

## THE CAPTIVITY OF LAND AND LABOR: NEOEXTRACTIVIST POLICY AND PLANNING IN SÃO LUÍS, MARANHÃO

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### Abstract

*After decades of repeated socio-environmental conflicts in the port region of São Luís, Maranhão, triggered by the appropriation of land from traditional communities, the State and capital have used planning for changes in land use and occupation, legitimizing the land expansion and unifying different business interests. Understanding the process as the result of neoextractivist strategies of the local economic enclave, this article analyzes the relations between port and municipal planning which, based on the developmentalist discourse, have incorporated the demands of real estate capital in a new movement of “accumulation by spoliation” for the submission of Land and Labor to the captivity of capitalist reproduction.*

### Keywords

*Neoextractivism; Economic enclave; Planning; Accumulation by spoliation.*

## O CATIVEIRO DA TERRA E DO TRABALHO: POLÍTICA NEOEXTRATIVISTA E PLANEJAMENTO EM SÃO LUÍS, MARANHÃO

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### Resumo

*Após décadas de repetidos conflitos socioambientais na região portuária de São Luís, Maranhão, provocados pela apropriação de terras de comunidades tradicionais, Estado e Capital se utilizaram do planejamento para mudanças no uso e ocupação do solo, legitimando a expansão fundiária e unificando diferentes interesses empresariais. Entendendo o processo como fruto de estratégias neoextrativistas do enclave econômico local, o artigo analisa as relações entre planejamento portuário e municipal que, a partir do discurso desenvolvimentista, incorporou as demandas do capital imobiliário em um novo movimento de “acumulação por espoliação” para submissão da Terra e do Trabalho ao cativeiro da reprodução capitalista.*

### Palavras-chave

*Neoextrativismo; Enclave econômico; Planejamento; Acumulação por espoliação.*

# THE CAPTIVITY OF LAND AND LABOR: NEOEXTRACTIVIST POLICY AND PLANNING IN SÃO LUÍS, MARANHÃO<sup>1</sup>

*Frederico Lago Burnett*

## 1. Introduction

The country invented a simple formula for coercing the labor of the free man: if the land was free, the labor had to be the slave; if the labor was free, the land had to be the slave.<sup>2</sup>

José de Souza Martins

During this century of “colonial looting and resistance struggles” (Castro, 2017), areas of privileged access to global port terminals, with “retroports”<sup>3</sup> taking a leading role, have brought about socio-environmental conflicts in several regions of Brazil, according to studies in Rio de Janeiro, Pernambuco and Maranhão (Barreto; Quinto Jr., 2012; Santana, 2018). For Barreto and Quinto Jr., conflicts result from contradictions between abstract space, the material basis for the exchange value and reproduction of capital, and social space, whose use value is linked to the relations between collective possessions and nature. The consequence of this is “a conflict between the actors in the abstract space and the actors in the

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1. I would like to extend my thanks to the State of Maranhão Research and Scientific and Technological Development Support Foundation for the Research Productivity Stimulus Grant (BEPP/FAPEMA); to the Universidade Estadual do Maranhão for the Scientific Initiation Scholarships (PIBIC/UEMA) and the Institutional Technical Support (BATI/UEMA); to the accumulated knowledge of the study groups Development, Modernity and Environment (GEDMMA/UFMA), Social Struggles, Equality and Diversity (LIDA/UEMA), Economic Development and Brazilian Agriculture (DEAB/UFMA), Center for Geographic Studies (NEGO/UFMA) and the Laboratory of Territorial Analysis and Economic Studies (LATESE/UEMA); to the anonymous volunteer reviewers who analyzed the initial version of this text and contributed to its adjustment and completion.

2. This and all other non-English citations hereafter have been translated by the author.

3. A place for loading or unloading goods that is located behind the port. Being behind the port indicates a certain proximity to it and would then act as an auxiliary terminal for the port.

concrete space”, leading to “differential spaces that oppose the marketing logic of appropriating space” (Barreto; Quinto Jr., 2012, p. 60).

As a result of the expansive, aggressive nature of capital, these conflicting dynamics bring about the unavoidable occurrence of “[E]xpanding geographically into new regions”, an alternative that “can create fresh room for accumulation”<sup>4</sup> (Harvey, 2005, p. 48), and depart from the system into the constant crises of overproduction. Demanding expropriations through a movement to conquer frontiers, creating external and internal imperialisms, “colonial policies” are proof of the need that the system has “for its own existence and development” to incorporate “non-capitalist social layers, as a market in which to place its surplus value, as a source of means of production and as reservoirs of labor for its wage system” (Luxemburgo, 1970, p. 317).

Since the 1970s, these socio-spatial trajectories have been reproduced in the city of São Luís, in the state of Maranhão, through the National Development Plans of the civic-military governments that installed the ports of Itaqui, Vale and Alumar in the municipality, linked to the Great Carajás Program (Figure 1). This was the origin of the first major land and environmental conflicts in São Luis (Sant’ana Junior, 2016), and the consolidation of productive restructuring with the “reprimarization” of the national economy (Lamoso, 2020) re-dimensioned the role of port terminals (ANTP, 2016; 2017 apud Brasil, 2018b), thereby updating the dynamics of the economic enclave as a global link of the subordinate national State. From that external enterprise, through “minimal economic transactions” with the place, to the foreign capital “of the main means of export,” capable of “financing the national State,” the modern enclave is distinguished from the traditional by its appearance as a “growth hub, thanks to the effects of linking it to foreign investments” (Cademartori, 2010, p. 11), characterizing the “conservative modernization” (Moore Jr., 1975), since it has a strong social appeal among high and medium-income sectors in the face of the weakened Ludovice economy, historically trapped in an “ideology of decadence (Almeida, 2008).

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4. NB – For direct citations the English version was used of HARVEY D. Spaces of Capital Towards a Critical Geography. New York. Routledge. 2001 p. 242.

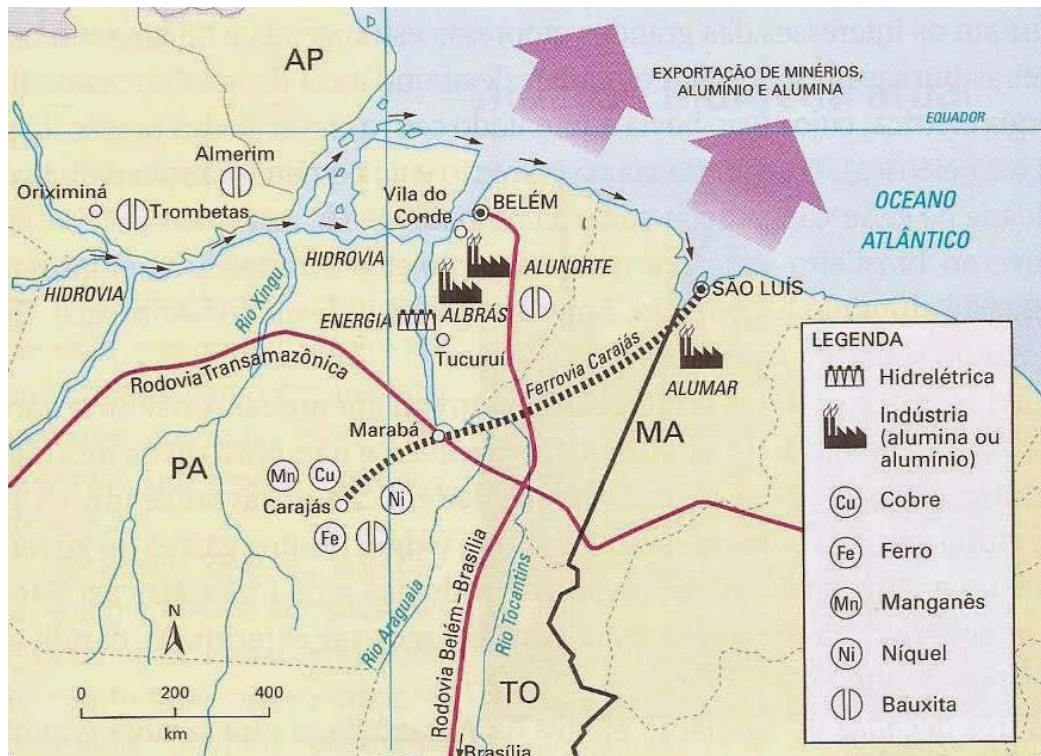


Figure 1. Neoextractivist enclaves in Eastern Amazon (1970-1980)

Legends: Hydroelectric plants; Industry (alumina or aluminum); Copper; Iron; Magnesium; Nickel; Bauxite.

Source: Mario Yoshida. <http://geoconceicao.blogspot.com.br/2010/05/recursos-minerais.html>.

The socio-spatial consequences of such processes, the persistent land conflicts between concrete and abstract spaces, relentless since the 1970s in the rural area of São Luís, have worsened during this century within the vicinity of port terminals, exposing the colonial face of business interests in appropriating territories of traditional uses in the rural region of the municipality. “The expropriation of a large number of rural and fishing communities”, together with the “compulsory displacement of their residents” (Sant’ana Junior, 2016, p. 283) has led to a sense of insecurity in rural areas and given rise to resistance movements in defense of their ways of life (Cruz, 2022). Between 2004 and 2005, in a wide-ranging combination of forms of struggle, 12 villages threatened with eviction resolutely defended their territories, enlisting social adherence and support from public institutions and managed to prevent the installation on the island of São Luis of a multinational steel complex led by Vale (Alves, 2014). The most recent conflict, involving six communities in Cajueiro fighting against the installation of a private-use terminal on their territory (Arcangeli, 2020), gained visibility both in the city and across the national media. It also became a case for the National Council for Human Rights (CNDH) (Burnett, 2022a) and, in December 2021, a formal complaint was lodged at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States (IACHR/OAS) (CNDH, 2021).

These troubled cases, which expose the asymmetry between the political and economic power of globalized businesses and the ways of life of rural communities stripped of citizenship rights, bring about both material and symbolic losses to multinational firms, since they occur outside the legal standards required by globalized businesses (Marangoni; Olsson, 2020). Circulating in restricted spaces of prior negotiation between capital and State, planning proved to be more efficient, since technique, apparently, takes the “form of rationalizing the expanded reproduction of capital” (Oliveira, 1981), bypasses the confrontation in ‘retail’ and resolves the land issue in ‘wholesale’ for the “captivity of Land” and Labor (Martins, 2010).

These events are approached herein through the concept of “enclave economy”, understood as “a mode of social production” whose “evolution, determined by foreign companies...must be considered as a space, since capitalist relations and social segmentation coexist there, and should not be understood as a territory, where strong non-market relationships take place between agents.” Still maintaining the role of “actors from abroad that determine the territory”, it is considered that “the modern enclave changes its shape, but does not change its essence”, since “in the modern enclave there are economic ties between foreign companies and local businesses.” Through “socio-political ties [...] the modern enclave, as well as the traditional, structures a territory to be functional for the needs of transnational companies that establish an alliance with the State and the local elites” (Cademartori, 2010, p. 11-12). In the creation of a common environment of dialogue and consultation between Capital and State, which has given rise to a new socio-spatial restructuring in São Luís, the hypothesis is that, without ceasing to be an intervention by the State in imposing “more advanced forms of the reproduction of capital to force a passage towards homogenization” (Oliveira, 1981, p. 29), urban and regional planning has constituted the language and discourse for the construction of a new urban hegemony in the state capital of Maranhão.

Referring to the first two decades of the twenty-first century, the text is structured into three sections, in addition to this introduction. The first discusses the planning of the Itaqui Port in its hegemonic expansionist dynamics in the regional space, since as a “technological and financial extension of more developed economies”, the “local agents do not control production” (Cademartori, 2010, p. 21), building a common development agenda as a discourse for the local agents of the State and Capital. The second section follows the influences of port agendas in the review of the São Luís Master Plan which initially, with an intra-urban focus and under the command of the real estate market, assumed a regional scale favorable to the demands of neoextractivism for homogenizing the municipal space, and

consolidating a local political group identified with globalized business. In the final considerations, the socio-environmental and political consequences are discussed with regard to the business and state alliances which, meeting the globalized demands for the homogenization of space, intend to hegemonize the future of São Luís and Maranhão in the name of local development.

## 2. National port policy and the interscalar articulations in São Luis

Made possible within the context of post-1964 national development programs (Batista, 2019), the Port of Itaqui remained under the control of local power groups despite the neoliberal administration of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1994-2003), who delegated its administration to the Empresa Maranhense de Administração Portuária (Maranhão Company for the Port Administration (EMAP)).<sup>5</sup> Due to the increased movement of cargo at Itaqui, expressed in the hinterland (Figure 2), the concession managed to survive through the management of four governors and federal port privatization programs, largely due to two decades involving the “reprimarization of the national economy,” that is to say, when the “relative share of basic exports” surpassed “the share of manufactured and semi-manufactured products”, which occurred in 2010 and was “accompanied by deindustrialization” (Lamoso, 2020, p. 3). However, as Lamoso alerted, “reprimarization may be generalized to Brazilian exports as a whole, but it is particularized differently in the federation units”, since “there are states that have always participated in international trade selling commodities, therefore the term “reprimarization” does not apply to them (ibid., ibid., p. 7).

Currently, state control of the Itaqui Port has remained under strict federal centralization of port policy which, guided by global management standards since the 2000s (Santos et al., 2019), and ignoring changes in the Republic and has maintained local power under the standards of the Union. The limits of this command are given by the very nature of ports, “a technological and financial extension of more developed economies” (Catemartori, 2000, p. 21) that port activities represent, which today are decisive for moving the export-import chain and the equilibrium of the national balance of payments (Brasil, 2017; 2018a; Lamoso, 2020). The complexity of articulating and controlling the stages of production, circulation and flow of different products across the vast national territory has led to the need to learn from international experiences, through technical advice from multilateral institutions and academic centers that lend scientificity to commercial exploration

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5. In 2000, the Union signed an agreement with the state of Maranhão for the “administration and exploration of the Organized Port of Itaqui, the São Jose de Ribamar Pier and the Ferryboat terminals of Ponta da Espera and Cujupe, in Alcântara” by EMAP. Available at: <https://www.gov.br/infraestrutura/pt-br/acesso-a-informacao/orgaos-extintos-desestatizados/codomar/institucional-codomar>.

(Santos et al., 2019). To this end, research and port management groups have undertaken consultancies, financing and events on the topic (Moniè, 2006; IPEA, 2010; Santos et al., 2019), constituting a new field of knowledge and domination.

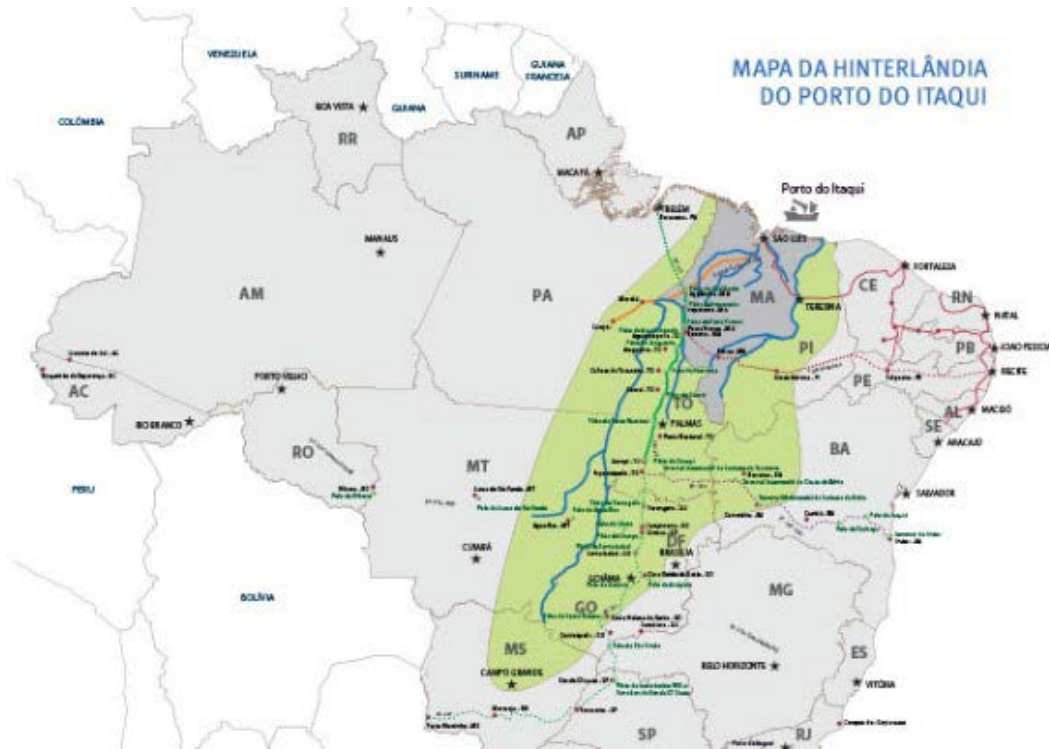


Figure 2. Map of the hinterland of the Itaqui Port

Source: Porto do Itaqui. Available at: <https://www.portodoitaqui.com/porto-do-itaqui/planejamento-desenvolvimento/novos-negocios>.

One field of knowledge has particularly stood out in recent years for its expertise in offering diagnoses and solutions to connect the processes of extraction, production and circulation of goods, whether basic, semi-manufactured or manufactured. Called strategic logistics corridors (SLC), these constitute the “appropriate, comfortable, integrated, safe, efficient, accessible and lowest possible cost transport system” of the “main products of the Brazilian economy”, i.e., “goods [...] selected based on the volume of cargo transported and the value of revenue from exports.” (Brasil, 2017, p. 8). To “emphasize the sustainable development of the country’s transport infrastructure”, the reports address subitem 2.5.2, “Interfaces with Environmental Conservation Areas and Indigenous Areas” on a page of text and two maps, one of which “for the sake of simplification”, brings together Federal and State Conservation Units (Brasil, 2017, p. 41-43). These aforementioned areas no longer appear in the document, apparently fulfilling a formality, since there is no reference to restrictions for the implementation or expansion of SLCs.



Participating with national prominence in the export chains of iron ore – 2<sup>nd</sup> place in 2015, 1<sup>st</sup> in 2016 (Brasil, 2018a), and Soybean and Maize (Table 1), the Itaqui Port Complex<sup>6</sup> “is present in both the North Corridor and the Northeast Corridor (Figure 3), considering that its area of influence serves the flows of both corridors” and is linked to the Port of Santos (Figure 4).

Nature of Cargo	Years				Percentage increase
	2001	2010	2015	2022	
Soybean	621,703	2,063,178	4,955,299	11,331,139	1,722.60
Soybean bran	---	9,317	185,476	100,03	973.62
Maize	---	---	2,112,038	6,537,064	209.51

Table 1. Movement of cargo in tons of Soybean and Maize (2001 – 2022)

Source: Own preparation based on data available at: [https://www.portodoitaqui.com/public/\\_files/arquivos/relatorio-de-movimentacao-decargas-2001-a2023-anual\\_65d4bd33b987d.pdf](https://www.portodoitaqui.com/public/_files/arquivos/relatorio-de-movimentacao-decargas-2001-a2023-anual_65d4bd33b987d.pdf)



Figure 3. Railway network linked to the Itaqui Port Complex – 2015

Legends: Carajás Railway; Trans-Northeastern Railway; North-South (North Section) Railway; Railway network linked to the Complex; Other Railway Route; Extension under construction; Capital/Town; Railway Yard.

Source: ANTT, 2016; LabTrans/UFSC, 2017 apud Brasil, 2018b, p. 80.

6. The Itaqui Port Complex is made up of the Itaqui Organized Port, the Ponta da Madeira da Vale Maritime Terminal, with the TUP Alumar and two terminals in the design phase: the São Luís and Mearim Port Terminals, the latter 50 km from the capital, in the municipality of Bacabeira (Brasil, 2018b, p. 3).



Figure 4. North-South Railway and the connection between the ports of Itaqui and Santos  
 Source: Rumo e VLI FSP apud Toledo, 2023.

In contrast to the role played by the Itaqui Port Complex (IPC) within the context of export policy, in São Luis, the temporal simultaneity of the land conflicts with a national repercussion (Alves, 2014; Sant’ana Junior, 2016; Arcangeli, 2020; Burnett, 2022a) have caused periodic events of port and urban planning (Brasil, 2018b; EMAP, 2019; São Luis, 2023) to become forms of rapprochement and dialogue between until that point distant worlds (Monié, 2006; Santana, 2018). The “discovery” by public and private agents from Ludovician land constraints, thus limiting the accomplishment of global and local capital, has curtailed the distance between interests and thereby solidified multi-scale partnerships for business expansion. Linked to the expansive nature of capitalist development (Luxemburgo, 1970), encouraged by national commitments and partnerships with globalized enclaves interested in the homogenization of space for the conquest of Land, Capital and Labor, the public-private association celebrated in São Luís around the interests of the IPC demanded, once again, that “capitalism plans the planning” (Baran, 1963 apud Oliveira, 1981, p. 25).

#### 2.1 Port Planning as a technical division of space

The performance of imports and exports, expanding year after year and decisive for the national economy (Lamoso, 2020), consolidating globalized commercial commitments, has required the regulation of port spaces. Following the measures

to disorganize port workers' unions (Araujo, 2013) and the institutionalization of private port concessions (Farranha, 2014), the Ports Secretariat of the Ministry of Infrastructure established "guidelines for the elaboration and review of planning instruments for the ports sector" for "short, medium and long term" periods (Brasil, 2014). Ordinance No. 3 of 2014 established four planning instruments linked to one another: 1) The National Port Logistics Plan (PNLP), "which aimed to identify the vocations of the different ports, according to the group of their... areas of influence"; 2) The Master Plan (MP), "aimed at the port unit, considering the perspectives of the strategic planning of the sector...contained in the PNLP"; 3) The Development and Zoning Plan (PDZ), an "operational planning instrument for the Port Administration", and 4) The General Grant Plan (PGO), "for assigning "new public and private ports or terminals" (Brasil, 2014 ).

Demonstrating the rigorous centralization of national policy, three of the plans are "State planning instruments" and it is only the PDZ which is the responsibility of the "port authority", although their content must seek "II- Compatibility with the urban development policies of the municipalities where the port is located, identifying appropriate areas for the expansion of port activities." (Brasil, 2014, p. 3). Thus, the "vision of each port unit" and the "development policies of the territory where the Port is located" (Santos et al., 2019, p. 262) are expressed in the Master Plan and provide conditions for the Development and Zoning Plan.

Federal regulations recommend "strategic planning" that "is basically concerned with what to do, and not how to do it", since "defining specific, detailed action plans is the responsibility of operational planning" (Santos et al., 2019, p. 257). In a clear technical division of labor and even though negotiations for implementing projects need to take place within the context of state and municipal licenses, the "ruler and compass" of national ports fall under federal command, an expression of the enclave character through the "link with the world market" and the "technological and financial extension of more developed economies" (Cademartori, 2010).

However, despite the rigid "technical" control exercised by the Union, the local 'trump card' remains the spatialization of Capital and Labor, i.e., their materialization on the Land, duly regularized and licensed, a condition imposed by international law that conditions globalized business. (Collyer, 2013; Marangoni; Olsson, 2020). Much for this reason, enclaves become "modernized", but do not change their essence, requiring a natural alliance between local elites, national elites and foreign companies," since "local political elites obtain their prestige from their capacity to maintain public order in enclaves and attract direct foreign investment" (Cademartori, 2010, p. 31).

Considering that the Industrial District of São Luís (Disal) is under state jurisdiction and the Master Plan (PD) and the Law on Zoning, Subdividing, Use and Occupation of the Land (LZPUOS) are municipal responsibilities, all propositions relating to territorial planning of port interest are dependent on the local scope. On the other hand, and taking into account the connections between the Itaqui Port Complex and the regional and national economy (Figures 2 and 3), the demands addressed to the different instances of territorial planning take on an imposing nature for local planning. From this viewpoint, issues relating to “port – city interactions” are up to local authorities, demanding the incorporation of port plans produced between 2012 and 2019. Analyzing their diagnoses and proposals enables an identification of the process to legalize “accumulation by spoliation” in São Luís, through the relationship between corporate port planning and municipal public planning.

#### *2.1.1 Planning in Itaqui (2012-2019): building an agenda for local power*

Over the past ten years, two development and zoning plans (June 2012 and December 2019) and the Itaqui Port Complex Master Plan (April 2018) were drawn up for the São Luís region. Most of the texts are dedicated to diagnosis and proposals for the internal and immediate spaces in ports, such as logistical structures for loading and unloading, and for the storage and distribution of goods. In addition to the theme of “port-city interaction”, contained in all plans through statistical data and exhaustive cartography, the proposals on ‘urban planning’ of the last two are of particular interest, which, in an unprecedented, purposeful manner, address the master plan being drawn up at the time.

For the three plans, “interaction with the city” signifies prioritizing the Industrial District of São Luís – Disal,<sup>7</sup> with an area corresponding to 40% of the municipality and adjacent to the planned “Greater Industrial District that encompasses São Luís and Bacabeira”, with “around 35 thousand ha”. The three documents are unanimous in stating that, despite the potential to accommodate large businesses, the area presents problems, since “there are non-conformities between the Disal Master Plan proposed by the State and the Land Use and Occupation Plan drawn up by the City Hall of São Luís”. Indicating the obstacles to be removed in relation to the “organic law of the municipality, which governs the use and occupation of land in Disal,” the PDZ 2012 warned that “several modules in this District, directed by its Master Plan for industrial use and occupation, are destined for either rural or environmental protection areas” (EMAP, 2012, p. 98)

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7. The area allocated to this district was a donation from the Union to the State Government of Maranhão, through a concessional contract dated May 16, 1977, with the purpose of establishing an industrial district and promoting the economic and social development of the region. (Brasil, 2018b, p. 203).

By stating that “it is not possible to speak of a Central-North corridor if the Port of Itaquí and the Industrial District are not preserved to guarantee the flow of the existing agricultural and mineral potential along this corridor” (EMAP, 2012, p. 167), the PDZ anticipated the relevance of the future strategic logistics corridors that would be developed from 2017 onwards (BRASIL, 2017; 2018a) and indicates that the issue of land regularization is crucial for business. There would also be a deadline: by the end of 2012, the preparation of “the Disal Master Plan should begin alongside that of the port, aiming at integrated planning for the industrial and port development of Maranhão” (Brasil, 2018a, p. 153), because “the use of the area must be changed to include it as an industrial area, through specific municipal legislation”. (Brasil, 2018a, p. 182)

Noting that “the land problem on the island of São Luís urgently needs a technical solution accompanied by a legal decision to cancel these records” (EMAP, 2012, p. 152-170), the plan provides a “succinct history” of the Disal land issues. It concluded that “the situations of occupation identified... indicate a high level of complexity for intervention” and “alternatives that transcend strictly legal issues to enable the economic development of the region (Ibid., *ibid.*, p. 182).

The entire emphasis of the PDZ 2012 on land regularization in Disal was reinforced by the unsuccessful project of the Vale steel complex in partnership with China, South Korea and Germany, in 2004, and efforts by Suzano Papeis e Celulose, in 2012, to build a private-use terminal in Cajueiro (Sant’ana Junior, 2016; Arcangeli, 2020). The residents of Rural Zone II, the region of the retro-port onto which part of Disal overlaps, put up resistance against these initiatives and, in a counteroffensive supported by sectors of society, in 2003, approved with Ibama the creation of the Taim Extractive Reserve (RESEX),<sup>8</sup> which neighbored the port of Alumar (Sant’ana Junior, 2016).

The RESEX, not addressed by the PDZ 2012, is highlighted in the PM 2018 and PDZ 2019. Considered as an impact measure for “updating the zoning of the Disal area” which, “if implemented, would establish a direct conflict with the territory destined for the Disal, and could even influence the activity of the Port of Itaquí” (BRASIL, 2018b, p. 205), the implementation of Resex was considered one of the “aspects identified as being incompatible” with business (EMAP, 2019, p. 381)

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8. Extractive Reserve – known as RESEX, area of the National System of Conservation Units in which traditional populations carry out extractivism, agriculture and small animal husbandry activities, ensuring sustainable use, protection of livelihoods and local culture, allowing public visits and research scientific. Available at: <https://antigo.mma.gov.br/areas-protegidas/unidades-de-conservacao/categorias.html>.

and systematically denied by the state government. Despite opposition, the mobilization around the proposal remains a popular development project<sup>9</sup> (Sant'ana Junior, 2016).

Drawn up in 2018, the Itaqui Port Complex Master Plan – MP is a “State planning instrument,” which discusses “the needs and alternatives for expanding the Port Complex for a planning horizon up to 2060” (Brasil, 2018b, p 3-4). In the plan, Disal is “rethought as a way of promoting the development of the state of Maranhão,” since “its adaptation will enable the region’s potential to be explored for housing industries that could even function as a support for port activities” and thus boost “the creation of jobs and income in the region” (Ibid., *ibid.*, p. 204).

However, the discourse of expanding jobs through port businesses does not correspond in any way to the current reality of São Luís, as data from the plans themselves attest (Brasil, 2018b; EMAP, 2019). More than 40 years after the installation of large projects in Itaqui, employees from the Port Authority, EMAP port workers, concessionaires and independent contractors totaled 2,048 jobs. This was just 9% of the 20,968 workers employed in the “Transport, Storage and Mail category” in São Luís, far fewer than jobs in Public Administration, Commerce and Services, which account for 61% of jobs in the capital (BRASIL, 2019, p. 359), because “in many sectors, foreign investments take up scarce local resources to generate domestic income” (Cademartori, 2010, p. 28).

The positioning of the Master Plan was even more incisive in relation to Disal’s “non-conformities” and to the “importance of adapting industrial zones to the needs of the industrial park, in order to rethink the limits contemplated by industrial areas established in previous, still valid periods” (Brasil, 2018b, p. 198). Although Disal includes state environmental protection areas and consolidated urban and rural residential zones, causes of frequent socio-environmental conflicts, the Plans insist on “adequacy”, since “several factors contribute to its implementation, such as geographic aspects, the existence of road infrastructure and favorable conditions for port facilities” (Brasil, 2018b, p. 204). The arguments move between the “demographic void” or occupation by those who do not work the land, thereby suggesting evictions and new, “more productive” uses (Brasil, 2018b, p. 213-218), since “the center of the enclave threatens traditional production, in others there is no link between them” (Cademartori, 2010, p. 21-22)

Coincident in relation to Disal’s constraints on the expansion of port businesses in São Luís and the impossibility of individualized solutions, driving resistance and

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9. Although the name of the RESEX was changed in 2008, to the Tauá-Mirim Extractive Reserve (Sant'ana, 2016), the official CPI documents made a mistake by maintaining the old name.

popular organization, the three analyzed plans require State intervention in order to resolve the impasse. They appeal to planning, “a typical form of the ‘rationale’ of monopoly capitalism, and at the same time of the anti-Nation State, which, through planning, attempts to reconstruct the ‘illusory community’, by which it claims to represent the Nation” (Oliveira, 1981, p 16).

### 3. Planning and the Master Plan in Brazil, instruments for homogenizing social space

Defined by the 1988 Federal Constitution as the “basic instrument for urban development and expansion policy”, the Master Plan constituted the major legislation for determining the use and occupation of municipal land in Brazil. Regulated by the City Statute (Brasil, 2001), its process was assigned to the City Council (known as *Concid*), a deliberative/consultative collegiate that, in a proportion of 40% to 60%, brings together representatives of public institutions and civil entities involved in urban planning, housing, sanitation and urban mobility (Brasil, s/d). An arena of disputes, in two decades of operation *Concid* has exposed the immense, historical asymmetries of Brazilian cities and, despite the dedication and commitment of councilors for fairer and more humane cities, recent socioeconomic and environmental data verify its limitations (IBGE, 2022).

These limitations are due to the fact that the city is “a social construction” in which urban changes are inherent to the efforts of capital to escape crises of over-accumulation (Harvey, 2005), leading to the “creative destructions” of environments built by those who “have the capacity to exercise power to build and/or destroy urban geographies”, i.e., “individuals occupying positions of privilege within a determined institutionality” (Zunino, 2002, p. 106-107).

Thus, the nature of urban planning distinguishes it from business planning which, focused on the “technical division with regard to different uses and functions” of controlled spaces, does not face the challenge of determining how “individuals, groups and classes [...] appropriate space” (Spósito; Góes, 2013, p. 98-102). Differences that, when analyzing the São Luís Master Plan process, expose the supremacy of the globalized enclave in incorporating its interests into urban legislation, thanks to the “economic ties between foreign companies and local companies” (Cademartori, 2010, p. 11).

#### 3.1 The São Luís Master Plan (2015-2023), capitalist claims and political clashes

Unlike the “neutral” space of port planning, the analysis of the São Luís MP review examines a social process in which proposals arising from private interests are exposed and negotiated with sectors of society, when the discourse

of local development takes center stage against socio-environmental arguments. In contrast to the rigor and certainties of port plans, the MP appears as a sequence of disagreements, conflicts and consensuses that, under class struggles and “palace revolutions”, over nine years (2014-2023), have sought to enhance capitalist expansion in the city.

This was a period during which political changes and business approaches strengthened the port agenda, while the irregular pace of the MP process penalized popular mobilizations, interrupted with each suspension of the Concid agenda, more fitting for public officials and business advisors. As a “serious blow to authentic and genuine popular participation” (Souza, 2022, p. 160), it was found that, at no time, did “previous training workshops for communities and neighborhoods” take place, whether “for public hearings or presentations of the technical reading”, a “lack of interest in taking such an important discussion regarding the city out to a mass that inhabits and lives in the urban fabric” (Zagallo, 2020 apud Souza, 2022, p. 160). To this end, alliances were created, spatial scales and political articulations were expanded in the construction of a hegemonic consensus between Capital and State.

### *3.1.1 From Sinduscon to Fiema, from the urban to the regional*

The Institute of City, Research and Urban and Rural Planning (Incid), a department of the Municipal Secretariat of Planning and Development, is the repository of the capital’s territorial data and, since 2006, has coordinated changes in urban legislation, acting as Concid’s technical support. Despite having included “Rural” in its title in 2007, being adept in the ideology of urban development, the body has become an “organic intellectual” of the capital’s real estate market, which explains why the MP review process began with meetings at the Civil Construction Industries Union of Maranhão (Sinduscon-Ma), in February 2014.

Wishing to “order the city and its growth”, since “the project has some points that need to be reviewed, such as the building template” (Construção Civil, 2014 apud Souza, 2022, p. 154), Sinduscon-Ma intended to start from the macro-zoning in the 2006 MP and increase land occupation rates in a new city zoning (São Luís, n.d). Already identified with port demands, the State of Maranhão Industrial Federation – Fiema expanded the debate with the seminar “Sustainable urban development and strategic industrial sectors for the municipality of São Luís” in August of the same year. However, restricting itself to intra-urban space, at the event, Incid reaffirmed the priority of “encouraging the occupation of urban spaces in São Luís, which correspond to 18% of the municipal area” (Souza, 2022, p. 154), demonstrating, at that time, disagreements between the local business community.



Experiencing the civil construction boom – high and medium income condominiums in partnerships with national developers and large residential properties from the *Minha Casa, Minha Vida* (My Home, My Life) Program (PMCMV) in neighboring municipalities and in the rural area of the capital<sup>10</sup> (Figures 5 and 6) –, the concerns of Sinduscon-Ma ignored the port demands. Restricted by the 1992 LZPUOS occupancy rates, developers were eager to extract more value from valorized areas, expanding profits compared to land costs in the capital

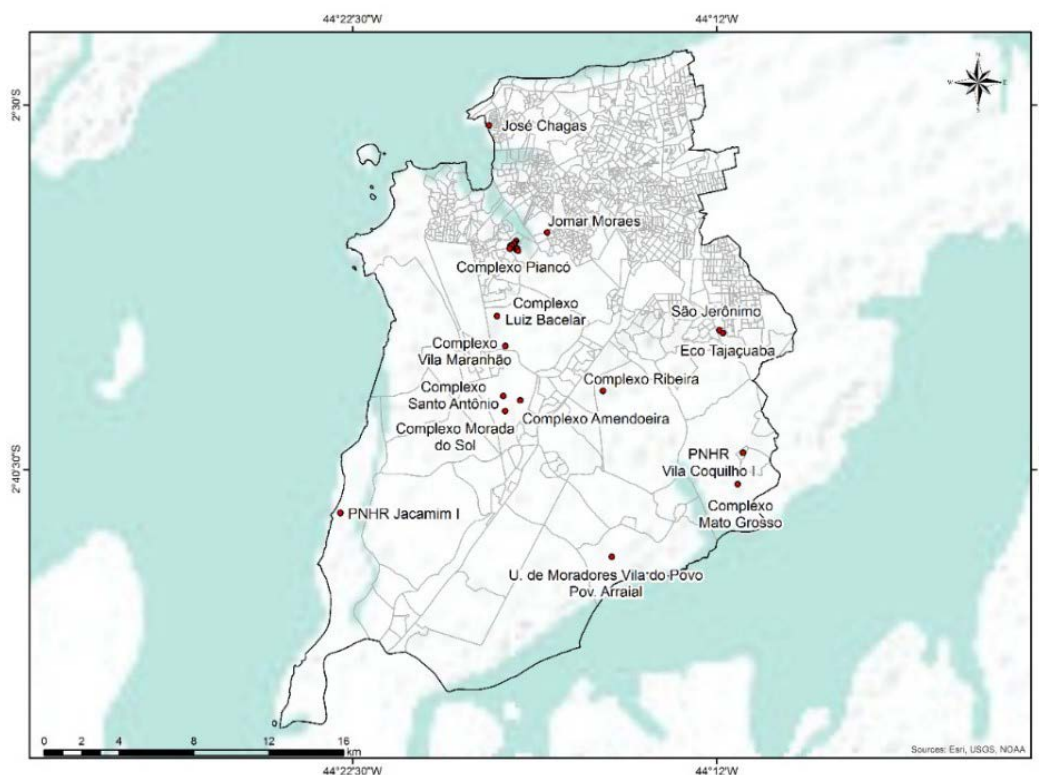


Figure 5. PMCMV residences, the urban and rural zone São Luís, Maranhão  
Source: Burnett, 2022b.

10. Of the 23,233 housing units produced by PMCMV in São Luís, 13,008 (or 55% of the total) were built in rural areas, close to centuries-old villages, without an environmental impact assessment. Of the total built, only 177 units (1.35%) were produced by residents' associations in the villages of Jacamim, Coquilho and Arraial.



Figure 6. PMCMV residences in Ribeira, in the rural zone of São Luís, Maranhão  
Source: Burnett, 2022b.

The intervention of the State Public Prosecutor’s Office (MPE) in July 2016, demanding compliance with the rules of the City Statute, and the Municipal City Conference, allowed time to adjust the divergent interests of the market. Between the appointment of new advisors, approval of Concid’s Internal Regulations and the conclusion of the Conduct Adjustment Term (TAC) between the MPE and City Hall in 2017 (Souza, 2022, p. 162), the MP review began in 2018, at that point already with port demands at the center of discussions.

The interval enabled Incid to take up a new position, recognizing the Port of Itaqui as “the major driver of economic development in Maranhão,” since “together with the private terminals of Vale and Alumar, it is part of the second largest port complex in terms of cargo movement in the country” (Barbosa, 2014a, p. 64). Aware of port planning, it cited PDZ 2012, which had the “objective of expanding the development of the port so that it could meet the expansion of new agricultural frontiers, the central-west corridor and enhance exports and imports,” as well as the “new port infrastructure” to “serve the Mearim Steel Works” in the neighboring municipality of Bacabeira (Ibid., *ibid.*, p. 66). Incorporating the municipal scale, Incid’s new approach justified the sustainability of industrial concentration due to the relationship that São Luís would have with the “Great Industrial District” (EMAP, 2012), mobilizing “the logistical (port) potential of the city even more, taking the professional segment with a high level of training to the capital,” because, “in

the opposite direction, it will lead to immigration flows of municipal population, which will be differentiated according to the construction and operation phases of the refinery” (Barbosa, 2014b, p. 145-146).

Time was also a partner of Emap which, committed to publicizing port demands, had aggressive support from the State Secretariat for Industry and Commerce (SEINC) within Concid and in the public broadcasting of the development discourse to be materialized by the MP (Souza, 2022, p. 233). Fiema also took advantage of this moment in a meeting with newly elected deputies in 2018 “to discuss demands from the productive sector” such as “environmental licensing, the completion of the BR 135 [highway] duplication works, economic-ecological zoning, the São Luís Master Plan”, seen as “obstacles for the development of Maranhão.” (Deputies discuss..., 2018). In an article, the president of Fiema reaffirmed that “only with the approval of the Master Plan will we be able to celebrate a new future for our city, with legal certainty.” (Das Neves, 2021, p. 4 apud Souza, 2022, p. 232).

The potentialities of the MP revealed to members of the Municipal Council for Economic and Social Development (CONDES) (Emap sedia..., 2016), motivated a state agreement in 2020 regarding imports for local commerce, and enabled financial support from the development agency in 2021 for port research<sup>11</sup> and, in 2022, with the International Symposium “The potential of Maranhão on China’s New Silk Road: Business and development opportunities for Brazil”.<sup>12</sup>

Contrasting with these “good intentions”, a series of issues – environmental, urban and rural development, mobility, housing, etc. – the Concid members were placed in antagonistic camps, culminating in the agenda of the 37th meeting, in November 2018: like ‘lightning in a blue sky’, Incid “presented the municipal macro-zoning map, with the urban and rural delimitation,” to be taken to public hearings, provoking “the most heated discussions among counselors” (Souza, 2022, p. 169). Meeting port and real estate demands, dozens of villages and their production areas were incorporated into the urban zone, while the protection limits of parks, mangroves and dunes were reduced, and illegal high-income occupations were regularized, favoring enterprises in regions with great value of agglomeration, threatening areas of traditional use and environmental reserves.

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11. “Research focused on the Port of Itaqui will receive investments from the State Government over the next five years totaling R\$ 40 million [...] foreseen in the “Porto do Futuro, Programa de Incentivo à Pesquisa, Desenvolvimento e Inovação (Port of the Future, A Research, Development and Innovation Incentive Program (RD&I) and preparing professionals for the job market (2022 to 2025)”. Available at: <https://www.fapema.br/governo-do-estado-vai-investir-r-40-milhoes-em-pesquisas-tendo-como-foco-o-porto-do-itaqui>

12. Available at: <https://valor.globo.com/patrocinado/dino/noticia/2022/07/20/maranhao-acelera-insercao-do-brasil-na-nova-rota-da-seda-da-china.ghml>

3.1.2 *From the La Ravardière Palace<sup>13</sup> to the Leões Palace<sup>14</sup>, from the municipal to the state*

Requests to postpone the decision in order to obtain a better analysis of the proposal and to hold consultations with the communities were denied by business and government representatives who approved the proposal by 16 votes to nine. With the MP legitimized by the Council, nine public hearings were held from January 2019 and despite popular protests at all of them, demanding a reduction in the proposed urban limit, the draft Plan returned to Concid and the urban macro-zoning proposal was rectified without change by the same councilors (Figure 7). Delivered by the mayor to the president of the São Luis Chamber in June 2019, three months later the notice of public hearings was published, conducted based on a “request signed by at least 100 people”, a measure taken under popular pressure (Souza, 2022, p. 193).

After the public sessions of the municipal legislature had concluded, which reinforced the demands made to the executive and were incorporated into the process, voting on the MP should have taken place at the beginning of 2020, but new recommendations from the MPE, sent to the legislature in February, required the project to be returned to the municipal executive. Due to “mistakes and omissions regarding the environmental and urban macro-zoning maps,” the document had to “undergo corrections, making sure that the social control rules were observed, with the scrutiny of the City Council, under penalty of prosecution” (Souza, 2022, p. 194-195).

However, the municipal elections removed the MP from the public agenda and the response to the MPE only returned to the São Luis Chamber in March 2022, through the mayor invested in January 2021. To justify maintaining the proposals in relation to the rural area and environmental protection areas, the Incid Technical Note basically included in the draft law the 65 risk areas registered by the Municipal Civil Defense (São Luís, 2022, p. 121) and, without submitting it to Concid, modified the limits of the urban perimeter, returning 22 peri-urban villages to the condition of rural areas (Ibid., *ibid.*, p. 127).

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13. The municipal government headquarters.

14. The state government headquarters.

PROPOSTA ANEXO III - MACROZONEAMENTO URBANO - PLANO DIRETOR DE SÃO LUÍS (AUDIÊNCIA)

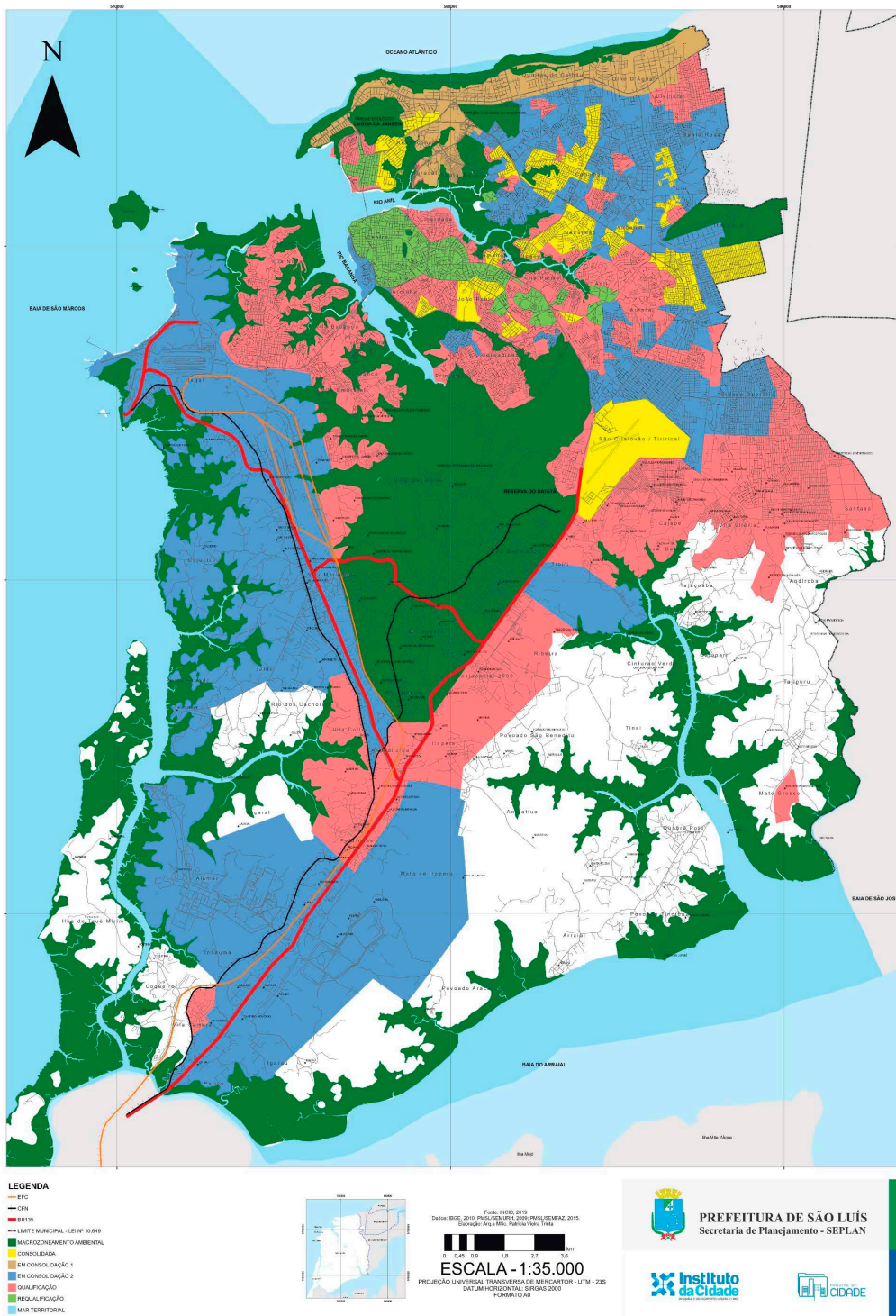


Figure 7. The Urban Macro-zoning Map of São Luís, Maranhão

Legends: EFC (Carajás Railway); CFN (Trans-Northeastern Railway); BR135 Highway; Municipal Boundaries – Law No. 10.649; Environmental Macro-zoning; Completed; Under Completion 1; Under Completion 2; Qualified; Requalified; Territorial Sea.

Source: São Luís, 2022a.

The councilors also demonstrated no urgency in the matter and the process was resumed in January 2023 at a different pace by the president of the Chamber, who had been on leave since March 2022, having taken over as State Secretary of Culture, and returned to the legislative agreeing a two-month period for a final analysis and a vote on the MP. With the unanimous agreement of the councilors, although under popular protests, the plan was approved with 48 legislative amendments, none of which came from public hearings or recommendations from the MPE. The inclusion in the MP law of a one-year deadline to approve the Law on Zoning, Sub-Division, Land Use and Occupation and the overturning of the municipal executive's vetoes on parliamentary amendments are evidence of the chamber's position, aligned with the State government for the urgent implementation of the new urban planning.

The sudden interference of the state government in approving the MP, which until then had kept its distance from the municipality's exclusive powers, indicated a break in the local pact, implicit since the beginning of the process. Related to the developmental profile that characterizes state power, more identified with neoextractivism investments in Maranhão, the friction exposed political movements and new alliances in the capital, with the São Luís Chamber playing a decisive role in the 2024 municipal elections.

Thus, in addition to the private appropriation of concrete territories of labor, the long process of port planning, legitimized by the Master Plan, signals a new correlation of political forces in Maranhão to be observed in the drafting of the Law on Zoning, Sub-Division, Use and Occupation of Land in São Luís.

#### Final considerations

Planning is not, therefore, the presence of a mediating State, but rather, on the contrary, the presence of a State seized, or not, by the most advanced forms of capital reproduction to force a passage toward homogenization or, as is commonly described by the literature on regional planning, toward 'national integration'.

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The reprimarization of the Brazilian economy (Lamoso, 2020), in São Luís, assumed a relationship with a supposed past of economic glories (Almeida, 2008), enabling the construction of a discourse of local development linked to imagery of the high- and middle-income layers, thus assuming a character of "conservative modernization" (MOORE JR., 1975). Hence, it established another significance in the process of national productive restructuring, as the large primary processing

plants for export and import, installed around Itaqui, reconstructed the industrial landscape of the textile park from the end of the nineteenth century, symbolically connecting to the extractivist past in Maranhão.

Thus, between landscapes and reminiscences, as a vehicle guaranteeing the return of economic development, the territorial planning of the state capital of Maranhão has intended to bind the city's destiny to globalized interests, proclaimed as ports and gateways to progress. After identifying the spatial needs of port businesses, those socio-environmental obstacles in the path of development were handed over to local political and economic subjects, ultimately responsible for clearing the pathway to the proclaimed future.

The implementation, in the Greater Industrial District, of the heralded most technologically qualified production center will be a test for both politicians and businesspeople from Maranhão. In this commitment, they will measure strengths with the nature of the globalized enclave of Itaqui, until now attracting the manufacture of simple, processed commodities, with environmental impacts, with no aggregation of value or qualifying labor.

This scenario of conflict will have as a backdrop the elaboration of the new Law on Zoning, Sub-Division, Use and Occupation of Land, which, among the capitalist sectors, will affect the partitioning of the land taken in by the MP. Opening a new chapter in the alliances between local industrial and real estate interests, this process will have its visible face in Concid and in public hearings, but will coexist with the climate of “palace revolutions” from the Leões and La Ravardiére, requiring the rebuilding of capitalist consensuses and confronting popular interests in electoral disputes. Thus, the delaying tactic adopted by the MP, which extended deadlines so as to consolidate the forces of capital and weaken popular movements, takes on a different pace and will seek to approve the LZPUOS until the 2024 municipal elections, when a new political framework will be defined in the capital.

Regardless of the results of this challenge and simultaneously with them, the predictable capitalist dynamics of land appropriations/evictions from Disal will coincide with an increase in the socio-environmental conflicts and new peripheral occupations in the city. Unifying demands and platforms of urban and rural struggles, leading to a worsening of the class struggle, the emergence of new subjects of popular interests will keep the project alive of another development in São Luís. To what extent will the spatial homogenization proposed by Capital, and made viable by the State, contribute to unifying the divided urban and rural struggles for concrete spaces?

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**Submitted:** May 12, 2023.

**Approved:** November 14, 2023.

**How to cite:** BURNETT, F. L. The captivity of land and labor: Neoextractivist policy and planning in São Luís, Maranhão. *Revista brasileira de estudos urbanos e regionais*. V. 26, E202415en, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.22296/2317-1529.rbeur.202415en>.

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