



## The processes of territorialization of indigenous land retaking in Brazil

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**Abstract:** *The objective of this article is to characterize the territorialization of collective actions by indigenous peoples in the reclaiming of ancestral lands and territories expropriated in Brazil. The research methodology includes interviews, conducted between 2018 and 2019, with women leaders of the Tupinambá, Guarani-Nhandeva, and Pancararu peoples, and the contextualized georeferencing of dozens of retakes in Brazil. After reviewing the literature on state actions in relation to the autonomy and ethnopolitics of indigenous peoples, the article contributes to the analytical framework on the contemporary agendas of indigenous peoples in land reclamation in Brazil.*

**Keywords:** *indigenous land reclamation; indigenous peoples; Brazil; autonomy; decolonization.*

### Os processos de territorialização das retomadas indígenas no Brasil

**Resumo:** O objetivo do artigo é caracterizar a territorialização das ações coletivas dos povos indígenas nas retomadas de terras e territórios ancestrais expropriados no Brasil. A metodologia da pesquisa inclui entrevistas, entre 2018 e 2019, com mulheres líderes dos povos Tupinambá, Guarani-Nhandeva e Pancararu, e o georreferenciamento contextualizado de dezenas de retomadas no Brasil. Revisadas as literaturas sobre as ações do Estado frente as autonomias

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e etnopolíticas dos povos indígenas, as contribuições do artigo estão nos marcos analíticos sobre as agendas contemporâneas dos povos indígenas em retomadas no Brasil.

**Palavras-chave:** retomadas indígenas; povos indígenas; Brasil; autonomias; descolonização.

## Los procesos de territorialización de las recuperaciones indígenas en Brasil

**Resumen:** El objetivo del artículo es caracterizar la territorialización de las acciones colectivas de los pueblos indígenas en la recuperación de tierras y territorios ancestrales expropiados en Brasil. La metodología de la investigación incluye entrevistas, realizadas entre 2018 y 2019, con mujeres líderes de los pueblos Tupinambá, Guarani-Nhandeva y Pancararu, y la georreferenciación contextualizada de decenas de recuperaciones en Brasil. Tras revisar la bibliografía sobre las acciones del Estado frente a las autonomías y las etnopolíticas de los pueblos indígenas, las contribuciones del artículo se centran en los marcos analíticos sobre las agendas contemporáneas de los pueblos indígenas en las recuperaciones en Brasil.

**Palabras clave:** recuperaciones indígenas; pueblos indígenas; Brasil; autonomías; descolonización.

### 1. Introduction

The aim of this article is to provide a basis for the analysis of the retaking, or *retomadas*, of indigenous lands and territories in Brazil - a scarce study, especially on the macro-social scales of historical regionalization processes. The hypothesis that indigenous retakings are actions that create territorialities guides this research into indigenous social movements and autonomous governments. Their institutional designs and own knowledge systems contradict supposed tendencies towards deterritorialization, acculturation and assimilation. In order to reflect on indigenous autonomies, in the face of the (re)foundation of states (López-Bárcenas, 2008, 2017, 2022), and the arbitrary pacts or social contracts of positive law, an exploratory mapping of 117 cases of retakings in Brazil was carried out based on interviews and the processing of hundreds of news items published on the *internet*.

Deforestation and biodiversity loss are increasing worldwide, the climate crisis and “global ecosystem collapses” are at an irreversible point and are

experienced unequally by different social groups (Hoegh-Guldberg *et al.*, 2019). Indigenous lands commonly overlap with protected natural areas, which are essential for biodiversity, human societies and climate stabilization (Diners-stein, 2020).

The area of primary forests worldwide has decreased by more than 80 million hectares since 1990. More than 100 million hectares of forests are being affected by forest fires, pests, diseases, invasive species, droughts and adverse climatic events (FAO and UNEP, 2020: 10).

Power dynamics affect the territorialization of indigenous peoples' knowledge, practices and cosmologies in biomes, communities of flora and fauna, in socially appropriated and meaningful natures. There are worlds in the midst of wars, and the biomes inhabited by indigenous peoples are part of these conflicts. According to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, armed conflicts after the Second World War are mostly intrastate, i.e. "a conflict between a government and a non-governmental party, without interference from other countries" (Davies, Pettersson and Öberg, 2023). The movements of borders and territorialities are related to the *being* (ontology) and *knowledge* (epistemology) of ethnopolitical or cosmopolitan cultures organized in the face of social conflicts. These asymmetrical conflictive dynamics lead to the creation of changing arrangements of family units and kinships. The oligarchic elites in their territorialization process reproduce themselves socially and biologically through marriage, business and ethnic appropriation of the state.

Indigenous retakings in Brazil - *recuperaciones* and *liberaciones* in other Latin American countries - transcend defensive resistance and state-centered antagonism. They are retakes of biosocial relations with ancestral territories expropriated during imperial colonization and colonialism in Latin America (Quijano, 1992; Casanova, 2003; Zibechi, 2024). The article discusses national identities, multiethnic citizenships and the role of autonomous actions by indigenous peoples in retakings - in the struggle of the enchanted spirits and the Tupinambá of Olivença, on the northeast coast, or the Pancararu of the hinterland; the retakings of the Guarani, Nhandeva and Kaiowá people, on the warring border between Brazil and Paraguay. According to the Socio-Environmental Institute (ISA), currently<sup>2</sup> there are 809 Indigenous Lands (TIs) under state protection, of which 167 are "under identification"; 36 "identified"; 68 "declared"; and 518 "homologated and reserved" (Ricardo, Klein and Santos, 2023).

<sup>2</sup> Available at ISA: <https://terrasindigenas.org.br/>. Accessed on: May 10, 2025.

## 2. Methodologies

Working with the Autonomous Territorial Government of the Wampís Nation<sup>3</sup> (GTANW) between 2019 and 2020 - Bonecini-Almeida (2021, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c) - made evident the transcendence of the (re)construction of autonomy in the process of recovering the integral territory, a search for *Tarimiat Pujut*, the full life, good living or *buen-convivir* (Baspineiro, 2019). These dialogues inspired the research into the contemporary conflicts of indigenous peoples in their retakings. The following methods were used:

1. Interviews with three women leaders of the Guarani Nhandeva, Pancararu and Tupinambá indigenous peoples, protagonists of retakings. The conversations took place between 2018 and 2019, via telephone calls. They took place in the context of the organization of the 2019 Free Land Settlement (*Acampamento Terra Livre*, ATL), a central mobilization of indigenous peoples and movements in Brazil.
2. Experimental cartography of indigenous retakings in Brazil - from the 1970s to the present day - by compiling cases in a georeferenced database, based on hemerographic research. *Online* news articles were consulted, from which data was extracted and organized into 22 analysis columns, including: year, state, municipality, latitude (Y), longitude (X), indigenous people, name of the retaking, indigenous action, violence<sup>4</sup>, source and bibliography. A total of 117 cases were identified, georeferenced on a local/municipal scale.
3. Characterization of the patterns of conflict and indigenous retakings based on a review of the theoretical-political literature with an emphasis on the Guarani Kaiowá, Kaingang and Tupinambá peoples, inhabitants of the regions with the highest concentration of events related to retakings, territorial overlaps (invasions and intrusions) and violence directed against indigenous peoples.

## 3. Preamble: colonial territorialization and republican tutelary state before the retakings

Non-indigenous people took over territories and established physical landmarks for the concentration of land ownership and possession, using

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<sup>3</sup> The Wampís Nation is part of the Jívaro ethnolinguistic group, recently renamed Aénts Chicham, as are the Awajún and Achuar peoples, and the Shuar on the Ecuadorian border.

<sup>4</sup> The descriptor categories used by the Cartography of Attacks Against Indigenous Peoples (CACI) of the Misisonario Indigenous Center (Cimi) were used, with an emphasis on cases of murder and attempted murder.

bureaucratic, institutional mechanisms and the use of force, whether paralegal, illegal or allegal<sup>5</sup> (Gudynas, 2018: 65). The foundation of the colonial headquarters deepened the operations of war, forced settlements, *reducciones* and *pacificaciones*, kidnappings, slave labor and religious conversions - “indignant reports about anthropophagy, polygamy and shamanism functioned as the origin and justification of all colonial violence” (Oliveira, 2022: 23). Pacheco de Oliveira (2022: 31) reflects on the “multiple ways in which indigenous people were incorporated into the national formation, from extermination to confinement, from assimilation to tutelage”.

The interiorization of colonization was given a new impetus with the immigration of the Portuguese imperial family. Dom João XVI issued an order to his subjects in the Captaincy of São Paulo, on November 5, 1808, by means of a Royal Letter: “infested by the Indians called Bugres, who cruelly kill all the farmers and landowners [...] under the just and humane laws that govern my peoples”. He orders “the effects of humanity to be suspended”, as “the war against these barbaric Indians has begun”, operated by armed “militiamen” from Curitiba and São Paulo. The so-called *just wars*, unjust and arbitrary, were also waged against the Coroados, Botocudos, Guerén, Canoeiros, Timbiras and other indigenous peoples. As Darcy Ribeiro (1985) reports, it was common in the empire and republic for water sources to be poisoned, or for clothes, toys and objects left in indigenous territories to be deliberately contaminated with disease. The use of biological weapons against indigenous peoples in Brazil did not begin with the toxic substances and practices of agribusiness, mechanized or automated, among other frontier technologies.

The Land Law of 1850 - which provides for the acquisition of the Empire's vacant lands by purchase deeds - turned public land into a capital asset that can be traded on markets. The internalization of the nation erected in the state legalized “tame and peaceful possessions, acquired by primary occupation”, cultivated and made the habitual home of the squatter. This is the constitution of private property based on the expropriation of indigenous territories. Capitalism is consolidated on state institutions and infrastructures, in illegitimate purchases and exchanges, land grabbing, as well as debts contracted with farmers, barons and colonels in *sheds*, *canteens*, *warehouses*, *pans* and other forms of control over work and land.

<sup>5</sup> According to Gudynas (2018) allegality refers to actions that are formally legal, or that are not prohibited, whose purpose is the spurious gain of exploiting legal loopholes, which can harm collective interests.

The historical institution of the *fazenda* as an economic and political unit, from local to national scales, exceeds the extent of fenced land and penetrates indigenous territorialities, as private and state property, creating prohibitions on access to territories, ancient trails and paths, animals and plants, water bodies and indigenous cosmopolitical spaces. For Alarcon (2017) and Pacheco de Oliveira (2022), this took place in Central Brazil and the Amazon, an extensive stretch of coastline in the northeast, while in the south indigenous people were persecuted by *bugreiros* - killers and murderers - responsible for campaigns of extermination in the name of private property.

Indigenous, *mestizos* and *caboclos* continued to be persecuted for their practices, knowledge and subjectivities, even in their diaspora. The process of racialization makes up the colonial pattern of power (Quijano, 2012) in relations, through the generic classification of the *other*. The technologies of power of colonialism create the racialized alterities of the *national Indigenous*, rural landless workers, converted into partners, sharecroppers, tenants, peasants, rural workers, informal, precarious and/or enslaved.

A new impetus for the formation of Brazil was given by the seizure of indigenous territories in the 20th century: the rubber economy; the expansion of the mechanized agribusiness frontier (soy, wood and cellulose, yerba mate, cocoa, corn, rice, livestock), penetration roads and colonization projects; the construction of large infrastructures, such as dams and open-pit mining and other extractive economies (Gudynas, 2018), led to the drastic reduction of indigenous territories caused by expulsion, forced displacement and migration.

Elaborated by the nationalism of the literate military leadership, republican indigenism is a “basis for an official policy of a protectionist and tutelary nature” (Oliveira, 2022: 24). Of particular note was the Service for the Protection of Indians and the Localization of National Workers (SPILTN), created in 1910 and renamed the Indian Protection Service (SPI) in 1918. Capitalist expansion turned indigenous lands and territories into “factors of production” (Alarcon, 2014). The SPI acted according to the principles of incorporation, assimilation and integration, responsible for attracting and concentrating indigenous people in areas controlled by the state, for the purposes of protection and guardianship, and the political and economic organization of the territory in the Indigenous Posts (PI).

According to Ferreira (2022), this process of deterritorialization fragmented the territories even more, moving from a relationship of overlapping - a colonial political, social and military siege - to disjunction, with the creation of a new agrarian structure responsible for expelling the *Indigenous people* and gathering

them into reserves and Indian posts controlled by state agents, such as the *cacique-captain* and *lieutenant*, *Indian delegate* and the *head of the post*: “Spatial separation was a necessary element in the construction of private properties as a monopoly space for settler-farmers” (Ferreira, 2022: 143). This racialized and white supremacist system, an image of the Brazilian state, established the legal political system in the indigenous reserves, with the highest indigenous authority being the lowest in the indigenist hierarchy - a radical asymmetry of power between different ethnopolitical groups. The indigenous people began to work for the ranchers, on their own land of origin, as an available national labor force (Fernandes and Góes, 2022).

My people were first recognized in the 16th century, right? In the 17th century, with the foundation of the village of Tacaratu [in the interior of Pernambuco], there was a new recognition of the indigenous people, and a first delimitation of the territory. The recognition of the territory came more recently, in 1940, when the SPI arrived here in the territory, and made a new demarcation. [...] But, due to an agreement with the colonels of the time and some indigenous people, so that the non-indigenous people would leave the territory, it was reduced to 8,100 hectares. The initial measurement [...] was 14,292 hectares. And that part that was left out was precisely what was negotiated with the colonels in Tacaratu. [...] Our territory recently had a court decision in favor of Pancararu for the disinjunction of the territory, which is the departure of the squatters, the non-Indigenous (C. J. Pancararu, 2018).

The SPI was abolished in 1967, in the context of the Figueiredo Report, the product of a parliamentary commission of inquiry (CPI) that exposed cases of torture, corruption, mistreatment and other violence against indigenous peoples during the military dictatorship. The National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) was created in 1967, coinciding with the expansion of major development projects in the Amazon - illustrated in slogans such as “lands without men, for men without land”, “love it or leave it”, “Brazil for Brazilians”, “the giant has awoken” - with penetration roads - Belém-Brasília/BR-010 (1958-completed), Transamazônica/BR-230 (1970-completed), Perimetral Norte/BR-210 (1973-completed) - ports, dams and hydroelectric plants - Tucuruí (1984) and Belo Monte (1975-2019) – illegal and industrial mining - Grande Carajás Project (1980) and Serra Pelada (1979).

The data [...] in the National Museum/CEDI survey (1987) is frightening: there are indications of the existence of mines in 29.2% of indigenous lands; this

proportion increases in relation to hydroelectric plants (39.2%), roads (50.4%) and requests for mineral research or exploration reach 69%. Most indigenous lands are even threatened simultaneously by several of these projects (Oliveira, 2022: 27).

The Indian Statute (Law No. 6,001/1973) provides for the “legal situation of Indians or forest dwellers and indigenous communities, with the purpose of preserving their culture and integrating them, progressively and harmoniously, into the national community”. Only in the light of Resolution 454/2022 of the National Council of Justice (CNJ) has this definition been challenged. Article 25 of the Indian Statute deals with the “right of Indians and tribal groups to permanent possession of the lands inhabited by them”, which “shall be independent of demarcation”, but “taking into account the current situation and the historical consensus on the antiquity of the occupation”, which includes non-indigenous properties, possessions and improvements - an argument analogous to the *temporal milestone thesis*<sup>6</sup>.

The imprecise definition of immemorial possession has given way to the concept of traditional occupation - as we can read in Chapter VIII, Of the Indians, of the 1988 Federal Constitution, article 231: “Indians are recognized for their social organization, customs, languages, beliefs and traditions, and the original rights over the lands they traditionally occupy, with the Union responsible for demarcating them, protecting and ensuring respect for all their assets”. Paragraph 4 states that indigenous lands “are inalienable and unavailable, and the rights over them are imprescriptible”. Indigenous policy is no longer aimed at displacement and removal, but at the conservation of indigenous peoples on their ancestral lands and territories: “the lands destined for indigenous peoples would no longer be simple places of refuge and sedentarization, but should meet the needs of socio-cultural continuity of each people or community” (Oliveira, 2022: 26). Or, according to Almeida (2004), “Theories of legal pluralism, for which the law produced by the state is not the only one, gained strength with the 1988 Constitution”, in the same period in which “new networks of organizations and movements were consolidated, to some extent countering the dispersion and fragmentation of representations” (Almeida, 2004, p. 23). The state no longer has the task of transforming indigenous people into non-indigenous

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<sup>6</sup> According to the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB), the legal thesis of the temporal milestone argues that indigenous peoples only have the right to the demarcation of their traditional lands if they were occupying those lands on October 5, 1988, the date of publication of Brazil's Federal Constitution. Available at: <https://apiboficial.org/marco-temporal/>. Accessed on: May 15, 2025.

citizens. The antithesis to the growing unity of indigenous peoples and movements, in the context of re-democratization, is the expansion of agribusiness by rural patronage, broadcast in all media as a modern, efficient, technological and productive driving force (Lerrer, 2020).

João Pacheco de Oliveira (2022) proposes *territory* as an analytical key to understanding indigenous societies, the establishment of internal borders and the global movements of human societies. The author states that indigenous land demarcations in Brazil were justified by three criteria: 1) the radical tutelary action, in which it was up to the state agent to choose the area to be allocated to an indigenous community, who would live there under the tutelary regime; 2) the self-described stance as a *technique* applied by FUNAI, especially from the 1980s onwards, in which “indigenous territory is defined on the basis of anthropological and environmental studies which, with the consultation and consent of the indigenous people, is transformed into a delimitation proposal” (p. 9); and 3) indigenous protagonist action in the retakings, given the paralysis of administrative procedures or their judicialization, to “create political facts that can make their rights viable in the short term” (Oliveira, 2022: 10).

I am an indigenous member of the Pancararu people, in the hinterland of Pernambuco, surrounded by three municipalities, Tacaratu, Petrolândia and Jatobá. Our territory is approximately 500 km from the capital of Pernambuco, Recife. [...] There is so much symbolic and physical violence that we have to deal with. Not only through legislation, but also through other forms of struggle [...] The physical clash itself, because if we expect the state to respect the very laws it makes, democracy is falling apart. So let's fight and tell the people to move forward, because we will move forward.” (C. J./Pancararu People, interview, 2018).

The legal abstraction of indigenous land, demarcated and/or homologated, does not reach the complexities of the peoples' lands and territories. Indigenous cosmopolitics contains multi-local networks of intercultural and interethnic agencies capable of (re)creating and guaranteeing rights, including those historically denied, in the “construction of a new political subject and the rooting of a project for the future” (Oliveira, 2022: 437).

[...] to be able to defend the rights of humans and non-humans, the rights of the enchanted over this land, the right to defend our territory, to defend life. And if we can't defend life, at least we can defend the right to our death, how we should and want to be buried in our rituals. [...] The issue of confrontation is

the issue of the shamans, our spiritual side, our religion, these churches invading indigenous territories, not just the farmers, but this mass, to occupy indigenous territories and attack our religions, killing our shamans (G. Tupinambá, interview, 2018).

The struggle for land and territory is transgenerational, mobilizing ancestral values in the resistance that produces new institutions, practices and identities. The creations of indigenous peoples manifest themselves in the face of the legal devices of *national* political agencies that are ethnically normalized in the *ethos* of whiteness (Bento, 2022; Santos, 2015).

#### 4. Indigenous retakings in Brazil

The retaking of indigenous lands and territories refers to the “organizing principles of social life” (Oliveira, 2022), the relations between ethnicity and politics, autonomies and hierarchies, the processes of territorialization of lands and territories. The retakings are also called processes of territorial recovery, of areas historically and ancestrally inhabited by indigenous people in a continuous, regular and peaceful way (Alarcon, 2014; Oliveira, 2022), expropriated by squatters, settlers, non-indigenous people, through the taking of land. The invaders often proceeded to legalize these possessions and properties in their own names or in the names of family members. How do kinship relations and affinities operate in colonial power relations between whites and/or non-indigenous people? The retakings are territorial conflicts that began in the 1970s and 1980s, which Pacheco de Oliveira (1998) initially described as a “journey back”: a self-reflexive announcement of ethnicity, territorialized and/or inscribed on the bodies of individuals, rather than a return to the past. What makes people return? What links and memories have been preserved or transformed between generations?

The retakings are *necessarily* legitimate actions of indigenous peoples’ autonomy to recover invaded lands (Ferreira, 2022). Anthropologist Daniela Alarcon (2014) identifies characteristics of the “retaken form” (p. 103): 1. ritualized techniques of occupation with cosmopolitical motives; 2. division of labour and responsibilities (in the retaking); 3. specific spatial organization in concrete engagements; 4. creation of their own vocabulary; 5. establishment of community gardens and other (re)productive activities, such as the organization of improvised kitchens; 6. mobilization and sedimentation of family and kinship units; 7. a political economy of alliances between villages, retaken lands and urban centers; 8. confrontation with the (i)legal capitalist economy, including armed

rural militias; 9. a means of local, regional and national political pressure to regularize demarcation processes; 10. they are motivated by “precision” (p. 107) and material needs; 11. “in-depth knowledge of the territory and the villages’ level of organization” (p. 117).

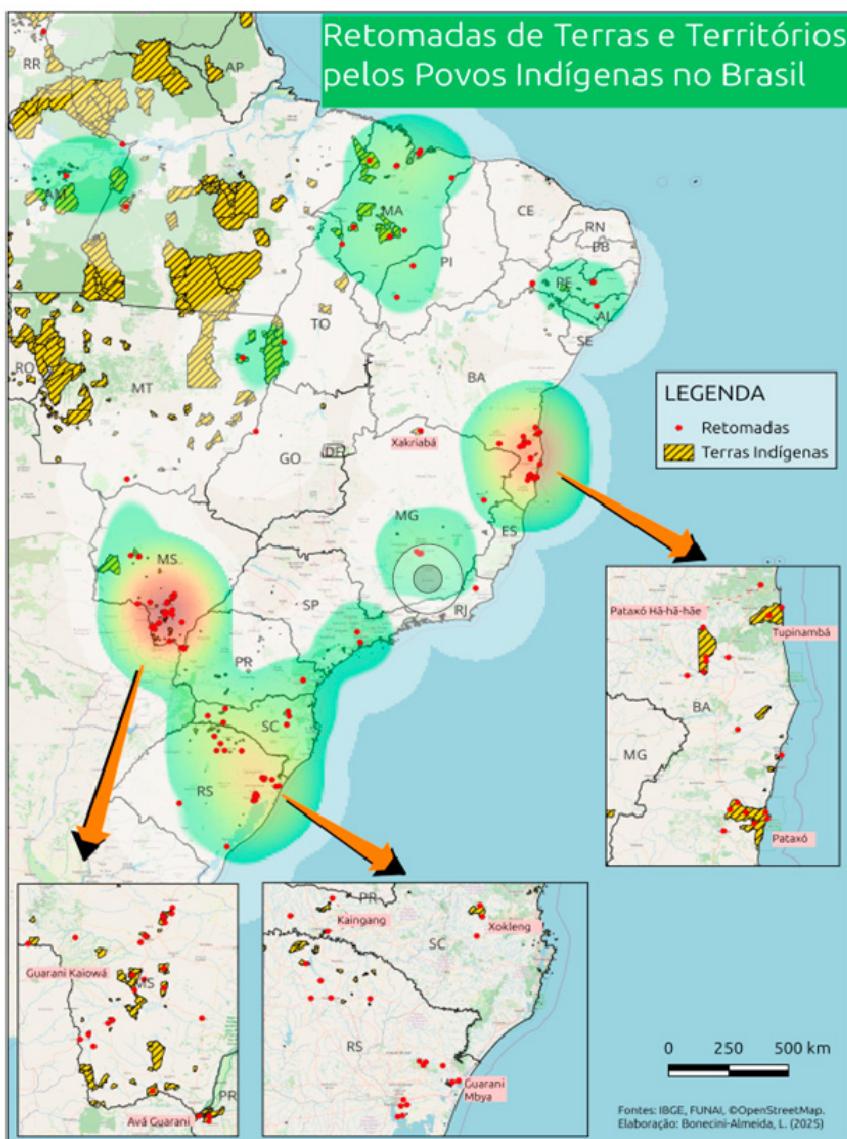


Image SEQ Imagem \\* ARABIC 1 - Retakings of Indigenous Lands and Territories in Brazil. The dots locate 117 cases between 1978 and 2025 – there are much more to know.

Source: own elaboration.

The *retomadas* are decentralized “insurgent micro-territories” (Ferreira, 2022) responsible for annulling the statutes of private property and the colonial (re)production systems of capitalist development, based on three dimensions: narrative, practice and organization. The first is anti-colonial critique, an immaterial and symbolic way of communicating self-righteousness and autonomy. The second, practices, refers to the peasant tactic of reclaiming land through occupations and collective actions. And the third refers to the reorganization of social and spatial relations.

This map produced from the exploratory collection of cases of indigenous retakings in Brazil (Image 1) shows their concentration in certain regions of the country: in the areas claimed by the Guarani, in opposition to soy agribusiness, in the south of the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, close to the borders of Paraguay and Paraná; the Kaingang and Guarani retakings in the north of Rio Grande do Sul and in Porto Alegre - in peripheral urban areas, roadsides and farms; and the conflicts in the territories of the Pataxó, Pataxó Hâhâhâe and Tupinambá peoples on the southern coast of Bahia, under pressure from the cocoa agribusiness, real estate speculation, drug trafficking factions and hotel companies. Below is a brief contextualization of the retakes of the Guarani, Kaingang and Tupinambá peoples.

### Guarani-Kaiowá and Guarani-Nhandeva people (Ava Guarani)

According to the Mainland Guarani Map (EMGC, 2016), in 2016 there were around 280,000 Guarani in four countries: Argentina (54,825); Bolivia (83,019); Brazil<sup>7</sup> (85,255); Paraguay (62,000). The Itatim, ancestors of the Guarani, suffered casualties in the Bodoquena regions of the Pantanal until the 17th century, due to Jesuit missions, bandeirantes and attacks by rival peoples such as the Mbya-Guaikuru, as well as diseases introduced by the colonizers. The Guarani, like the Kinikinau, Kadiweu and Terena, fought against Paraguay.

The eight Kaiowá reserves in Mato Grosso do Sul (MS), created between 1915 and 1928 by the SPI, are home to 43,401 people. The *aldeamento* – or to create communities – gave way to the creation of reserves: to reserve the *Indians* from full citizenship and autonomy, and to make land available as valuable reserves for colonization in the 20th century. “Families that were enemies of each other [...] were concentrated, causing strong political tensions” (Silva and Mura,

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<sup>7</sup> The Brazilian Guarani population is identified by the ethnonyms Kaiowá, Nhandeva (Ava Guarani, Tupi Guarani, Xiripá) and Mbyá, and is distributed in the following Brazilian states: MT, RS, SC, PR, SP, RJ, ES, MS, PA.

2022: 87). This movement accelerated deforestation, the introduction of extensive cattle ranching and mechanized agriculture. The state accelerated territorial fragmentation, capitalist initiatives and the introduction of new territorial markers: posts, fences, walls, gates, towns, dirt roads, the expansion of the road and rail network - *writing* a colonial sociability on the land.

The thirty-two Guarani-Kaiowá retakings identified are all in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul (MS). The struggle to retake lands and territories of traditional occupation takes place on indigenous lands<sup>8</sup>. The conflicts are territorial, and the agents of violence are landowners, private militias, police forces and ruralist parliamentarians, who institutionally organize the attacks on the retaken lands. The people affected by the physical, psychological, political and symbolic violence are mostly leaders, women and children.

We can group the empirics of the retakings according to the dynamics of the conflicts:

1. Premeditated attacks resulting in the murder of leaders and people linked to direct action in the retakings, kidnappings and ambushes resulting in disappearances or deaths followed by the hiding of bodies, expulsions, massacres and collective terror. The Guapoy Massacre (June 2022): military police action with deaths and three missing Kaiowá. The Caarapó Massacre (2016): action by an armed group linked to agribusiness;
2. Torture and extreme cruelty, such as beatings, stabbings, collective intimidation and humiliation - such as the case of a young man shot and tortured in Avaé'te (2023);
3. Repeated attacks and permanent threats against the same community: using fear as an instrument of terror and insecurity, with the presence of gunmen or private security guards. The retaken areas in Dourados (Avaé'te, Aratikuty, Ñu Vera) suffered frequent attacks with weapons, fires, destruction of wells and houses. Kurusu Amba has been the target of attacks since 2007, continuing until 2025, even with the presence of the National Force. In Apyka'i, the population lives on the edge of the highway, in a situation of extreme vulnerability;

<sup>8</sup> The Kaiowá indigenous lands (TIs) being retaken: Amambai (Guapoy, Guapoy Tujuru Mirim), Kurussu Ambá, Panambi-Lagoa Rica (Tayjaçu Iguá, Tekoha Guyrakamby'i, Tekoa Yvy Ajheré, Kurupa'yty, Pikyxi'yn, GuaarokáItá'y Kagwyrusu), the Dourados Indigenous Reserve (Ñu Vera, Boquerón, Retomada Avaé'te, Tekoha Aratikuty, Apyka'i, Tekoha Yvy Rovy Poty), Sombrerito, Taquaperi, Taquara, Té'y Kue, TI Dourados-Amambaipeguá I (Kumumi Poty Verá), Yvu Verá.

4. The retakings are reactions to violence: the retaking of Jopara after murder (Coronel Sapucaia/MS); the blocking of the highway in Dourados (Ñu Vera, Boquerón) after eviction; the retaking of Laranjeira Nhanderu at Fazenda Inho (Rio Brilhante/MS) as a response to repression; the return to Teko-Ava, in Naviraí, among other urban retakings.

Despite the rise of cases to the Supreme Federal Court (STF), police force and private violence persist: destruction of crops, evictions, arbitrary arrests, threats and aggression, such as the criminal burning of Guarani prayer houses - in 2024 in Porto Lindo<sup>9</sup> (Japorã/MS) and in the retaken Kunumi Verá<sup>10</sup> in Caarapó (MS).

I'm from Porto Lindo Village, Mato Grosso do Sul, I'm Guarani-Nhandeva [Ava Guarani]. The Guarani-Nhandeva population are living in a village, they are *demarcated*, but most are living in various ways, mainly on the side of the road, due to lack of land (S. B., Guarani-Nhandeva, interview, 2018).

Guarani ecology includes morphological transformations, territorial mobility and *jeheka* (or *going in search of*). These “centers of irradiation of itinerancy” (Mura e Silva, 2022), since the points of departure and arrival are the units of the Kaiowá domestic ecology, with two distinctive aspects: first, they are inter-generational means of socializing knowledge, of experiential cartography in the territory in production, and second, how domestic and family groups establish dominion over the territory in alliances and conflicts.

For us Guarani, what divides us isn't land space, demarcating territory, setting borders for each other, it's *different* people. What divides us is difference. A place is sought for us to continue our own system, so that there is respect for another society that is different from us and we who are Guarani also respect the space of others (S. B., Guarani-Nhandeva, interview, 2018).

Kaiowá swidden farming (*kokue*) near the collective residences or “big *malocas*” (Silva and Mura, 2022) is connected by paths (*tape po'i*) that lead to the places of Guarani activities, both mundane and sacred (Chaparro and Fabrini, 2025). These paths are the product of kinship networks and ethnopolitical

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9 Available at Correio do Estado: <https://correiodoestado.com.br/cidades/casa-de-reza-e-incendiada-em-aldeia-indigena-de-ms/432062/>. Accessed on: October 10, 2024.

10 Available at CIMI: <https://cimi.org.br/2024/02/queima-casa-de-reza-marcal/>. Accessed on: November 18, 2024.

alliances. These housing units are distributed within the watersheds, as water is a central element of indigenous geopolitics. The Kaiowa territorial organization is one of radial, non-concentric circles, mobilizing multiple scales: the domestic group aggregated in housing units (*oy* or *óga*) built in courtyards (*oka*) and connected by a network of radial trails, has as its axis the house of the elders, patriarch and matriarch. The trails connect these units to form a local community; the group of communities forms the *Tekoha* - “place where we realize our way of being and living” (Silva and Mura, 2022: 98) - a political unit with relative autonomy and hierarchies typical of the family groups of origin; and the group of *tekohas* forms the *Tekoha Guasu*, associated with a river basin.

The *Tekoha Guasu* expresses the existence of a group of “te’yi” (trunks or family lineages) who build their “tendápé” (region of ancestral occupation), in places close to water sources and the few forests that currently cover the southern cone of Mato Grosso do Sul [...] continuous explorations, experiments and appropriations of the desired and accessible resources (Silva and Mura, 2022: 106).

The Guarani in Mato Grosso do Sul used fixed physical landmarks to delimit the areas of occupation that resisted the process of colonial territorialization, in order to “defend or recover the exclusive use of the places from which they are aware of their origins” (Silva and Mura, 2022: 102). From the 1980s onwards, the Guarani retook expropriated land, in a context of serious violence (EMGC, 2016). There were 891 murders of indigenous people in Brazil between 2003 and 2015, of which 426 (47%) were in Mato Grosso do Sul - one murder every 11 days. In the same state, from 2000 to 2015, there were 752 suicides, 70% of them among young people aged 15 to 25, one case a week over the last 16 years.

For us Guarani, it is very important that the land is demarcated according to our system, where there is a river, where there is bush, where there is game, where there is a place to plant. When the village gets too small, the group usually splits up, leaves the village and looks for another space, to follow their own system, the *Tekó Nhanderekó*, a *Guarani way of life*. (S.B., Guarani-Nhandeva, interview, 2018).

Ferreira (2022) identifies three characteristics of the *retomadas*: the *retomadas* overlap with fractions of the mythical and ancestral spaces of origin; secondly, they tension the myth of the gift of land resulting from historical conflicts *within the state* insofar as they are *against* the state; thirdly,

“territoriality and ancestral territory are overlapped by the notion of Indigenous Land, which is a way in which the state codifies and institutionalizes a vision of indigenous territory. It is usually a fraction of the ancestral territory” (Ferreira, 2022: 151).

### Kaingang people

Fernandes and Góes (2022) understand the meaning of “community”, “Indian” and “original people” to be of colonial origin, when dealing with the various nomenclatures received by the Kaingang: “Gualachos, Guaianá, Guañanas, Goianás, Guaianas, Kamé, Coroad, Pé-largo, Dorins and Jac-fé.” (Fernandes and Góes, 2022: 44). In the 18th century, the figure of the *bandeirantes*, the myth of the founding pioneers who tamed the land and the Indians with horses and guns, was established in the northern region of present-day Guarapuava (PR), today the municipality of Telêmaco Borba, the scene of the *Tibagi Massacre*. The name *coroad* was widely used, referring to the crown-shaped haircuts, as the name Kaigang was only established at the end of the 19th century. Both peoples, Kaingangue and Xokleng, were affected by Decree No. 426 of July 24, 1845, which instituted the “Regulation on the Missions for the Catechesis and Civilization of Indians”.

The areas destined for indigenous occupation - in order to assimilate their identities to the nation, to wage labour and to colonial forms of socialization - were called *toldos*, an indistinct classificatory term of Spanish colonial origin, common in Rio Grande do Sul. It denoted the *uncultivated* areas occupied by unruly and seditious savages, “‘natives’, ‘savages’ and agraphs to the erudite knowledge of the colonizer” (Almeida, 2004, p. 23), averse to the progress of the immigrant settlers.

The Kaingang have carried out nine retakes (Image 1), in the states of Paraná (1), Rio Grande do Sul (6) and Santa Catarina (2). The conflicts are over the lack of demarcation of territory and public policies, and the recovery of land historically expropriated by non-indigenous people, companies or the state. In addition to retaking land, Kaingang actions include encampments, political and legal actions, inter-ethnic alliances and denunciations. Despite the low level of direct physical violence, there is symbolic, political, legal and structural violence, such as possession reintegration and agreements breached by the state (Aldeia Kairú, Carazinho/RS, 2016). We characterize the Kaingang retakes in some typifications:

1. Peaceful retakes without direct confrontation, in abandoned, public or disputed areas: Monte Caseros (Caseiros/RS, 2005) - encampment on the side of the BR-285; Serrinha (Constantina/RS, 1996) - return to the territory with negotiation and request for compensation by the occupants; Toldo Imbu (Abelardo Luz/SC, 2005) - awaiting demarcation for years (Santos, 2024); Toldo Pinhal (Seara/SC, 2005) - no direct conflict; Floresta Metropolitana (Piraquara/PR, 2021) - multi-ethnic retaking; Goj-Jur (Passo Fundo/RS, 2018) - occupation in an abandoned dump site; in Canela/RS (2018) - claim in national forest; Gāh Ré (Porto Alegre/RS, 2022) - urban retaking in an area of real estate interest. 2. Retakes with judicial repression (evictions and threats of reintegration) characterized by institutional violence and forced removal, in disrespect for the right to consultation and reparation; 3. Intimidation, invasions and abuses by private individuals in the retakes, with the support, complicity and/or omission of institutions and police officers - in the Gāh Ré retake there was an invasion by a neighbor with a lawyer and two police officers, without a court order, as well as physical threats and attempts to censor Kaingang cultural practices; 4. Resettlements with latent conflicts associated with the land structure, urban and real estate pressure (Morro Santana, Porto Alegre/RS, 2022), or conservative environmentalisms that exclude indigenous people; 5. Resettlements with inter-ethnic alliances and solidarity, political strategies with the support of social movements, seeking greater visibility and political strength vis-à-vis the state - the case of the Kaingang, Guarani Mbya, Guarani Nhandeva, Tukano and Krahô resettlement in Piraquara/PR (2021) and the Kaingang and Laklāno Xokleng resettlement in Porto Alegre/RS (2022).

Indigenous retakes are collective techniques and actions, in which indigenous peoples mobilize tactics and knowledge of care, defence and war to guarantee their integrity. According to Fernandes and Góes (2022), the Kaingang leaders referred to the retakings as "clearing the land", a metaphor for the swidden, *clearing the land to be cultivated*. The Kaingang retaking is heralded by the expulsion of approximately 3,000 settlers from the Nonoai Indigenous Reserve, in Rio Grande do Sul, in 1978. The eviction was carried out using bows, arrows, clubs and other weapons. These farmers are said to have been responsible for organizing the landless rural workers in Rio Grande do Sul, who camped out on the banks of the Nonoai lands, in the *Encruzilhada Natalino*, and then years later occupied the Anoni Farm, the founding stone of the MST social movement - which indicates that these processes precede and/or enhance each other, despite the fact that land occupations by peasant

social movements are better known and studied. In the same year, around 700 settlers were expelled from the Xapecó Indigenous Land, in Santa Catarina, and another 500 from Mangueirinha (PR), “reinserting ethnic territorialization into discussions about land planning in southern Brazil” (Fernandes and Góes, 2022: 65).

According to Fernandes and Góes (2022), the Kaingang in the retakes carried out two tactical lines of action: open confrontations and the arrest of state officials. The conflicts were marked by land disputes with agents of economic activities, such as logging and cellulose processing industries, agribusiness, hydroelectric power stations, railroad lines and electricity transmission lines. They have resumed practices and knowledge, such as the ritual of worshipping the dead, the *Kiki*, which was previously forbidden by indigenous institutions. The appreciation of Kaingang culture in family, community and inter-community units reaches the cosmopolitics that define materially and symbolically relational spaces and times in polytheisms and ecologies of “ethnic territories” (Oliveira, 2022). The Kaingang have deep ties to their birthplaces, where umbilical cords are buried, cosmological markers of intergenerational relations: “the pioneer demiurges who give rise to humanity come into the world from underground, from the top of the mountains” (Fernandes and Góes, 2022: 74).

### Tupinambá people

A Tupinambá leader told us in an interview:

The Tupinambá people are located in the southern region of Bahia, in the municipality of Buararema, in the region of Ilhéus. [...] Our territory makes up 47,000 hectares, a *single territory*, which covers 22 communities, TI Tupinambá de Olivença. [...] They arrived here giving us a “mirror”, taking the territory, without actually listening to our questions, we who are the owners of these lands. The landowner meets with the police and decides on the lives of the people, and wants to dominate the territory and exploit it. This also involves hotel associations of large mega-enterprises that come from resources outside the country and that implies the problem of violence within indigenous territories, for the non-demarcation of our territories. [...] There is persecution from the landowners, there have already been several arbitrary arrests of leaders, women, not just the chief, today there is a risk to life (G. Tupinambá, remote interview, 2019).

The retakes of the Tupinambá of Olivença, on the southern coast of Bahia<sup>11</sup>, are characterized by extreme situations. Firstly, the retakes of the Limoeiro (700 ha) and Cachoeira (878 ha) farms, which took place in 2006, were met with little initial resistance from the few occupants present, in areas that were difficult to access, unproductive or abandoned. On the other hand, the retakes in Serra do Padeiro and Serrá de Tremes, starting in 2014, expose the extreme violence practiced against the Tupinambá people. In Buararema and Ilhabela there were attacks by armed gunmen, ambushes and summary executions, with no possibility of defense.

For Cacique Babau (2019), the Tupinambá retaking is achieved through control of the means of reproduction, specifically the production of food, among other historical practices of biocultural memory (Toledo and Barrera-Bassols, 2008). Alarcon (2022) and Pacheco de Oliveira (2022) talk about the *maintenance* of a territory based on projects and intentions for the future related to a common past, recovered and valued in the processes of territorialization, of which retakes are part as common horizons for the future. This implies two movements: the involvement of those who see themselves as relatives in the process of territorial recovery; and the maintenance of these daily relationships engaged in collective projects and horizons for the future.

The permanent use and maintenance of a territory also requires a project for the future, which will be widely internalized by the members of that collectivity, providing them with a guide for their conduct, parameters for their innovative practices and initiatives, as well as values and feelings that can legitimize their judgments and actions (Oliveira, 2022: 438).

Those who return are welcomed by the relatives (*parentes*) who carried out the retaking, and then return to a new area where they will establish themselves based on ancestral ties to specific areas. The retakes expand their scales because they involve connections with relatives inside the preserved territory,

11 Since the 1980s, the Pataxó and Pataxó Hâhâhâe peoples have also been leading the process of reclaiming their traditional territories in the south of Bahia, marked by conflicts with farmers, agribusiness companies (pepper, coffee and cocoa) and the state itself. The retaking actions have been the target of different forms of violence, including police repression, the actions of private militias and the murders of indigenous leaders and young people - Aurino Pereira dos Santos (2007), Luiz dos Santos Santana (2014), Gustavo Silva da Conceição (14 years/2022), Samuel do Amor Divino and Nauí Brito de Jesus (with the involvement of the Military Police, 2023), Maria de Fátima Muniz (Nega Pataxó, 2024). There are also accusations of environmental degradation caused by large companies, such as Veracel Celulose. The episodes highlight the combination of institutional violence, state omission and land disputes in areas already recognized as indigenous lands or in the process of being regularized.

the retaken territory, nearby urban centers, with relatives living long distances away, as well as alliances with other indigenous peoples and non-indigenous solidarity organizations.

Our people have already retaken the entire area, expelled the farmers from the area, it's a retaking where we are traditionally from this place, [...] all our lives we've been from here, we were born here, we've raised several generations, so there's no way to get us out of our territory, except by killing us (G. Tupinambá, interview, 2019).

Alarcon (2022: 169) states that “relatives make the struggle, the struggle makes (and unmakes) relatives”: expanding the political meaning of being a relative to new configurations of intra- and inter-kinship power, as relatives are forged into new relationships in the course of the struggle, while others move away or oppose the retaking. At stake is the maintenance of a people's practices and knowledge as principles of their own rights.

## 5. Territories, territorialities and territorialization processes in ethnic conflicts

João Pacheco de Oliveira (2022) deals with “territorialization processes” as an analytical key, crossed by the epistemological, ontological, bodily, temporal, ethnic and political dimensions of the formation of territories. A characteristic of any territory is its geographical historicity, according to specific dispositions and combinations of political cultures in the social appropriations of nature (Leff, 2006, 2015). The relationship between culture, territory and nature concerns the historical dynamics of border movements, the expansion or contraction of territories, their transformations and the resulting new orders.

The hegemonic control of mobility, sedimentation in cities and *natural* domains configures the horizontal and vertical topographies of Milton Santos (1993), networks and flows of people, matter and energy in regional connections and (dis)integrations. Haesbaert (2007) defines four main objectives of territorialization: 1) physical refuge, source of material resources and/or means of production and reproduction; 2) identification or symbolization of groups through spatial references, such as borders; 3) control and/or discipline through space; 4) construction and control of connections and networks: flows of people, goods and information.

The inequalities of the capitalist mode of production are the cause and consequence of ethnic and ecological conflicts, related to divergent access to and control of common resources, representing contradictory interests and values

between unequal power players. Power relations in the territory become a key element in these conflicts, both in the ability of the actors and the plots to impose their decisions on others, and in the imposition of a dominant language of valuation (Martínez-Alier, 2004). Silva and Mura (2022) point out the indivisibility of the *social*, *technical* and *ecological* systems in social phenomena and institutions by defending the concept of “socio-ecological-territorial contexts”, in which the variations and diversities of the social are paired with “other forces, physical or chemical, which produce similar effects of diversification, in a given space of interactions and relationships” (p. 81). For Barclay and Santos-Granero (2010: 24), energy and life force “is finite, generally fixed, scarce, in constant circulation and unevenly distributed”. Borders are multiple: of toponyms, of ontocosmologies, or of the interethnic limits of reciprocities and interdependencies. Borders are material limits, intersubjective knowledge systems, wars or ontological conflicts (Almeida, 2013).

The insertion of exogenous products-objects-techniques alters indigenous peoples' ways of doing things, such as ultra-processed foods, work tools, everyday utensils made of metals, glass and plastics. As a result: “the Kaiowá realize that they are not qualified to reproduce the industrial objects and knowledge attributed to the sphere of competence of whites; however, nothing prevents them from seeking to refine techniques and strategies to access them” (Silva and Mura, 2022: 91). The diet also changes - sugars, oils, alcoholic beverages, flours and transgenics - and the ways of accessing food, and in this sense the policy of tutelar guardianship is strengthened as the *savior* of the impoverished survival of indigenous peoples. Mura and Silva (2022) highlight how temporalities are transformed according to colonial metrics: the fiscal calendars of municipal, state and federal public resources, the seasonality of agricultural production that absorbs indigenous labor in harvests throughout Brazil (onions, apples, grapes, sugar cane, among others), with many cases of slave-like work on farms, one of the forms of political and economic control of indigenous peoples.

Colonization has brought animal and plant species as part of its territorial control technique: pastures for livestock, genetically modified varieties requiring tons of toxic agrochemicals, and restricting access to water and cultivation areas according to the method of rotation, burning, ploughing and regeneration of ecological successions, which prevents indigenous peoples' self-determination, sovereignty and food security. For Ferreira (2022), the process of territorialization/derritorialization is the production of limits, borders, flows, connections and points of occupation; the projection of new social and spatial relations, incorporating new spaces and reorganizing old ones. As if dialoguing

with Shapiom Noningo<sup>12</sup> - when he says “The Wampís nation builds, destroys, leads, conducts its common and collective destiny and the State is called upon to support in the spaces we consider pertinent, but in the way and as the Wampís nation wants” - Ferreira (2022: 120) states that the process of territorialization is “the action of creation/destruction, consequently, of transformation of territories”. Therefore, the process of territorialization is the political action of defining geographical boundaries and reworking the political culture of meaning of spaces and relationships, in other words, their territorialities. It is a dynamic, multidimensional process, always updated in the temporal and spatial relations of indigenous peoples.

Ethnohistories become more complex when multiple ethnopolitics are combined, in opposition to the limits of contemporary official and capitalist cartographies. In Brazil, there is a paradox of overlapping territorialities, property titles that are incongruous with the material and symbolic reality of the territories, and borders that are not recognized on public agendas. There are 213 indigenous lands overlapped/invaded, in 1,187,214.07 hectares, by rural properties registered by National Institute for Colonisation and Agrarian Reform (Incra) (Castilho *et al.*, 2023). The “time horizons of development” (Harvey, 2007: 76) promise the future, but destroy the conditions for its realization (Kothari *et al.*, 2019). The hybridization between the nation-state and capitalist enterprise is a comprehensive system of domination (Aráoz, 2013) that creates, according to Bebbington (2011), *besieged* spaces where people and nature are pressured from all sides. Racialized human experiences are invisibilized in the colonized natures of the modern colonial world-system (Alimonda, 2011).

## 6. Autonomies, ethnicities and politics of indigenous peoples in retaken areas

There is a dialectical/contradictory imbrication of the structures themselves and the anti-structures appropriated from colonizing/colonialist societies, be they legal-political devices, technologies, forms of organization and distribution of power, use of force and violence, as well as the political, economic, labour and cultural dimensions. Ferreira (2017) criticizes the eurocentric nature of the meaning of politics, as if it were exclusive to the state, reducing non-state forms to *previous* or non-political ones. When they *oppose* the state, they are *outside* the state, alien to it and its relations. The meaning and existence of the state is

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<sup>12</sup> See the news item “La nación Wampís desafía a la pandemia y convoca y reta al Estado Peruano”, published by GTANW (2020), Available at: <https://nacionwampis.com/la-nacion-wampis-desafia-a-la-pandemia-y-convoca-y-reta-al-estado-peruano/>. Accessed on: November 20, 2021.

naturalized. We must observe the historical multiplicity of “real forms of objectification of politics” (Ferreira, 2017: 196). But how can we recognize the collective rights of indigenous ethnopolitics? How can legal pluralism be evoked so that a “pluriethnic state” (Almeida, 2004) protects or adapts to different ethnic expressions?

The historical study of ethnopolitics, from a dialectical and local perspective, emphasizes conflicts as expressions of power capable of transforming the social structure. According to Ferreira (2022), based on the concept of territorial dialectics, territorial conflicts can be understood as historical processes of domination and resistance, of varying autonomies, whether “without”, “within” or “against” the state. It’s about “conflict as contradiction in practice” - to paraphrase geographer Carlos Walter Porto Gonçalves - and social movements that create new (dis)orders.

The identities of ethnic groups and interethnic systems are always the product of the interaction of hierarchies of symbolic, economic and political power classifications, whether within the state or in the organizations and institutions that regulate endogenous and interethnic relations. The history of each group can be found in its present practices, in its collective memory, in orality and other forms of expression of identities and changing ethnonyms, whether through assimilation, fusion or invisibilization. This takes place in historical interethnic relations of cooperation, competition, domination and/or subordination, in processes of territorialization of ethnicities. Control and access to territory is central to the construction and governance of relations, for the cultural sedimentation of knowledge and techniques in the historical time of each society in its intercultural interactions.

Ethnopolitics is “the political activity of ethnic groups (or inter-ethnic systems) that bears the marks of their historical experience, social organization, culture and material-ecological base” (Ferreira, 2017: 198), forming an expanded and multi-scalar social system (micro-politics, infra-politics and the local level of politics) endowed with interdependencies - like the Tekó Guarani. The retakings have led to greater participation in the indigenist and justice councils of the states and at federal level, the expansion of the areas claimed, the consolidation of memories, the critical retelling of official histories, the strengthening of the political power of the indigenous movement, communities and urban villages.

Autonomy is the constitutive and creation act of the social, of a nation or a people. Alien to the notion of *polis* or citizenship regulated by the juridical-political devices of the state (Zibechi, 2020, 2024), governing life exceeds Western

and Christian colonial power in its expansive impulse as a reason of state. The experiences of reexistence (Hurtado and Porto-Gonçalvez, 2022) point to affinities and solidarities towards common horizons of development or redevelopment, as opposed to those of the amalgamation of states and capitals. Autonomy is the ontological realization of the common (Escobar, 2016), of ways of being in their totality, as the production and reproduction of life.

The right to land is a very fundamental right, and from this, everything that affects these spaces is everything we need to survive: the right to traditional knowledge, the right to our way of using the land, handling the land, education, health, housing, how we educate our children, how we deal with these spaces that are mega diverse, and we need this maintenance (C. J. of the Pancararu People, interview, 2018).

These territorial experiences, whether they are called self-governments, extraordinary systems of justice, social and environmental surveillance, *forest guardians*, police and/or community patrols, are established by the authorities under their own, customary or autonomous law, as well as the sanctions for violations and transgressions in their territory based on ethnopolitical ethics. The delimitation of the inside and outside of the territory in the processes of reterritorialization - which is spatial/material and subjective/ideological - marks the limits between worlds and beings, cosmopolitical and interspecific borders. Indigenous autonomies strengthen the social fabric, favoring the recovery of lands and territories degraded by colonial exploitation and thus the emergence of "clandestine and inaudible memories" (Pollak, 1989) that put the so-called *national memory* to the test.

Autonomies are rich in pedagogical meaning and operate in the multi-scalar correlations of asymmetrical forces. Dignity is rebuilt and exceptional and defensive violence is appropriate to interrupt the final violence - or the "end of the world", as Krenak (2019) warns. G. Tupinambá said in an interview: "Indigenous peoples demand an end to the violence, criminalization and discrimination practiced even by public agents, ensuring that those responsible are punished and that the damage caused is repaired". The monopoly of state violence, taken as an instrument of private (property) force for the purposes of plunder, is questioned when colonized peoples and nations recognize the limits of exogenous forms of domination and territorial control. Furthermore, the autonomies of Latin America's indigenous nations contribute to the reinvention of democracies, which are in deep political and ethical crisis in neoliberal

economic regimes (López-Bárcenas, 2021). These are acts of insubordination and political power that go against the teleological passivity inherent in the liberal paradigm of representation of the democratic rule of law.

Self-government initiatives, local autonomies and/or their regional ethno-political alliances have spread since the 1990s (López-Bárcenas, 2008), as the result of decades or even centuries of conflict. Its character and scope refer to the degree of independence and sovereignty in relation to, against or beyond the state. Historical justice and reparation means the defense and recovery of lands usurped in the colonial process of establishing the mononational, monocultural state, built on the universalism of procedures for the supremacy of ethnic groups over 1.7 million indigenous people, from 305 peoples speaking 274 languages, according to the 2022 Census. They are creations to accommodate means and contents freely conceived by indigenous people (López-Bárcenas, 2008; Soriano-González, 2013). Héctor Díaz-Polanco and Consuelo Sánchez (2002) highlight characteristics of indigenous autonomy: unity of the nation and equal treatment *in the state*; equality between indigenous peoples; solidarity, material and cultural conditions in objective actions. For Rodolfo Stavenhagen (2002), autonomy implies: 1) the identity of the subjects of autonomy; 2) the scale and relative scope of autonomy; 3) the attributes for governing life; 4) the legal and political structures established in the state are the product of negotiated agreements.

Ferreira (2022: 121) defines autonomy as “a given society and/or its particular component subgroups can determine the form, function and meaning of their own social institutions and, consequently, of their territory”. He classifies indigenous autonomies in dialectical and contradictory relationships with the state: autonomies “within the state” or “with the state”; autonomies “without” the state; and “against” the state. Autonomies *within* the state “presuppose the construction of or participation in the structures of the national state as a condition for their autonomy” (p. 124). Autonomies *without* the state “presuppose the need for self-governing territories, outside the political control of national states” (p. 124). Autonomies *against* the state are forms of organization that repel state agents and institutions, creating their own institutions, norms and forms of organization.

At regional and national level, Pancararu joins other indigenous peoples in the fight for the full regularization of our territories and fundamental rights that are vital for our socio-cultural and socio-environmental *maintenance*, for the presence of future generations and the valorization of our ancestors,

who have always maintained this idea of our territory, our culture, our enchanted ones, our spiritual strength. We try to respect, revere, value and always evoke these forces, as is the case now (C. J./Pancararu, interview, 2018).

Constant *resistance*, in reaction to consecutive acts of war and colonialist aggression, does not represent the full realization of indigenous peoples. We can assume that resistance is the symmetrical and natural opposite of the dominant force. However, the equivalences between actions and spatial relations of encompassing, connecting, approaching, overlapping and separating (Ferreira, 2022), which are constitutive of the processes of belligerent territorialization in the West, or at least of the reason of the state, are not given, since “one of the fundamental aspects of the modern state is the monopoly of control over the territory in which all the spatial relations it expresses tend towards the production of hierarchies and centralization” (Ferreira, 2022: 122). Criticism of the naturalization of the state as an institution, idea, value and way of organizing human life in society helps us to understand the tutelary institution of the state as a centralization of power over spatial relations in different historical periods. Even in anthropological studies, especially structuralist and functionalist ones, *indigenous* political systems are alien to the modernity of stable, ahistorical and homogeneous forms.

Autonomy is a concept capable of expressing self-determination that is diverse, yet concrete in its realization, in which collectivities of the same ethnicity affect the institutions and organizations of different political systems, aware of their relative limits and contradictions. Autonomy therefore presupposes a symmetry of power in the circuits in which it takes place, while the hierarchies of arbitrariness inform asymmetries of power. Autonomies can be sources of intercultural and/or transcultural political creation, alternatives to the formal and informal institutional dynamics of unequal social pacts resulting from colonial policies and long-term structural violence (Braudel, 1958). Indigenous autonomies question the meaning and legitimacy of power in the history of Latin America and the world, projecting from indigenous territories to the complex issues of the humanities in crisis.

## 7. Final considerations

The scientific and political challenges are many. According to João Pacheco de Oliveira (2022), “indigenous lands and territories have attracted little attention in Americanist ethnological studies in recent decades; they are generally

presented as facts and information already given, similar to the climate or the political regime". Lands and territories should be investigated through an "ethnographic gaze" attentive to Latin American formulations, "contributing to a more dynamic and profound understanding of such cultures and societies" (Oliveira, 2022: 11). Raquel Tupinambá, from Baixo Tapajós (Pará) says: "There's a lot of talk about retaking. It seems like we're frozen in time, right? But it was the state that didn't recognize us as indigenous. We've always fought, always been indigenous" (ISA, 2023: 436).

The different collective actions of territorialization carried out by autonomous indigenous movements contradict the idea of their deterritorialization on a global scale, a civilizing gesture of modernity. The genesis of Latin American countries takes place in spaces with an apparent vacuum of sovereignty, demographics and political systems. With the colonial occupation of Portugal and Spain, new borders were drawn and built, which have continued to expand and/or change. After the armed independence movements, indigenous peoples began to appear in the nationalist narrative of the New States as being "original people" (Ferreira, 2022: 115). Indigenous peoples are commonly represented as absent of their self-determination and power, imagined as animалиstic, naive, pure and/or brutal, racially classified, enemies against whom the state was built.

The expropriation of indigenous territories has led to systematic violence and structural injustices: deaths, threats, demonization, criminalization and judicialization, rape, disease, malnutrition, forced migration and displacement, compulsory literacy and the banning of their own language, the loss of cultural practices, the severing of tangible and intangible material and symbolic links with the territories of their ancestral occupation. It is also due to the introduction of money and salaried work; an increase in commercial consumption, manufacturing and industrial production; changes in food sovereignty and security; the professionalization of leaders and political caretakers; the consumption of cultural products, with little or no representation; the demarcation, titling and regulation of relations with the state through *indigenous lands*, among other forms of guardianship and control; state initiatives aimed at integration, assimilation, pacification, reduction, national communion; settler invasions; legal and illegal companies that exploit *natural resources*.

Therefore, a central challenge is the decolonization of the natural conceptions, generalizations and classifications used to refer to each indigenous nation and people - a work of commitment to research and all action dedicated to

favouring indigenous autonomy and territorial rights. By studying the history and culture of each place, state, region and country, we must seek out the political, institutional and subjective conditions for dialoguing with the indigenous peoples present there, respecting their struggles, their protagonism and their systems of knowledge and technologies “in the face of genocide, indifference and omission, stimulating hope in a plural, just and democratic country” (Oliveira, 2022: 10).

There are conflicts in different territories, as well as important political, epistemological and civilizational challenges that point to coexistence, but also to historical and structural violence. This debate is circumscribed by antagonistic historical narratives about the protection of the natural and positive law of the state; the consolidation of the international law of the original nations; their resistance and struggles through autonomous governments, mobilized in multiple forms, contents and meanings; the violent territorialization of colonizing agents, with land grabbing, engines of expropriation and accumulation. These define the mononational borders and regionalization of the country, the distribution of power, the racialization of public ethics, the meanings of development and social reproduction. We investigate the hypothesis of the decolonization of lands and territories based on the retakings - the emergence of ethnic, multicultural and cross-border resistance, agencies of territorialization, (re)invention and creation of the government of life. This question is urgent in the territorialization processes of the *retakings* carried out by indigenous peoples throughout Brazil.

This article provokes new medium-term research agendas, both in terms of deepening the discussions and results, as well as new methodological, spatial and temporal approaches. We envision the following potential actions:

1. Research cases of retaking in Latin America and the Caribbean, georeferencing the layers of economic activities, properties and real estate overlapping indigenous territories, as well as comparing the institutional, political and ideological contexts.
2. To produce dialogical cartographies of the historical series of local, regional and national socio-political conjunctures, highlighting the transformations of the spatialities and territorialities of indigenous peoples and the forces with which they conflict, in order to retell official histories.
3. Associate personal and group profiles to characterize how kinship and affinity operate in colonial(ist) power relations for white and/or non-indigenous people..

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