Reflection

My motivation to research on the topic of tourism started as an educated hypothesis and a curiosity: what was the connection of tourism industry (largely advertised nowadays) to the territorialisation of the untouched and pristine areas? Personally, the wish on researching this topic was more than means of problematizing and advocating against the effects that tourism (under the supremacy of capitalism) bring to rooted communities and diverse ecological sites. I was looking for a new way of understanding the paradoxical dynamics of a said beneficial and sustainable industry in order to envision what goes wrong in these cases and rethink new worlds from it. Moreover, the potential of tourism always motivated me, as it seems like a latent and complex industry that has similar patterns of behavior regardless of its site and is easily transferable and replicable through locations across globe. However, despite having some basic knowledge of the site and of the history of my location - Alter do Chão, on the Amazon Frontier - a lot need to be deepened to be able to frame and grasp its complexity.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH AND DESIGN

The relationship between research and design for this thesis has a particular importance, as since its beginning, it was oriented towards research consciously acknowledging that the main contribution would be the unveiling of information.

The type and means of information that resulted from the research varied during this last year; navigating from old modernist plans of territorialisation, basic cartography, ethnographic studies, visual materials, discourses, articles and news. This extensive and constant research process informed all spheres of this project, without which the Design would not have been possible.

The exploratory tone of the research, allowed me to navigate in multiple spheres and understand the project's complexity. The project, both as research and design, structured itself around three main axes of exploration: Time, Space and Agency. The initial research - entitled Postcard Series - was used to strengthen the Problem Statement proving a clear correlation between the evolution through time of the spatialisation on my site. At this moment, I create essential links that will further inform and shape my Design.

Explorations that came later - such as Monographies and Topographies of Values - allowed me to bridge scales and spatialise agency. This was conducted by delving into my fieldwork findings. The results that emerged from the fieldwork derailed - quite positively - the path of what now is my design proposal. It allowed me to understand the territorial reach of indigenous practices and where agency is allocated in the tourism socio-economic chain.

The projective proposal of this thesis responds - under a critical and theoretical rhetoric - to the outcomes of the research with three main proposals: Strategies, Ethos and Procedures. The multiple angles that were constantly nurtured during my research, provided me with enough understanding to propose a set of interventions that navigate from non-negotiable protocols - the Strategies - to adaptive, evolving, site-sensitive - the Procedures. Both of them directly address the issues posed during the research and transpose the findings it into a Territorial transition model.

Said that, I would reiterate the surprisingly strong and integral synergy between research and design. The completed project is evidence of how research and design, when intricately intertwined, may produce solutions that are significant, sensitive to context, and theoretically sound.
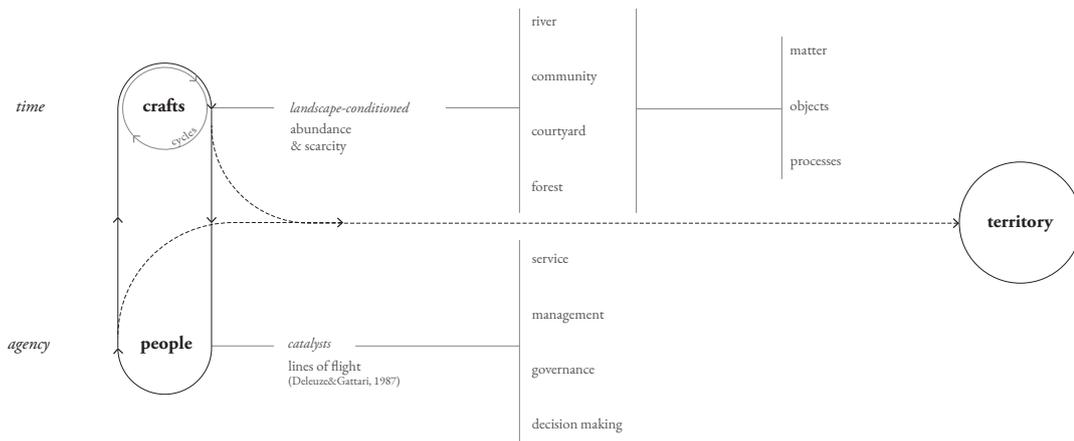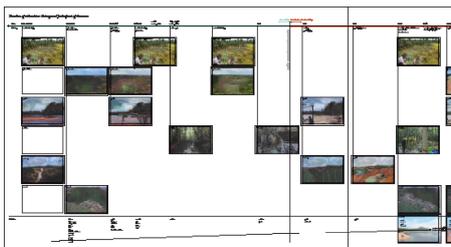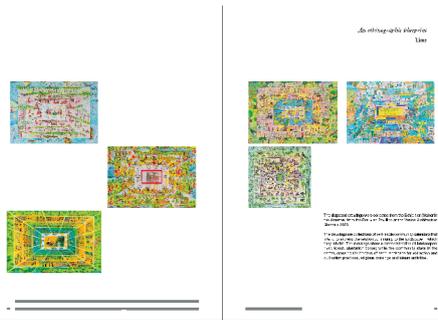
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GRADUATION TOPIC, STUDIO TOPIC, MASTER TRACK AND PROGRAME

The relationship between my graduation topic, studio focus, master track, and overall program is an important framework of this thesis, it intends to develop the topic of tourism under the umbrella of the Studio's research focus, while applying skills from the Urbanism track and integrating the overall set of knowledge from Architecture and the Built Environment. Arguably the topic of tourism is considered to be the realm of geography scholars, and for that, little research has been done to bridge this knowledge into the urbanism field. This thesis is an effort to bring the topic closer to the discipline; not only due to its clear proximity to the build world and and the construction of new places but also because of its ability to encourage a more informed practice that territorialises and advocates for a site sensitivity.

The research conducted for my thesis topic allowed me to thoroughly examine the geographical relationship between tourism and urbanism, demonstrating a fundamental link between the two.

The Transitional Territories Studio holds a cycle of three-year topic, that functions as an umbrella for the coming graduation projects. This year, the Studio launched its new cycle framing Altered Natures, analysing the material and agential connection of human intervention in/with Nature.

The topic explored in this thesis is closely linked to the studio's overarching theme of "Altered Nature". With a particular focus on the Alter do Chão extended territory - and its ecological, economic and transitional states - the project aligns with the Studio's perspective, which posits that viewing the Amazon as an altered nature is a rhetorical stance. Departing from the view of the Amazon as a cultivated garden shaped by pre-Columbian indigenous practices, the project advocates for this interpretation. It aims for a shift in paradigm and perspective towards a more symbiotic intertwining of our intervention in the world.

This thematic alignment facilitated an in-depth exploration of the territorialisation of the Amazon through infrastructure implementation, directly engaging urbanist skills and planning tools while maintaining a sensitivity to social and ecological issues.

Moreover, the project's extension into smaller-scale architectural practices reinforces the focus of the Master Program's emphasis on building technologies and technical solutions. This multi-scalar approach highlights the program's commitment to integrating technical proficiency with broader urbanistic and ecological considerations, highlighting the strong link between my academic pursuits and professional aspirations.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN METHOD AND APPROACH

The thesis draws back from the research framework developed at the Studio Transitional Territories and their methods of analysing, reading and representing the territory. Following an umbrella of domains, the exercises carried on the Studio, allowed me to theoretically frame my project, analysing its material and immaterial compositions, its multi-scalar approach and its evolution over time.

The method and framework conducted by the Studio, although extremely enriching, reached a conflict of ethical and theoretical production. Throughout my research exploration, as I acknowledge the issue that cartography poses in this context.

Cartography is seen not only as a means of colonisation but - through its absence - a means of resistance. The lack of accessible data (written or mapped knowledge), initially challenged me in producing informative material for analysis, a typical practice in our field. This challenge then became an acknowledgement that new ways of unveiling the site were needed without positioning it as a threat to the original communities. Exploring what lay beneath the radar of modern media (such as open source data, papers, books, internet articles, etc) became my main goal to bridge the gap caused by the lack of technical data. The thesis, therefore, took an individual method of exploration while maintaining a link to the research framework.

Finally, the projective approach aims to bridge my findings back into structurally organized Scales, Systems and Frameworks of action. Intentionally, the findings from the Research exploration are abstracted back into clear frameworks aligned with those conducted by the Studio, encompassing themes of territorialisation, infrastructural spaces, ecologies, landscape design, environmental degradation, climate crisis and geopolitics.
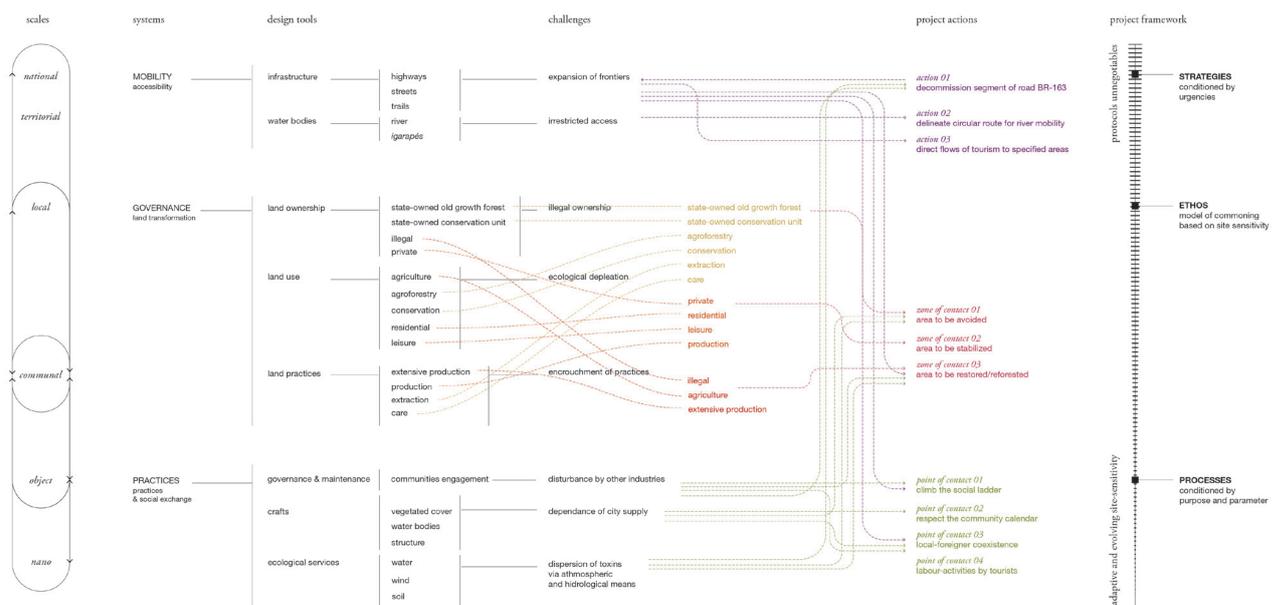
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GRADUATION PROJECT AND THE SOCIAL, PROFESSIONAL, SCIENTIFIC FRAMEWORK AND THE TRANSFERABILITY OF THE PROJECT RESULTS

SOCIAL - PROFESSIONAL - SCIENTIFIC

The relationship between my graduation project and the broader social, professional, and scientific framework highlights the critical role of urbanists as mediators in territories where tourism drives urbanization, advocating for more informed and sensitive design practices.

In particular, this thesis critically examines the efficacy of past and current strategies and policies, identifying gaps and proposing innovative approaches to protect spaces with valuable natural and cultural assets. On that, the research discloses numerous old master plans envisioned for the area, encouraging a reflexive and self-critical tone within the academic community about our practice. Moreover, it emphasizes a need for a site-sensitivity approach. All in all, it aims to contribute to the academic discourse by providing practical insights that can inform policy-making and professional practice.

During the research and production of analytical documentation, the research confronted ethical and moral issues with the cartographic media, which is the main documentation product of our field. In the case of the Amazon (one could also argue that it applies to other colonized and underdeveloped places), historic cartography served as the starting point for the recognition of resources and their extraction. Cartography in that sense, functioned as an imperialist tool for conquest. To address these concerns during the production of the research, new methods and means for illustrating, tracing, and mapping had to be developed. They aim to represent intangible matters that are often overlooked in traditional mapping techniques but also withdraw from the need for technical and precise pinpointing.

Regarding this, the thesis aims to broaden the methods available to urbanists and other professionals in the field, promoting a more nuanced reading of the landscape, that allows them to navigate conditions in which deep data is not available or, in this case, not needed. This was developed in the chapter of Topographies of Values, in which I extensively read the territory through imagetic, and discursive and used a parameter-based method to prove that empiric information could sufficiently, not to say better, inform my design. By abstracting it back to academic and formal structure, to bring this ethnographic and explorative knowledge into systems and scales tangible to the urbanist skills, I hope to broaden the methods of investigation and research in our field.
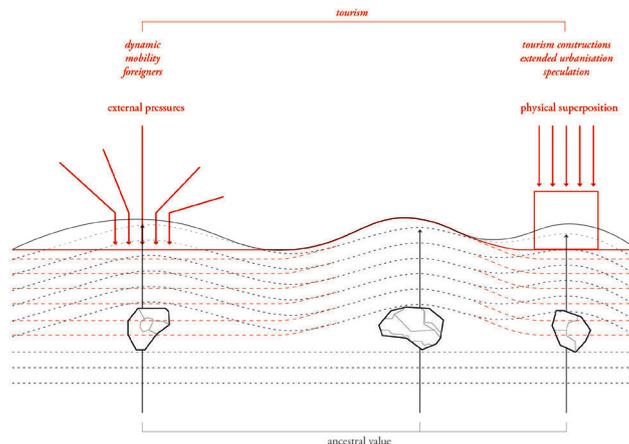
TRANSFERABILITY

While the topic of tourism is academically related to the concept of path-dependency (Martin, 2014), which suggests that tourism implementation is extremely singular and site-specific, the thesis draws on other scholars to support the idea that tourism also relates to common global domains.

Strong theories that back up the importance and need for transferability is the commonly discussed topic of cultural-ecological commodification and its environmental paradox (Williams and Ponsford, 2009), which in this thesis we address as the tourism paradox. It depicts how the commodification of the territory, the success and growth of the tourism economy lead to an exhaustion and decay of the territory, rather than its maintenance for the future.

In line with our global commitment to the preservation, conservation, and regeneration of the world's ecologies, this project exemplifies the commodification of tourism, unrestricted access to pristine areas and depletion of cultural-ecological assets. Although its project is set in the Amazon, this story can be told in numerous locations, each with varying background and intensity, but that sharing a common denominator.

Intuitively, it seems that the Global South and former colonies are affected differently due to an additional layer of exploitative, colonisation paradigms. However, touristic destinations in Europe, Eastern Europe, and North America also experience and relate to these issues. In these regions, a more robust political framework may allow for the establishment of policies, collective agreements, and regulatory measures, which is often not the case in the Global South.

By examining these patterns and their implications, this thesis aims to contribute to a broader understanding of the global dynamics of tourism and its impact on local ecologies and communities.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT

In conducting the research on the paradox of tourism in pristine several ethical considerations were observed. This research has a rhetoric-ethical tone in the background of Brazilian history, which is emphasized by the extensive colonialism period. Approaching the topic, already had a a premise, the careful consideration on the means of doing it and the intense outcomes from unfolding Brazilian Amazon's past.

Firstly, respect for local communities is paramount. The research focuses on the Alter do Chão region on the Amazon Frontier, an area with a significant indigenous presence and rich historical context. Engaging with local communities and shedding light on these actors is not only necessary but mandatory. It comes as an imperative to start putting these communities in the centre of the discussion, and not as a lateral participant in economy, society or development. This approach requires sensitive, careful consideration, in an effort of decolonising our most intrinsic ways of performing our career. Their values, autonomy, traditions, and knowledge systems were extremely relevant to this thesis, without which this design would not have been possible.

Secondly, as previously mentioned in this reflection, it is crucial to review the commonly practised research methodology. The Amazon region has a history marked by exploitation and colonization, often facilitated through tools like cartography. To prevent the continuation of these harmful dynamics, the research tested and advocates for alternative methods of mapping and representation that do not commodify or misrepresent the territory. Personally, I understand this methodology as a relevant outcome of this thesis, which is fully aligned with the empowerment of local communities.

Thirdly, it is only possible to emphasise the environmental sensitivity that must be addressed. Given the tone of the latest events in Brazil - as of May 2024 - Brazil is facing one of its most critical socio-environmental disasters in which the State of Rio Grande do Sul has 4000km-wide floods. The South region, as responsive natural hidrological system that responds to the Amazon atmospheric dynamics, suffers evidently from the deforestation of our main bodies of biodiversity: Cerrado and the Amazon Forest. Parallel to that, Congress approves Law flexibilization that reduces the conservation demands in the Amazon, repeating and continuing the cycle of a nationwide disaster and the construction of new infrastructural projects - Ferrogrão railway - to fulfil the agriculture sector. On that, environmental sensitivity is a critical ethical consideration given the ecological significance of the Amazon. The research prioritizes environmental preservation by critically examining the impact of tourism on local ecosystems and advocating for sustainable practices. Moreover, it questions our logic of preservation and aims to suggest an active tone on maintaining and caring for Nature. The study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how tourism can coexist with environmental conservation.


As cheias, as secas   Paulo Tavares   148

Em junho de 2013, enquanto o governo brasileiro corria para terminar a construção de caríssimos estádios e projetos urbanos para receber a Copa do Mundo de Futebol da FIFA de 2014 – evento que supostamente mostraria ao mundo a alardeada "emergência global" da maior economia da América do Sul –, uma multiplicidade de protestos populares inundou centenas de cidades por todo o país, convergindo em manifestações de massa como não se viam desde os movimentos pelas reformas democráticas que puseram fim aos vinte anos de ditadura militar, na década de 1980. As pessoas tomaram as ruas pedindo melhorias na saúde, na educação e nos serviços urbanos; as redes sociais foram povoadas pelas hashtags #nãovaitercopa e #semdireitossemcopa; e naqueles dias também surgiriam revoltas e ataques a prédios públicos, bancos e outros símbolos de poder político e econômico.
    Temendo uma escalada do caos social capaz de comprometer o evento, as forças de segurança impuseram uma reação rápida. No centro das cidades, a polícia militar conteve os manifestantes com gás lacrimogêneo, balas de borracha e prisões arbitrárias; nas periferias, onde os projetos da Copa do Mundo e das Olimpíadas de 2016 no Rio de Janeiro deixaram um legado de desapropriações generalizadas, empregaram os meios usuais de repressão contra os pobres, aterrorizando a população com toques de recolher, veículos blindados e execuções extrajudiciais.
    Embora tenham atraído muito menos atenção da grande imprensa, as Jornadas de Junho haviam sido pronunciadas por uma série de rebeliões em regiões remotas da fronteira amazônica, muito distantes dos principais centros urbanos e da opinião pública. No dia 15 de março de 2011, o canteiro de obras do Complexo Hidrelétrico do Rio Madeira se tornou o palco da maior sublevação de trabalhadores da história recente do

1. "Articulação Nacional dos Comitês Populares da Copa e Olimpíadas", in "Dossiê Megaeventos e violações dos direitos humanos no Brasil". Ancop, s.l., nov., 2014. Disponível em: comitepopulario.files. wordpress.com/2014/11/ancop_dossie2014_web.pdf. Acesso em: 6 abr. 2018.
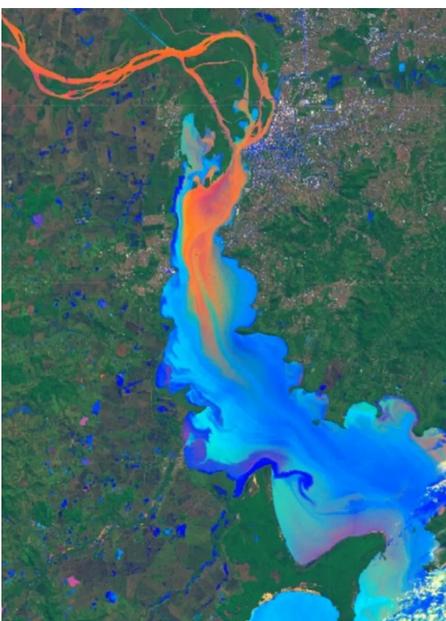
Fourthly, the research must be committed to cultural preservation. In the context of Amazon, it is impossible to detach culture from Nature as people can not be represented if not in relation to the occurrences of natural phenomena and seasonal dynamics. The commodification of culture and Nature through tourism can lead to its depletion, making it essential to safeguard the cultural heritage and practices of indigenous communities. This involves highlighting and supporting traditional knowledge and practices rather than allowing them to be diluted by tourism-driven commercial interests. The research seeks to document and promote cultural practices in a way that respects and preserves their authenticity.

Lastly, reflexivity is fundamental to the research process. The study must clearly articulate its goals, methodologies, and potential impacts. In the case of this thesis, reflexivity required a tone of self-criticism that pushed me to continuously reflect on my positionality, biases, and the potential consequences of my work. This helped me to ensure that the research is conducted ethically, although holding a critical tone.