activity as journalism for the purposes of activism, which, by definition, takes a side, contrary to journalism, which presupposes balance and independence."

SUMAÚMA also reached out to historian and journalist Thiago Gomide, the man behind the Tá na História profile. Through his press agent, he said that "since May 2025 the project has begun to tell stories about different initiatives — particularly cultural ones — being done by Vale, the largest private investor in culture in Brazil. This partnership allowed content to be filmed in states like Pará and Espírito Santo, reinforcing a commitment to spreading historical knowledge," the statement read. "Tá na História's business relationships follow compliance standards, considering all efforts undertaken by our partners — individuals or corporate entities — to continually improve their practices and mitigate any impacts inherent to corporate activities," it continued. ■



Eliane Brum

Guamá River, Belém, Amazon

In the world of marine wildlife activism, Captain Paul Watson is a whale. When the Canadian appears on the world's seas, his is an imposing presence, especially for the destroyers of life. As the Japanese government well knows. Among the most powerful causes in his 50 years of actions is his fight against whaling. Due to an episode over which Watson guarantees he had no influence but which he believes was used to persecute him, he was arrested in Greenland in July 2024 at Japan's request and released in December when Denmark refused to extradite him. He was even placed on Interpol's red list, but after the flimsiness of the allegations was confirmed, his name was removed. When Japan learned that Paul was attending COP30 in Belém, its government immediately called for his extradition, but the captain left Belém without any sudden surprises after renewing alliances with Indigenous peoples from the Amazon and other parts of the world.

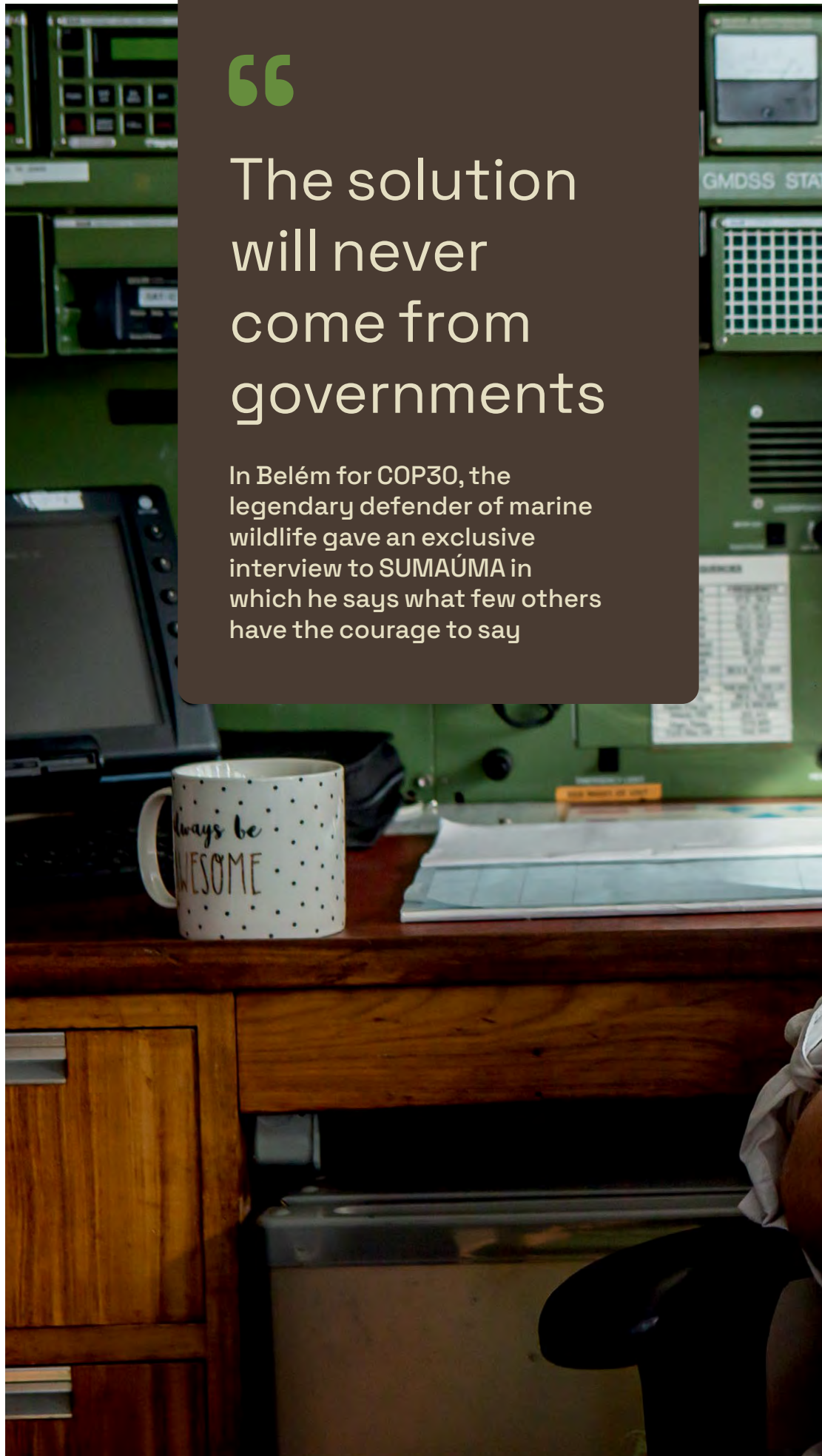
It was while Paul Watson was out protecting whales that he had an experience that is etched in his soul. Paul and Robert Hunter, co-founders of Greenpeace, were the first people ever to put their bodies between whales and whalers. In 1975, when they positioned their inflatable boat between a Russian harpoon vessel and a group of sperm whales, one of the mammals was harpooned. Paul says he saw "a glimmer of understanding in the dying whale's eyes," as if the creature knew the group was trying to save him. The whale released its body away from the boat, slid back into the waves, and died. This eye-to-eye encounter of two beings who recognized each other as equals impelled the surviving human to pledge to become a defender of whales and all creatures of the sea.

And so it was. Paul Watson embodies his concept of aggressive non-violent direct action—at sea but also in the offices of organizations. At the age of 74, he has neither settled down nor given up. After a series of battles fought on the water, Paul left Greenpeace because he disagreed with the direction the organization was

“

The solution
will never
come from
governments

In Belém for COP30, the legendary defender of marine wildlife gave an exclusive interview to SUMAÚMA in which he says what few others have the courage to say





Lela Beltrão/SUMAÚMA

PERSISTENCE: PAUL WATSON, ONE OF THE PLANET'S MOST LEGENDARY ACTIVISTS, ON THE SEA SHEPHERD, MOORED IN BELÉM FOR COP30

taking. He then founded the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, which he eventually left, he says because they tried to silence him. He continues with Sea Shepherd Brazil, France, and the United Kingdom and also established the Captain Paul Watson Foundation.

Most people grow more conservative as they age. Not Paul. He remains active, courageous, and bound to the promise he made to the Sperm Whale. Although he does say he is the conservative one because he fights to conserve life.

Read key excerpts of the interview Paul Watson gave to SUMAÚMA on November 15. This whale says what few others have the courage to say.



ELIANE BRUM You have been fighting for a long time. How do you see this path that brought us to here?

PAUL WATSON What's happened over the last 50 years, you say?

Yes.

Well, on the positive side, there's been a lot of awareness. More people are aware of the problems now than 20, 30, 40 years ago. I think that there's more of an urgency on the part of people to try and find a solution. So, that's a big improvement. The negative side is that we're running out of time. And we're not putting a lid on it [climate change]; temperatures keep rising. [Additionally] biodiversity, the number of species, keep being diminished. There's now only 4% of biomass non-domesticated by human beings. So we only have 4% [wildlife], and we've lost over 50% of our animal biomass over the last 50 years. [According to the latest research, we have already lost 73%.] So that's the bad part about it. But to me, the biggest problem is not so much climate change but diminishment of biodiversity. I think one of the factors that is driving climate change is that we're losing biodiversity and the interdependence of species, [for example,] the whales making sure that we have a healthy phytoplankton population to provide the oxygen, sequester CO₂. The role of the trees in the world, the worms and insects and bees, all of this is being diminished because their numbers are being diminished. At some point, we could be in serious trouble. If bees disappear, or certain species of plants disappear, then that would cause catastrophic problems. But generally, human beings are oblivious to that. They just don't care. That's the major problem.

How do you define this moment?

I think that we're reaching a point where real decisions have to be made. If not, then Nature's going to start making those decisions for us. We've lost a good 30-35% of the insect population in the world, and insects are major pollinators. They eliminate waste. They do all these services that we just don't give any thought

to. So a world without insects is not a world that we can live in. A world without so many different species, without that diversity, is not a world we can live in. So we should come to a realization of that before it's too late. Because when Mother Nature acts, she's not very kind. We'll suffer indiscriminately.

Do you think about Nature like [James] Lovelock [scientist and inventor who revolutionized the way of thinking about life systems]?

No, I look on Nature as being governed by ecological laws—which are just like the law of physics, for instance, the law of thermodynamics, the law of gravity. There's the laws of ecology that govern how the natural world runs. I don't believe that there's an intelligence behind this. I believe that all of this stuff has evolved over millions of years of species working together—and that's in danger of falling apart. I like to describe it this way: consider that we're on a spaceship. And every spaceship has a life support system that provides us with everything we need: the oxygen we breathe, regulating climate and temperature, providing food. That life support system is run and maintained by a crew of engineers, all those species that keep everything running. We, humans, we're not engineers, we're passengers. We're having a great time, entertaining ourselves. But we're killing the engineers. We're basically murdering the engineers. I think that's the situation we're at right now. We're running out of constructive engineers.

But isn't this a way to see Nature from the perspective of our world, the human world? Engineers and spaceships...

Well, that's just a way of conveying, symbolically conveying. But you're right. The problem is that humans view the world from an anthropocentric point of view. It's all about us. We're the only species that matter; we're dominant over everything. One of the things I've learned from Indigenous cultures over the years is to understand the biocentric viewpoint—which is that we're part of everything, we're related to everything, everything is interdependent with each other, we have the responsibility to live in harmony with all these other natural species. They take care of us; we take care of them. We should be part of the ecosystem, not dominant over it.

You said the climate is not the biggest point. The big problem is that we're losing biodiversity. Do you think this catastrophe is well represented at this COP?

There's a couple things that are never represented. The ocean itself. And I don't think there's much talk about biodiversity. All we ever seem to hear about is sequestering carbon, trying to build a machine that'll sequester carbon. We have that—it's called a tree. We just need more trees. We don't need more machines. So, the biocentric point of view is not really



ALLIANCES: PAUL WATSON RECEIVING VISITORS (RIGHT TO LEFT): CACIQUE NINAWA HUNI KUI, OF ACRE; PRINCE APPOLINAIRE OUSSOU LIO, OF THE TOLINOU PEOPLE, OF BENIN; AND GERT-PETER BRUCH, FROM THE NGO PLANÈTE AMAZONE

represented. The very fact that Indigenous peoples of Amazonia are not really participating in any of these negotiations, when they're the people who have that biocentric understanding, [shows this]. So we have to listen to all these technocrats who come up with all these technical solutions which don't work. I noticed that in the Japanese pavilion. Their slogan right on the front was "Solutions for the world"—Japan's going to provide solutions for the world. But when you look at it, they're just talking about improvements in fossil fuel development and stuff like that. That's not a solution to anything. I said, yeah, there is a solution that Japan can do: stop killing whales. That's a good solution for addressing climate change.

When we met for the first time, during an event at the

beginning of COP, I asked you what you thought about this COP, and you said, "It's the same as the others."

It is. There hasn't been any change since I attended the UN conference in Stockholm in 1972, the Rio conference on environment and development in 1992, COP21 in Paris. It's always the same—a lot of talk, a lot of papers, a lot of promises. We've got plenty of laws and treaties, like we just got the high seas treaty and everything, but those are just papers; they don't mean anything without enforcement. If I saw some real enforcement of these treaties and regulations, then I would feel more positive about it, but I think they just like to leave these conferences saying, "Look what we did. We've got this wonderful treaty; we've got this wonderful set of regulations..." They've also been spending a lot of time raising money for low-lying countries [such as island nations].

Giving them money is not a solution; it's not going to stop the water from rising. It's just buying time. I think it's an attempt to buy off the people who are suffering the most from rising sea levels. Let's just buy them off and they'll stop complaining. Just give them money and they'll stop whining.

Many people think we don't need to continue holding COPs. Those people think COPs are not important. Do you agree?

Well, I don't think there's anything constructive that's coming out of it. World leaders are not going to come, sit down, and actually negotiate anything that's going to work. Because they're coming at it all the time from an anthropocentric point of view. And the answers cannot be anthropocentric; the answers have to be biocentric. We'd be better off if they called a climate change conference in the middle of the Amazon among Indigenous people and didn't invite the fossil fuel industry, didn't invite all of these technocrats. I don't think they should allow people who are involved in destroying the planet, the people who are responsible for climate change. Why are they being invited to the table? Why do we have to listen to them? It's sort of like back in the days when we were trying to abolish slavery. OK, let's invite the slavers, the people who own the slaves; let's invite them to the table and see what they think about the slave trade. And of course, it's an economic necessity. A lot of people's lives depend on this; a lot of jobs depend on it. Economically, what's it going to do if we end slavery? There's going to be a lot of economic problems. It's the exact same thing.

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Biocentrism doesn't recognize nationalities. We need to look at this planet as a planet and not as a bunch of little teams waving their little flags. We have to look at ourselves as Earthlings

Paul Watson

Why did you come to this COP?

I think the real reason was that it was an opportunity to come to Brazil, but we're also on our way to the Southern Ocean, and this [COP] is on the way. We wouldn't have come here just for a COP. It's also the opportunity to meet with Indigenous people, to meet with people in Brazil, and to network. When I come here, I don't look to talk during negotiations; I don't look at talking to the government. I look at talking to other people involved in environmental and Indigenous work.

We can raise many criticisms about COPs, but wouldn't it be worse if we didn't at least make this attempt? Our fate would be entirely in the hands of people like Donald Trump and the big corporations, wouldn't it?

OK, if you have a very serious cut on your arm, you can keep putting a band-aid on it every year, or you can stitch it up. But we're not doing any stitching; we're just putting temporary band-aids every year to make it look like we're actually healing the problem, but we're not. So, whether there's a COP or not, the result's still the same. Nothing is being done. But if the situation gets to the point where we have to act, maybe they'll realize that we have to come from a completely different point of view, that we have to adapt that biocentric point of view, hold real serious climate change conferences to address real problems, and not allow the people who are responsible for the problems to participate and control it. I mean, the end to me was two years ago at COP28, when the president of a Dubai oil company was the president of COP. That just negated the entire process. And all he said was the solution would be found through fossil fuels. That's what the Japanese pavilion was showing: the solution will be found through fossil fuels. They're not even trying to address the problem; they're just trying to profit. I mean, a lot of climate change deniers have been replaced by climate change enablers. People say, "Hey, there's a lot of business opportunities here. It's going to open up the Arctic to fishing, and exploration, oil development. So let's look at the positive side of climate change. The weather's going to be warmer in the north, not necessarily in the tropics, but it'll be like more pleasant weathers in New England and different places. It's good for us. We don't care about the rest of those people living in other places in the world." But here's the other problem: we're going to put more and more stress sociologically on populations, which is going to mean more and more environmental refugees.

We still have a world divided in nation-states. What is the role of nationalities in the collapse?

Biocentrism doesn't recognize nationalities. There's no divisiveness there. We need to look at this planet as a planet and not as a bunch of little teams waving their little flags, which are like their sports colors. We have

to look at ourselves as Earthlings and not Brazilians or Americans or French or whatever. It might seem impossible, but I think that's the way we have to do it. Because anthropocentrism is by its very nature divisive. We have divisions between the left and the right, politically. I don't adhere to either one. To me, biocentrism negates left and right. Because anything that affects this planet is going to affect you, whether you're on the left or right. If the ocean dies, it doesn't matter what your political or religious beliefs are. Nature will dictate what reality is. Nature is resilient, but only up to a point. And things are slow; things don't happen overnight. But when I say that, I've been quite surprised at how rapidly things happen. Much more so than what scientists said 30, 20, 10 years ago. It's been accelerating, and they don't really seem to understand why. It's sort of like a domino effect. It just keeps getting worse and worse. At some point, it can get really bad, really, really fast.

You mentioned the COP president in Dubai. But Lula, 21 days before this COP, decided to open a new oil exploration frontier in the Amazon. What do you think about that?

I spent an hour speaking with Marina Silva on this. And what she said is that both President Lula and her have ideas, progressive ideas, but their hands are tied by Congress. There might be some truth in that. But the real reality is that no, there can be no political solution. Because any politician who actually wants to do something is going to be out of office. They're not going to get the support to stay in office. It would be political suicide. So I think Lula is doing this because he's under enormous pressure from the oil companies and from the right in Congress. And it's really a question of political survival on that. I think Marina Silva is quite sincere in what she wants to do. But, for instance, Nicolai Hulot was the man who put together COP21. He was an advisor to [French] President [François] Hollande [who governed from 2012 to 2017]. After COP, he was appointed by Hollande to be Minister of the Environment. He quit after a year. Why? He says it's a useless position. Whatever I decide is negated by the Minister of Fisheries or the Minister of Industry; they're more important than I am, so I'm just wasting my time here. I think it's a reality for every environmental minister everywhere in the world. If they try to do anything, they're going to be knocked down and probably removed for having the courage to actually do something.

So you're saying the solution won't come from the State...

The solution will never come from governments. Never.

So where will it come from?

The way it has always happened. No government has ever solved any sociological problem, ever. Slavery was

ended after 200 years of campaigning by passionate individuals. The women's suffragette movement took decades to accomplish its goals. And they had to move slowly because they were criticized not only by men, but by the majority of women. Finally they got it by taking to the streets. Here's what I've learned over the years about social [movements]: you don't need the majority of people on your side. You only need 7%—7% of any population gives you a movement. And once you have that movement, the movement begins to get stronger. So, look, we're not anywhere near 7% right now. Because there are more people who are subscribers to Warcraft and Minecraft than there are environmental activists. So, that's what we should aim for: the 7%. We're never going to convince 100% of the population to do anything right. We never have, we never will. The majority were always against abolishing slavery. The majority were always against giving women the right to vote. The majority were always against civil rights. Because everybody wants change, but nobody wants to change. Nobody wants to give up their material benefits, and that's what they're afraid of. If I do this, then we're not going to have this product, or we can't get a nice car. Materialism is the driving force. Nobody wants to make the sacrifices. But, again, the 7% will get you a movement and that will begin to snowball. It gets to be stronger and finer. So, I believe that the environmental movement will get stronger. And by necessity, it has to get stronger because of the threat of ecological collapse. Then it will start to make a difference. Then you get people into a position of power where they can do something. But it's still going to be a struggle. You have to have patience and persistence. And not give up. You just keep going and going.

But as you said earlier, we are at a different moment because we don't have time. We don't have 200 years or even two decades...

No. But I think there's two things that are going to happen: we're going to find a way to solve the problem, which is unlikely, or Nature will solve the problem for us. That will come in the form of ecological collapse, and that will not be a pleasant situation. For example, if phytoplankton were to disappear in the ocean, we'd die. We just simply wouldn't live in that case. But to bring something closer to reality: say ecological problems develop into viruses hitting a certain family of plants, let's say the grass family. The virus goes from one grass species to another, affecting the entire thing, which is a possibility, because it has affected other crops in the past. So if the grass has died out in one or two years, we would die out with the grasses. We would be fighting wars over turnips and potatoes. Pretty much that's how it would be. Because that would mean all the wheat, the rye, the corn, the rice, everything would be gone. And the animals who eat grass, they would be gone.

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They [Indigenous people] know what they need to do; they just need the materials. All the NGOs who are campaigning to protect Amazonia, why aren't they giving the people what they need, if they really are sincere about that?

Paul Watson

There would be no cows, no pigs, or nothing for them to eat. There would be no insects and that would be a serious ecological collapse, in which our population, which is presently 8 billion, would probably be reduced in about three years to about 100 million. That would happen very quickly.

So the path would be to radically change our way of life...

Yes. To me, that's the only way to survive. And that radical change is to switch from anthropocentrism—which to me is a collective form of psychosis—to biocentrism, which is a healthy way of living. But it would be a radical change in our thought processes. Because for 8,000 years, ever since the development of agriculture, we've been an anthropocentric civilization. Outside of Indigenous cultures, it's anthropocentrism. And every single major religion in the world is anthropocentric. Every one of them says we're the center of creation—it was all created for us. That's an incredible delusion. The planet is 4 billion years old, but it was created for us 6,000, 10,000 years ago? I

mean, to even think about that is so illogical. And that we're created in the image of some sort of monkey-god in the sky or something. People are fanatic about their belief in what are basically fairy tales. There's no realism. Because of that, we're alienated from the natural world. We're completely divorced from natural life. We don't even understand it; we don't even comprehend it.

But it doesn't seem like we'll become biocentric. As you said, most people will continue to be anthropocentric. How do you see the future, the near future?

I don't really think about the future because I don't have any power over it. I just focus on the present. And that will define what the future will be. But if you start really thinking about the negative possibilities, it can be very depressing. So I try to think about the possibilities that I can actually contribute to.

The problem is that our billionaire class that we have right now, they're focused on incredible fantasies like, "Let's go to Mars." I mean, why would you want to go to Mars? Why don't we protect the planet that we have right now? If all of those resources about going to Mars were put into environmental work now, that would make a significant contribution. Why would you want to go to Mars when you can't even live in Antarctica? Nobody wants to go live in Antarctica. I mean, it's a beautiful place, but you can't live there. And Antarctica's a hell of a lot more comfortable and forgiving than Mars. So I don't think they've really thought it through. About 10 years ago, I actually set up my own Martian organization. I called it the Martian Conservation Society. First of all, just as a joke, I wanted to be the oldest conservation organization if everybody ever went to Mars. [laughter] But the serious side of it is to focus attention on the possibility of Martian exploration, bringing back microbes to this planet that we don't know how to deal with. But also when you look at it, if humans went to Mars, say we did establish a colony on Mars, those people would cease to be Earthlings; they could never return to Earth. Because within two generations, they wouldn't be able to walk on this planet because of the gravity shift. They would be raised in a gravity where they would literally collapse if they came back to Earth. Their eyes would evolve to the Martian atmosphere, and they wouldn't be able to see here. That's how evolution works. Basically, exploration of Mars would mean the eradication of human beings as we know them. But again, there's 8 billion people. They're all going to go to Mars? Or just Elon [Musk] and his babies? You know, it's just like Moonraker [a 007 spy movie]. Elon Musk is like Moonraker, where they kill everybody on Earth and flee into space. So he needed James Bond to stop him.

You were involved at the beginning of the fight against Belo Monte, which was called Kararaô at the time. Do you intend to fight against Belo Sun, the



Lela Beltrão/SUMAÚMA

WARRIOR: THE SEA SHEPHERD—THE SHIP BELONGING TO THE ORGANIZATION PAUL WATSON FOUNDED TO FIGHT FOR MARINE WILDLIFE—HAS BECOME AN ATTRACTION IN THE PORT OF BELÉM

Canadian mining company that is trying to open the largest open-pit gold mine in Volta Grande do Xingu, a very biodiverse part of the Xingu River, where Belo Monte is already causing an ecocide?

If we can, we will. When I first came here in 1989, it was to support the opposition to the dam, but here's the problem: victories are always temporary, and then you have to fight it all over again. That's what's happening right now. We want to work and support Indigenous people in Amazonia as much as we can. I was just in Raoni's village—probably the most famous Indigenous leader in the world. The things they want are very minimal. Like, "we'd like two patrol boats and the ability to patrol the Xingu to stop poachers from coming in and taking our fish. We're not asking for much." So I'm going to do everything I can to try and raise that support. Get them a good all-terrain vehicle to bring in supplies, two very fast boats like they're used to. But I don't want to be taking charge of this; I just want to give them the materials so they can take charge. They know the river

better than I would ever, they know what they need to do; they just need the materials. And those things should be there right now. All the NGOs who are campaigning to protect Amazonia, why aren't they giving the people what they need, if they really are sincere about that?

As an activist, you advocate the concept of "aggressive non-violence"...

We get called a lot of names—terrorists, militants, whatever. But the reality is this: in 50 years, ever since we began, we've never injured anybody, not a single injury. I've never lost a single crew member, no serious injuries. I've never been convicted of a crime or lost a civil lawsuit. So the strategy of aggressive non-violence works. It's successful. We drove the Japanese out of the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary. We shut down the Canadian seal hunt. We ended whaling in Australia, in North Korea, in Spain, in the Soviet Union. We did all of these things through the approach of aggressive non-violence. ■

Giant climate talks are too small for global inequality

The Belém COP incorporated human and social rights into climate documents and established a coalition of countries committed to eliminating fossil fuels, but the outcome failed to bridge the gulf between those with too much and those with nothing

Claudia Antunes

Rio Guamá, Belém, Amazônia

The conferences on climate change are the biggest international meetings organized by the United Nations. After COP26, held in Glasgow, in 2021, right in the middle of the covid-19 pandemic, the number of credentialed participants climbed to around 40,000 and has never fallen below this number. At COP30, in Belém, 56,118 people held official credentials. According to an unofficial tally released by Brazil, over 42,000 of them were in the Blue Zone, the UN-controlled space where negotiations take place among governments. If this figure holds, the first COP held in the Amazon and the first in a democratic country in the last four years will have had the fourth highest Blue Zone attendance, after Dubai in 2023 with 83,884 people; Baku, Azerbaijan, in 2024 (54,148); and Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, in 2022 (49,704).

The national government representatives who hold the power to make decisions were joined at the climate conferences by thousands of observers from civil society, academia, and state and municipal governments. Lobbyists from the oil and agribusiness industries, the sectors that are the biggest polluters, were also there. What is driving so many people is the effort to speed or delay the containment of an existential crisis, caused by the destruction of Nature to keep the economic system grinding along based on the burning of oil, gas and coal, which for over 200 years has been confused with the words “development” and “progress.” It is a system based on profit, exaggerated consumption, and

inequality. And that is why the COPs, despite being so big, are too small to transform it.

The Belém Conference approved a document on the just energy transition that incorporates human and social rights into decisions on the climate at an unprecedented scale. It also forged coalitions of more than 80 countries who say they are willing to put the gradual elimination of fossil fuels and ending deforestation into practice. COP30's results were nevertheless limited by not only a blockade by oil-producing States, but also by financially wealthy countries' unwillingness to close the distance between the wealthy nations that are mainly responsible for the climate crisis and the poorer nations that suffer the worst impacts.

The inherent limits of climate treaties

Signed ten years ago, at COP21, the Paris Agreement represented a chance for a solution to the climate emergency. For the first time, all of the countries committed to having goals for cutting their greenhouse gas emissions, which are raising the temperature on Earth. This rise is doing irreversible harm to the forests and oceans, which keep the climate in balance, and this is on top of the devouring of Nature that was already happening.

Since the Paris Agreement, the projected rise in the average temperature on Earth by the end of this century fell from over 4 degrees Celsius to between 2.3 to 2.8C. The agreement could not be said to have made



WITH 190 COUNTRIES IN ATTENDANCE, COP30 SHOWED HOW DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE GLOBAL NORTH AND SOUTH ARE IMPEDING CONTAINMENT OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS

no impact, but the current outlook is far from its most modest objective of keeping this rise below 2C. And it is dangerously insufficient to prevent a catastrophic outcome, especially for the biomes and populations in the planet's tropical zones, where the temperature tends to rise more. Scientists are already certain that keeping the temperature from rising in the coming years beyond the target of 1.5C, the agreement's most ambitious goal, will be unattainable. As recognized by the main document approved in Belém, it is now about trying to limit how far over it will go and how long that overshoot will last.

The Paris Agreement was negotiated under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, which dates back to the Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro, in 1992. The texts from these two treaties have their own limitations, which is also the only reason they were signed by over 190 countries. First, they set forth no punishment for failing to fulfill agreements. Next, they only have climate targets because those targets are "Nationally Determined Contributions," or rather, each country is able to decide on how much to cut its own emissions. Additionally, the countries classified as "developed," historically the biggest polluters, with 24 attending the Climate Convention, are the same ones that must finance the energy transition and the adaptation to a hotter world for the others. It is an obligation they have always resisted, despite remaining the wealthiest based

on income per inhabitant – the few nations that have joined this exclusive club since 1992 include South Korea and petro-states like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Finally, the lack of an agreement concerning the quorum for making decisions at the first climate COP, in 1995, led to the establishment of a rule that everything must pass by consensus.

In July 2025, an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice, the UN's main judicial authority, added nuance to these principles. The court said that although the countries' climate goals are "Nationally Determined," they should represent an "adequate contribution" to keeping the planet's heating to 1.5C. The opinion said that a country's classification as "developed" or "developing" cannot be considered as static, but depends on its current circumstances. The court added that nations that do not take measures to draw down fossil fuel production and use could be charged with committing "an internationally wrongful act." In Belém, the island nations under threat from the rising sea tried to include a mention to this legal opinion in the decisions. Yet a consensus could also not be reached on this.

The consensus requirement also prevented documents from the 27 first climate conferences from ever mentioning the two fundamental steps to halting climate change: ending the burning of fossil fuels and stopping deforestation. This only happened at COP28, in Dubai, one of the seven Arab Emirates, in a decision

that was driven by significant international mobilization. It was the requirement for consensus that produced a climate finance agreement at COP29 that left a wide swath of dissatisfaction: it watered down wealthy countries' obligation to finance those with fewer resources and set a goal of 300 billion dollars per year, to only be reached in 2035, falling far short of the 1.3 trillion dollars per year estimated as necessary.

Marina Silva's insistence and an idea that found its time

It was also the consensus requirement that prevented the Belém Conference from adopting a decision to create "roadmaps" to end deforestation and dependence on fossil fuels. Making it mandatory for all countries to create these maps would be a strong political signal to polluting industries and the markets in their orbit, which are accustomed to receiving government subsidies and making easy profits.

A proposed timeline to gradually eliminate fossil fuels in a "just, orderly and equitable manner" found a champion in Brazil's environment and climate change minister Marina Silva back in Dubai. She raised the idea at a Pre-COP meeting held in advance of negotiations, in October 2025, in Brasília. At that time, Marina had already called the timeline a "roadmap" and suggested a map to end and reverse deforestation as well.

Diplomats with Brazil's Foreign Affairs Ministry always had reservations about putting this proposal on the table in Belém, as the COP30's own president, ambassador André Corrêa do Lago, admitted. They believed it might block other agreements that were under negotiation to be finalized in Brazil – which in fact never happened. President Lula nonetheless submitted the proposal at the Leaders Summit preceding the Belém Conference.

The requirement for consensus prevented the Belém Conference from adopting a decision to speed up the implementation of what was agreed two years ago in Dubai: the creation of roadmaps to end deforestation and dependence on fossil fuels

He did this in part to push back on criticism about the issuance, right before COP, of a license for exploratory oil drilling in the Foz do Amazonas Basin – a license that could mean opening a new frontier in oil exploration in Brazil, on the very shores of a Forest that is closer and closer to the point of no return.

By proposing the roadmaps, Lula set off an uncontrollable domino effect. According to counts from specialized website Carbon Brief, the map to end dependence on fossil fuels garnered support from 85 out of the 194 nations at COP30, including Latin American countries like Colombia and Chile, European states like France, Germany and Greece, and 37 of the 39 members in the group of island and coastal nations. The map to end deforestation was supported by 92 countries, including the 56 in the Coalition for Rainforest Nations.

The countries standing in the way and those with no money

As predicted by Brazil's Foreign Affairs Ministry, opposition to the roadmaps was led by a group of 22 Arab countries, with Saudi Arabia at the helm. The absolutist Persian Gulf monarchy is the world's second largest producer of oil, trailing only the United States, the biggest historical polluter, which was removed from the Paris Agreement by Donald Trump, leaving behind an immense climate debt. The Arab group threatened to block any COP30 decision if the maps were mentioned. Joining this group were countries like Russia, Nigeria, Venezuela, and India. The Indians sent conflicting messages, with the government telling the local press it would not oppose the roadmaps if each country could make their own map, but insisting during negotiations in Belém that its priority was on increasing finance, and not on new obligations for cutting emissions.

The Indians and Saudis still had not submitted their updated targets for reducing emissions by November 27, something all nations must do in 2025. The late group included 32 African countries.

It would be easy to simply attribute the roadmaps' obstruction to the Arab bloc. Yet the schism caused by the proposal is more complex than this, as was made clear in the closed-door negotiations on the "Mutirao Decision," the main document approved at COP30, a first version of which once included these maps. The group of African countries, formed by 54 nations, supported the Arab group, but with dissent coming from at least seven of them, including Sierra Leone, Kenya, and Cabo Verde (which is also part of the island nations group). The African countries argued that they did not cause climate change and were unable to bear any additional obligations without guaranteed finance to make the energy transition, adapt to a hotter world, and reduce poverty at the same time. The Arab bloc is itself not homogenous. Countries like Yemen, Algeria, Tunisia, and Iraq are far removed from the ostentatious wealth of the

Persian Gulf monarchies. Many of the African and Arab States emerged from the last round of decolonization, which in some cases lasted into the 1970s.

This recent past has not been overcome. In a report from September 2025, the Oxfam organization estimates 666 million people in the world do not have electricity in their homes, and 85% of them are in sub-Saharan African countries. (According to calculations by the International Energy Agency, made up of 32 countries, a total of 730 million people worldwide have no electricity, 600 million of whom are in Africa.)

Global inequality can be measured by differences in energy consumption. The Our World in Data website, run by Oxford University, in the United Kingdom, made this comparison by measuring energy use in kilowatt/hours, including households, transportation, and industry. In the United States, this amount reaches 76,800 kilowatt/hours per person; in Canada, it is 97,785, while Russia was 62,485, France 37,866, and China 34,514. Energy use per person in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is 382 kilowatt/hours, while it is 674 in Sierra Leone, 7,813 in India, 9,661 in Egypt, and 18,486 in Brazil.

Oxford University's data does not consider inequalities within countries. Yet the Oxfam report says: "If just one year's energy consumption of the wealthiest 1% were redistributed, it could meet the energy needs of all the people without electricity seven times over." According to Oxfam, 50% of clean energy investments in 2024 were made in high-income countries. China accounted for 29% of these investments, while Africa had just 2%. Furthermore, money for renewable energy projects in the Global South is lent at an annual interest rate of 9% to 13.5%, while rates in Global North countries range from 3% to 6%. "These costs are not inevitable – they reflect a system that prices risk through the racialized lens of colonial legacies," Oxfam says. It is similar to the diagnosis made by Mohamed Adow, director of the Power Shift Africa organization: "Roadmaps and work plans will be meaningless unless they are translated into true finance and real action for countries that are bearing the brunt of the crisis."

The Mutirao Decision and the parallel strategy against fossil fuels

The Mutirao Decision, the main document out of COP30, was negotiated by Brazilian leaders to tackle topics that were not originally on the conference agenda, but that had been proposed by groups of countries. These included the establishment of finance obligations and the "ambition gap" between the set of climate goals and the efforts needed to fulfill the Paris Agreement – the roadmaps fall under this point. A third issue regarded "unilateral" trade measures, which was mostly a reference to the carbon tax the European Union will begin to charge on exports to the block in 2026, making products sold by other countries more expensive (the

Europeans say the tax is aimed at making trade fairer for their companies, by offsetting the costs they incur from having stricter environmental laws).

The European Union came to Belém without a position concerning the roadmaps, because there was no internal consensus among its 27 countries – Italy and Poland were against the Brazilian proposal. Nevertheless, at discussions on the Mutirao Decision that took place in the second week of COP30, the European group pulled together and then pinned advances on finance to the approval of these maps. They argued the withdrawal by the United States from the Paris Agreement had left Europe as the main provider of climate funds, even though countries like Japan, Canada, and Australia still remained. China, which is the biggest polluter today as well as the biggest producer of equipment for the energy transition, dodged the leading role it was expected to play with the USA being absent. In private discussions, the country avoided pressuring the Russians and Arabs, preferring to focus opposition on the Europeans' "unilateral trade measures."

Nobody wanted to compromise, which is why the Mutirao Decision represented the lowest common denominator among the 194 countries in Belém. The document's final text was only ready after COP30 ran into Saturday, November 22, one day after the conference's scheduled end date. At that point, some of the Brazilian negotiators had gone 70 hours with no sleep.

Understanding this document is like deciphering a hieroglyph. There is not one mention in the text of the term "fossil fuels." Yet in order for the Europeans and most of the Latin Americans to agree to it, a reference to the "United Arab Emirates Consensus" was included. This mention of the COP28 agreement that talks about the "transition away from fossil fuels" and "ending and reversing deforestation by 2030" is connected to the "Global Implementation Accelerator," now created in Belém to help countries turn their goals for cutting greenhouse gas emissions and their national adaptation plans into a reality.

Alden Meyer, from the USA, is with the E3G think tank and is a COP veteran. He says this encrypted mention will make it possible for Brazil's COP30 president to keep the topic on the agenda until next November, when Australia and Turkey will take charge of COP31. According to Meyer, Brazil's announcement that it will use this period to deepen international discussion on the roadmaps is "a huge step forward." The announcement of the Brazilian initiative was due mostly to pressure from the streets, the social and environmental movements, scientists, and countries like Colombia. It joins various international coalitions that have already organized on the issue, such as the Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance. Representatives from Columbia and the Netherlands have called a conference on gradually eliminating fossil fuels for 2026. The Climate Observatory, a network of

Brazilian organizations, says the growing wave calling for “serious discussion” on fossil fuels is the biggest legacy of COP30: “This wave broke in Belém, but it should grow throughout 2026.”

Finance is still on shaky ground

The Mutirao Decision also leaves climate finance, which is vital to so many nations without resources, on shaky ground. The Africans, Latin Americans, island nations, and the group of 44 countries classified by the UN as “less developed,” most of which are in Africa, wanted a commitment from wealthy countries to triple climate adaptation funds by 2030 – which would total 120 billion dollars per year. This would have to come from donations or interest-free lending to keep foreign debts from climbing. The Mutirao Decision nevertheless “calls for efforts” to triple these funds by 2035, without mentioning any amount to be reached. In addition, the lack of an agreed definition on what climate finance is leaves room to perpetuate the dispute over the amount that will really go from the North to the Global South with the goal of fulfilling the Paris Agreement. In 2023, according to a World Bank estimate, countries in the Global South paid more to private creditors in the North than they received in money for climate actions.

The document establishes a two-year work program on finance, including all the cash flows – and not just from the wealthy countries to the rest. In another encrypted message to mollify the governments of wealthy countries, the text contains a footnote saying this will be done without the program “prejudging the process on the implementation” of the new finance goal agreement, which was approved under protests one year ago.

Days before COP30, Brazil and Azerbaijan introduced another map, the Baku-Belém Roadmap to 1.3 Trillion (dollars), the minimum annual amount necessary for climate finance. There is no compliance mandated by the report, which was ordered by COP29, and the Mutirao Decision merely “takes note” of its existence. Although it contains no revolutionary proposals, it does suggest reforms to climate funds, multilateral banks, and the financial system so that money can more easily make it to countries with fewer resources. It also includes ideas like charging extraordinary taxes on the most polluting sectors and expanding instruments that allow countries to spend what they would pay in foreign debt on climate policies.

Some countries objected to these suggestions. Japan said it would not support a roadmap that was not “coherent with the discussions and consensus accumulated in international bodies, like the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision.” This organization sets international regulatory standards for the banking system.





THE SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT ASKED FOR AN END TO NEW OIL AND GAS PROJECTS AND AN 'ORDERLY AND FULLY FINANCED' TRANSITION

The just transition and indicators for adaptation

In the end, the minimum consensus reached in the Mutirao Decision led to the blockade being lifted, but it also lowered ambitions in two other documents that had been under negotiation in recent years and were approved at COP30: the work program on the just energy transition and definition of the indicators that will be used to measure countries' stage of adaptation to a hotter world.

The program for the just transition was given plans for a mechanism to accompany its implementation, as demanded by social and environmental organizations. But the mechanism has yet to be created – this is only expected to happen one year from now, at COP31. Paradoxically, however, the text left out the explicit connection with the “transition away from fossil fuels” mentioned in the draft that reached Belém, but that was struck from the final version. A mention of the rights of communities affected by the exploration of minerals used in energy transition equipment, such as batteries and solar energy panels, was also included in the document at one point, but was removed under pressure from China.

Meanwhile, the number of adaptation indicators fell from 100 to 59 after the African countries threatened to withhold approval, fearing they would be held to account for measures they did not see themselves as capable of putting into practice. This reduction led to an outcry from Latin American and Caribbean countries at the final plenary in Belém, who were assuaged by the promise that the topic will be put back up for discussion at the mid-year Climate Convention meeting in 2026. In addition, there will also be a two-year process, before COP32 is held in Ethiopia, for countries to “align” their views on indicators before they begin to take effect.

As is typical of COPs, this set of decisions is insufficient and gradualist to the extreme, in contrast to the increasingly visible consequences of global heating

The Climate Action Network, the biggest international group of social and environmental movements, welcomed the document on the just transition. “No COP decision has ever carried such ambitious and comprehensive language on rights and inclusion: human rights; labor rights; the rights of Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendants; and strong references to gender equality.”

However, as is typical of the COPs, this set of decisions is insufficient and gradualist to the extreme, in contrast to the increasingly visible consequences of global heating. The Climate Action Network reiterated this, saying the Belém Conference “has produced weak outcomes in the very areas that are critical to ensuring justice for vulnerable and frontline communities.” It is a reference to the vague commitment to increase finance for adaptation and the absence of any mentions of a “just, equitable and fully-financed transition away from fossil fuels.”

Nods toward Indigenous peoples and frontline communities

Various documents approved at COP30 make nods toward demands from Indigenous and Quilombolas peoples and from other communities that protested en masse in the streets of Belém, in what the conference's executive director, Ana Toni, classified as “little big steps.”

For the first time, the texts in the Mutirao Decision and work program on mitigation (to reduce greenhouse gas emissions) recognize the importance of Indigenous Territories and traditional communities in containing climate change. The document on the just transition recognizes Indigenous peoples' rights to “free, prior and informed consultation” about activities affecting them and their territories. It mentions, for the first time, the rights and protections owed to Indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation or who have come into recent contact. African descendants, the diaspora made up of Africans who were mostly enslaved during European colonialism, received an unprecedented mention in four documents, including the new action plan on including women and girls in national climate policies.

They were “wins that really matter,” according to Tatiانا Oliveira, of WWF-Brazil. “The distance between the social effort and the frail pages of the [final] agreement shows that solutions come from peoples and territories. It is a clear sign of the limits of global governance, but also an invitation to a future of struggle, collaboration, and hope,” she said.

A process was also started to bolster synergy among the agreements on the climate, biological diversity, and desertification, in an initial step to recognize the essential connection between conserving Nature and reducing emissions. The document on mitigation mentions “vectors” (causes) of deforestation for the first time. Yet, as is typical of the complicitness and cowardice of most of the governments when it comes to powerful



THE COUNTRIES OF AFRICA, WHERE MILLIONS LIVE IN HOMES WITH NO ELECTRICITY, HAVE NO INTEREST IN TAKING ON ADDITIONAL CLIMATE OBLIGATIONS

interests, the document names neither monocrops grown for export, such as soybeans, nor mining. The need to change systems of food production, distribution, and consumption did not appear in the Mutirao Decision, despite being an increasingly prevalent topic in the debates held in parallel to the negotiations.

Claudio Angelo, a Climate Observatory coordinator, felt that “Belém delivered what was possible in a world radically transformed for the worse.” For him, the formation of a coalition of countries willing to move forward on the issue of fossil fuels was a “huge political victory” at the conference. Yet the fact that this did not enter any of the consensus documents, he says, shows “the exhaustion of the consensus-based decision model and makes it necessary to reform the Climate Convention and COPs.”

The debate on reforming the COPs is not new and has a few unknowns. One of the more mundane issues is that a consensus decision is needed to put an end to decisions by consensus. This year, the countries again refused to adopt a rule that would allow a vote of two-thirds of those present to make decisions. The other, more complex issue is whether this can help to reduce the inequalities, both within and among the countries, which are among the causes of climate change and are

delaying fulfillment of the treaties intended to prevent planetary collapse.

On the same day the COP ended, the leaders in the G20, the group of the world’s largest economies, began a summit meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa. This, like the COP30 meeting, was also boycotted by Trump. Similar to COP30, everyone reaffirmed a commitment to multilateral cooperation, joint action between countries, and their concern with the climate emergency. In his speech, president Lula said that it is from the G20, which is responsible for 77% of global emissions, that “a new economic model should emerge” – something that Lula’s electors are hoping his administration does domestically. Lula said the Belém Conference planted the seed of the roadmap to move the world away from oil, coal, and gas and it will bear fruit “sooner or later.”

Many of the countries that signed the G20 declaration, including Saudi Arabia and the Europeans, helped to water down the documents approved in Belém. Multilateralism, although agonizing, may have survived Trump’s threats. However, the alternative approaches practiced and advocated by the populations on the frontline of the climate emergency have still not made their way into the halls of power. ■



A jaguar sees the Moon and COP from behind bars

While COP30 debates the climate collapse in Belém, Luakã covers 24 kilometers a day in captivity

Lorena de Paula

Guamá River, Belém, Amazon

Luakã, she who shines and is lovely as the Moon, is not prone to big public appearances. When the sun rises, insofar as is possible within the indiscreetness of her home of barred walls, she finds refuge in the shadows of the dark lair, eluding the curious eyes behind the branches and bushes, stealing away behind trunks that provide nothing more than a glimpse of her enigmatic tail. Yet that morning began atypically in Belém, Pará, and Luakã's decision was atypical too.

November 10 marked the start of the United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP30, held in Belém. And this was the day when Luakã decided to reveal herself in all her splendor. The Goeldi Museum's Zoo-Botanical Park, the stage for so many of the event's thematic programs, opened its doors, the curtains of Luakã's home. And on the leafy tableau, with the sun as her spotlight, the jaguar let herself shine.

"She's showing off for the gringos," she heard one spectator comment with irony. Yet she didn't mind, she didn't even dignify it with a look. That visitor was just one among so many and, like the others, in a few minutes he would be gone, maybe forever. She was used to the wide eyes, the awestruck "ohhhs!," the constant chatter of voices from an intermittent audience, the fleeting attention they bestowed upon her before leaving.

She wasn't easily swayed by admirers, with their begging for photographs, the clicking of their ingratiating kisses, their impertinent comments. This adulation of-



ten turned to impatience, even fury, leading would-be fans to be rebuked by security staff for hurling bottles against the bars of her home, asking for the removal of her stone lair so she could be exposed to their staring, suggestions that the park's employees should knock on the railing to coax her out of hiding. All because Luakã refused to show herself. All because she refused to be a pet cat. All because she wouldn't give into the whims of those who wanted her to be a model and a puppet. They may have seen her as one of the park's "main attractions," but it was of her own accord that she would show herself, and not anyone else's.



IN AN ENCLOSURE WITH TRACES OF THE FOREST, LUAKÃ LAMENTS THE LIFE SHE COULD HAVE HAD

Curvy and stealthy, she exited her rocky lair to lick herself clean in spectacular fashion, have a vigorous wee behind the water fountain, and let out a powerful yawn before discreetly napping among the dry leaves, in a display of camouflaged spots. She heard the hubbub from the audience, but it was so natural for her that she wasn't even fazed. Over time, she had learned to recognize genuine admiration, the familiar appearance of her friends in uniform, the true respect in the fond looks. That morning, some of those familiar eyes stared at the jaguar.

Maybe Luakã didn't know or remember, but Ana

Vitória had grown up perched on the railings, one of her most faithful admirers. From the time she was 10, she would go to the museum with her family almost every Saturday and, despite her affection for all the animals, the felines always drew her like a magnet. "The jaguars have an imposing presence, you know? When they come, they take all the attention."

Over a decade passed and her amazement did not abate. As a 21 year old studying Biological Sciences at the Federal University of Pará, Ana Vitória received a fellowship from the Goeldi Museum. Since then, she has learned the feline's story, the spots that are as unique to

her as a human's fingerprint, and Luakã was no longer just "the jaguar," she gained an identity. "Every time I come to work at the museum, I swing by here. I take the longer route, just so I can see her. It's fascinating looking at her like this. [...] And despite people saying 'Oh, but they're predators' and everything, whenever I look, I still see a kitten, a big cat that just wants to play."

"Play or attack?" Raul always wonders. The gardener who walks along the edges of her home-enclosure, in the perimeter accessible to visitors, always catches the jaguar's interest. As soon as she saw him drawing near, she attentively watched him, standing still, wagging the tip of her tail, ready to pounce. She pawed at the bars, trying to steal his watering can, causing little drops to rain down on her nose. "We have a love-hate relationship," he says, smiling. But he then turns serious. "There's people who say it's cruel to bring animals here. I think it's cruel to abandon them to die in the woods."

This would have been the fate of many of the beings who inhabit the Goeldi Museum. This could also have been Luakã's fate. Rescued from an illegal breeder in Anajás, on Marajó Island, she was still a cub when she came to the park. A domesticated orphan, she was exiled from her natural instincts, nearly turned into a house cat. With no mother to teach her to hunt and survive in the Forest, the possibility of reintroducing her into Nature was ruled out.

All that was left for her was adoption and being named "Luakã" – a moniker suggested by one of the kids in the Goeldi Museum's Little Researcher Club and chosen after a vote by the park's visitors. The name is inspired by an Indigenous character from the book *As Maravilhosas Lendas Amazônicas e Outros Contos* (Wonderful Amazonian Legends and Other Tales, loosely translated), meaning something like "she who shines and is as lovely as the Moon."

Yet instead of uncertain and agile hunts under the moonlight, Luakã is left with a diet of 2.5 kilos of chicken and beef, which she eats every other day to keep from getting too fat. All that's left is to watch the moon from between the bars. All that's left is the company of Guma and Talismã, two other neighboring jaguars who, like her, were also captive refugees. This was the closest she came to having a family – if this human institution could be considered as suited to the typical feline solitude.

Solitude is what Luakã experiences these days, now that Guma and Talismã have passed in their old age. Now she wanders alone among the three enclosed compartments. She rambles from one side to the other, over and over, covering 24 kilometers each day. It has been like this for 15 years, her whole life.

Although the size of her enclosure complies with the minimum required by law for zoos, biologist Thatiana Figueiredo guarantees that expansions would be welcome. "We would like her and the other animals to be able to have a bigger perimeter of movement. But we're

Now that Guma and Talismã have passed in their old age, Luakã wanders alone from one side to the other, over and over, covering 24 kilometers each day. It has been like this for 15 years, her whole life

limited by the park's space and the lack of resources," she says. "We hoped COP could help us resolve these infrastructure problems."

Although the institution has managed to renovate some areas and administrative buildings, Thatiana thinks the COP could do better when it comes to including animal lives in debates. Yet the more-than-humans have no credentials to access the negotiations, where men in suits outline their destinies. At COP, she has been occupying an almost decorative place. Even though they are the first affected when the forest is licked by fires and tractors smash into trees. Even though they are seen as a mere side effect in the unbridled thirst to engulf the Amazon in a developmentalist project. Even though human action exiles them from Nature, robs their instincts, and leaves it up to the museum to fulfill the role of shelter. "And here they play an educational role, of showing the public the importance of conserving, of keeping the Forest standing," Thatiana says, in a voice that seems to be praying.

Only Luakã knows what she feels deep down. Her traits convey indecipherable emotions, which humans frequently try to divine. Could it be boredom and melancholy they see on her face? They wonder if she has somehow found happiness in the routine feedings, safety, and human affection. Just like Luakã, the answers remain an enigma.

When a storm breaks out over Belém and drives her visitors away, the questions still linger in the air, popping like raindrops on her feline body. Slowly, she walks toward the shelter. For a brief moment she seems to drop the veil of indifference she uses to cover her resentment at being deprived of the life that never was, but could have been. ■



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CUBUKRA KAYAPÓ AND TEÔ KAYAPÓ WORK TOGETHER; THE BODY PAINTER CREATES WHILE HER PARTNER TRANSLATES THE CULTURAL MEANING OF THE DESIGNS FOR THE PUBLIC

THE COP NOBODY SEES

Sitting on the floor as the world rushes by

In the greenless Green Zone, Indigenous artists could only find room on the floor

Shayra Cruz

Guamá River, Belém, Amazon

I was still trying to catch my breath after waiting in line for an hour in the hot sun to get into the Green Zone. Nearby, some women and men were distributing leaflets from the National Institute of Circular Economy, an organization that promotes sustainable practices and explains how to cut waste and reuse resources. They were handing out educational material and water, trying to bring a little relief to those waiting their turn to enter the space where credentials are not required at COP30. Near the entrance, where artists had arranged their work on display, I saw a row of people from the Kayapó Indigenous community sitting on the floor, no stands, no

structure. Women with children on their laps, men with body paint from head to toe, young people with pots of natural dye made from genipap fruit. Hundreds of conference attendees were hurrying by, swerving around the bodies, many without even noticing that in the midst of this hubbub, memories were being drawn.

This was when I met Cubukra Kayapó, 88, and her husband, Teô Kayapó, 48. She was wearing a floral dress stained with genipap; he was shirtless and his entire body was covered with his people's traditional body paint patterns. Sitting side by side, they had spread Kayapó drawings on the floor—images that looked



CLOSE-UP OF CUBUKRA KAYAPÓ'S HAND PREPARING NATURAL DYE FROM GENIPAP FRUIT

like living maps that told stories no one else in those conference rooms could translate. Every line and every trace of dye conveyed ancestral knowledge, identity, and resistance.

Before I could say anything, Cubukra lifted her painted face and in a sweet voice called me over: “Come, come and let me paint you.”

She spoke only a few words of Portuguese. Shy at first, I soon felt welcomed and began to open up. I talked a little about my people (Baré) and where I come from (Rio Negro), and they both listened attentively. At the end, they said they would visit me, and I realized this moment was about more than just exchanging stories; it was about connection, care, and mutual respect.

Cubukra began drawing a Kayapó pattern on my arm. As we shared paint, laughter, and confidences, time seemed to slow down, each story imprinting not just on my skin but also in my memory.

While he drew, Teô told stories about their lives. He said they had traveled “to so many places in this Brazil,” always just the two of them, taking body paint with them as if taking their land. He said they were trying “to make a little money” with crafts and body paint, because it

is expensive to travel. With a smile suggesting he still couldn't believe it, he told me they were going to visit Canada the following week. “Look... I never imagined I'd do this.”

When the foot traffic picked up, he looked around and said with a sad chuckle: “We could very well have a decent place here in the Green Zone to do our body painting. We're on the floor, might even get stepped on...”

It was his first COP. Teô said he was amazed by the number of kin that were there, by the strength of the peoples who had gathered. He called it the “Indigenous COP.” But he admitted he had expected more: “I thought there'd be a space for us. A table, a stand, our own place to work and sell our crafts.”

There on the floor, in a makeshift spot inside one of COP30's busiest venues, they hung tough, drawing out history in the midst of global haste. Invisible to many. Immense to anyone who stopped for a few minutes.

I realized I didn't need anything else to feel the power of their culture. And that is when I understood: the story I was looking for wasn't hidden. It was sitting on the floor, alive, pulsating through every drawing, every laugh, every gesture of silent resistance. ■



The men cleaning the uncleanable

The silent sweeping of the 400 prisoners clearing Belém of garbage at this COP30, prohibited from speaking

Darlon Neres

Guamá River, Belém, Amazon

Men wearing green vests and light-colored shirts quietly sweep Avenida Bernardo Sayão with such order they seem to be an army. That impression soon dissolves upon seeing the gun pointed at them. They have been deprived of their freedom, confined to Pará's state prison system. Under the sun, many of them wear balaclavas that cover their heads, necks and, sometimes, parts of their faces, nearly suffocating in the sweltering Amazon summer. They aren't allowed to speak, they are only allowed to sweep. They are dropped off in the morning and picked up at night to return to their cells. They will repeat the same silent saga the next day to clear the garbage from around COP30 headquarters, now multiplied by an estimated 50,000 plus visitors.

On its website, the Office of the Pará State Secretary of Penitentiary Administration guarantees that they have labor rights, yet provides no details on what those rights are, while also mentioning that for every three days of work, one day is taken off their sentence. According to the official statement, this is aimed at "reintegration in society, work, and citizenship."

On Avenida Bernardo Sayão, the group is still in formation. Men in black, in charge of security, give orders: "Move down the other side of the street!" The prisoners move as a group, concentrated, subdued. The only noises they make are the ones coming from their hoes and shovels.

Next to the street, a dumpster and a small front loader

pick up the accumulated trash. Further down the road, the scene looks like a dump in the middle of the city: mud, rubble, bottles, plastic bags. In the back is a dark warehouse, where the light barely shines in through the bars. Inside, men and women are sorting recyclables, PET bottles, cans, paper.

I introduce myself as a journalist and receive a courteous and attentive welcome, but I hear the same order being repeated: "We can only talk when authorized by the person in charge." Then one of them invited me to come in and speak to the local guard. Along the way, I came across other men – and lots of rubbish. At the end of a warehouse wall, a guard dressed in black welcomed me. I asked the security team if I could record interviews, listen to the stories behind the covered faces. The answer came in stages. First, they said they would consult their superiors. Then, one more phone call — and another. Ten minutes passed as I waited. The final decision was curt and firm: "We are not authorizing them to speak with reporters."

Our contact ended there. The hoes continued to beat the ground, the wheelbarrow kept filling with trash, and silence reigned once again. It wasn't just their bodies that were deprived of liberty, but their voices as well.

Suddenly, amidst the noise of the shovels, a sound cut through the silence. Inside the dark warehouse, one detainee ventured a quiet bit of singing:





SILENCE, SUN, AND HEAT: WORKER-PRISONERS SWEEP AVENIDA BERNARDO SAYÃO, IN BELÉM

“

I tried working, it's hard focusing
The evening's the pits, when the sun sets
She was waiting for me a while, wearing a smile
Today, the day goes, the longing grows
And I'm in this house alone...

Oh, if these walls didn't say
Oh, if this pillow didn't narrate
All the loving nights
I spent with you.

The song – Paredes (Walls, loosely translated), by Wesley Safadão and Jorge & Mateus, released in 2016 – echoed among the garbage and shadows of the warehouse. It was a memory, maybe a way to let off steam, perhaps a way to keep some part of himself alive.

The SUMAUMA team tried to understand who these worker-prisoners are – and the conditions under which they live and work. We sent two emails, on November 6 and 10, formally requesting information and an interview, in addition to asking to talk to the men sweeping the streets. We also went to the Office of the Pará State Secretary of Penitentiary Administration twice, on No-

vember 10 and 11. Both visits were met with silence. “They can't, they can't talk without an order from their superiors,” one member of the press office said.

In a statement, Belém's municipal government said the operation is being done in partnership with the Pará State Secretary of Penitentiary Administration and “has around 400 detained men who are working daily, with the support of penitentiary agents and teams from the Pará State Secretary of Penitentiary Administration, as well as 20 dump trucks and three backhoe loaders providing logistical support to service areas.” The statement also said that “in addition to direct reinforcement of urban sanitation, this action has a significant social aspect, guaranteeing participants the right to a reduced sentence: for every three days worked, one day is taken off their sentence, pursuant to law.” Again, there was no information on compensation.

Off paper, the work being done beyond prison walls, which should represent a chance for a new beginning, is turned into another zone of control. The hands cleaning the pavement are unseen, the faces collecting the city's waste remain behind bars – visible only to those willing to see.

The shovels keep beating the asphalt, and the men who sweep Belém's streets at the summit to discuss the planet-home's future continue to clean what can never be cleaned as long as they are deprived of the right to even say their own names. ■



The story of Maria's bottled-up life

Seated in front of an upmarket hotel, Maria must sell bottles of water to avoid being swallowed up herself. Climate collapse makes her every day harder and hotter

Marcos Miranda

Guamá River, Belém, Amazon



Marcos Miranda/SUMAUMA

SITTING ON THE SIDEWALK, MARIA CONCEIÇÃO STARES AT HER IRON CART WHILE SHE WAITS TO SELL WATER TO PASSERSBY

Maria Conceição is a woman who believes she knows nothing about COP. But the impacts of the climate collapse and of discrimination are inscribed on her body. She manifests the inequality that is steadily reproduced and now exacerbated by the collapse. In the case of bodies like hers, these impacts will be greater and hit earlier. Because when you are Maria in Brazil, Black and Amazonian, you earn less money than others, while feeling a much greater effect of global heating.

Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, president of Brazil, spoke about the “crisis of inequality” in his speech at the opening of COP30. Maria is familiar with this. She is 49 and has spent the last ten years sitting on a sidewalk selling water during the day so she can afford to eat dinner at night. Maria sells something that is a central topic at the 30th UN Climate Change Conference, COP30, which began on November 10 in Belém, capital of Pará state. In the Blue Zone, to which Maria has no access, water governance and management are under discussion.

Maria Conceição simply sells water. Before—when she lived in the municipality of Curralinho, on Marajó Island, her native land—this daughter of family farmers drank water from the Pará River at no charge. It was free. The River too.

Today, Maria works on Avenida Presidente Vargas, which runs by such major Belém landmarks as Praça da República and Boulevard Castilhos França. Not far away is Ver-o-Peso Market, a historic and cultural site on the banks of Guajará Bay; at the end of the avenue is Estação das Docas, an old port that was renovated and transformed into the city’s busiest gastronomic and cultural hub. But not for the Marias of this city. The Marias are only there to serve.

Seated in a worn-out plastic deck chair, Maria Conceição sells water from her cart to passersby. This water was good quality and free before capitalism ate up rivers and usurped their waters, thus controlling lives. Everyone’s life, but especially the lives of Marias.

From a nameless distributor near her home, Maria buys a 12-pack of water for 10 Brazilian reals, or about 1.89 dollars. Each bottle costs 0.83 real, and Maria resells it for 3 reals—a profit of about 40 cents in dollars. Right next door, on the corner of the block where she and her cart wait for someone to suddenly feel thirsty, stands one of Belém’s priciest hotels. The contrast speaks volumes. But nobody hears Maria. Maria Conceição has never set foot inside the hotel. And nobody from the hotel has ever bought water from her cart. Those passersby simply pass her by.

“Maria, what does COP30 mean to you?”

Maria falls silent. Not because she doesn’t know but because this isn’t Maria’s language. Because she and all the other Marias experience the climate collapse day after day. Her life speaks her words.

Maria’s mouth makes a gesture, contorting to say she doesn’t know. Then she starts telling me about her days of COP30, about what will remain as a memory of a moment so many will consider historic and, for other reasons, will be historic for Maria too. She says she made more than 265 dollars selling water to the scores of foreigners who came to the city for the two days leading up to the official opening of COP30. While struggling hard to understand their diverse languages, in two days she took in ten times what she usually earns in one day. “I couldn’t figure out how to talk to them, they talk different, a guy helped me.”

Maria understood that in today’s scenario, selling water was her smartest strategy, given the climate that makes foreigners from abroad and Brazilians from the South and Southeast sweat. And so she managed to earn a little money to use for fishing a dream out of one of the rivers of her desires, rivers that run ever drier, her desires weighed down by the accretion of days.

With the money earned selling water, Maria dreams of giving each of her four children a house and buying one for herself, so she can move. She lives on the south side of Belém and says she takes a risk every time she leaves home because her neighborhood has a dangerously high crime rate. She would like to get away from there, less because of the crime and more because of the state violence. “They say anyone who lives there is a criminal. When [the police] raid the place, they beat us.” Maria would really like to live on the same street as the hotel.

Maria Conceição gets up every day at 6 a.m. and travels more than six kilometers by bus—not a comfy, air-conditioned COP bus but one of the crowded ones habitually left over for residents on the poor outskirts of Belém. Maria climbs on board without taking even a sip of wake-up coffee. Once she arrives in Belém’s historic city center, she sets up her water cart under the sun and, if she’s in the wrong place at the wrong time, gets called a thief. Because for Marias, the wrong place is their home, and the wrong time is all the time.

Maria Conceição has a dream, but she still hasn’t sold enough water to make it happen. She wishes she could live near her work, in the historic neighborhood where all she is left with now is a piece of the sidewalk. Maria doesn’t know it, but the cost of a night’s stay at the corner hotel is 18 times her two days’ earnings from the time preceding COP30. What Maria does know is how to sell water to beat the heat and, with the money, dream of occupying the space where she is occupied now.

Maria Conceição did not comment on COP30, but her very life tells the story of the climate emergency. The collapse is what makes Maria sell water so her life is not drunk to the last drop. Because in the Brazil of Marias and the world of waters, both were once free but are now trapped. Some in bottles, others on sidewalks. ■



Axolotls, extraordinary experts at adaptation, are now casualties of the war on Nature

Resisting the attacks on Nature is an impossible challenge even for one of the most adaptable amphibians. Three of them who survive in an aquarium at Pará Federal University warn us of a future that is already here

Flávia Coimbra

Guamá River, Belém, Amazon

The three axolotls who live at Pará Federal University—Kite, Gle, and Cris, one male and two females—were rescued during an operation against wildlife trafficking at Belém International Airport. Native to Mexico, axolotls are salamanders who have a remarkable ability to regenerate. If one of their limbs is cut off, they regrow a fully functioning replacement, bones, nerves, blood vessels, and all. They can also adapt to a land environment, if need be, losing the gills that allow them to breathe underwater and using their lungs instead. Axolotls are living testimony to the amazing adaptability developed by life on Earth. However, these magnificent creatures are vanishing from the planet.

In November 2024, after federal police agents discovered the axolotls inside a Styrofoam box marked “fragile,” the trio was taken to Brazil’s environmental protection agency Ibama and then given a home at the university in Belém. Home—but captivity as well, because despite the species’ resilient adaptation to diverse environments, their existence in the wild is endangered by developmentalist logic. Once inhabitants of the system of interconnected wetlands and lakes in Mexico’s central valley, today axolotls can only be found naturally in only three locations: lakes Xochimilc, Chalco, and Chapultepec.

Given the expansion of urbanization, water pollution, the introduction of predatory species, and environmental degradation in Mexico, they are no longer able to survive. The species has been listed as critically endangered due to habitat loss. Estimates are that 1,000 of them at most can still be found in the wild.

In the aquarium at Pará Federal University, the axolotls sometimes need to be separated. During their last fight, one of them lost an arm and had his tail gnawed. It was, however, possible to observe the whole process of a new limb being completely regenerated. Even so, axolotls may disappear from the planet. They can endure long trips on wildlife smuggling routes but cannot return because their home no longer shelters them. They can switch from aquatic to terrestrial but cannot survive the destructive power of humans.

Axolotls can regenerate their eyes (cornea and retina), jaw, heart, and parts of their brain (research indicates they may even be able to restore lost skills, suggesting memory retention or recovery). The species is also known as the Mexican walking fish, because their bodies resemble lizards while their heads look like fish. Scientists believe their DNA may hold the key to human regenerative treatments that could transform Western medicine. Though endangered, they are treated as pets



AXOLOTLS IN AN AQUARIUM AT PARÁ FEDERAL UNIVERSITY:
THE STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE



around the world. “Fascinating,” say the ads; “cute,” say people—signaling human folly yet again.

Axolotls have become a symbol of both the need to preserve Mexico’s waters and the urgent imperative to halt the global destruction of Nature. They are a reminder that individual attitudes have a direct impact on the collective. For this series of The COP that nobody sees, they are just three of the many more-than-humans who fight to survive. In the aquarium, thousands of kilometers from their home, the axolotls bump from one wall to the other. At COP30, who is watching those who resist? ■



THE COP NOBODY SEES

The sickly Sumaúma tree on the way to COP30

At the entrance to the conference blue zone, a solitary tree suffocated by the city struggles to survive

Guilherme Guerreiro Neto

Guamá River, Belém, Amazon

A sickly Sumaúma tree stands in the middle of the path to COP30. Her crown was amputated seven months ago. Her roots are breaking through the concrete in an insistent fight for life. Nobody cares about her. There is no forest around her. To remain standing, the Sumaúma weaves roots and tightly embraces herself.

What is left of the Sumaúma watches an equally sick world pass by her on its way to discuss the climate. Since forest-beings recognize each other, riverside dweller Raimunda Gomes da Silva and indigenous leader Bel Juruna do not just walk by but stop next to the tree.

Neither Raimunda nor Bel nor the Sumaúma can enter the Blue Zone. That is why they suspect that what ails them is unlikely to be resolved there.

“COP should be discussed with those who protect the Forest,” Bel says. “Not with Forest destroyers,” Raimunda adds.

Raimunda and Bel saw the Xingu River fall ill. Its disease was Belo Monte. Bel Juruna comes from Miratu Village, in Paquiçamba Indigenous Territory, along the stretch of the river known as Volta Grande do Xingu, where the hydroelectric dam made water scarce. Raimunda comes from Furo do Trindade, a Ribeirinho territory that river peoples are trying to remake following their eviction from there.

Raimunda knew the Sumaúma in Belém when the tree was still healthy. As she walks up to the tree, she recalls how beautiful her canopy once was. “They removed her crown for COP,” Raimunda says sadly. Bel is the first to realize why: the tree is unwell.

The Sumaúma was pruned after a team of forestry technicians and engineers from the Federal Rural University of the Amazon and the City of Belém identified dead branches, a termite infestation, and the presence

of giant ceiba borers, a beetle whose larvae burrow tunnels inside the trunks.

Raimunda calls the illness that endangers the Sumaúma “vento roto”—fierce wind. She can tell when the core has become hollow just by looking at and touching the prop roots and bark.

If the dam killed the Xingu, it is the city that is trying to kill COP’s Sumaúma. Not simply a city but the model of city that has taken over Belém, smothering green areas so everything becomes concrete and asphalt, flying in the face of climate adaptation.

Not far from the COP30 Sumaúma, the Pará state government, using around 46 million dollars from the Brazilian development bank BNDES, ran over nearly 35 hectares of forest to extend and widen Rua da Marinha. A municipal park that runs alongside the thoroughfare is now more endangered. This is one of the projects done for the climate conference.

“She got sick from so much asphalt around her. There are no other trees here to help her draw more nutrients,” Bel explains. She and Raimunda peer at the circle of earth to which the Sumaúma is confined. “This is nothing for her. She’s hunting for space,” Raimunda says. Beneath the concrete sidewalk, her roots burst through the ground to spread out, to breathe.

If any forest were left there, the Sumaúma could attach herself to other roots, who would strengthen her support. But the cities that kill trees are not prone to making community; they prefer isolation to convergence.

This is why it is so hard for the Babel of COPs to produce effective multilateral action to contain the advance of the climate emergency. Our roots do not meet.

Without Forest, what the Sumaúma does to live is sustain herself on her own. “She’s wise. She started rotting here and attached herself farther on,” says Raimunda, a Ribeirinha as wise as the tree.

I ask how Bel Juruna and Raimunda Gomes da Silva know so much about this Sumaúma, so immense and yet so insignificant to global leaders. Bel answers: “By living with Nature.” Living with—something many of us have unlearned how to do.

The Belém City Hall says they have treated the Sumaúma and that she is monitored “to track her recovery and ensure safety in the surrounding area.”

Cândido Ferreira Neto, a professor with the Federal Rural University of the Amazon who oversees the health of trees in Belém, believes the Sumaúma is getting better. “In some places that were pruned, there is regrowth; branches are sprouting again. It’s a good sign. A sign she’s recovering.”

Bel and Raimunda say goodbye to the tree and continue on their way to the door of the Blue Zone, as far as they are allowed to go. But as part of diplomacy between species who share the same home, they leave a little of their own roots behind to help to sustain the Sumaúma along their path.. ■



UNABLE TO FIT IN THE CIRCLE OF GREEN SHE HAS BEEN CONFINED TO, THE SUMAÚMA BREAKS THROUGH THE CONCRETE TO SPREAD HER ROOTS



THE MEETING OF FOREST-WOMEN RAIMUNDA GOMES DA SILVA AND BEL JURUNA AND ‘COP30’S SUMAÚMA’



On the margins of Belle Époque Belém, a down-to-earth life on the docks

While jet-setting climate delegates sleep so they can decide the fate of the world (or not) the next day, Bombom de Leite is mad at the fish, Rosicleide charges 2 reals for the right to pee, and Suanne thinks COP30 is about soccer

Énh Xym Akroá Gamella

Guamá River, Belém, Amazon

Thursday, November 6, two in the morning. The first bodily sensation in this place is its signature odor: pitiú, the pungent smell of fresh fish. Located between the Praça do Relógio and the Feira do Açaí open-air market on the one side and the Pedra do Peixe dock on the other, this is the first area of the city to awaken, while the rest of Belém sleeps. In the pitch-black streets, garbage trucks drive through the symbolic capital of Brazil, which will host the . At dawn, presidents, prime ministers, and other heads of state will gather for the Leaders' Summit, which officially precedes COP30. But those living off the market and docks, those who move and feed the city, have a different agenda.

Unhoused residents of the city lie in front of shuttered shopfronts. Workers unload açaí from boats arriving on the Guamá River. Life is in the water, and it is via the water that it gets to the city. It arrives in baskets of açaí, crates of fish, in the sweat of those carrying the weight of the day before the sun rises.

There is a kind of steady faith underlying this down-to-earth life on the docks. The faith of survivors. While world leaders will discuss the climate collapse in air-conditioned rooms, early-morning Belém began its conference with life hours ago.

Bombom de Leite and the fish massacre

Standing on the Pedra do Peixe landing dock in Belém is a 57-year-old man who has seven children and 27 years





BOMBOM DE LEITE, AS HE'S KNOWN IN THE AREA, HOLDING A GRAY SNAPPER



SUANNE MARTINS CLEANS CATFISH ON THE DOCK. LIKE MANY OTHERS, SHE THOUGHT COP HAD TO DO WITH SOCCER, UNTIL HER SISTER TOLD HER IT WAS “ABOUT TREES.”



Khumba Suya/SUMAÚMA

of hard labor showing through the scars on his face, the portrait of a life marked by abandonment, betrayal, and survival. “My wife kicked me out. I worked too much, and she cheated on me,” he said while chopping the head off a tambaqui fish. “I live under a truck. I wash up outside and sleep under [the truck].” Everyone on the docks knows the man as Bombom de Leite, or Milk Candy.

His story is shared by many other “toothless Black men,” as one of his clients puts it. Men who bear the burden of being invisible, even to public policies. “[COP] is for good-for-nothings. Good-for-nothings and thieves. It only does any good for governors, presidents, and mayors. It doesn’t do anything for us. They want to take our jobs away,” Bombom says, in a scathing criticism of the system that favors the “prettiest and best-smelling,” those who have access.

As the smell of fish mixes with sweat, he tells how he learned to process fish: “with [my] bare fists.” “You’ve never been arrested,” his regular client jokes, an allusion to the social inequalities that keep Bombom de Leite on the margins of society. The dialogue, jumping back and forth, revealed an unglamorous Belém: “I don’t just like it..., I love it... We’re about to start another [fish] massacre.”

In the end, his goodbye is as harsh as the context. “I’m going to start the final slaughter,” he announces. And so it goes.

“In the time I’ve been here, I’ve seen good things and bad things,” he adds. But in this country, it feels like there’s only enough of the latter for those who live under trucks.

A pee for 2 reais, a shower for 4

Among the bins of açaí sits a tiny square building. Rosicleide Amaral, 44, is the attendant of this small bathroom in the middle of the market. She charges 2 reais (0.40 dollars) for use of the toilet and 4 reais (0.80 dollars) for a shower.

“I make about 100 reais (almost 19 dollars) a day, one day on, one day off,” she said, as the nightlife picks up. It’s a 12-hour shift, from 7:30pm to 7:30am, dusk to dawn. “Thank God, everyone is very respectful,” she said when asked about being a woman surrounded by men.

She’s new to life here and has been on the job now for two months. Her 11-year-old son stays with her sister, who also works at the market. The renovation of the market stalls did not push her out but also did not include her bathroom. “They just moved us from the temporary space to the new one.”

While Belém prepares for the November 10 opening of COP30, a global event that will discuss the future of the planet, Dona Rosicleide knows little about the matter. “I don’t know. It’s closing some places down. So only the presidents can get through. I don’t know; that’s what they’re saying.” For her, the important forecast is

THE COP NOBODY SEES



AT THE MARKET, BASKETS OF AÇAÍ ARRIVE
BY BOAT FROM THE GUAMÁ RIVER



ROSICLEIDE AMARAL WAITING FOR THE LATE-NIGHT WORKERS WHO USE HER BATHROOM

different: “There will be less activity here.”

And while the city discusses climate protocols, there are those who need to secure the basics: a place to pee or take a shower to wash their weary souls. The market continues at its own pace, indifferent to summits.

Is it a soccer match or something about trees?

Suanne Martins, blue rubber gloves shielding her hands, fillets a small catfish with a sharp knife. The 37-year-old is from Chaves, on the island of Marajó, and found a way to make a living on the Pedra do Peixe docks. After going back and forth for a good while, some time, she ended up making Belém her permanent home, and she has been processing fish there for three years.

Suanne scales the fish and then shoves her hand into the belly and guts it. Most of the fish she processes go to restaurants in Belém, but some middlemen take the catch all the way to Santa Catarina, in southern Brazil.

What about COP30? She almost gets the name right but instead begins to talk about the World Cup, like most people at the market. “I thought it had to do with soccer,” she jokes. Her sister explained it was “about trees,” and that is how it stuck: COP30, a meeting of important people talking about trees. “I didn’t want it

to be about soccer anyway, because I don’t like it.”

Her shift is long. She arrives at 8 pm. The fish only really start coming in around 11:30pm. She stays until dawn. She doesn’t know exactly where the fish come from; “they come on the boat, but I think they’re from farther away.”

Suanne wouldn’t be one to speak at a climate summit. She wouldn’t talk about biodiversity or river conservation. And maybe that’s the point: while Belém tries to fix itself up and look important in the eyes of the world, Suanne only hopes it gets better. Not the planet, but life. Hers. Her family’s. Suanne just needs tomorrow to bring fish and for the fish to sell.

While world leaders sleep in king-size beds with bajillion-thread-count sheets, underneath his truck Bombom de Leite laughs to himself. Rosicleide, guardian of the 2-real bathroom, counts coins that are worth more to her than promises of sustainability. And while Suanne discovered COP is not about soccer, tomorrow she will continue chopping up catfish. Before the sun rises, the boats will return. With more fish caught in rivers she does not know.

How many Suannes, Bombom de Leites, and Rosicleides are living on the margins of the conference their lives depend on? ■



“

If we continue destroying everything on this earth, there will be chaos

In an exclusive interview with Sumaúma, the Kayapo leader and globally-recognised defender of the rainforest says COP30 is ‘an opportunity to shout’ about indigenous rights

Lorena de Paula and Jonathan Watts

Guamá River, Belém, Amazon

Chief Raoni Mětyktire, chief of the Kayapó people (also called Měbêngôkre), is one of the most emblematic indigenous leaders in the world. At almost ninety years old, he is known for raising his voice as a shield in defense of his territory, the forest, and the continuity of life. For many who are concerned about indigenous rights and the protection of forests, he is seen as a leader who can speak on behalf of the Amazon rainforest at COP30.



JONATHAN WATTS Will COP30 in Belém help or hinder the forest and its people?

RAONI MĚTYKTIRE I think the first COP meeting in the Amazon can help the forest. We haven't had an opportunity like this before. We can talk about what's happening, the destruction, the deforestation. And I'm very happy, pleased, with this opportunity, which is important for all of us, to be able to speak, to be able to shout, so that the authorities can hear us. It's important for us.

Lela Beirão/SUMAÚMA





AT ALMOST 90 YEARS OLD, CHIEF RAONI IS PARTICIPATING IN COP30, CALLING FOR THE DEFENSE OF FORESTS AND INDIGENOUS TERRITORY DEMARCATION

JW What do you think about Brazil's flagship conservation initiative, the Tropical Forest Forever Facility (TFFF)?

RM It will play an important role in protecting our territorial rights, the rights of indigenous peoples, and it can also contribute to solutions to the problems that are happening today. These problems are deforestation, the destruction of the forest, the exploitation of land. I think this fund can strengthen our work and continue the fight we are waging. For a long time I have been telling the world that if we continue destroying everything on this earth, there will be many consequences, there will be chaos on this Earth.

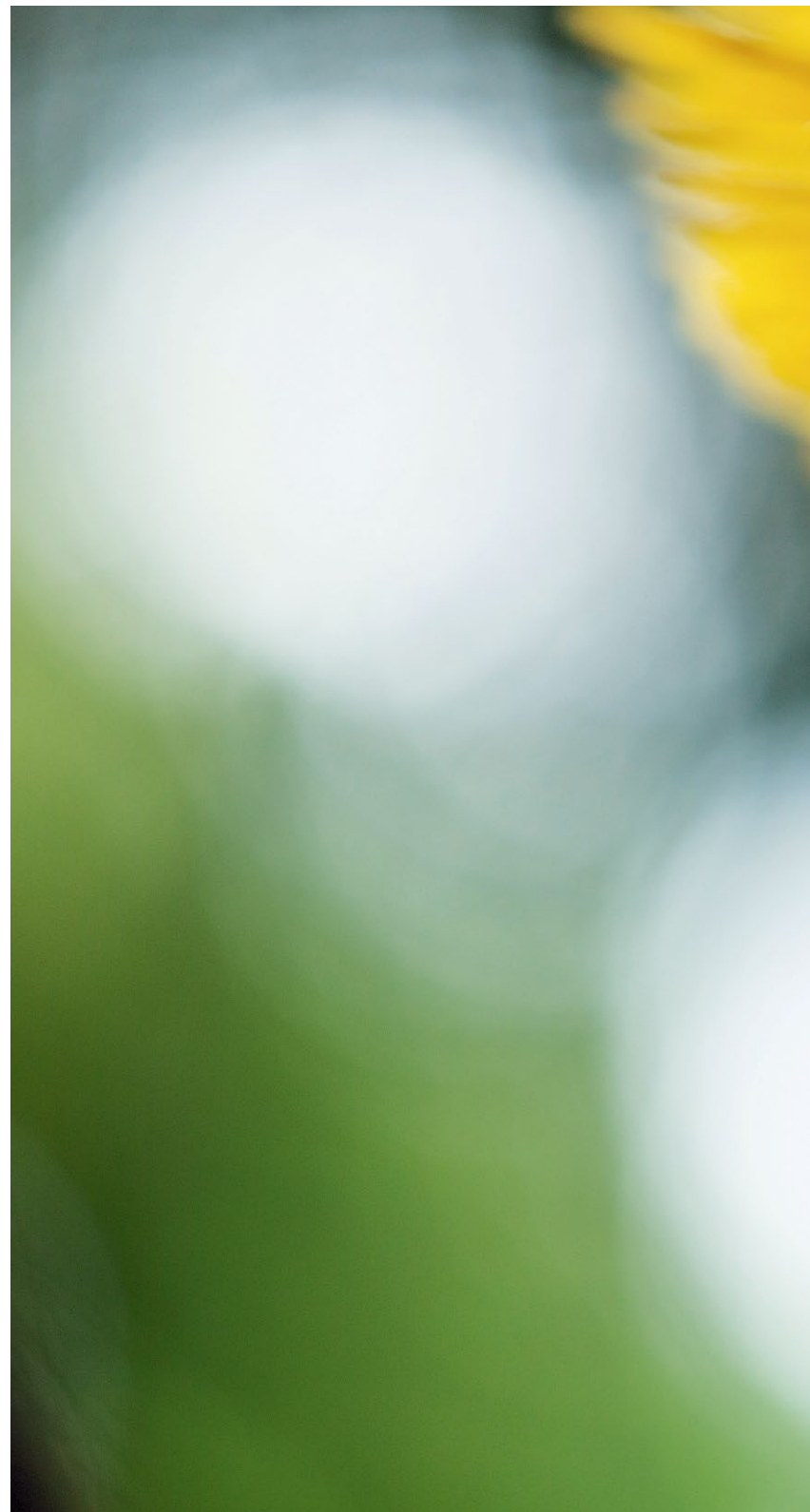
It's good to remember that the commitments of these large projects (like TFFF) can facilitate and give autonomy to those of us at the grassroots level, so that we can continue defending the forest that remains today. That's what I think. I think the project can strengthen that.

JW How significant is it that the project will give 20% of the money directly to indigenous peoples?

RM That's important. And since [President] Lula started this commitment, to have a large project like this, which can directly help indigenous peoples and strengthen their work, to continue monitoring their territory, monitoring the forests, so that indigenous territories can be peaceful, and indigenous peoples can live with their culture, with their celebrations. That's what I think, that this project can do that for us, indigenous peoples.

LORENA DE PAULA Many indigenous people, including yourself, have criticized the Lula government for projects such as oil exploration off the coast of the Amazon, and for the slow pace of demarcating indigenous lands. When you ascended the ramp of the Planalto Palace alongside President Lula during the 2023 presidential inauguration ceremony, did you imagine the government would be like this? How do you assess his third term?

RM I don't agree (with these policies). If Lula had reflected well before becoming president, he would have committed to helping indigenous peoples defend their territory, defend the forest. He had said that to us. But recently I learned of this news – information about these large projects that affect us, indigenous people – and I



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So, Lula, listen to me, and demarcate indigenous territories, so that the forests can be protected by us, to guarantee our survival on this land in the future

Raoni Metyktire
Chief of the Kayapó people



don't accept them, I don't agree, because it's a very bad thing for us. It would impact us, indigenous people.

Lula, if you are listening to me, or if this information reaches you, please reflect on Nature, on the Forest. These forests need to have life, and this will contribute to our life on this land.

During the campaign, before becoming president, he also committed to demarcating indigenous lands. And today, some indigenous lands have been demarcated and some have not yet. But Lula must continue to demarcate the lands. And these indigenous lands where there is forest contribute to being our lungs, they

contribute to our respiration.

So, Lula, listen to me, and demarcate indigenous territories, so that the forests can be protected by us, to guarantee our survival on this land in the future.

LP How do you see the future of the struggle for the Amazon? Why do you still fight?

RM I will continue defending the Amazon rainforest. And also ask that people respect the Amazon, that the forests within the Amazon remain alive and contribute to our lives, contribute to our survival. I will continue fighting. As long as I can, I will continue fighting. ■

COP30: Struggling for life

The UN summit tried and failed to extinguish a global conflagration with a cup of water. Little more could be expected in the age of Trump and Musk. But finally a debate has started about ending deforestation and fossil fuels. Brazil should lead the creation of a survival roadmap

Jonathan Watts

Xingu River, Altamira, Amazon

At the end, the most fitting symbol of the first climate conference in the Amazon was the sickly Sumaúma near the summit entrance which was suffocated by asphalt, contaminated by petrol fumes, isolated, and struggling for life. The once mighty tree was not quite finished, but seemed to be slipping ever further from being fully alive. The same was true of efforts to tackle the climate crisis, save nature from extinction and rescue global environmental governance.

COP30 in Belém wrapped up on Saturday evening 24 hours later than planned and with an Amazonian rainstorm thundering down on the conference centre. A few drops leaked ominously from the roof, but the United Nations structure just about held, as it has done these past three weeks despite fire, fierce tropical heat and blistering political attacks on the multilateral system of global environmental governance.

Dozens of agreements were gavelled through on the final day as the most collective form of humanity worked to resolve the most complex and dangerous challenge that our species has ever faced. It was chaotic. The process very nearly collapsed and had to be rescued by last-ditch talks that went on into the early morning. Veteran observers told Sumaúma the Paris agreement was on life-support.



But it survived. For now at least. The outcome wasn't nearly enough to limit global heating to 1.5C. There was a considerable shortfall of the finance needed for adaptation by the countries worst impacted by extreme weather. The importance of rainforest protection barely got a mention even though this was the first climate summit in the Amazon. And the power balance in the world is still so skewed towards gas, oil and coal interests that there was not even a single mention of "fossil fuels" in the main mutirao agreement.

Yet, for all these flaws, Belém opened up new avenues of discussion on how to reduce dependency on petro-



PRESIDENT ANDRÉ CORRÊA DO LAGO AT THE LAST COP30 PLENARY SESSION: THE UN STRUCTURE WITHSTOOD STORMS, HEAT, FIRE, AND POLITICAL ATTACKS ON MULTILATERALISM

chemicals. Brazilian president Lula and his environment minister Marina Silva proposed the launch of a roadmap process in which every country would draw up their own plans, at their own speed to move towards a safer, cleaner, fossil-free future. “Finally something has been put on the table to debate what really matters,” Marina told Sumaúma afterwards. “But we must also recognize that...we should have been working on this for the last 30 years.” Their initiative was backed by more than 80 nations, but eventually pushed off the main negotiating text. Brazil has promised to continue to develop the idea in the coming 12 months of its COP30 presidency.

There were other small steps forward. The Belém conference increased the scope of participation by indigenous groups, quilombolas and scientists, it made vague reference to stronger policies on a just transition to a clean energy future, and crowbarred the wallets of wealthy nations to be a little more open (a tripling of climate adaptation finance by 2035).

A debate is now raging as to whether Cop30 was a success, a failure or a fudge. But any judgement needs to take into account the geopolitical minefield in which these talks took place. Here are five threats that will have to be avoided at next year’s climate summit in Turkey.



MARINA, LULA, AND JANJA AT A PRESS CONFERENCE: BRAZIL'S PRESIDENT AND ENVIRONMENT MINISTER PROPOSED A ROADMAP AWAY FROM FOSSIL FUELS

1 Global leadership vacuum

The US walked out. China failed to step up. With the parents of the climate crisis missing or quiet, it felt at times like the children were free to run riot. Many of the problems that beset the Belém talks could have been avoided if these two climate superpowers (the world's biggest historical emitter and the world's biggest current emitter) were able to coordinate a shared approach as they used to do before Donald Trump came to power. Instead, Trump has attacked climate science, cursed the United Nations and staged a summit in Washington with

Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud. Little wonder Saudi Arabia felt emboldened at COP30 to stymie any mention of fossil fuels, even though language on this was agreed at COP28 in Dubai. China, by contrast, was present in Belém and geared towards helping its Brics partner, Brazil to stage a successful conference. But its advisers made clear that China did not want to fill US shoes when it came to finance, nor to lead alone on any issue beyond the manufacture and sale of renewable energy products. "China cannot solve global crises by itself," one advisor told Sumaúma.



Lela Beltrão/SUMAÚMA

2 Divided Brazil, divided world

Among the key fractures in global politics today is that between extraction and conservation interests. One wants to endlessly expand agricultural frontiers, dig ever deeper for minerals and ignore the toll on forests and oceans. The other warns such activities are breaking planetary boundaries with ever more catastrophic consequences for the climate, nature and human health. This division is evident across the world. It was also apparent at the Cop30 climate talks, where the Brazilian hosts sometimes seemed to send mixed messages, according

to observers from Asia, Europe and Latin America.

While the environment minister Marina Silva was the driving force in pushing for a roadmap away from fossil fuels and deforestation, the Brazilian foreign ministry – which has spent decades promoting agribusiness and oil exports – was far more hesitant and needed prompting by president Lula. Big mining and agribusiness interests, such as Vale, were among the sponsors for the summit even though they are major drivers of environmental destruction. The Amazon rainforest appeared to have been a victim of this, getting only one brief and vague mention in the main negotiating text.

3 European parsimony and the rise of the far right

Europe has often presented itself as a leader on climate action, but this wealthy continent – home to the grandparents of the climate crisis, the UK, France, Germany, Italy and other old industrialised nations – was heavily criticised at Cop30 for lagging on promises of climate finance to developing countries. It too was woefully divided, partly due to the rise of the far right in many countries. As a result, the European Union had to delay its updated NDC (Nationally Determined Contribution) climate plan and only decided halfway through the Belém conference that it would make a fossil fuel transition roadmap one of its negotiating “red lines.” This was incompetent at best because such major issues needed far more advance coordination. Little surprise that many global south participants were suspicious that this sudden conversion to the roadmap was a ruse or a bargaining chip to delay action on adaptation finance. The UK also came under criticism, including being named “fossil of the day” at one point for holding up negotiations on a just transition. It was also criticised for blocking language on African descendants.

4 Money-and-attention sapping wars

Conflicts in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan and elsewhere overshadowed this conference, shifting priorities for government resources and media coverage. European politicians told Sumaúma that their budget priority has shifted towards re-arming due to the rising threat posed by Russia and a lack of trust in the United States.

As a result they have slashed overseas development aid and it becomes an ever more difficult challenge to allocate funds for climate finance. At one time that might have provoked an outcry, given polls showing that the vast majority of people in the world want their governments to do more to address the climate crisis. But it is increasingly hard to the public in many countries to know what is happening in climate talks. None of the four major US networks sent a team to Belém. Reporters from British and European broadcasters were present, but many said it was hard for them to get space in news programs for their stories.

This feels defeatist and contrasts with the incredible positive energy on the streets and rivers of Belém.

5 Rusty, cranky global decision making

The United Nations, which has just turned 80, is showing its age. Consensus decision making means any country can veto almost any decision. As a result the convoy of climate action appears to move at the speed of its slowest boat, and is not heeding the warnings of science, indigenous leaders or the concerns of future generations and other species. As at previous Cop gatherings, frustrations about this – particularly among small island states – were glaringly apparent in Belém. Dozens of high-ambition nations led by Colombia issued their own Belém Declaration and announced plans to hold a parallel process on phasing out fossil fuels, which will have a first conference in Santa Marta, Colombia next April. The organisers say this aims to complement rather than replace the UN Cop process, but it could also widen the gap between major fossil fuel producers and those who champion renewables. On the political level that might be an inevitable break, but the global economy is increasingly moving towards renewable power, which is now cheaper than fossil fuels, and demographic trends are shifting power to the global south. Meanwhile, underpinning everything are the unrelenting physics of the climate crisis, for which there can be no veto. These realities need to be recognised by a revamped and more dynamic system of global governance. Or the Paris agreement – and the sliver of hope for a habitable world – may not make it unscathed much long. Brazil's COP30 presidency still has much work to do. ■





THE SICKLY SUMAÚMA NEAR THE COP30 ENTRANCE: THE TREE SEEMS TO SLIP FURTHER AND FURTHER FROM LIFE, MUCH LIKE EFFORTS TO SAVE NATURE FROM EXTINCTION AND RESCUE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

Let's talk about COP30 and mutants?

Between outside and in, a between-worlds dialogue meant to complicate the answers in the face of the threat of extinction

Eliane Brum

Xingu River, Altamira, Amazon

As a journalist, before and during COP30, I wrote and stated at every opportunity that climate summits are important, no matter how frustrating and inadequate they might generally be. They are important because they are multilateralism still resisting, even if it is falling apart; because they sit country representatives at the same table to discuss paramount issues; and because without this effort, we would be left entirely in the hands of the big corporations that are leading us ever closer to extinction, of the far right, which continues to erode worlds, of big tech controlling reality, and of president-CEOs like Donald Trump defining the planet for the benefit of the majority shareholders of their corporation-country. We would still be held hostage by a minuscule minority of billionaires and super-rich who, since they have always saved themselves, think they will save themselves this time as well.

All this is true. But after experiencing this COP in Belém as closely as a journalist possibly can, I need to say more. I need to complicate the answer.

When I first got to the Blue Zone, on the eve of the Leaders' Summit, and saw that giant Sumaúma tree without a crown, fighting—and losing—a battle waged on the concrete that is asphyxiating her, it sparked both pain and insight. I had never seen a crownless Sumaúma before. A tree that irrigates the skies and Earth, immensely collaborative, a rainmaker, home to so many, had been amputated. And right in front of the



premises of the U.N. summit. When I say “pain,” it is not rhetorical, it's real pain. I have learned from Indigenous and traditional peoples, from forest-journalists, that the Sumaúma tree is human like me, only in another body. I am now able to feel her as my own kin. It was like standing before someone who had been tortured. What first came to my mind were scenes of enslaved, subjugated Black people, exposed on the trading block during centuries of slavery in Brazil, encountering the indifference of those who made decisions about their bodies, about their life and death.

The amputated Sumaúma was a warning of what



was to come.

Belly of the beast or alien spacecraft?

Wajã Xipai, forest-journalist of the Xipaya people, from Terra do Meio in the Xingu Basin, described the interior of the Blue Zone as the belly of some beast. I think there is no more powerful image. But as someone who comes from other experiences, the Blue Zone reminded me more of a spacecraft. Not only because of its shape and design, but also because it landed in Belém like an alien spaceship arriving to colonize Earth. It is a little suspicious to propose a meeting but impose a design, in the

broad sense. What it inevitably and immediately brings to mind are the caravels that reached what they would call Brazil and imposed the separation of man from Nature and converted Nature into a commodity, thus beginning to produce—without knowing it yet—the collapse of the climate and what is called biodiversity.

This U.N.-ship was planned to block the unchosen from entering, and it was engineered chiefly to protect everyone who had authorization to enter from everyone on the outside. The ship landed in the Amazon but most of its passengers had traveled aboard smaller craft, airplanes, stepping as little as possible in a city some

of them considered infected (remember the German chancellor's viral video). They later boarded a plane back to their own countries. Any desire for sterile cleanliness was thwarted by the poorly outfitted bathrooms, perhaps the earliest disturbing sign in the Blue Zone.

Some statements seemed to suggest the guests wanted the environment beyond the ship to affect them as little as possible. When they discovered they could not reproduce the living conditions they enjoyed in their places of origin, they were deeply offended. Some of those with credentials apparently came to COP30 not to be touched, in many ways. They came not to change—and not changing is only possible if there is no encounter.

The entire structure was designed so nothing would get out of control; it was as hermetically sealed as possible, supposedly impermeable, so that no stowaway could slip in. This too required a lot of security, even the army. Not only to protect the lives of the chosen, but mainly to protect control.

Indigenous people—who learned from their ancestors just what caravels can do—burst forth. On both the second and fifth days, the U.N.-ship was unblocked, mainly by peoples of the Tapajós River but from different stretches of it and with two different leaders, both women, who have been the great protagonists of the struggle for life in recent years: Auricelia Arapiun and Alessandra Korap Munduruku.

They entered. And forced Brazilian authorities to listen to them.

An invader called Nature

The executive secretary of the U.N. climate convention, Simon Stiell, sent a letter to the Brazilian government complaining about security. Not only were forest protectors getting in without credentials, like the Tapajós women warriors; the leaking roof also left puddles of water when it rained, and when the air-conditioning was not set to Antarctic temperatures, it was overwhelmed by the breath of the tropics. Inside this controlled environment, everything seemed to be out of control. The U.N. was bothered by Nature entering from all sides.

Then fire broke out in one of the pavilions. Some voiced the obvious metaphor: “Now they have some idea of what the Forest feels when they set fire to it.” There is no possible comparison with the holocaust of diverse lives lost in every forest fire, most of them, if not all, criminal. But the comparison does have strength.

On all flanks at COP30, Nature itself pointed out the folly of believing power lies with men (the gender choice is intentional). And now I will begin a dialogue with some of the people I interviewed at this COP, taking things deeper than I found in the Blue Zone, where negotiations were very complicated but not always complex. Not because the participants were shallow but because a bizarre facet of this type of negotiations

is that they often revolve around [brackets]. In every document, brackets are used to indicate where there is no consensus, and in some cases there are hundreds of brackets. This is why someone who has not been contaminated by official conversations may be thoroughly baffled by the hearty celebrations seen in 2025 and during the 30th climate summit because a “victory” had been won with the inclusion in the documents of, for example, Afro-descendants. Or Indigenous people. Or women. In this sense, it seems like COP has only now incorporated the advances of the second half of the twentieth century.

Between-worlds

This was my first COP—and maybe my last. My conversation here is with interlocutors who were inside, although not as negotiators—but mostly outside, where another COP was advancing. I also offer these descriptions in hopes that the majority—who are affected by the collapse but have never attended a COP—might see what I saw.

Since I left São Paulo in 2017 and moved to Altamira, an epicenter of Amazon Forest destruction, people often ask me why the move. Among my various answers, I say I wanted to reforest myself, go back to understanding myself as Nature. I explain it is a process that will continue for the rest of my existence and that, when I die, will not have ended, since the language of capitalism has structured me from childhood on.

This very difficult movement—that of becoming another language—is born from the understanding that this is the only truly effective way of confronting the collapse. I needed to incarnate this journey so my words would be inhabited. Obviously, it is not enough to change places geographically to accomplish this; if it were that simple, the Forest would not be facing destruction (also) by local elites and everyone orbiting around them, nor would the majority of voters in towns in the interior of the Amazon have voted for Jair Bolsonaro in the last two elections. One truly has to risk transmuting one's body.

“

We are mutants of unconsciousness, and this disease needs to be cured. Is it because we're mutants of unconsciousness that we think everything is normal?

Carlos Papá

Spiritual leader and filmmaker of the Guarani-Mbya people

I will never fully understand myself as Nature again, but my analysis of COP originates from this place: I have dis-conformed myself somewhat, I have de-structured myself somewhat, yet I am still—and forever—between-worlds.

Paralyzed mutants

In my understanding of the collapse, when men separated themselves from Nature (the gender choice is again intentional), they abandoned the world of humans and became something else. So when he separated himself from Nature, man also separated himself from humans.

When I interviewed Gilberto Gil during COP, he proposed a different way of talking about this separation. Gil is not only an extraordinary musician and composer who has left his mark on Brazil—in a way, Brazilianizing it—he is also a free thinker. As he sees it, there are two species of humans, one from the jungles and another from the “concrete jungles.” Those from concrete cities—now the majority—have mutated and become the people who are currently digging the abyss. Now that the collapse is approaching, they have stopped mutating. They are paralyzed, motionless, when they should be learning from the humans who never mutated, who have continued to safeguard and transmit ancestral knowledge. The latter did not mutate, to be clear, but remained in motion. The mutant majority, on the other hand, needs to find ways to break out of this paralysis and try to reverse the mutation that is leading us to extinction.

“It’s beautiful to see how—when [forest peoples] have to be concerned about something—they’re concerned about their fight to remain as they are, remain as they have been. It’s about not changing. For someone like me, it’s about changing. Because I’m not a forest person. I’m from the concrete jungle. That’s where I’ve lived. Basically, the concrete jungle, the asphalt jungle, the jungle of transmission towers, right? I’m someone from that other jungle, for whom change is imperative. [...] Because we tend to be increasingly concerned with containment, more so than the forest peoples, who have fought to keep things as they are. Anyway... These days, we’re more concerned with being a little more like the forest peoples. But we’re also afraid of mutation. We are mutants, but we are increasingly aware of the threats that this acceleration of acceleration, this permanent vortex in search of change, brings us—the agony this causes us. I mean... This panic we’re experiencing today, this fear of extinction, which threatens us. [...] Suddenly, we’re pursuing containment.”

The mutation Gil talks about is what I call capitalism. In this regard, the word “mutation” is a real find. My assertion is that capitalism is a language—understood as that which constitutes us, makes us what we are, and determines our way of life as well as our way of understanding ourselves and others. It is like another DNA, but fortunately one we can change.

To borrow Gil’s words, I think I can say I am trying to reverse the mutation called capitalism. I am trying not merely as an individual movement—because if I were, I would be adopting the capitalist language—but as a hard experience, the hardest, I believe, but one that is possible once we go back to understanding ourselves as an interdependent collective.

On Radio SUMAÚMA, along with Paulina Chamorro and Darlon Neres, I interviewed two Indigenous leaders from the Atlantic Forest, Cristine Takuá and Carlos Papá, who are part of the Living Schools—a resistance movement that has ties to the Selvagem Cycle and Editora Dantes publishing house and seeks to strengthen the transmission of ancestral knowledge. Or, as Cristine Takuá explains it, is “a proposal to pierce this bubble of mental monocultural thinking that hovers over us and is intent on shaping and formatting human minds to compete and try to be someone in life, running after a title that means nothing because it has been drained of significance.”

Carlos Papá also referred to mutation but drawing from the knowledge of his people, the Guarani: “There are codes in the woods. So you have to learn to read the codes. It’s the same thing in the city—there are traffic lights, signs that tell you where you can go, where you can’t. These codes are also found in the woods, and once you understand the codes, you have greater sensibility. You understand the Forest. So when you talk about preserving for the future, you are engaging in steady dialogue with the spirits. When you sleep, you dream, and in your dreams, you move or the spirits approach you, and thus you have direct communication with them. The spirits say we humans are sick, suffering from a disease called mutations of unconsciousness. We are mutants of unconsciousness, and this disease needs to be cured. Is it because we’re mutants of unconsciousness that we think everything is normal? Exploring for oil is normal [...]. Seeing street children or homeless people sleeping in the streets is normal [...]. So we are wholly mutants of this unconsciousness, which thinks everything is normal. Seduced by pretty talk, by the media, by the [advertising] that capitalism uses very well to entrap a vulnerable society, who thinks this is all a serene life, a comfortable life. But this comfortable life becomes a disease, and people become slaves without realizing it [...]. So the Great Spirit is speaking: you need to heal yourselves, pay more attention than ever to finding a cure. And the cure lies in consciousness. We need to cure this consciousness because we are mutants of unconsciousness.”

This perception about mutants is expressed in different ways. Paul Watson, one of the most renowned marine life activists on the planet and cofounder of Greenpeace, who later left the NGO in disagreement with the direction it was taking, told me he had learned the “biocentric” viewpoint from Indigenous peoples: the fact that we are part of everything, we are interrelated with everything,

interdependent with each other. “Other natural species take care of us; we take care of them. We should be part of the ecosystem, not dominant over it,” he says.

Part of the reason Paul does not believe in solutions coming from governments or COPs is that nothing that truly distances us from extinction will emerge from an anthropocentric viewpoint, heavily influenced by Christian religions: man at the center of the universe and all others created to serve him.

Personally, I don’t like the prefix “bio” because it holds us prisoner to a line of thought that perceives Nature as something outside ourselves. I prefer Nature in the center—even though “Nature” is also a simplified—and Western—translation of complex thinking and traditions. The languages inhabited by most people fall short, because they derive from this world that separated itself off, making it hard to find words to denote such diverse realities.

The air-conditioning and the thunder

In my book *Banzeiro òkòtó* (translation by Diane Whitty, published by Graywolf Press), I talk about the need to shift the hegemonic centralities in order to achieve an urgent re-centering of the world. This does not mean a re-placing of Nature at the center, because she already is and has always been there, but recognizing the centrality of Nature. In this way, the legitimate centers of the world—legitimate because without them we would not be here talking (or even breathing)—are the Amazon and other forests, the oceans, and all of the other biomes—and not Washington, Beijing, London, Frankfurt, São Paulo, and so on. The centers are where life is—not where markets are. And not as rhetoric, but as a radical change in language based on the recognition of what is obvious in order to allow the mutant majority to undertake the move towards understanding itself as Nature once again.

In the Blue Zone, Nature was merely decorative—and abused. After the amputated Sumaúma tree, my next big shock came when I first walked into that long hallway—with its oppressive lack of windows that might afford some kind of exchange, in all senses of the word, with the outside world—and saw the space allocated to Nature. Jaguars, monkeys, armadillos, anteaters, and crocodiles looked out at us from panels on the walls. It is hard to forget the terrified stare of the monkey from the Caatinga, a gaze meant for the photographer but that simply hit the lens and bounced off.

The sound of the Blue Zone was the relentless, loud, heavy drone of the air-conditioner that bored through our brains and the days. It was only defeated, around once a day, by the Amazonian rainstorms, Nature superimposing herself on the sound of the machines.

In some places, the “breeze” coming from the enormous air conditioners tormented the plants, who became droopier and more withered every day.



We need to understand what the agoutis, pacas, and otters are discussing at their conferences in the Forest, because they were not invited to COP

Cristine Takuá

Coordinator of the Living Schools

By the time it was over, they were all beaten up, most half dead. It is curious how even where Nature is being discussed—or should be—few people feel shocked to see other living beings abused and used as decoration. The more another being’s body differs from ours, or the more invisible to our eyes, the less empathy we have, which is part of prevailing anthropocentrism.

I wrote my first note during the Leader’s Summit:

A jaguar gazes down at us from enormous panels on the wall. A lizard, a giant anteater, massive trees, inhabitants of the Amazon Rainforest and other biomes in Brazil. Underneath them are pet plants, the ones that sit in pots, but they don’t have pots yet, just black plastic bags with dirt inside. Sad plants ripped from their territories to fake Nature at the Amazon’s first COP, being held in Belém, the city that turned its back to the River and the Forest. This is the Blue Zone corridor on day one of the leaders’ summit. The country pavilions are still under construction, but this matters much less. What matters is the frightened look of the Caatinga monkey, staring at us from the panel. What matters is the place given to Nature at a COP in the world’s largest tropical forest. Because the animals on panels and the pet plants are at the same time violence and absence. They are being killed right now in the actual forest, the one that is reaching the point of no return, the one Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who is hosting this COP, authorized Petrobras to drill in search of oil, something happening at this very moment in the Foz do Amazonas Basin. The absence is because the other humans—considering here the Indigenous understanding that animals, plants, fungi, rivers, and mountains are humans with other bodies—are not represented at this COP as anything more than wall décor. The broad corridor under construction is the truth about the hegemonic view at this COP. Yet on the outside, the forest-peoples arriving now by boat will fight to dispute this COP, as they fight on

the ground of the Forest and in every biome. This Blue Zone corridor is a truth. And it is offensive because the truth is violence.

The geopolitics of pavilions

By the opening of COP, the country pavilions were finally ready. And their layout replicated global geopolitics closely. In the main walkway, where everyone had to pass through, one of the most opulent displays was that of the “Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,” a petrostate that played a decisive role in blocking any progress, however small, in the transition away from fossil fuels—although the transition had already been agreed upon at the Dubai COP in 2023. Frosted glass protected the inside from external eyes, while outside, on large digital screens, Saudi Arabia showed propaganda on what it called its “green initiative.”

Another was the Chinese pavilion, designed to convey solidity and grandeur. Prominently displayed right at the entrance were copies of Xi Jinping’s political gospel, distributed to journalists and everyone interested in the words of the Chinese president. SUMAÚMA analysts noted that China, currently the largest polluter in the world, supported COP and Brazil but declined to take a leadership position. Its representatives made it clear China did not want to take the place of the United States in terms of financing, nor did it want to take a solo lead on any issue other than the manufacture and sale of renewable energy products.

Donald Trump’s United States, as we all know, did not show up at COP, with a few exceptions, including California governor Gavin Newsom, who lamented the absurd truancy of his country. “The reason I’m here is the absence of leadership coming from the United States; it’s a vacuum. It’s jaw-dropping. Not one representative—not one, not even an observer, not someone taking notes—[is] going down to Belém,” he said at an event in São Paulo just days before COP. The biggest historical polluter and the main architect of climate collapse, Donald Trump’s corporation-country is now quite simply expanding fossil fuel production and destroying alternative energy projects, claiming climate collapse does not exist despite all scientific findings and the deadly concrete evidence of extreme weather events wreaking devastation and death around the planet.

Japan was selling its usual image of technological efficiency with the following slogan: “Solutions for the world.” At the same time, Japan was asking Brazil to extradite Paul Watson based on arrest warrants issued for him in Japan involving a controversial episode. “Solutions for the World...,” Paul said ironically, safely moored in the Port of Belém. “But when you look at it, [the Japanese are] just talking about improvements in fossil fuel development and stuff like that. That’s not a solution to anything. I said, ‘Yeah, there is a solution that Japan can do: stop killing whales.’ That’s a good

solution for addressing climate change.”

Other countries from Europe and Asia shared the main walkway with Brazil, the host country. Deliberately discrete but still active, Scandinavian countries were on secondary walkways. More hidden away were African countries, who could only afford the minimum. Cuba’s modest pavilion resembled a small classroom with a few desks and materials and no technological displays.

Larger than most countries’ pavilions, the pavilion of Brazil’s National Confederation of Industry brought together a significant number of those responsible for accelerating global heating. At its events, they fully adopted the “sustainability” discourse, making everything more dangerous for people who fight for their children to have at least a tolerable quality of life in the coming decades. It would be paradoxical, had it not become the norm—given the increasing pragmatism in all areas of society, including journalism—for part of the funding for COP preparatory work and COP itself to be furnished by major destroyers of the Amazon, such as Vale and Hydro.

The color and art of the alien U.N.-spacecraft that landed in Belém—or rather, rose from the ground—were contributed by both Indigenous peoples, who were present in far smaller numbers than would be just, and representatives of African and Asian countries. For everyone else, it was suits for men and pantsuits for women. And lots of black.

One in 25 participants in the Blue Zone was there to defend gas companies or groups associated with them. Responsible for at least 75% of the emissions that cause global heating, countries and corporations operating in oil, coal, and natural gas continue to expand production, even though the temperature increase has reached 1.5 degrees Celsius, the limit established in the Paris Agreement for sustaining a quality of life that is merely tolerable.

Conference credentials were granted to 1,602 representatives of the fossil fuel industry, the largest proportion of the total number of participants ever recorded. If lobbyists had been a delegation, it would have been larger than any other country’s, except Brazil. Petroleum lobbyists numbered 50 times more than the Filipino delegation and 40 times more than Jamaica’s, countries recently affected by extreme weather events. The survey was conducted by the Kick Big Polluters Out coalition.

This must be underscored: in the Blue Zone—the space for negotiations—there were 1,602 fossil fuel lobbyists and 900 credentialed Indigenous representatives, 360 of them Brazilian. That means something.

In the Blue Zone, the majority tore down the sky

The mutant species is causing the collapse, threatening not just their own world with extinction but the world of those who did not mutate, because, in the end, it is

the same world. As Lula said twice during his speeches at COP—citing *The Falling Sky* (translation by Nicholas Elliot and Alison Dundy, published by Harvard University Press), by shaman Davi Kopenawa Yanomami and anthropologist Bruce Albert—Indigenous people are holding up the sky to keep it from falling.

The problem is that a good share of the participants in Blue Zone negotiations are the very same people who are tearing down the sky. Although all countries have a vote in COP decisions, which must be made by consensus—supposedly guaranteeing equal voting rights—it is clear that countries in the Global North have much more power. The alien U.N. spacecraft is an explicitly colonialist ship, from its physical architecture to its politics, from those who enter and those who remain outside. The people who protect biomes, ensuring there is still something to fight for, do not have effective representation or votes.

Given the outcome of COP30, which after such a monumental effort ended (once again) with only a few very small advances, it is difficult to ignore the claim made by so many: COPs are designed to keep everything as it is. The most critical voices go so far as to say these conferences are merely a “distraction,” a charade to make it seem like measures are being taken, when what continues to happen is the expansion of the destruction of Nature and the acceleration of the collapse.

At the same time, without COPs, we are left in the hands of violent people who have taken individualism to an extreme, like the majority in the Brazilian Congress, who use democracy to undermine democracy—and distort the greater meaning of politics, the common good, in the name of personal gain.

The month of November in Brazil was a window into what is happening in the world. It started with a COP trying to keep what is left of multilateralism alive, with enormous preparation and exhausting negotiations that, after 12 days, failed to achieve any progress that made an immediate, tangible difference. Five days after the conference ended, Congress overrode Lula’s vetoes to the Devastation Bill, demolishing environmental licensing laws. Now the Devastation Law, this legislation removes most of the barriers that restrained the forces of destruction, embodied by soy, meat, mining, pesticide, and oil corporations—also making it easier to get approval for large construction projects, which are usually not only a source of annihilation but also of corrupt kickbacks.

The Devastation Law will empower narcotrafficking, which is rapidly spreading across the Amazon. It is worth noting that organized crime has already expanded its business repertoire to include crimes with long traditions in the Forest, such as land grabbing, timber theft, illegal mining, and cattle grazing on deforested land. This is the advancement of the far right in the world that is multiplying the risk of extinction by undermining democracy from within. In Brazil, this predatory force

has learned that if it can control Congress, it can control almost everything.

This is the great battle being fought on the planet, between the struggle to save multilateralism in a world very different from the one that gave rise to the U.N. after World War II (1939-1945) and the openly predatory and unlimited advance of what has been called the far right, but which still needs a name that more accurately reflects what it represents. But this more-or-less true, more-or-less false polarization does not represent (all of) the real battle. I am leaving COP30 even more certain we need to expand the complexity of our responses to the collapse and liberate ourselves from the limited perspective that can only see and recognize these two global forces.

The outside world’s dance is greater than the one inside

We need to expand our view to realize where COP30 was powerful. At least 5,000 Indigenous people and representatives of traditional communities surrounded the U.N.’s alien spaceship, occupying the streets and unofficial spaces. This had never happened before and only happened now because it was a conference in the Amazon—and in Brazil. The power of resistance erupted in Belém, forging something never to be forgotten. The milestone was the Global Climate March on Saturday, November 15. I wrote this note for SUMAÚMA as soon as the march ended:

Struggle is celebration, this is what the Amazon’s people teach us. And celebration is a very serious thing. What was seen at the Global Climate March, which gathered tens of thousands of people from different territories of Nature and urban territories, was the best of Brazil, this joy that is an instrument of resistance, that is the power to act. What burst forth onto Belém’s concrete streets was the living struggle. And the living struggle has dancing, it has singing, it has music, the living struggle can only be fought by living bodies. And which bodies are alive in a world of paralyzed people, a world of zombie-people, who shut down their pores and gestures with the expectation that, if they don’t move, everything will be alright?

Living beings are the ones resisting the capitalism that is leading us to extinction, and they resist because they move, and they move every part of their bodies in a gesture of expression. These are the bodies of forest-peoples, of biome-peoples, who protect the planet every day, but these are also the bodies disputing the cities by advancing through the cracks and bursting into colors. There has been so much discussion about this COP in the Amazon, so much criticism heaped on Belém, but what emerged and was asserted in this march was a Belém that doesn’t belong to Helder Barbalho, a Belém not represented by the projects financed by the Forest’s destroyers, a Belém that didn’t turn its back on Nature.

In an amalgamation with so many Indigenous peoples, Quilombolas, Ribeirinhos, and small-holders, present in all their diversity, Belém's cultural, political, and social movements burst onto the pavement with their parade gear and turned the march into a dance of many bodies and many voices. It is the manifest understanding that it is not one fight and another fight, but the same fight.

There had never been a climate march set to the beats of Pará: carimbó, lambada, brega, guitarrada, aparelhagem. It was the Festival of Pavulagem, of the mythological Boiúna snake and Matinta Pereira, of the Círio de Nazaré processions, all forming an alliance against the world's disfigurement by oil, mining, soy, meat, palm oil, and pesticide corporations. Forming an alliance against the genocide in Palestine because the extermination of Palestinians and the extermination of the Amazon are carried out by the same arms of the Global North, in conjunction with local extractivist elites. It was spirituality traversing bodies like a rebellion.

What this inhabited march showed is that the fight and the expression of bodies are not one thing and another thing. As in life, culture is not separate from Nature. There are no binaries; instead, there is exchange, interdependence, contagion. Evolving down Avenida Duque de Caxias, the sad setting of an entombed forest, where a concrete straitjacket smothers the living; evolving among the surviving trees, some sickly, who have witnessed a struggle that is theirs too, everything was transformed, everything was suddenly alive, everything pulsed. It was all natureculture, just one word.

The men wearing neckties in the Blue Zone, that mix of a spaceship and a couch that landed on Belém to give negotiators a climate-controlled and supposedly aseptic environment, might understand what COP is if they had ventured out to the occupied streets. COP is where life resists. COP is the transgression of COP.

When I say the struggle is a celebration, I am not talking about a “party” in São Paulo, London, or New York but a party permeated by culture, spirituality, ancestry, and the power of bodies. The closest thing to this might be street carnival in Brazil—but that’s still not quite it.

Cristine Takuá who was in Belém with Carlos Papá those days to launch Jerome Lewis and Chris Knight’s *Flourishing Diversity Manifesto* in both English and Portuguese, translated by Marina Matheus and published by Editora Dantes. During a radio interview, Cristine talked about the need to widen our consciousness to include the existence of other marches and conferences that took place simultaneously and continue taking place: “We need to walk slower, understand what the agoutis, pacas, and otters are discussing at their conferences in the middle of the Forest, because they were not invited to COP. The jaguars are talking about us and this relationship, this necessary resistance. [...] There are many marches in the middle of the Forest, many conferences

of ants, bees, capybaras—in short, of beings. These beings are in motion because the micropolitics of everyday life, which is not always invited to dialogue at these large conferences, is still present in this way. The micropolitics of everyday life must be brought forward and listened to, because the invisible beings must also be listened to.”

In the interview, Cristine introduced a dimension that is little understood by the mutants but is very present in the discourse of Indigenous and other traditional peoples: the idea of walking more slowly, more calmly, to deaccelerate the collapse. It seems paradoxical but it is not. It is only by paying attention, observing, and ceasing to be “mutants of unconsciousness” that we will combat the collapse. Pointless speed—unthinking, robotic, automatic—only brings us closer to extinction.

Carlos Papá explained that dance is another form of walking and another perception of existing: “In the city you walk in a straight line; there’s nothing to get in your way. In the Forest, you can’t walk straight; you start dancing with your body. You encounter a liana. You encounter some mud, some rocks, mountains, and you encounter trees. You encounter roots and thorns. So you don’t walk straight, otherwise you’ll trip, fall, get hurt. You have to dance. On the ground, you jump, crawl. You get up, sometimes you jump, and you twist your arm, your body, so you can get from one place to another. You do a dance with the Forest.”

“We are the answer,” the key phrase of the Indigenous people at COP30, is the assertion of another path that has existed for thousands of years. The path is also another way of walking. As Paul Watson said, it is not necessary to try “to build a machine that’ll sequester carbon. We have that. It’s called a tree.” He concludes: “We don’t need more machines. We just need more trees.”

COPs will never confront the collapse

These forces of reXistence—resistance in order to exist—did not emerge now. Indigenous people alone have a 13,000-year history in the Amazon, not to mention that the ancestors of present-day native peoples created part of the Forest, as the Forest they also are. For the past 400 years, Quilombolas have been waging an uprising in the name of life. Another 27 traditional peoples who live in Brazil are incarnations of a rebellion against capitalism. If Nature still exists, it is because these peoples, as the Nature they are, have remained standing—even though so many have been and still are felled by bullets. They have been joined by movements in the city that did not succumb to the constriction of culture. This is not merely strong and beautiful—it is power. Because it was these forces that, against all odds, kept life alive—remember how the Brazilian elite of the early 20th century believed they had completely exterminated (or assimilated) Indigenous peoples? A century later, the Indigenous population is growing and occupying the Blue Zone at COP30.

This is the force seen as peripheral—but which is in

fact central. COPs must keep happening because at least there are more than 190 countries agreeing they need to take on a common threat. That is still worth something in the face of the calculated denialism of Trump and others. But we are not going to stop the collapse with the decisions made there, although I hope coming COPs and related events disprove me. While the planet heats up at a much faster rate than in the most pessimistic predictions by scientists, negotiations in each Blue Zone proceed as if there were time to delay, postpone, block, and pick up again at the next meeting. In this sense, COPs are also a manifestation of denialism.

COPs will never be the center of a real confrontation of the collapse because they reproduce erroneous thinking—the thinking of mutants. Indigenous and traditional peoples will take a long time to maybe, in many years, be recognized at COPs as the protagonists they are. Until then, if we continue at this pace—and everything indicates we will—the Amazon will no longer exist as a forest, and the minority that is destroying Earth, the producer of global heating, will force the new generations that are already here to struggle to survive on a hostile planet.

From where I stand, there is no other path except the transmutation of the language that is capitalism to the language that is Nature. I think it will be necessary to go back to mutating, but not into what humans who have separated from Nature cannot return to being. There is no going back; what exists is another loop in the spiral. Mutating into an existing that once again understands itself as Nature without erasing—because that would be impossible—the experience and memory of those wrongly born to be something else.

Consent by default

When Gil talks about two species of humans, those of the jungle and those of the concrete jungle—or those who have not separated themselves from Nature and those who have, as Indigenous thinkers like Ailton Krenak put it—he dispels a misconception in a way that is perhaps easier to understand. To repeat: the collapse of the climate and biodiversity are caused by human action. But, importantly, not by all humans, only by those who have separated themselves from Nature. And among the latter, only by a minority of a few thousand billionaires and super-millionaires, most from the Global North, shareholders of large corporations and the governments and parliaments that serve them, in association with local extractivist elites, as is the case in the Amazon.

But what about the majority of mutants, who will be the first and hardest hit by the collapse? For some years, it has been my hypothesis that capitalism, by reducing us to consumers, has destroyed our survival instinct, rendering the majority incapable of reacting, even to the concrete threat of extinction. Any living being will instantly react to an attack on its life or the preservation

of its species. Us, not anymore.

Faced with the risk of extinction, most mutants become paralyzed or believe all kinds of lies told by the far right so they can go on clinging to their ever more unstable comfort zone. Like small children who cover their eyes and think nobody can see them, and so they feel safe. From this perspective, the majority are deniers, since it is not enough to accept the utter obviousness of the climate emergency—we must act in accordance with the emergency.

In late September, I found another answer that can help us expand this thought. In support of the Freedom Flotilla that carried humanitarian aid to Gaza, dozens of intellectuals, including Angela Davis and Judith Butler, issued a manifesto. The document said that, even if we do not like it, the genocide perpetrated by Israel in Gaza has three actors: the killers, the killed, and the spectators.

This is not the first time I have extended this idea to the collapse. According to the manifesto, these spectators are “devitalized, stunned, and paralyzed subjects.” “We, the spectators, have become a population reduced to perceiving ourselves, with shame and rage, as powerless.” This politics of cruelty, the text says, “inaugurates a new form of governing”—as we witnessed the day the Brazilian Congress demolished environmental licensing laws. “[This new form of governing] seeks to destroy the imagination, lock subjectivity into abjection, and make it impossible to envision a future. It targets our bonds and capacity for attachment; it isolates individuals, casts suspicion on any gesture of empathy, and intimidates any critics through tacit but perfectly clear threats. It creates a world where political affiliation is negotiated based on consent by default.”

Consent by default. This is what the majority of paralyzed mutants are doing as they face a planet in collapse. The majority have become spectators, witnessing their own extinction and the extinction of their children and their world. What a horrendous mutation: to consent by default to our own end.

Paul Watson, who believes no solution will ever come from governments, sees the near future like this, given our current inaction: “We’re going to find a way to solve the problem, which is unlikely, or Nature will solve the problem for us. That will come in the form of ecological collapse.” He also says: “If phytoplankton were to disappear in the ocean, we’d die. [...] But to bring something closer to reality: say ecological problems develop into viruses hitting a certain family of plants, let’s say the grass family. The virus goes from one grass species to another, affecting the entire thing, which is a possibility, because it has affected other crops in the past. So if the grass has died out in one or two years, we would die out with the grasses. We would be fighting wars over turnips and potatoes. Pretty much that’s how it would be. Because that would mean all the wheat, the rye, the corn, the rice, everything would be gone. And



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We already have that.
It's called a tree

Paul Watson

Marine life activist

the animals who eat grass, they would be gone. There would be no cows, no pigs, or nothing for them to eat. There would be no insects and that would be a serious ecological collapse, in which our population, which is presently 8 billion, would probably be reduced in about three years to about 100 million.”

The most important tapir in the room

Among the many criticisms aimed at COPs, there is one based on the best of science: the focus on carbon emissions. Among the most respected voices on the topic is Antonio Nobre. An Earth systems scientist, he is one of the few who risks challenging science's conventional wisdom—and has done for many years now. In an interview to Radio SUMAÚMA and an article published during COP30, he said: “As COP30 convenes at the heart of the Amazon, the world's focus is narrowly set on carbon emissions and net-zero pledges. Yet, this tunnel vision blinds us to the most important elephant in the room: Ecosystem destruction is not a carbon problem alone—it is the systemic sabotage of the planet's most powerful climate control mechanism.” While he recognizes that carbon neutrality is a goal well worth pursuing, Antonio argues we need to look at life. Or at the biotic pump theory developed by Russian scientists Anastassia Makarieva and Victor Gorshkov during a study in which Antonio participated.

“Forests function as the beating heart of the hydrological cycle. Trees transpire vast volumes of water vapor, which rises and rapidly condenses into clouds, aided by cloud-seeds also emitted by the plants. When vast amounts of water vapor rise and condense back into liquid droplets (clouds), that liquid takes up vastly less volume than the gas did. This sudden shrinkage creates a low-pressure area—a massive natural vacuum—that efficiently pulls humid air from the oceans

deep into the continents. [...] Our studies have revealed this mechanism operates globally. [...] Remove the trees, and the pump breaks. Transpiration stops, dry air falls, humid air is no longer drawn inward, clouds vanish, the natural cooling system collapses, and menacing, massive bubbles of hot air settle over deforested regions, further blocking humidity circulation and triggering desert-like conditions across vast continental areas.”

For Antonio Nobre, we must face what he calls an “uncomfortable truth”: “Even if we zeroed out carbon emissions tomorrow [...] without massive ecological restoration the climate emergency would persist. [...] By damaging the ocean-atmosphere-land water cycle we drastically amplify the climate's sensitivity to CO₂. Forests aren't just carbon sinks. They are the planet's primary climate regulators, its freshwater generators, and the very foundation of continental habitability. [...] We must enforce, fund, and model policies that recognize the forest not merely as a carbon repository, but as the planet's irreplaceable air-conditioning and freshwater generation system. [...] Give diverse forests a chance, give native territories a stand, and they will heal the climate. This conviction is not naive optimism; it emerges from the practical application of physics, deep ecology, ancient wisdoms and four billion years of evolutionary genius.”

The first action by mutants, once they break out of the paralysis that has trapped and condemned them, should be to ally themselves with Indigenous peoples and traditional communities. In Brazil, the primary action needed to keep alive the Amazon Forest and all biomes that are still delaying the collapse is to demarcate all Indigenous territories, which have proven to be the most well-conserved lands; title all Quilombola territories; and protect the areas where another 27 traditional populations live. This alone would represent tremendous progress, while also strengthening women leaders, who moved to the fore of the struggle upon realizing many men are corrupted when captured by the world of consumption.

What is happening, however, is the opposite, and this means the 2026 elections present an opportunity to turn things around. Anyone who wants to protect their children—and this isn't rhetoric, because the risk of extinction just keeps on growing—has to work to prevent the re-election of the most predatory Congress in Brazil's history. Not just by voting well but by acting to stop others from voting poorly.

When people ask what gives me the energy to fight, I say I don't fight to win; I fight to live. This dimension, that of life, has also been reduced by capitalism. Life is not what we mutants call life, but rather a creative force, the power that engendered this extraordinary planet, the enigma that circulates through the bodies that forge the world together.

This power still inhabits us. ■

SUMAÚMA

SCOP30

OUR TREE



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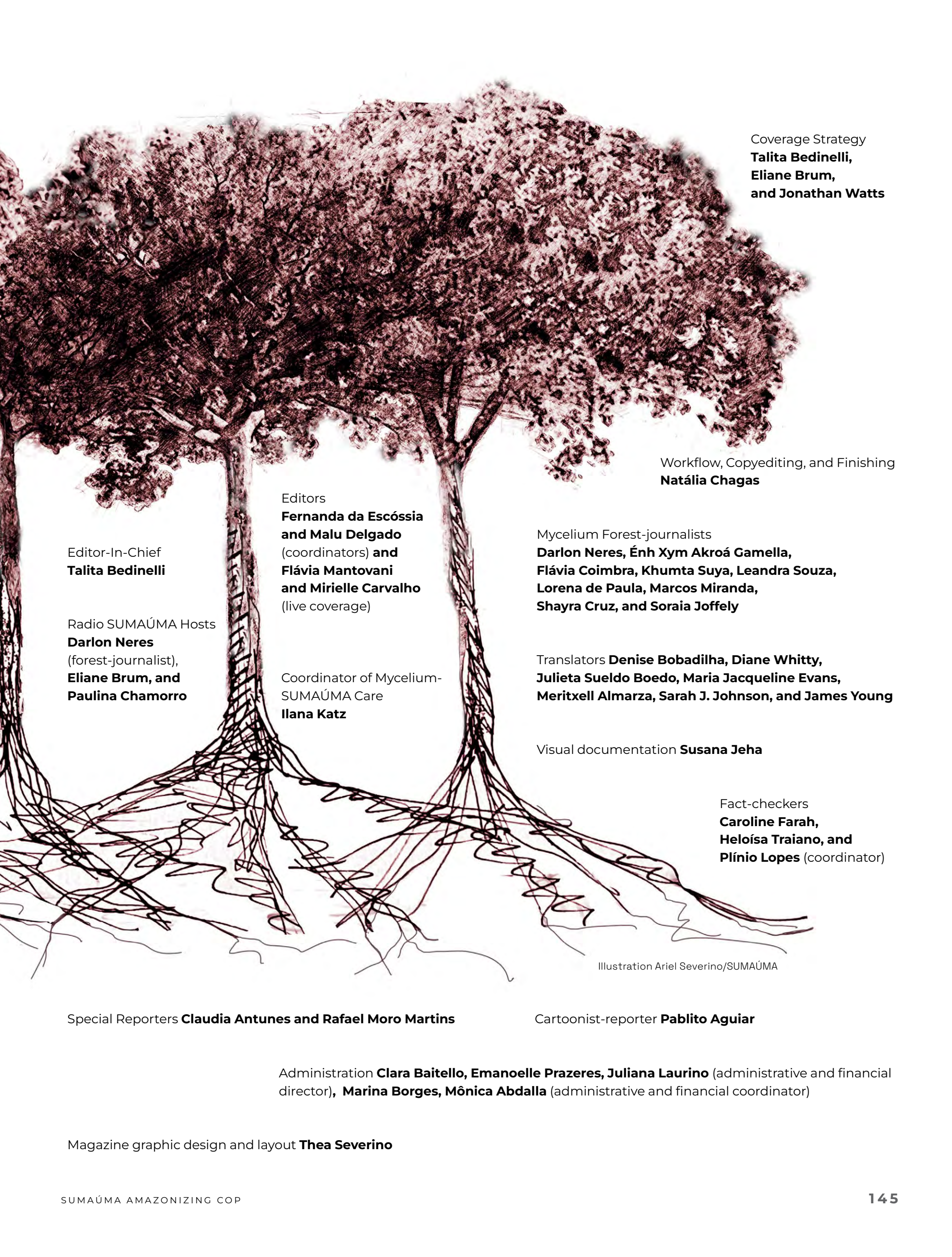
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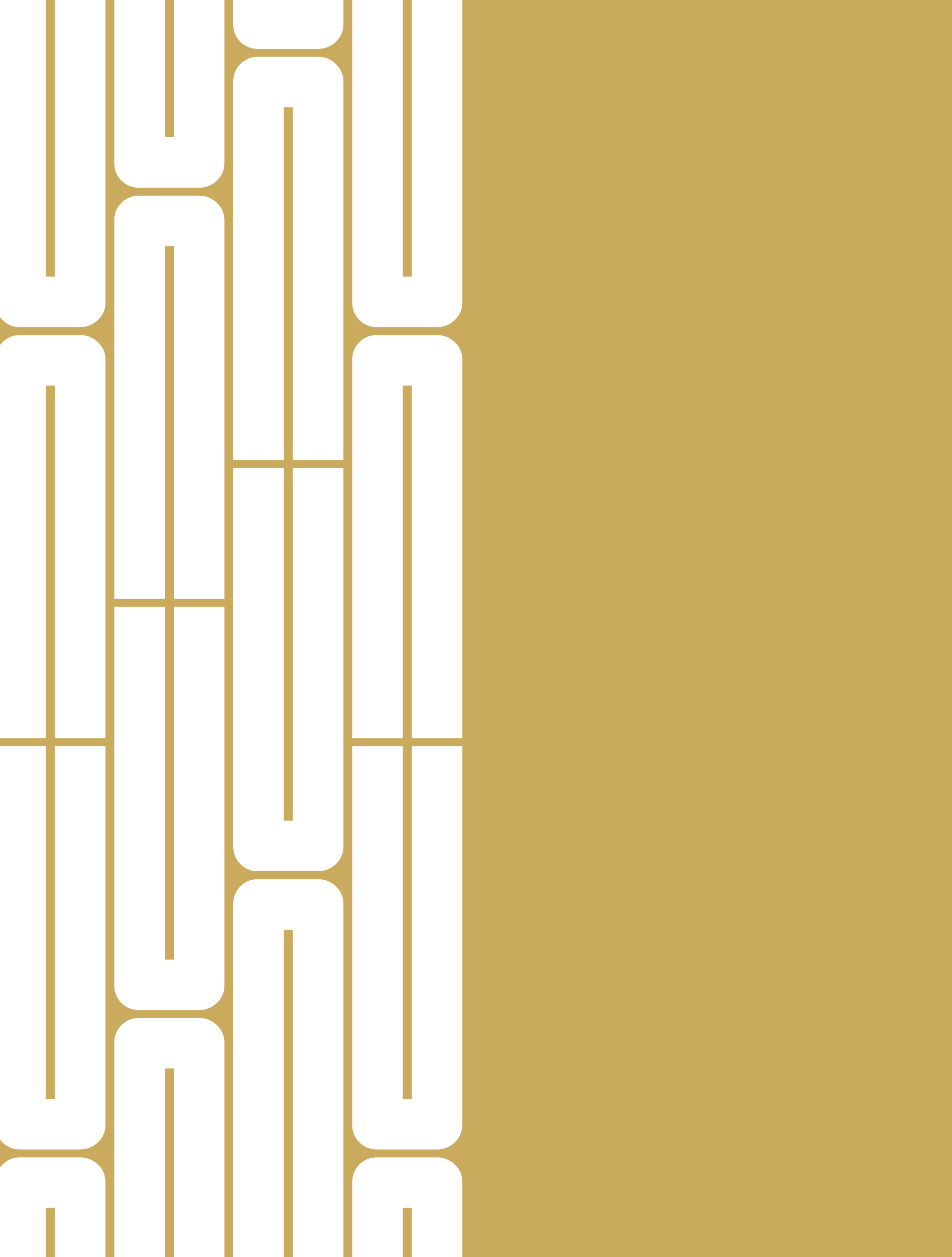
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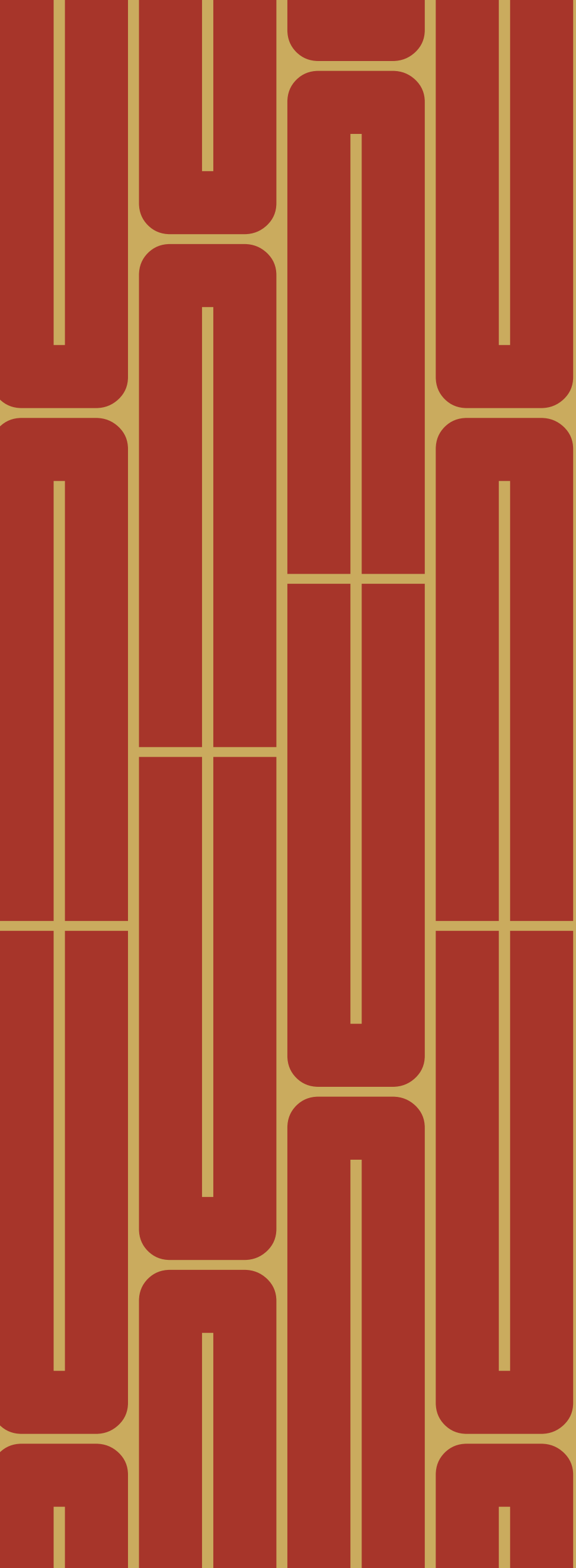
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