


**RUBBER TAPPER TERRITORY: EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES IN THE JACI-PARANÁ EXTRACTIVE RESERVE, RONDÔNIA**

**TERRITÓRIO SERINGUEIRO: VIVÊNCIAS E DESAFIOS NA RESEX JACI-PARANÁ, RONDÔNIA**

**TERRITORIO SERINGALERO: VIVENCIAS Y DESAFÍOS EN LA RESERVA EXTRACTIVISTA JACI-PARANÁ, RONDÔNIA**

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**Ravele da Silva Santana<sup>1</sup>, Siane Cristhina Pedroso Guimarães<sup>2</sup>**

**ABSTRACT**

This article analyzes the experiences and challenges faced by rubber tappers in the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve (Resex), in Rondônia, considering the conflicting territorial dynamics between environmental conservation and the expansion of the agricultural frontier in this area. The research, based on a qualitative approach and dialectical analysis, uses primary and secondary data to discuss the resistance of traditional communities in the face of pressure from economic agents and the omission of the State. The results highlight the weakening of the extractivist way of life due to deforestation, land grabbing, and the lack of effective public policies. It is concluded that guaranteeing the territorial rights of rubber tappers requires integrated actions in environmental management, land regularization, and the strengthening of community organization.

**Keywords:** Amazon. Territory. Conflicts. Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve. Resistance.

**RESUMO**

Este artigo analisa as vivências e os desafios enfrentados pelos seringueiros na Reserva Extrativista (Resex) Jaci-Paraná, em Rondônia, considerando as dinâmicas territoriais conflituosas entre a conservação ambiental e a expansão da fronteira agropecuária existentes nessa área. A pesquisa, baseada em abordagem qualitativa e análise dialética, utiliza dados primários e secundários para discutir a resistência das comunidades tradicionais frente à pressão de agentes econômicos e à omissão do Estado. Os resultados evidenciam a fragilização do modo de vida extrativista devido ao desmatamento, grilagem de terras e falta de políticas públicas efetivas. Conclui-se que a garantia dos direitos territoriais dos seringueiros exige ações integradas de gestão ambiental, regularização fundiária e fortalecimento da organização comunitária.

**Palavras-chave:** Amazônia. Território. Conflitos. Resex Jaci-Paraná. Resistência.

**RESUMEN**

Este artículo analiza las vivencias y los desafíos enfrentados por los seringueiros en la Reserva Extractivista (Resex) Jaci-Paraná, en Rondônia, considerando las dinámicas

<sup>1</sup> Doctorate Student in Geography. Universidade Federal de Rondônia (UNIR).  
E-mail: ravelesantana@gmail.com Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7769-0447>  
Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/6701796280315715>

<sup>2</sup> Dr. in Geosciences. Universidade Federal de Rondônia (UNIR). E-mail: sianecpg@unir.br  
Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8332-9850> Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/8118717751743592>

territoriales conflictivas entre la conservación ambiental y la expansión de la frontera agropecuaria en esta zona. La investigación, basada en un enfoque cualitativo y análisis dialéctico, utiliza datos primarios y secundarios para discutir la resistencia de las comunidades tradicionales frente a la presión de los agentes económicos y la omisión del Estado. Los resultados evidencian el debilitamiento del modo de vida extractivista debido a la deforestación, el acaparamiento de tierras y la falta de políticas públicas efectivas. Se concluye que garantizar los derechos territoriales de los seringueiros exige acciones integradas de gestión ambiental, regularización de tierras y fortalecimiento de la organización comunitaria.

**Palabras clave:** Amazonía. Territorio. Conflictos. Resex Jaci-Paraná. Resistencia.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Porto-Gonçalves (2019) reminds us that around rubber there was arguably the most important flow of settlement to the Amazon, a fact that dates back to the 1860s, and this migration becomes even more intense with the droughts in the Brazilian Northeast at the end of 1870. It is estimated that 300 to 500 thousand Northeasterners migrated to the Amazon between 1860 and 1912 (Porto-Gonçalves, 2019).

Especially with the advent of the 2nd Industrial Revolution and the development of industries interested in latex, the Amazon became the target of international greed, given the need for large-scale production of elastic gum, especially for the automobile industry. In the 1940s, in the context of World War II, two important facts, which again gave impetus to extractivism in the Amazon, were the occupation of Asian rubber plantations by Japanese troops and the creation of the Bank of the Amazon (BASA), reactivating the rubber plantations in the region, bringing a new population contingent, which became known as "rubber soldiers".

After World War II, and the higher productivity and cost-benefit of rubber produced in Asia, there was a sharp drop in extractive activities due to other economic activities, such as mining. "Thus, a whole pattern of social organization of geographic space is being shaped in the Amazon, not only within the forest, but also in the floodplains" (Porto-Gonçalves, 2019, p. 93).

But it is mainly in the 1970s that rubber tappers emerge on the political scene again. In the state of Acre, this movement is aroused through clashes between rubber tappers and ranchers who have been cutting down the forest to plant pasture. Porto-Gonçalves (2019) reiterates that the understanding that the rubber tappers defended themselves from an invasion was given by the way they called the ranchers: paulistas, designating those who came from outside. Thus, rubber tappers saw themselves as protagonists against the destruction of the forest (Porto-Gonçalves, 2019).

This same process occurs in Rondônia, and is identified in our study area, since extractive exploitation along the Jaci Paraná River dates back to the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, under the dominance of the rubber baron Mr. Isaac Benayon Sabbá (Rondônia, 1994). However, with the adoption of the policy of expansion of the agricultural frontier in Rondônia, in the 1970s and 1980s, the areas originally occupied and worked by rubber tappers were subposed to the INCRA Settlement Projects, causing a disorderly occupation generating a series of land conflicts, being one of the

problems that exist in the region to this day.

According to Oliveira's (1991) propositions, it is understood that this is where the establishment of divorce between the worker (the rubber tapper) and the things he needs to work, for example, the land, begins. This is the first condition and the first step for the establishment of the reign of capital and the expansion of capitalism. And it is in this context that we can say that "there is an Amazon of the forest and there is a deforested Amazon. In this there is an Amazon of pasture, usually of the latifundium, but also another, that of the planter. There is an Amazon that kills. There is an Amazon that resists, that "r-exists" (Porto-Gonçalves, 2019, p. 10).

## **2 THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE RUBBER TAPPER TERRITORY: MOVEMENTS AND STRUGGLES FOR EXTRACTIVE RESERVES**

In the early 1980s, the rubber tappers, observing the difficult conditions to which the settlers of the INCRA Settlement Projects were subjected, and already under the leadership of Chico Mendes, began to formulate an original political proposal that combined the struggle for land with the struggle for their way of life.

In 1984, they took to Brasília, to the IV National Meeting of Rural Workers of Contag, the proposal that Agrarian Reform could not be homogeneous for the entire national territory and, thus, inscribed the cultural dimension, of the way of life, in the political debate. They explicitly reject Incra's rural module, of 50 or 100 hectares, since the rubber tree condition required an average extension of 300 hectares of land with forest. (Porto-Gonçalves, 2019, p. 132).

For Becker and Stenner (2008), in this same period contradictory processes are identified regarding the performance of the State and social organization, opposite processes that have the year 1985 as a milestone. "On the one hand, the exhaustion of national-developmentalism, on the other hand, the creation of the National Council of Rubber Tappers, symbolizing a movement of resistance of local populations – autochthonous and migrants – to the expropriation of the land" (Becker and Stenner, 2008, p. 27).

For Porto-Gonçalves (2019, p. 130) these "are movements of r-existence, since they not only fight to resist against those who kill and deforest, but for a certain form of existence, a certain way of life and production, for different ways of feeling, acting and thinking". By incorporating the cultural dimension and protectors of the forest, they were soon supported by international ecological movements and:

At the same time that they ally themselves with a movement of planetary dimensions, which seeks to defend the forest, they explicitly place themselves as protagonists of this defense by stating that "there is no defense of the forest without the Peoples of the Forest" (Chico Mendes). In this way, they open a new dimension in the political debate involving ecology by associating, in an organic way, the social dimension with the ecological one. (Porto-Gonçalves, 2019, p. 132).

This new political dimension becomes a trend from then on, because according to Porto-Gonçalves (2019), one of the characteristics of the process of societal reorganization underway in the world is that the monopoly of international relations is no longer of the State or of those "at the top". For the author:

[...] These populations present themselves today with the authority of those who resisted the devastating model; of those who have knowledge about the forest because they have their habitat in it. Today, they seek support in sectors of civil society in the First World for support for their struggle for basic individual rights, such as the right to life, as well as other citizenship rights already relatively established in the First World. They thus make ecology an asset in their dialogue in search of rights and social justice, showing that this process of globalization can have another face, since, from the point of view of these protagonists, it must also incorporate the extension of rights and justice to everyone on the entire planet. (Porto-Gonçalves, 2019, p. 64).

In this sense, the proposal of the Extractive Reserves was the crowning achievement of this rubber tree identity. It is understood that the Extractive Reserves are the greatest expression of a historical period that characterizes the Amazon, from various perspectives, especially the survival of the population, with special emphasis on rubber extraction. However, historically, the experience of rubber tappers does not qualify them only as simple extractivists, because in times of decline in this economic activity, agriculture was also part of their daily lives, characterizing their way of life, making them agroextractivists.

The practice of what today several agronomists and forest engineers call agroforestry systems would be one of the best traditions of these populations. A warning is also made by Porto-Gonçalves (2019), that these populations have developed a medicine that serves as the basis for large laboratories that puts us on the issue of patents and intellectual property to which these populations have not had access.

The Resex thus presents itself as a living laboratory, for the search for a development model that makes with and from populations that have an effective knowledge woven in the coexistence with the forest. The Extractive Reserve is itself a beautiful construction that arose from an intimate relationship between intellectuals and the

social movement, in this case the trade union. It arose from the need to build a proposal that corresponded to the experience of those who struggled, that incorporated their culture. Strictly speaking, it did not come from outside. The Resex thus combines the usufruct of each individual family and community property, under the tutelage of the State, but under the participatory management of organized civil society entities, with a view to ensuring a sustainable use of natural resources and, thus, generating the institutional conditions to go beyond sustainable development, but towards a society that has institutions that point to self-management. (Porto-Gonçalves, 2019, p. 132-133).

Thus, the result of the struggle led by Chico Mendes was the adoption in Brazil of a new category of conservation unit: the Extractive Reserves. According to Dourojeanni and Jorge-Pádua (2013, p. 309), in fact "extractive reserves did not start as Conservation Units. It was a technocratic alternative that resolved the conflict, legalizing the use of the land by rubber tappers, transforming them into "extractivists". Regarding this consideration, Mello-Théry (2011, p. 109) says that "despite numerous criticisms regarding the economic viability of the reserves, it is an explicit social policy, aiming to guarantee access to land and resources for populations that are strongly threatened by economic pressures".

Thus, in the early 1990s, the first Extractive Reserves were created, two in the state of Acre (Resex Alto Juruá and Resex Chico Mendes), one in the state of Amapá (Resex do Rio Cajari), and one in Rondônia (Resex Rio Ouro Preto). All were created under federal management.

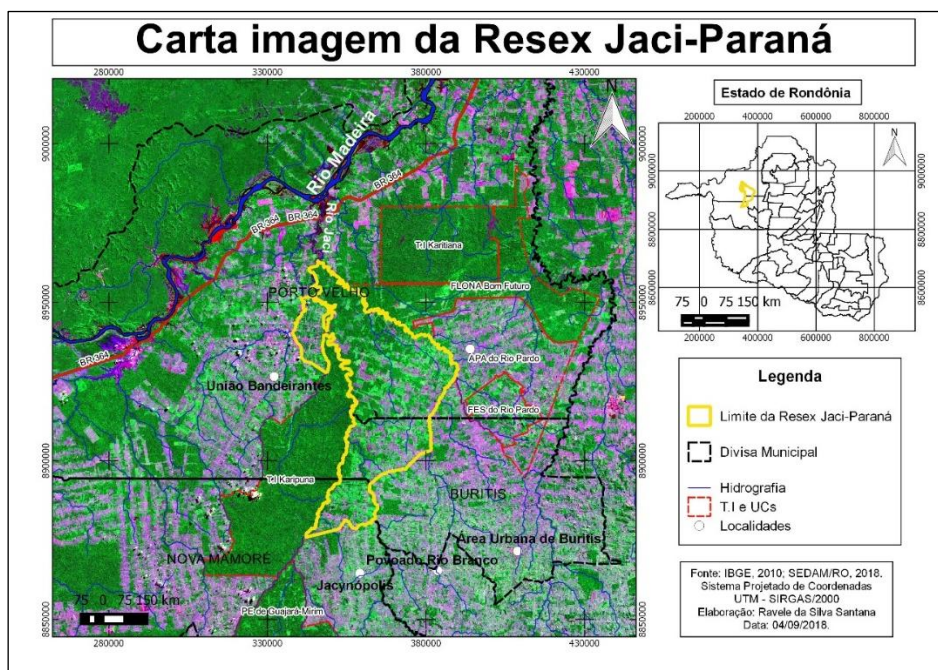
According to CNUC data, there are currently 95 (ninety-five) Extractive Reserves in Brazil, with an approximate total of more than 15 million hectares, corresponding to 3.88% of the total Conservation Units in Brazil. Of the 95 Resex existing in Brazil, 76 (seventy-six) are in the Amazon. Rondônia leads with a total of 25 Resex, 21 under state management and 4 under federal management.

### **3 A RESEX IN DISPUTE: CONTRADICTIONS, DISMANTLING AND EXTRACTIVE RESISTANCE**

The Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve is located in the northwestern region of the state of Rondônia, partially covering the municipalities of Porto Velho, Buritis and Nova Mamoré, and is territorially distributed in 66%, 22% and 12%, respectively (figure 1). The unit is located approximately 130 km from Porto Velho, accessible by BR-364 towards Acre and, later, by km 101, towards the district of União Bandeirantes. Additionally, access to the Extractive Reserve can be made by river, using the Jaci-Paraná River and its tributaries.

**Figure 1**

*Location of the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserv*



Source: Organized by the authors.

A curious issue is that of the 95 Resex existing in Brazil, only 29 are managed by the state, which is equivalent to 30.5%. And of the 29 Extractive Reserves under state management, 21 are located in Rondônia, which is equivalent to 72.4% of this total. All 21 Resex were created between July 1995 and January 1996, but the acts of creation are reflections of movements that began years earlier, precisely in the transition from the POLONOROESTE to PLANAFLORO.

Therefore, the context of the creation of the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve is the 1990s. In the context of the political temporality that permeates the creation and definition of the boundaries of the Resex, the interference of capital in the sphere of the state government and even the Senate is well perceived. According to the files consulted in the database of the Center for Research and Documentation of Contemporary History of Brazil – CPDOC, the behaviors of the governors of Rondônia were adverse to environmental sustainability and totally permissive to environmental degradation, going against the sustainable development projects of PLANAFLORO, and:

It can be said that it (PLANAFLORO) was anchored in the notion of an "ideological void", a context in which social actors with their connections and fittings, articulations and conflicts had to be displaced or reconfigured in new local, regional and global

positions. But the simplifying principle – "sustainable-development-for-a-developing-society" – could not be implemented so easily this time because the actors had a voice and the channels to make themselves heard. The conceptual fluidity embedded in development and sustainability contributed to polarizing the actors around different interpretations, one of which would be to immobilize society and leave nature in its quiet platitude, thus contradicting social representations. In looking at future generations, planners seem to have forgotten about present generations. (Ott, 2002, p. 253).

In 1995 the closure of PLANAFLORO was considered, however the State, anticipating that it could still gain from the project, reformulated it to continue the expenditure of the resources obtained, however:

The World Bank, during the first three years of its execution, did not establish any accounting control, nor did it require any financial audit report. At the end of 1996, the accounts were effectively audited, verifying that the expenses of more than 11 million dollars could not be adequately explained. The disbursements were then suspended, until the proper justifications were found. (Ott, 2002, p. 208).

What according to the author was "duly clarified" the following year, with the new reformulation of PLANAFLORO's resources that were in dollars and flowed again, in this sense what was noticeable was that:

Each social actor, each in their own way, adopted and implemented tactics and strategies that ensured their positions, in such a way that in the end the anthropophagic dispute devoured everyone, and along with them PLANAFLORO. The fundamental conflict between governmental and non-governmental actors, funding agencies and funded organizations, which oriented their discourses in two reductionist poles on the one hand accusing the project of stifling the development of the state, while on the other hand emphasizing the need to guarantee extensive areas for environmental preservation, was a false dilemma around the dichotomy of society and nature. After decades of operation of a productivist system and a developmentalist conception, in which the greatest profit should be obtained in the shortest time and environmental concerns were ancillary, it would be difficult to imagine that a "sustainable economy" would be implemented in a few years, incorporating lasting ecological and social considerations for the development of Rondônia. (Ott, 2002, p. 265).

The failure of the projects, it seems, occurred because the rules were not followed to meet the objectives horizontally. The rules, projects and goals were carried out in the offices, but in practice, in the face of the needs and difficulties, the small producer, the traditional populations (quilombolas, indigenous and caboclos) were not listened to. Thus, it would not



be useful to form ecological corridors for creation and sustainable development, if there was no teaching of how they could help the producer, so in this way:

The government of Rondônia, in turn, was suitable for foreign loans, especially since the borrower of the resources and future payer was the Brazilian government. The only obstacle was that rulers in democratic regimes depend on local popular approval, manifested in regular times through voting. Announcing to the bulk of the population that the State was focused on the management of natural resources, protection of forests, riverside dwellers, springs, Indians, rubber tappers and other exotic figures of low electoral density, leaving aside loggers, cattle ranchers and landowners, would be equivalent to political suicide. The local government's solution, therefore, was to re-signify the project, presenting it with another name for internal consumption, in which agriculture and livestock appeared in the foreground, while forestry took a back seat. (Ott, 2002, p. 149).

In view of this, what happened in Rondônia was the occurrence of a (pseudo)conservationist political plan and (pseudo)support for the settlement of traditional populations, a product of policies established in the past. From the imposition of financing agents and international pressures, the need to create areas with tradition and potential for extractive activity was established with a view to nature conservation, maintenance of ecosystems and support for traditional populations. This tells us that in reality, in Rondônia, the Extractive Reserves were created in the background, as a background to meet part of the requirements of PLANAFLORO financing.

Likewise, this means that the Extractive Reserves were mostly created from insufficient studies, without technical criteria, and many were created in the environment where conflicts already existed. In this regard, Silva (2016) emphasizes the incongruities between the interests of the economic class, based on the activities of capital reproduction, such as agriculture, and the attempts to implement sustainability policies with the participation of traditional populations:

The participation of territorial agents was present in the work of the 2nd Approximation of the ZSEE. If the Government of Rondônia controlled the legal and advisory instruments to implement the ZSEE, the World Bank financed and imposed requirements to make the Government of Rondônia comply with the contractual clauses of the financing of PLANAFLORO. The civil society organized within the scope of the Forum of Non-Governmental Organizations (Forum of NGOs), brought together various segments of the countryside and the forest, proposed and denounced the deviations from the purpose of the Zoning proposal, above all, pointed out the inconsistencies between the state agencies (SEDAM, ITERON) and the federal ones (INCRA, FUNAI, IBAMA), regarding the allocation of land for rural settlements in areas

of Conservation Units and Indigenous Lands, or the stimuli made by public agents to guide new occupations, advancing the timber and agricultural fronts. (Silva, 2016, p. 329).

What is clear from the readings of the Amazon regarding the implementation of efficient land management, such as the ZSEE, is that the whole issue of conflicts is basically related to matrices of distinct rationalities, in short, of different cultures with their forms and modes of appropriation of nature that are symbolically and materially different (Porto-Gonçalves, 2019).

Such conflicts were also identified in the idealization of the area proposed for what would become the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve. Parts of these conflicts were never resolved in their entirety, which culminated in the degradation of the area even before it was carried out.

In May 1988, with Ordinance No. 680, INCRA created the Buriti Settlement Project, in the micro-basin of the Candeias River, destructuring the extractive population residing there. The implementation of the project was impossible until then, as a result of the first zoning of Rondônia. In the early 1990s, this area was interdicted through Decree No. 5383, of November 18, 1991, to survey the feasibility of what would become the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve, where an area of over 490,000 hectares was proposed between the banks of the Jaci Paraná and Candeias rivers for the creation of the Candeias River Extractive Income State Forest. never actually created.

However, in 1992, other Settlement Projects were created in the region, stimulating the migration of populations from the state itself (municipalities of Cerejeiras, Colorado D'Oeste, Ouro Preto and others) to occupy these projects (Rondônia, 1994). These official interventions, combined with other actions, resulted in the phytogeographic decharacterization of a significant part of the area, with direct implications for the reduction of the limits for extractive use.

In 1993/1994, the Institute for Research in Defense of the Amazon Identity – INDIA, at the service of the Government of Rondônia in the execution of PLANAFLORO, proposed an area of 411,127.76 hectares for the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve. This proposed area, despite the great extractive potential, had obstacles to its demarcation, such as the Buriti Project (east of the area) which already had deforested areas inhabited by farmers, ranchers and other Definitive Titles (TD) (12 TD were accounted for). These TDs characterized problems, as the negotiations for expropriation in the Resex would take a lot of time and

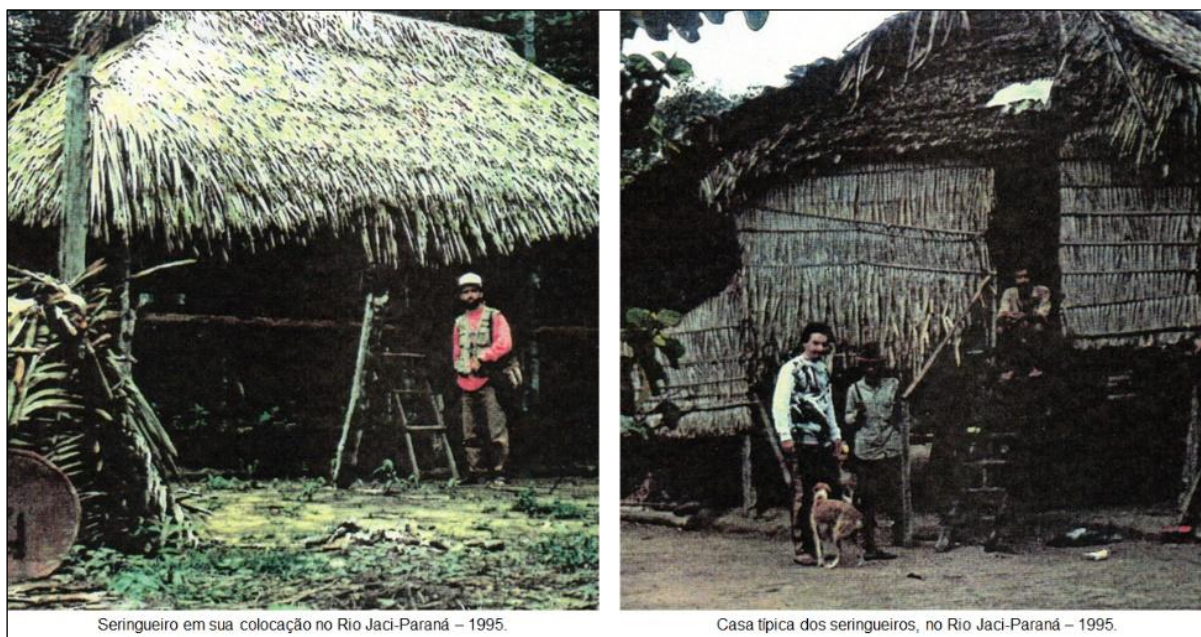
money. Thus, it was decided (ITERON AND OSR) for a perimeter that would deviate from the Buriti Project and some TDs.

In October 1995, after the visits of ITERON/UNDP technicians, a meeting was held with members of the OSR where the land problems were exposed, opting for an area of approximately 200,000 hectares, which included some TDs, all belonging to Mr. Issac Benayon Sabbá. These TD were included in the area because the then owner had always developed extractive activities in these lots and due to the existence of a large number of rubber settlements and roads (Rondônia, 1995).

The main basis of the OSR's claim for the creation of the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve was based on the need to ensure the extractive population present in the area (figure 2), and also on the relocation of the rubber tapper community on the Candeias River, due to the expansion of the Buriti PA and the rubber tapper community that was removed from the Uru Eu Wau Wau indigenous area, that it was waiting for the pronouncement of the OSR to be redirected to the extractive area, in this case to the Jaci-Paraná River, counting on government recognition and support.

## Figure 2

*Rubber tappers in their settlements on the Jaci Paraná River*



Source: OSR Collection.

On January 17, 1996, the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve was created by Decree No. 7335, with approximately 205,000 hectares. The decree established the exclusion of seven

Definitive Titles denominated as: Pedras, São Domingos, Nazareth, Estrela, Conceição, Consuelo and Progresso, making up an area of 27,933 hectares constituting 13.62% of the total area. In this same decree, Article 3 states that:

The State Executive Branch shall proceed with the expropriation of private areas legitimately bordered on the Public Authority, the identification and collection of public areas, and for this purpose shall enter into agreements with public and private entities for the effective implementation and land regularization of the Extractive Reserve. (Rondônia, Decree 7335, 1996, p. 5).

However, as previously stated, land conflicts have always been present, as the extractivists in the area reported that several cattle ranchers came from the Buritis region with the intention of occupying the area between the Jaci Paraná River and the Rio Branco making threats to the rubber tappers, in addition to other reports of people who were burning along the Rio Branco (figure 3).

### Figure 3

*Area of the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve with signs of occupation*



Source: Rondônia, 1995.

It is reiterated that still in 1995, during the interviews prepared by the PLANAFLORO team, the action of several other invaders was reported by the residents in the area of the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve. There is a "picadão" made by the Bullian family, where a



sign was found stating that 17 people own the area (figure 4). "On this plate there is even a telephone number for contact" (Rondônia, 1995, p. 20).

**Figure 4**

*Bullian sting identification plate*



Source: Rondônia, 1995.

Even before the actual creation, there were already conflicts and contradictions that were not resolved, allowing the possibilities of decharacterization of the area as time went by. Even with the decree of creation and demarcation being made later, the absence of public policies for the permanence of the population and extractive activity contributed to what happened later and which persists to this day.

Since the preparation of the first approximation of the ZSEE of Rondônia, several complaints had been made, especially by social movements, that many areas destined for conservation were already under some type of use and, in some cases, with titles already issued by INCRA. This fact demonstrated the inefficiency of technical studies, the non-participation of traditional populations in decision-making, and further demonstrated the interests of the politicians who governed at the time. As Silva (2016, p. 331) shows, "a powerful political group has been consolidated that, since 1994, has hegemonized state policy, always based on the economic growth of the agriculture, agribusiness, and timber sectors, articulated with the agro-industrialization sectors."

Soon after the creation process, in April 1996, the Settlement Project was carried out in the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve. Also in this project, some socio-economic issues in the area were raised, possible sources of employment and income generation for the

population, priority needs, such as schools, roads, among others. The project aimed to settle 50 families, aiming to occupy the existing settlements, the abandoned ones and the empty spaces where new settlements could be opened.

As stated above, in the theoretical plan, the project had relevant and important criteria for the maintenance and development of the extractive activity: improvement in infrastructure (new settlements, health centers, schools), training in agroextractive activities, fostering the increase in the source of income, and being, at the time, the responsibility of the OSR to settle the families in the settlements. In dialogue with the former presidents of the OSR, it was informed that there were about 40 to 60 families in the area when the Resex was created. There were 42 settlements, 22 in activity, 19 abandoned and 1 already invaded.

In consulting the reports prepared by the Government of Rondônia and PLANAFLORO during the settlement processes, a series of problems can be identified, as it occurred that in many of these settlements there was only one resident who, according to reports at the time, spent a good part of their time in the city. During the interviews carried out by the Government team, it was already noticeable a great discontent of the residents and a trend of migration in the area, with Porto Velho being the final destination, the reason would be economic causes, such as the search for jobs, in addition to violence for land ownership, which indicated a possible decrease in the population of the region in the coming years, if there were no changes in support for extractivism.

In a report carried out by the news site "*((o))eco*", <sup>3</sup>in 2018, journalist Fernanda Wenzel highlights the experience and difficulties faced by the remaining residents of the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve (figure 5). Living with fear is part of the daily life of extractivists in the face of threats and at the same time neglect on the part of management bodies. Abandonments are constant through threats from armed men and this has reduced the residents' trips to the Resex, and they have been spending most of their time in the city, in Porto Velho. As pointed out in the article, the threats led Mr. Janderman, the remaining extractivist, to empty the house: "I threw everything into the canoe. I took a stove, gas cylinder, mattress, plate, pan". His wife, Dona Maria, says she is afraid to return: "We are afraid, right? You see these confusions of land, and it's just death."

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. <https://www.oeco.org.br/reportagens/sai-extrativista-entra-boi-a-lei-do-mais-forte-em-uma-reserva-extrativista-de-rondonia/>. Accessed on 09/10/2020.

**Figure 5**

*Extractivist Mr. Janderman, at his home in the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve*



Photo: Marcio Isensse e Sá. Source: ((o))eco, 2018.

In dialogue with the OSR, the most important difficulties faced by rubber tappers were inquired about, and the most raised issues were in relation to the lack of medical and educational care, transportation, deficiency in marketing due to low rubber prices and the lack of a transportation system, utensils and other materials for the collection and extraction of extractive products and finally, storage place, and especially effective inspection of the boundaries of the areas.

And it was in the face of so many problems that, since the beginning of the creation of the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve, many placements have been "sold" to people without an extractive tradition, who in most cases have used these areas for pastures. The invasion by land grabbers is considered the trigger for the abandonment of the area by the extractivist population.

It was not possible to confirm the official number of families that were settled, as this was not identified either in reports or in the interviews and dialogues carried out.

In our dialogues carried out throughout the research, the former president of the OSR, José Maria dos Santos, said that formally since 1999 he has been denounced and requests have been made to SEDAM for inspections in the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve, which has been invaded by loggers and land grabbers. Even denunciations to the federal

government were made, the former president proves these accusations with a news item printed on the cover of the newspaper *Diário da Amazônia*, on 07/21/2000, entitled: *Environmentalists and rubber tappers denounce to the federal government the neglect of the government of Rondônia with the Conservation Units, because they are tired of denouncing and waiting for some action from state agencies that do nothing.*

Although several meetings were held (figure 6), and other forms of articulation between the extractivists of the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve, it is clear that to date they have not been effectively attended.

**Figure 6**

*Community meeting in the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve – 2001*



Source: OSR Collection.

Porto-Gonçalves (2019) collaborates in the understanding of this issue by showing that:

The slowness with which the public machine moves to contemplate the demands of the rubber tappers is a clear demonstration how, historically, the Brazilian State has not been prepared to contemplate the needs of the people, except through the old clientelistic mechanisms. In this, the rubber tappers encounter the same difficulties as other family producers throughout the country. (Porto-Gonçalves, 2019, p. 135).



Still in the investigative process, there was another approach to the problems in the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve, based on the reports made by SEDAM. According to a technical report prepared in 2001, the crisis in the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve began when sectors of the region learned of the form of the signing of a contract for the exploration of part of the area of the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve between the Association of Rubber Tappers of the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve (ASRJP) and the logging company APOLO, based in the state of São Paulo. with the endorsement of the OSR.

Law 692/96, which defines the limits of the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve, also provides, with regard to the implementation and management of the Extractive Reserve, that the State Secretariat for Environmental Development (SEDAM) may seek partnerships aiming at co-management in the execution of actions that ensure an administration based on its respective Use Plan, and may, for this purpose, enter into agreements with entities focused on the interests of the extractive population. However, the above-mentioned report points to the signing of a "negotiation contract that excluded PGE/RO and SEDAM, therefore, not following the procedure of the Law" (Rondônia, 2001, p. 7).

The performance of the company APOLO in the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve is something complex to be analyzed in the light of the information collected. First, we have a vision of the extractivist who saw in the concession possibilities to curb invasions, the theft of wood and at the same time raise resources to invest in the resident population of the area, which is believed to be feasible as long as there is commitment and responsibility of all parties. However, it is difficult to imagine a company exploring the potential of an Extractive Reserve, having as a principle the collective well-being of the rubber tree population and the necessary environmental control, it is believed that there is a contradiction here.

Second, we have a view of SEDAM technicians who, in an operation carried out in 2002, with the support of the Military Police, indicated that the Use Plan that the company APOLO had executed within the Resex was a factor that greatly influenced the invasion of land, since roads and bridges were built that facilitate access. In addition, the topography trails of the aforementioned company served for the invaders to move, because in the operation the police found people in these trails that probably served as a base point for dividing lots in the future.

During the period of this field inspection (April 4 to 18, 2002), more than 50 invaders were removed from the Extractive Reserve, who were instructed that the place where they were belonging to the State and could not carry out any activity there and could not remain

in the area. For the inspection team, the invaders reported the existence of mowing and division of a 21-acre plot of land, concluding that the invasion was already at an advanced stage, requiring intensification in the environmental inspection of the Resex.

It is clear that the Plan for the Use of the Extractive Reserve prepared in 1997 was never actually executed in its entirety and is currently in total disuse. The Management Plan was never finalized and consequently executed. In a conversation with the former president of the OSR (in office from 1994 to 2002), he said that APOLO was the financier of the Management Plan and had a preference for the purchase of wood, but it was never actually exploited due to a judicial embargo. In view of this, a Rapid Ecological Assessment (AER) was prepared by a technical team, but with little or no effectiveness of use.

All these issues about the already existing conflicts that have not been resolved, the little support by the state government to the extractive communities in relation to the advancement of productive activities, especially agriculture, illegal logging and the threats of land grabbers and invaders led to the evasion of rubber tappers from the reserves, as it was not possible for them to enjoy a better quality of life and the (in)action of the State was impactful, by not imposing himself and not being present as the manager of these CUs. Santos (2014, p. 102) reiterates that "in certain cases, government intervention favors some and harms others, directly or because of its consequences".

In this case, the absence of the State ended up giving benefits to the logger who acts illegally, to the cattle rancher and other offenders and criminals who, above all, have the support of the government. This process has been intense and lately much encouraged by the managers who took over the state and federal governments, being respectively, Governor Marcos Rocha and President Jair Bolsonaro. This has led traditional communities and the bodies that represent them to give in to pressure from the timber sector and cattle ranching regarding the effective use and exploitation of the Extractive Reserve. It is reiterated that for the realization of this research, SEDAM, specifically the CUC, was not solicitous by not responding to any of our letters and questionnaires filed with the secretariat.

On 08/11/2019, it was possible to dialogue with the acting president of the OSR, Mr. Agenor da Silva. We sought to obtain more information about the OSR, created in December 1991, and its performance towards extractivists and its perspectives regarding the future of the Resex, especially the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve.

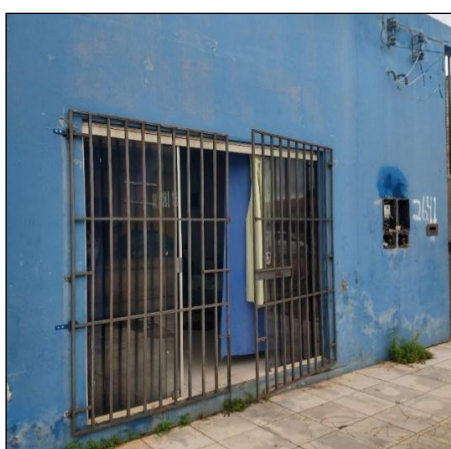
First, it was said that the OSR's performance recently has been difficult, as its board of directors has suffered losses. The previous president, Mr. Teixeira, died of a heart attack,

the Secretary died of cancer, and the one who took over, Mr. Agenor da Silva, lost his son, who was murdered. The then president said that he assumed the presidency of the OSR at the time of the Temer government, which according to him "was already a disgrace", and now at the time Bolsonaro who "is hell himself". According to him, he no longer has the resources to maintain energy or water, that is, he has disabled the maintenance of the OSR.

In January 2020, the OSR headquarters in Porto Velho was visited (figure 7). It is located at Rua Nova Esperança, nº 2641, Bairro Caladinho. At the time, there was an extractivist who allowed entry into the interior of the headquarters, as well as providing several documents about the OSR, the Extractive Reserves in Rondônia, and also unofficial data from the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve. According to information obtained, the OSR is disjointed in the face of budgetary difficulties, but they are organizing. A new board of directors was elected in December 2019, and at the time of the visit only the minutes were missing.

**Figure 7**

*OSR headquarters, in Porto Velho*



Source: authors' field collection.

Still in the dialogue with the former president of the OSR, Mr. Agenor da Silva, he reports that in the beginning the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve was invaded by Buritis with speeches (speeches endorsed by politicians) that it was necessary to settle poor and "landless" settlers. But, according to him, this was not true and never happened, because what has always existed and what is actually in the area are cattle breeders, large businessmen and "the reserve itself almost no longer exists". According to him, the destruction in the area is so violent that in the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve, even the riparian forests are being destroyed. This fact could be proven in a study carried out by

Santana (2016), on the areas of Permanent Preservation Areas of the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve.

Mr. Agenor da Silva states that the state governments were and are enemies of the environment, because all the reserves have extractive potential, but the governments do not finance anything. For him, the extractivists who still live there are heroes, but they are already old, and live off nothing. According to him, the Resex still exists because of them.

Still on the maintenance of the Resex, it was said by Mr. Agenor da Silva that "if there are no residents, we are aware that sooner or later it will be invaded by "landless", so it needs to have sustainable use". He also reiterates that Rondônia does not have "landless", "it has a bunch of clever people who grab land and sell".

When asked about the prospects for the extractivist movement, it was said that:

We have no prospects with this government of Bolsonaro and Marcos Rocha. His first measures for the environment were drastic. In the PT government, at first we were even afraid, because they said that they encourage land grabbing, but it didn't happen, on the contrary it was when we had more support, we were able to bring energy to the UCs, to buy transportation. But the current government has mutilated us, we can't even keep the headquarters in Porto Velho, we are seeking to strengthen the movement, the institutions, the NGOs. It seems that when we talk about the environment we are their enemies. (Mr. Agenor da Silva. Testimony, 08/11/2019).

In the conversation, he reinforces what had been evidenced regarding the evasion of extractivists in the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve, but which according to him applies to all the other Extractive Reserves in Rondônia, because yes, in fact there is a discontent of the traditional populations, especially the rubber tappers. Still on the lack of support, he recalls that:

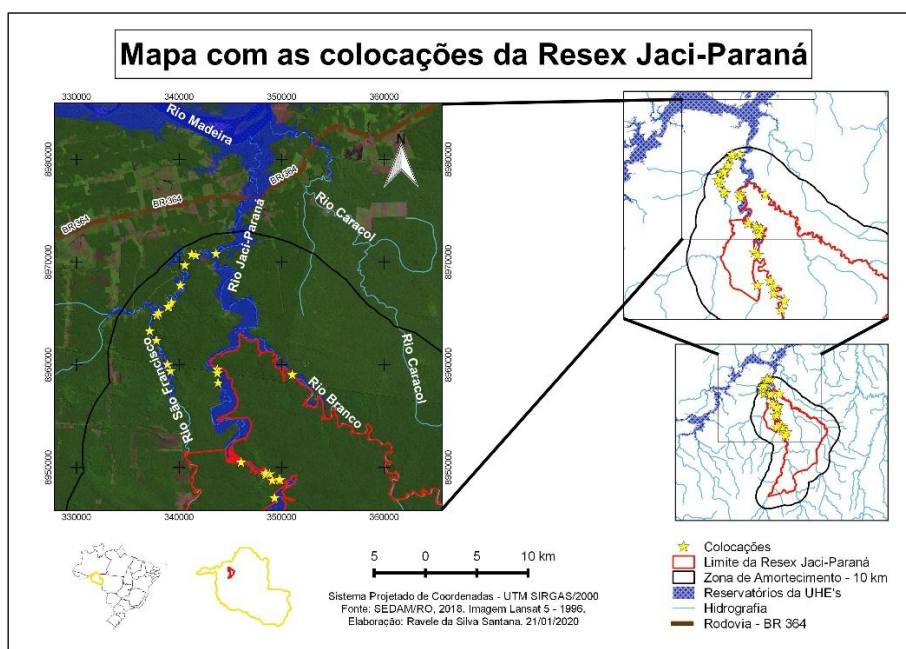
In mid-1986 there were more than 600 families of rubber tappers in Rondônia, today there must not be 300, many at the time due to lack of assistance and support migrated to the capital, to the street, in search of other jobs, some housing project, but we only came to have support in Lula's government, in Temer's and here, everything is over. (Mr. Agenor da Silva. Testimony, 08/11/2019).

This testimony brings us to the consequences of the lack of support from the rulers to traditional populations, since simply not meeting their demands will not deprive them of other disturbances. Porto-Gonçalves (2019, p. 109) reiterates that "a large part of the problems of the countryside end up being transferred to the city, by the rural exodus.

In 2012, the survey carried out by the OSR counted a total of 24 families present in the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve and approximately a total of 52 people, who constitute the remaining population in the area. In dialogue with the Head of Jaci-Paraná, appointed by CUC/SEDAM, he said that "currently there must still be only about 10 families", but that it is an uncertain number. There are few remnants located on the banks of the Jaci-Paraná River (figure 8).

**Figure 8**

*Remaining settlements (residences) in the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve*



Source: OSR database.

For Mr. Agenor da Silva, the tendency is for everyone to leave, because most of them are dying and "I believe that all this can end my generation, because at that time there were no projects to discriminate against traditional populations".

Asked how this discrimination occurs or what it would be, he replied that:

Young people are totally discriminated against, because they are the children and grandchildren of rubber tappers, a prejudice that has never ended and seems to never end, keeping our youth away from work in conservation units, from sustainable work, they move away from the interest in fighting, because beyond prejudice there is no incentive. I, who live in Machadinho, suffer a lot, because the population here has many of southern origins who discriminate against us and this is what has taken our young people to go after other places, other jobs to survive. It was the case of my son who had to migrate to the city, get another type of job and today he is no longer with

us. No one more than being the son of a rubber tapper, of being a rubber tapper. (Mr. Agenor da Silva. Testimony, 08/11/2019).

These words of Mr. Agenor can be related to the propositions of Santos (2014), as this author exposes the drama of people who migrate in the face of the increase in the density of capital in rural areas, because these people are:

displaced from a social, political or employment position whose stability has been created through time to which they were intimately linked and from which they are suddenly forced into an exodus that puts them in front of a new space, a new economy, a new society, where they will have great difficulty playing a new role. (Santos, 2014, p. 64).

Silva (2010), when dealing with the advance of productive activities in the territory used, allows us to understand what Santos (2014) presents as a tendency towards "deculturization". Santos (2014) says that:

To the extent that the replacement of people, the alteration of the social balance of power, the introduction of new ways of doing, generate imbalances that result, on the one hand, in the migration of traditional local leaders and the breaking of habits and traditions, and on the other hand, in the change of forms of relationships that have been slowly produced for a long time and that are seen, of suddenness, replaced by new forms of relation whose root is alien and whose adaptation to the place has a purely mercantile foundation. (Santos, 2014, p. 63).

In view of this, the remaining extractivists and their particularities of social, economic and spatial organization constitute a barrier to the expansion of capital (figure 9). They demand, deserve and need special attention, because "when the old cannot collaborate for the expansion of the new, the logic of capital dictates that it be eliminated". (Santos, 2014, p. 106).

It is important to reiterate that the State uses its political power to govern and is, therefore, understood as the legitimate provider of public services. From a legal point of view, this is also ensured in Law No. 692/1996, which defines the limits of the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve and provides other provisions, as stated in Article 4: "The State Executive Branch shall be responsible for providing local communities with services in the areas of health and education, as well as the minimum infrastructure necessary for the commercialization of their products". (Rondônia, 1996).

**Figure 9**

*Remaining residents of the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve, in 2024*



Source: Personal collection of Lincoln Fernandes de Lima.

In view of the foregoing so far and with the reflections made, the Extractive Reserves are understood as a possibility of solving and mitigating various problems that involve the social, economic and cultural context. Regarding this potential, Mello (2006) adds that within the scope of the Pilot Program, the PPG-7, the Resex were experimented as an appropriate model of co-management between government and society, as they evolved into a social organization that has management as a model for the exploitation of natural resources.

In the context of environmental public policies, PPG7 was of great importance, as "special attention was given to the gender issue, related to the participation of women in project activities" (Mello, 2006, p. 116). With the impact of these policies and following these references, the extractivist women of Rondônia, with the support of the OSR and other personalities of the environmental political movement, organized themselves by holding meetings and launching campaigns in search of better conditions for survival, rights and justice for rubber tapper women (figure 10).



**Figure 10**

*Campaign of women extractivists, in Rondônia*



Source: OSR Collection.

However, it is still necessary to have a policy that involves all sectors of society and that seeks to introduce a perspective of protection and conservation of the environment, overcoming the dichotomy of economic development versus environmental policy, as this thinking almost always has the immediacy of profit as a winning side, even if most are not yet part of the plan.

Resuming the essence of Amazonians is essential. Porto-Gonçalves, Berta Becker, Mello-Théry and other authors argue that at every moment that there is a new appropriation of natural inputs, such as soil, water, minerals, and biological diversity, made by large national and foreign companies, in the same way there are several traditional populations that have learned to reconcile well-being with natural resources, therefore, These populations are the protagonists of other rational matrices, which use the fruits of nature in a way that cannot be measured only by an economic rationality (Figure 11).



**Figure 11**

*Residents of the Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve producing cassava flour for trade and their own consumption, 2024*



Source: Personal collection of Lincoln Fernandes de Lima.

Sectors of society, especially the common population, need to understand that forests are important, because a participatory and effective management of the Extractive Reserves can bring benefits such as the fight against and expansion of poverty, hunger and unemployment. The Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve, if it worked efficiently, could contribute to the creation of direct and indirect jobs, with tax collection for the State with other matrices of permitted use, as well as strengthen the extractivist movement as a whole and the consequent conservation and preservation of the surrounding ecosystems.

#### **4 CONSIDERATIONS**

The Jaci-Paraná Extractive Reserve exemplifies the crisis of conservation units in the Amazon, where the guarantee of territorial rights comes up against hegemonic economic interests, that is, it illustrates the limits of environmental policies in the Amazon when confronted with the expansionist logic of capital. Rubber tappers, historical guardians of the forest, face not only environmental degradation, but also political invisibility and the precariousness of their rights.

The survival of the rubber tapper territory depends not only on environmental inspection, but on a political project that values the standing forest and its populations. The

guarantee of the rubber tapper territory is not only an environmental issue, but an imperative of social and cultural justice. This study reinforces the urgency of intersectoral actions to reconcile conservation and social justice, because at the time we close this writing, the burning season began in the Amazon, with "protected" spaces being the first to burn.

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