

## Modernization and development in Brazilian Amazon: giving voice to those who have no voice as basis of an alternative political, cultural, and economic project<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

In this paper, we will argue that Brazilian political projects of cultural-economic development concerning Amazon can be defined as a form of *conservative modernization* which imposes the logic of capitalist modernization in an intrinsic double sense: first, modernization represents an inclusive universalist culture, contrarily to traditionalism, which is attached to its own context and, then, non-reflexive, on the other hand, modernity is self-reflexive and guarantor of an embracing social integration, contrarily again to traditionalism; second, economic development is the only possibility to satisfaction of human needs and social welfare, which means that traditionalism cannot serve as alternative to social-economic modernization. Therefore, cultural-economic modernization is conceived as a natural evolutionary process, which depoliticizes it, transforming it in the normative-political societal basis *par excellence* to ground any project of development, so that there are no alternatives to modernity: it is only the great alternative we have to continue. From this self-comprehension of modernity, both traditional peoples and ecology have not voice or centrality, but just the economy's systemic imperatives. Our final argument consist that any kind of epistemological-political question and social-economic project concerning Amazon must have the consideration and the participation of traditional peoples, as well as the ecology must be their basis, and it means and requires the politicization of modernity's ideology and contradictions.

**Key-Words:** Amazon; Modernization; Traditionalism; Epistemological-Political Conservatism; Future.

**Modernização e desenvolvimento na Amazônia brasileira: dar voz àqueles que não têm voz como a base de um projeto político, cultural e econômico alternativo**

### Resumo

nesse texto, argumentaremos que os projetos políticos brasileiros de desenvolvimento cultural-econômico referentes à Amazônia podem ser definidos como uma forma de *modernização conservadora* que impõe a lógica capitalista de modernização em um intrínseco e dependente sentido duplo: primeiro, a modernização representa uma cultura universalista inclusiva, contrariamente ao tradicionalismo, que está preso ao seu próprio contexto de vida e que, portanto, torna-se não-reflexivo, de modo que, por outro lado, a modernidade, pelo fato de conseguir abstrair de seu contexto em termos de fundamentação epistemológico-moral, torna-se autorreflexiva e garantidora de uma integração social abrangente, contrapondo-se e superando as visões tradicionais de

<sup>1</sup> A first version of this paper was translated into portuguese and published in NIENOV, C. O. M.; DE BARBA, C. H.; DANNER, F.; DANNER, L. F.; DAGIOS, M.; KONZEN, P. R (Eds.). *Governo, cultura e desenvolvimento: reflexões desde a Amazônia*. Porto Alegre: Editora Fi, 2015, p. 90-122.

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mundo; segundo, o desenvolvimento econômico em termos de modernização capitalista é a única possibilidade para a satisfação das necessidades humanas e para a realização do bem-estar social, o que significa que o tradicionalismo não pode servir como alternativa à modernização sócio-econômica. Com isso, a modernização cultural-econômica é concebida como um processo evolutivo natural, isto é, consequente e gradativo ao próprio gênero humano, situação que a despolitiza, transformando-a na base societal normativo-política *par excellence* para fundamentar qualquer projeto de desenvolvimento, de modo que não existem alternativas à modernidade: ela é a única grande alternativa que nós temos para continuar. A partir desta autocompreensão da modernidade, tanto os povos tradicionais quanto as questões ecológicas não têm voz ou centralidade, mas apenas os imperativos sistêmicos da economia. Nosso argumento final consiste em que qualquer tipo de questão epistemológico-política e de projeto sócio-econômico referente à Amazônia deve ter a consideração e a participação dos povos tradicionais, da mesma forma como a ecologia deve ser sua base, e isso significa e requer a politização da ideologia e das contradições da modernidade.

**Palavras-Chave:** Amazônia; Modernização; Tradicionalismo; Conservadorismo Epistemológico-Político; Futuro.

### **Introduction: Amazon as a recent political-economic project of modernization**

From the concept of *conservative modernization*, we will analyze in this paper the contradictions between a generalized process of cultural-economic modernization in relation to Amazon, and, on the other side, the fact that traditional peoples and cultures – as well as Amazonian ecological integrity – are subjected to an overwhelming process of delegitimation and exploitation in the name of cultural, social, and economic capitalist progress (industrialism and consumerism). By the concept of *conservative modernization* we mean the direct political-economic imposition of the logic of progress, i.e. there is no mediation or inclusive participation of Amazon's native peoples concerning the imposition of this cultural-economic process of modernization, but, as we said above, a direct and authoritarian institutional imposition of it. Then, all traditional peoples' claims are denied as illegitimate (because they are opposed to social-economic development made possible by modernization), in the same way that the very own traditional ways of life are conceived as primitive, as non-valid to modern contexts (which means that traditional peoples have nothing to say in terms of thinking current social, cultural, political, and economic conditions – traditional values and practices are not valid to our modern world), by political-economic elites and by a colonizing culture based on the white meritocracy and the educational and constructive roles of cultural-economic modernization, something that traditionalism cannot do.

Our first central argument is that cultural-economic modernization is based on two imbricated normative points: the universalist, civilizing, and inclusive sense of cultural modernization, which means that, as a mature evolutionary stage of humankind, cultural modernity can serve as normative paradigm to critic, integration, and mediation to every kind of interactive process; and the systemic comprehension of social-economic development, i.e. the fact that capitalist development way is not just necessary to welfare, and to a fair and effective social inclusion, but also a very direct technical question, centralized and monopolized by political-economic institutions and their elites. In the first case, we have an epistemological legitimation of cultural modernization, the same way that, in the second case, we have a political validation of social-economic

conomic modernization. Then, cultural modernization is a civilizing educational and integrative process, which overcomes barbarism and rudeness of traditional ways of life; and social-economic modernization, based on industrialism and consumerism, as well as in the technical-scientific development, is the way of life that satisfies all human needs, improving quality of life for all. So how can we oppose to cultural-economic progress? It is non-sense, because in both senses (civilizing educational process and social-economic development), modernization is a final stage that ensures all we need.

As consequence, that is our second central argument, cultural-economic modernization becomes a *naturalized process*, the sense that it is both a general normative inclusive context to civilization, and a social-economic basis (industrialism, consumerism, technic and science) to human development. Cultural-economic modernization appears as a final – or at least a more effective and mature – mankind's stage, because of their universalist culture and social-economic capitalist basis, which depoliticizes it. Indeed, for us, this is the most impressive feature of Amazonian conservative modernization in relation to traditional peoples and the ecological concerns, i.e. the depoliticization of cultural-economic modernization based on the fact that cultural-economic modernization is a mature stage of human development, which implicates that we cannot fight against it, but just construct it. Then, all counterposition to modernization are delegitimized as non-justified or abstruse, stupid, just as the contradictions of cultural-economic modernization – and even its exhaustion – are not thematized or taken seriously as real and harrowing problems that put down the modernization itself. As a naturalized process, modernization can continue indefinitely, legitimized by its own depoliticization. It can also have some problems, but modernization is both necessary to human development, and self-reflexive to correct from inside, in that it can continue its totalizing process: ecology and traditional peoples' integrity are problems which may be postponed to a faraway future, while cultural-economic modernization can continue its triumphal march.

Brazilian conservative modernization concerning Amazon transforms Amazonian peoples and land basically in a strategic political matter to economic-political hegemony, and in an economic field to predatory exploitation of natural-mineral resources

that guarantee industrialism and consumerism (globalization' social-economic basis). In both senses, Amazon is centralized and monopolized by political-economic elites, becoming a question of strategic institutional policies, by national and international political-economic elites, so that the land, forest, and its resources are taken from native people (and monopolized by economic-political institutions based on a strategic policy), who lose the political right to decide their future as land, forest, and cultures that depend of a harmonious symbiosis with Amazonian natural world. Now, how can we change this situation? Our third central argument consists that we must deconstruct the naturalization of cultural-economic modernization, politicizing its contradictions and totalizing assimilationist tendency. We must deconstruct both the normative, inclusive, civilizational and universalist modernity's sense, and the idea that industrialism and consumerism are the motto to an unstoppable economic development and material progress, which destroy traditional peoples and ecology. We must deconstruct also a strategic institutional policy which centralizes and monopolizes the ownership of Amazon by economic-political elites, beyond native people and an inclusive democratic process of decision on Amazon's present and future. In this sense, traditional peoples have much to say culturally, politically, epistemologically, and, of course, economically – as we will argue, any possible project of development must have the participation of traditional peoples who live in Amazon and depend – just as we – of a strong sense of ecology, of a much imbricated symbiosis with the Amazonian nature. Traditional peoples' word must be the decisive word.

### **Amazon, traditional peoples, and the cultural-economic modernization**

Brazilian Amazon was not an important political question until the midst of XX century. However, from 1970s, multiple and huge colonizing political projects and economic modern processes transformed Amazon – its forest, soil, rivers, natural-mineral resources, and traditional peoples – in a modernizing experience which has only one strong direction: the direct and unstoppable way to *cultural and economic modernization*. This is the field, this is the epistemological-political context from which we can situate the pungent contradiction between, on the one hand, the discourse and practice of modernization, and, on the other hand, the subsistence of forest and traditional peoples in

their original condition, beyond (and restraining) the process of modernization itself. What we can see, then, is the fact that cultural-economic modernization takes for itself the very own comprehension and guiding of the process of social evolution, in the manner and the way based on the need for epistemological-political prosecution and radicalization into cultural and economic modernization – as if modernization were conceived like the natural and, then, metaphysical course for human cultural and social evolution, in an overwhelming overrun of traditional life by cultural, technical, and social modern progress. As consequence, all which is traditional become an obstacle that must be overcome by technical machines or political conservatism.

So we can define the technical-political imposition of a cultural and economic process of modernization as a *conservative modernization process*. Indeed, in the first place, we have a direct epistemological-political institutional imposition of the logic of modernization. This epistemological-political logic of modernization is very clear and simple: evolution means cultural-economic transformation, i.e. the consolidation, in cultural terms, of institutional secularization and strong individualism, and, in economic terms, of development based on an overwhelming industrialism (which consumes more and more natural-mineral resources, as well as fossil fuels), and immoderate consumerism. Well, how can we establish this changing into modernization? By merciless attack against traditional, because it is the opposite of cultural-economic modernization. The war against traditional, by modernity, acquires here its sense: the objective is an epistemological-political deconstruction of traditional epistemologies and moral values. In these traditional epistemologies and moral values, we can cite a deep imbrication with nature, society and individuals, as the same manner the non-instrumental and moderate use of natural and social resources for living (cf.: Fernandes, 2013, 2014; Viveiros de Castro, 2012). In many ways, therefore, traditional cultures and peoples deny directly economic-cultural modernization, including the very modern presupposition that social evolution leads necessarily and directly to cultural-economic modernization.

Here arises the pungent sense of a conservative modernization as basis of Amazonian colonization and development: for traditional peoples have a primitive form



of life and an abstruse epistemological-moral comprehension of nature, society, and individual (traditional peoples insist and insist in a mythical and magical comprehension of nature, society, and even the individuals themselves, which is not rational as scientific modern form of life!), they cannot decide both the Amazonia's path of cultural-economic evolution, and the way in which the cultural-economic evolution will be. This decision is centralized and monopolized by political institutions, political parties, and technicians – all of them subsidized by economic groups very interested in natural-mineral Amazonian resources (cf.: Benayon, 1998). Brazilian political parties, which have an absolutely great power in relation to regulate all parts of our society, just endorse the obvious and crude fact that the cultural-economic modernization has a self-justification which assumes a totalizing and colonizing expansion into all contexts.

And what is the main feature of the Brazilian conservative modernization concerning Amazonian development and colonization? It is the depoliticization of the Amazonian development and colonization, i.e. Amazonian development and colonization are not a conflict between modernization and traditionalism, because this conflict does not exist. Really, according to the heralds of Brazilian conservative modernization, modernization itself is the natural process of evolution which has the capability to absorb itself internally also traditionalism, as if modernization were a societal and normative context for all forms of life (including traditional forms of life). There is not a conflict between modernization and traditionalism, in this sense, because modernization does not deny mythical and magical forms of life, as well as, it does not destroy alternative forms of subsistence in favor of industrialism and consumerism – all kind of life is possible *inside modernity*, but the opposite is not true. In the same way, this conflict between modernization and traditionalism is not a real conflict, because modern epistemology and politics have an inclusive universalist sense, which means that all cultural contextual forms can live integrally from modern society. Well, this stylized understanding of modernity, as enabling an inclusive universalism and also a rational social structuration and justification, is the basis to prosecution of cultural-economic modernization and, in particular, it is the main normative argument to the defense of that prosecution of mo-

ernity, to the delegitimation of traditional cultures and peoples as enabling an alternative form of sociability and comprehension of the relation between nature and human societies (see Habermas, 1984, 1989).

In the first place, the association among modernity, rationality, and inclusive normative universalism is the *epistemological basis* to the depoliticization of the clashes between modernization and traditionalism. As consequence of the association between modernity and inclusive universalism, the normative justification of cultural-economic modernization has an anti-traditionalism bias, i.e. traditionalism is only legitimate if it is inside modernization. If it is separated from modernization, then it is not legitimate, but barbarous, because, contrarily to modernity, traditionalism has not reflexivity *according to modern procedures and rules*. Modernity is based on a separation among nature, society, and individual, which means an instrumentalization of nature, a secularization of society, and the centrality of individual concerning to cultural-political foundation – then, modernity is highly reflexive because of this separation. As we argued above, modernity has an inclusive universalist culture and moral consciousness which assumes the guard of social normativity (and its application to all contexts), as the capability to guide and orientate an inter-cultural dialogue and cooperation. We can perceive here the modern self-understanding that evolution and even the relationship between modern world and traditional worlds can be mediated by modern normative paradigm, i.e. rationalism, because – once more – it has an inclusive normative sense, which is not rooted in particular contexts; it is just procedural, neutral, and impartial in relation to each particular cultural context – in the same way, the rationalism takes individual rights and political individual participation seriously, as well as the institutional secularization (see Habermas, 1990, 1998). Traditional cultures have an epistemology rooted in their contexts, attached to them, which does not allow their reflexive, autonomous and abstract moral capacity, so they take not seriously individual and institutional secularization (see Habermas, 1984).

Well, modern rational paradigm depoliticizes the clashes between economic-cultural modernization and traditional peoples by the fact that, according to modern



self-understanding, there is no conflict among them. Universalist normativity, generated, made possible, and sustained by modernity cannot be in confront against traditionalism, because it is inclusive, i.e. it is formalist, abstract, basically procedural, which means that it is neutral and impartial concerning particular forms of life. Modern normative paradigm can serve as a general normative formal context and method to discussion and foundation of all general moral agreements and practices among different cultures and peoples, but it never serves for discrimination and negation of any kind of culture and people. The opposite is true: traditionalism cannot serve as normative basis to epistemological-moral foundation, because it is very linked to its context, confusing and associating its own context to a universalist comprehension based on the affirmation of a specific epistemological-moral content as the general context for the dialogue and integration to all contexts (modernity, let's remember, is a formalist, abstract, and procedural context to foundation; it does not impose an specific epistemological-moral context as valid to all cultural-historical contexts).

So from modern normative perspective, when we assume modernity's cultural self-understanding, we are not introducing a conflict against traditional forms of life, nor against traditional peoples' thoughts and practices, because modern procedures of foundation have not a particular cultural content to impose to traditional peoples, but just the formalist and impartial conditions from which we can justify intersubjectively what we want for us as humankind. It is in this sense that the political use of modern epistemology depoliticizes the pungent clashes between economic-cultural modernization and traditional peoples, allowing to theoretical-political discourses based on modernity to affirm their capacity to guide and orientate both modern and non-modern peoples and cultures. In other words: modernization appears as pure objectivity (with no serious contradictions), as innocent in relation to all problems involving the process of modernization, or at least, modernity's self-reflexivity enables it to correct itself from inside and, then, to continue its totalizing movement, as well as to affirm itself as an inclusive universalism which can intermediate and integrate all forms of life, practices and values, from the primacy of rationalism, from the primacy of a direct movement to cultural-economic development.

Modern epistemology is special because it is very objective, inclusive, neutral, and impartial, at the same time it has great self-reflexivity, the sense that it can criticize and transform itself by self-reflexivity, acquiring a universalist scope, beyond particular cultural-historical contents. In other terms, there is a scientism as basis of modernization, which – by the simple mention of scientism – justifies it completely. The capability of self-reflexivity and the ability to abstract of contextual contents make modern foundations highly formalist, impartial, and objective, i.e. they make modern epistemology more pure and universalist than traditional epistemologies. Well, the modern scientism is the theoretical justification of modernization because it assumes and centralizes the construction and the legitimation of procedures, methods, and, at last, contents of valid culture, knowledge, and practices which will be utilized as patterns of social guiding and transformation. This is the meaning of the fact that modernity serves (and affirms itself) as normative basis, as epistemological-moral paradigm to foundation, to organization of plurality and heterogeneity in a homogeneous collectivity, as well as to mediation of different and contradictory normative paradigms – modernity assumes itself as the normative paradigm of all normative paradigms, i.e. it assumes itself as the effective universalism in relation to cultural-historical particular normative paradigms. In all senses, modernization is a scientific question, a scientific matter, and just by scientific procedures and practices it will be legitimized and conducted, which means in last instance that this evolutionary step carries behind itself traditional epistemologies, because, by its scientific role, modern epistemology is pure objectivity.

In the second place, the depoliticization of the Amazonian contradictions is based on a systemic comprehension of capitalist economic development. Indeed, correlatively to modern assumption of a universalist normative paradigm founded on scientism, *the political basis* to legitimation of the process of cultural-economic modernization concerning to Amazone is the *systemic comprehension* of economic development and political institutionalism, i.e. the fact that economic field has an internal logic of functioning which is closed to other fields, specially social normativity and political institutional action. In this case, capitalist economy – the societal basis to all projects of development and colonization – is affirmed as a self-referential, self-subsisting, and autonomous logic of functioning in relation to common sense and common people (and particularly here,

to traditional peoples), in that it cannot be intervened outside and by non-technical and non-specialized subjects. Just from inside, the capitalist economy can be thought and moved, and only by specialized technicians it can be understood and corrected. Then, a systemic comprehension of economy means that all fields of society is a system, which has proper and internal operating logic. This internal logic is technical in the first hand, not political or normative. As consequence, economic development is basically a technical question and a systemic dynamics, which is beyond popular participation and deliberation – an economic development which is only for specialists and technicians.

Therefore, politics and political institutions become very dependent of this economic structuration as a sealed system with technical operation and an internal self-referential logic. Their objective is in the first place, the construction of a development process which is based on that logic and technical operation of economy as a system. Now, in this situation, projects of colonization and modernization are depoliticized because they have not a political impact and a political sense (except indirectly – more jobs and more money to institutions, to political parties too); they have just an objective and pure systemic, logic, technical sense and impact, which means that political critics and political justification are not necessary to the validation and legitimation of capitalist economic development (but the contrary is true: economic logic of functioning is a technical and normative basis to political structuration and action, particularly because of that systemic comprehension of economy). It is sufficient the argument that more jobs and more taxes will be generated, and that more money will enter in the specific place and contribute to develop it, to justify the legitimacy of economic arguments and logic in relation to normative claims and political struggles. This is the dynamics of legitimation of capitalist economic prosecution in Amazon, based on a depoliticization of the contradictions of economic intervention concerning to forest, its resources, and the traditional peoples' ways of life: economic forces and political parties always appeal to systemic, logic, and technical economic comprehension, what enables them to refuse popular participation, normative argumentation, and an inclusive political deliberation concerning the modernizing process in Amazon. Economic forces and political parties can centralize and monopolize all kinds of technical discussion and political action by affirmation of scientism and systemic economic comprehension, and attack directly traditional peoples

and even social and ecological movements as enemies of modern social progress – modern social progress which is the natural way to humankind.

Now, what appears here is the modern social, cultural, and economic evolution as necessary and *naturalized process*. Why cultural-economic modernization is a naturalized process? Because it is the evolutionary direction and, then, the culmination of human development, both culturally and socially. As an apogee of human cultural and social evolution, modernization can, firstly, assume itself as the condition of normative context, epistemological judge, and political *praxis* to all particular cultures and peoples, becoming the theoretical-practical basis to any kind of legitimation and scientific foundation; second, it represents a societal organization which, by capitalist market, by industrialism, by consumerism, supplies technically all human needs, something that traditional cultures and societies didn't make earlier moment. Well, all human needs are provided by social, cultural, and economic development of modernization, as well as the modern structures of consciousness (secularization, individualism, and universalism) enable a very reflexive life individually and socially. Then, with modernization, we are in the moment of culmination of humankind, or, at least, we cannot ignore and abandon modernization, which means that it must be continued and performed always and always. As a natural process, modernity is excused, forgiven by its internal problems and contradiction, and it is presented as the better alternative that we have to construct a more fair and satisfied world. And the better alternative we have is not a problem, but the solution to our problems. So traditional peoples have neither voice nor right to decide if modernization should be the societal platform of social evolution, because traditionalism is not a better alternative than modernization. In last instance, as traditional peoples have not the sense of modernization, they are not necessary in any kind of public debate or public agenda to legitimate social, cultural, and economic development.

Finally, here emerges again the sense of a conservative modernization concerning Amazonian development and colonization. Social and economic development is imposed by political institutions and economic groups as a necessary condition to inclusion and promotion of Amazonian societies and their peoples in general, as well as the epistemological-political logic of modernity is assumed as the paradigm *par excellence*

from which any kind of legitimation and practice is validated and reached. But this imposition means, first, that forest and its resources must be submitted to technic activity and economic dynamics, i.e. forest and its resources must be submitted to industrialism and consumerism – the real way for economic modernization and technical-scientific growth. And this imposition means, secondly, that traditional peoples cannot protest or stop the path of progress, the way to industrialism and consumerism. Traditional peoples must be integrated and isolated, controlled by institutional elites who are far from the Amazon, and policed by technocratic or violent local forces which maintain the order of progress and the usurpation of the land and traditional peoples. The conservative modernization of Amazon is an absolute, direct, and unstoppable way to confront traditional peoples' ways of life and to submit the forest and its resources to capitalist dynamics (industrialism and consumerism), denying any other proposal for development and colonization, denying principally an inclusive democratic participation and deliberation among peoples who live in Amazon and depend of its preservation.

### **Contradictions and perspectives of Amazonian conservative modernization**

Cultural-economic modernization of Amazon has a double intrinsic problem: the imposition of Western universalist rhetoric, which denies traditional ways of life, or, at least, tries incessantly to absorb them into modern rules, procedures, and values; and the imposition of economic-political rationality of capitalist progress (industrialism, consumerism, and scientism), which denies ecology as basis of any societal project of development. As consequence, the hegemony of Western model of cultural-economic modernization leads directly to the *ideology of modernization as a natural process* of social evolution, very proper of humankind, which overcomes traditional cultures and forms of life – cultural-economic modernization as societal project and form of life *par excellence* to contemporary epoch. It becomes the only alternative (epistemological-political, societal, economic etc.) to our contemporary epoch, at least in the short and medium term. So, material unlimited progress in terms of industrialism and consumerism, at the expense of predatory exploitation of natural resources and the destruction of traditional forms of life, is the motto to any kind of political projects of Amazon's cultural-economic modernization, what means again that the real enemy to be delegitimized (as alternative

form of life to cultural-economic modernization) are the traditional peoples and cultures. Now, the very profound contradiction of Brazilian conservative modernization is the fact that the authoritarian imposition of cultural-economic modernization, in despite of its discourse supposedly inclusive and promoter of differences, has a logic of pure unregulated exploitation of natural resources and a clear combat against traditional peoples, who don't accept this direct destructive exploitation of the forest, which still implicates the direct destruction of their traditional forms of life which depend of the Amazonian ecological protection.

In the first place, therefore, Amazonian cultural-economic development assumes basically a predatory and exploratory characteristic: their pure and simple goal is to utilize and utilize natural resources as material to industrialism and consumerism. There is not any kind of equilibrium between industrialism and ecology, but the very direct fact that Amazon is big and we can destroy it mercilessly, just because trees and natural-mineral resources will grow again. But the more important thing concerning Amazonian cultural-economic development is that there is no preoccupation with forest and environment, because economic groups and political parties interested in Amazonian resources are here just to explore and enrich themselves with such exploitation. After that, they will go to other places and Amazon will remain abandoned to its own fate. Of course, Amazon is also a strategic field to politics (not only to Brazilian politics, as we can see the growing of international interest on Amazon), what means that, if Michael Klare and Harald Welzer are rights (as we think), the political conflicts over natural-mineral resources will mark the path of XXI's evolution, because these natural-mineral resources are the basis to continue the economic growing and, then, they are the *condition sine qua non* to political, cultural, and principally economic hegemony of current powerful countries (see Klare, 2003; Welzer, 2010; Dillon & Reid, 2009; Kolko, 2009). Anyway, Amazonian natural-mineral resources are real sources of richness and strategic political power, which means that cultural-economic modernization will be the effective politics to transform the fragile structuration of Amazon's nature and traditional cultures. Again: the main question is not a democratic inclusive development of Amazonian society, but the very direct exploitation of Amazonian natural-mineral resources as source of precious money and strategic political power. The people who live here are



real “non-people”, in the sense that they are not subject of Amazonian cultural-economic development; they are not also effective political subjects, because they decide not about how and what kind of cultural-economic project will be introduced here – the logic of this cultural-economic modernization is imposed from out, by economic groups and political parties which assume modernization as the motto to the unstoppable economical growth and the institutionalization of a strategic politics of development which impact and interest only these economic groups and political parties (see Rabello, 2013; Souza, 2011; Rabello & Souza, 2006).

Therefore, the main intention of strategic politics and economic projects concerning Amazone is basically the exploitation of soil, forest, and their natural-mineral resources. This is the starting point to think the current conditions and contradictions involving, on the one hand, the predatory economic practices in relation to Amazone, and, on the other hand, the violence against traditional peoples and cultures, as well as the conservative political imposition of a cultural-economic modernization which destroys increasingly all traditional alternatives both to capitalist bad distribution of richness and material production, and to exhaustion of natural-mineral resources and the destruction of forest. In fact, traditional peoples have more careful relationship with nature and a very fair socialization among them, which means a powerful blow against both rhetoric and practice of cultural-economic modernization, in that traditional people don't have social problems and destructive practices against nature – they have a social and ecologic consciousness which is very remarkable and could serve as a model to rethink Western cultural-economic modernization and its current crisis – or, at least, to deny the association between modernity and universalism, modernity as the apogee of human evolution. But the traditional peoples' social and ecologic consciousness is, as we are arguing, an obstacle to a political project of cultural-economic modernization which is chaotic and authoritarian (because its only goal is the direct and unstoppable exploitation of natural-mineral resources, the institutional centralization and monopolization of Amazonian forest and land). This political project of cultural-economic modernization denies – the moment in which it imposes without moderation the policy of development based on the predatory exploitation of natural-mineral-resources that has no counterpart in terms of ecologic protection – voice and political participation to traditional peoples

and cultures, because they have an alternative way of life in relation to industrialism and consumerism (and so, in relation to direct and destructive exploitation of nature, based on the possessive individualism, and marked by a bad distribution of material resources or richness, as modernization does). And traditional peoples know that their way of life is a real and very effective alternative to cultural-economic modernization based on industrialism, consumerism, predatory exploitation of nature, and possessive individualism. Now, they make it necessary to silence traditional peoples, maintaining them away of political participation, and attributing them the condition of irrationality and barbarism, contrarily to civilization, economic progress and cultural modernization.

Then, in the second place, Amazonian cultural-economic modernization assumes an epistemological-moral vocation: to civilize, improving cultural training to Amazonian peoples. In this sense, civilization comes from out, because traditional peoples and cultures are compared to pure and simple barbarism or, at least, to pure and simple raw animalism, to crude natural brutality. Indeed, Amazon is, in many legends and in many current cultural understandings, the place of *Eldorado*, a savage land with a savage forest, animals, and peoples – of course, not as the Rousseau's model of *good savage*, but a land of a raw savagery, with monkeys walking on the streets and people living naked. In other terms, Amazon is understood in current discourses as pure savagery and mythical traditionalism, as a non-civilization. Civilization comes from out, i.e. it is made yesterday and today by settlers who faced and face this savage essential characteristic of land and people (see Rocha, 2012a, 2012b; Souza, 2011). The Amazonian hell is pacified and colonized by civilized men who face, again, many difficulties, the harshness of the jungle, and the brutality of native people. Then, after too much efforts, civilization was established here, jungle and native men were controlled and even civilized. As we are arguing along this paper, such discourse and cultural practices based on the civilizational work and arduous struggle against savagery is the normative basis to a delegitimation of traditional cultures and peoples, as well as to a direct validation of the cultural-economic modernization in relation to Amazon, its forest and peoples.

As consequence, Brazilian conservative modernization in relation to Amazon assumes strongly this epistemological-political motto as basis of the Amazonian

cultural-economic development and colonization, in that modernization is totally imposed by economic-political elites from out of Amazon, denying any political right of decision to traditional peoples who have always lived here in a harmonious symbiosis with forest and land, and it is marked in its prosecution by a massive exploitation of the land, in the same way that it is performed in a manner which assimilates mercilessly traditional peoples or pushes them into more deepest corners of forest, away of our civilized eyes and concerns, as non-subjects of rights. Now, what is the current perspective of this conservative modernization and, on the other hand, of the survival and hegemony of traditional peoples from Amazon and in Amazon? As a totalizing cultural-economic progress, modernization has an epistemology and politics based on an unceasing assimilation and regulation of all contexts, practices, and values, which means that traditional peoples and cultures must be integrated and guided by the light of modernization and its logic. Well, in this sense, Brazilian conservative modernization – just as Western modernization in general concerning all traditional contexts – will continue to impose implacably cultural-economic transformations in Amazon, as we can see in the numerous projects to use and explore natural-mineral resources in current political-economic discourses, both national and international. Nowadays, they are consolidated discourses and practices which have the cultural-economic modernization as their basis; and, as we argued along this paper, the fact that Amazon becomes a strategic political-economic question both to Brazil and other Western countries (including China in the East!) is a symptom of the national and international political strategy to monopolize gradually Amazonian land and forest. So traditional peoples and cultures will be erased radically of a normative-political consideration, in the name of a model of economic progress to which Amazonian land is fundamentally a business and a political strategy of hegemony – in last instance it is the fate of all traditional cultures and peoples in the face of the overwhelming and totalizing growth of cultural-economic modernization, which is basically the current ideology of global capitalism.

It is important to perceive, therefore, the fact that Amazonian land and forest is becoming a matter of political strategy to economic hegemony, national and international, exactly because natural-mineral resources, including the very basic water and

soil, are the central basis to the current and more to the future economic hegemony. Natural-mineral resources are the present and the future of economy, and this is the political strategic point of contemporary Amazonian policies and cultural-economic projects of development: the first and very basic political goal is gradually to colonize and monopolize the land and the forest by national and principally international economic groups and political governments, in a movement that will remove the land and the forest of their own people, especially traditional peoples and cultures. As we are arguing, this tendency is consolidated more and more in current times, and epistemological justifications based on the normative content of cultural modernization, as well as economic policies based on industrialism and consumerism, are the core to centralize the validation of these cultural-economic projects of modernization in the political institutions, political parties, and economic groups, fomenting cultural conservatism against traditional peoples and cultures (cultural conservatism based on white meritocracy and economic progress), which implies in the depoliticization and naturalization of cultural-economic modernization and progress, and the delegitimation of traditional peoples' demands, rights, and ways of life (see Assis, 2014; Beck, 2010, 2003). Now, the monopolization of the land and the forest, with their natural-mineral resources, is the core of the strategic policies and economic projects of development which, at the same time, depoliticizes Amazonian question, and delegitimizes traditional peoples' vindications for rights, political voice and participation, and also an alternative project of development based on ecology, social justice, cultural recognition, and political democracy.

## Conclusion

If economic development was the real question for justice and welfare, then its fair distribution and democratic control would be sufficient to resolve our national and global problems. But this is not the question, of course. The question is just and directly the centralization and monopolization of Amazon's natural-mineral resources through the destruction of Amazon's traditional peoples and cultures, and even through the massive and unregulated use of Amazonian land and forest. The modern war against traditionalism assumes here an ideological point which serves as a naturalized epistemological-political basis to cultural delegitimation of traditional peoples and cultures

and, then, to imposition of cultural-economic modernization. This conservative modernization is a project made from out, by political elites and economic groups which have only direct goal: an outright exploitation of nature and a strategic political monopolization of Amazonian natural-mineral resources – in other words, economic imperatives and a strategic institutional policy monopolize Amazon and define its role as a political-economic basis to exploitation in view of economic hegemony of capital (assumed by Brazilian economic-political elites, and even by current powerful countries). Traditional peoples are not important; they are not in the strategic economic-political calculation of these elites, in which they are just enemies, or obstacles. And an obstacle, in the moment that it is not a political subject and has no rights, it can be simply denied and destroyed, or even delegitimized (which means in anyway the normative, cultural, and political death).

Now, how can we change this process of conservative modernization in relation do Amazonian land and traditional peoples? Firstly, by politicization of this conservative cultural-economic modernization. It is very necessary and urgent to deconstruct the naturalized comprehension of cultural and economic progress towards Western modernization (industrialism, consumerism, technicality, and scientism) as the direct way to human evolution – a human evolution which overcomes traditional worlds and comes to cultural-economic modernization as the apogee of human evolutionary process. This naturalized comprehension of cultural-economic modernization as the apogee of human evolution is depoliticized because of this metaphysical or essentialist character of modernization, which appears as an intrinsic stage of human evolutionary process, not as social, political, and cultural construction with a historical perspective. Like a natural stage which all people will reach, the cultural-economic modernization loses its very political content, becoming a necessary step that we must always and quickly perform as the condition to our improvement as humankind – so, no criticism can limit the totalizing and unstoppable process of modernization, in the same way modernity's internal contradictions do not delegitimize it, or affect nor restrain its totalizing movement.

Well, if we can deconstruct this idea of cultural-economic modernization as a naturalized stage of human evolutionary process, we can politicize it, which means that the entire process of cultural-economic modernization will be understood as a historical construction, with political-economic forces guiding it, as well as it would be understood from an Euro-americancentrism. In other words: cultural-economic modernization is a political process, in the sense that it is constructed by a specific culture, or political-economic social classes, in the same way that cultural-economic modernization is a Western epistemological-political paradigm among other alternatives; it is not an absolute paradigm which is the condition of validation, criticism, and legitimation of all forms of life and axiologies, serving as human societal basis *par excellence*, the only alternative we have. The politicization of modernity allows us to identify political-economic forces and their normative-strategic interests as the epistemological-political key to the understanding of the path and dynamics of cultural-economic modernization, as well as its normative justifications and political forces which sustain and use it to justify both strategic politics of colonialism, and the economic exploitation of all contexts in the name of progress. Cultural-economic modernization would be confronted with its own contradictions and problems; it would be perceived as a totalizing process of cultural and economic imposition of the methodological scientism, systemic institutional politics, and capitalist logic of monetization to all contexts (cultures, peoples, lands etc.), which destroy inclusive social participation, ecology, and non-modern cultures and peoples.

Politicization of cultural-economic modernization allows us to identify alternative cultural-economic projects to it. The politicization of modernity allows us to criticize modernity's naturalization as a definitive societal basis from which human evolutionary process happens or must start always: its justification and validation, then, depend of the practical confirmation and democratic deliberation of its content and consequences. In the moment we deny the naturalization of modernity, we are affirming it as a societal normative, epistemological, and political project which is imposed from Euro-american cultural, political, and economic centers to all contexts, cultures, and peoples, with no sensibility to particularities of each context, to all social and natural contexts. Now, this is the first step to the understanding of the political content of cultural-economic modernization, as well as its limits – this is also the first step to refuse modernity's



direct association with universalism, modernity's self-comprehension as universalist cultural, social, and economic basis to human evolution and integration. Cultural-economic modernization is not our evolutionary apogee, nor a necessary step and stage we must perform, but a political construction with many contradictions and problems, then other alternatives are possible and necessary.

It is in this moment that traditional peoples have so much to say *of* cultural-economic modernization (and against it, of course), in the same way that they have so much to say *to* cultural-economic modernization, especially when we are referring to Amazonian conservative modernization. They can say about the destructive effects of cultural modernization concerning traditional values and practices, crushed by strong Western scientism and rational culture. They can say about the destructive effects of economic modernization concerning Amazonian land and forest, as well as about more ecologic and sustainable ways of life to industrialism, consumerism, and monetization. And, finally, they have so much to say about strategic institutional politics and projects of economic development whose only and direct reason is the centralization and monopolization of land and forest by political-economic elites to which the main question is basically the political-economic hegemony of their capitalist centers along the time, especially along the next centuries (marked by progressive lacking of natural-mineral resources, water, soil, just as growing of population and, of course, of intensive economic needs). These capitalist strategical logic denies ecological concerns and peoples' rights, as well as the democratization of social-economic development; these capitalist strategical logic denies also the democratization of political institutional powers, which are essentially affirmed (from a systemic capitalist comprehension of economy) in a systemic institutional dynamics, self-subsisting, self-referential, and autonomous in relation to an inclusive democracy, in relation to participation of common people (a political power centralized and monopolized by political parties, economic elites, and their technicians and specialists). Including in the political field, Amazonian traditional peoples can teach to Western culture the importance of the collectivity, fair and inclusive deliberation, and an egalitarian distribution of social production.

Therefore, any kind of cultural-economic project of modernization concerning Brazilian Amazon – if it is possible – must have the participation of traditional peoples as political subjects which can argue on modernization and even against it. They must test cultural-economic modernization's normative arguments, political strategies, economic structuring, and social-cultural impacts. In the same way, their lifestyles can moderate cultural-economic modernization as a totalizing process, just as the unstoppable industrialism and consumerism which are the motto to cultural-economic modernization in general and to Amazonian conservative modernization in particular. Traditional peoples can politicize cultural-economic modernization, its epistemological-political justifications and economic dynamics, by putting inclusive political democracy, social justice, and ecological consideration in first place to epistemological-political foundations and even to elaboration of social-economic projects of development – which means that any project of social-economic development must be based on inclusive political participation, social justice and ecological protection. Indeed, the denaturalization and, then, the politicization of Western cultural-economic modernization signifies the radical refuse of strategic institutional politics and systemic economical logic that centralize and monopolize social evolution, conceiving it as an institutional and technical matter, by political-economic elites and their technicians and specialists.

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