

IMPACTS OF EUCALYPTUS MONOCULTURES ON INDIGENOUS AND
QUILOMBOLA WOMEN IN THE STATE OF ESPÍRITO SANTO

WOMEN AND EUCALYPTUS
Stories of Life and Resistance

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WORLD RAINFOREST MOVEMENT

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1. Introduction

These losses caused a very big impact, because they violently affect the lives of everyone, and especially the lives of us women, because we are the ones who — together with our partners, of course — but we are the ones who create life, and we are the ones who devote our time to talking with our children, talking about our history, and this is becoming lost.” (OLINDINA, Association of Black Women of São Mateus).

On 8 March 2006, International Women’s Day¹, before the break of dawn, 2,000 women from Via Campesina² occupied the Aracruz Celulose corporation’s tree nursery in the state of Rio Grande do Sul³, Brazil. Their faces hidden by purple scarves, the women waged a lightning attack, destroying thousands of eucalyptus seedlings. Their goal was to draw the Brazilian public’s attention to the impacts of monoculture eucalyptus and pine plantations on local populations and ecosystems. These monoculture operations are run by multinational agribusiness corporations. In their statements, the rural women protestors equated the green deserts of eucalyptus plantations with aridity and death, and highlighted the relationship between diversity and fertility, factors that make life possible, and monocultures and desertification, which represent death. “On International Women’s Day, 8 March 2006, Brazil witnessed — partly without understanding — a historic battle. The battle between fertility and aridity. [...] Between the harshness of unscrupulous profiteering and the tenderness of mothers.”⁴

¹ International Women’s Day, 8 March, is celebrated by women’s movements around the world. On 8 March 1857, women textile workers at a factory in New York went on strike to demand the shortening of the work day from 16 hours to 10 hours. For working 16 hours a day, these women earned less than one third of what men were paid. The striking women workers were locked into the factory and burned alive. Approximately 130 women died as a result. In 1910, at an international women’s conference held in Denmark, the decision was adopted to designate the date of 8 March as International Women’s Day.

² The women were members of the Movimento de Mulheres Camponesas (Peasant Women’s Movement, MMC) and the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais sem Terra (Landless Rural Workers Movement, MST). The MMC and MST are member organisations of Via Campesina, an international network of peasant movements (including small and medium-sized producers and landless peasants) from Latin America, Asia and Europe. In Brazil there are a number of Via Campesina regional forums and a national forum. For more information, see: <www.viacampesina.org>

³ The nursery is located on the Barba Negra estate in Barra do Ribeiro, Rio Grande do Sul.

⁴ Via Campesina (2006). *O latifúndio dos eucaliptos: informações básicas sobre as monoculturas de árvores e as indústrias de papel*. Porto Alegre: Via Campesina.

The political strategy of the women of Via Campesina was aimed at sensitising the Brazilian public to the serious effects of the continued spread of large-scale plantations of single species throughout Brazil. Aracruz Celulose — which is operating in the state of Espírito Santo with no respect for the principles of social and environmental justice — has been the target of repeated denunciations from social movements active in rural areas.

One year later, on 8 March 2007, the streets of the city of Vitória, the capital of Espírito Santo, were occupied by 1,500 women — rural and urban, white and black, indigenous women and *quilombolas* (descendants of runaway African slaves) — in an action organised by the Espírito Santo Women's Forum with strong support from the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) and other social movements and NGOs. On this International Women's Day, the women of Espírito Santo broke their silence, marching and shouting in unison for an end to violence, for the rights of indigenous and Quilombola peoples over their traditional territories, and for environmental justice.

Given the fact that the problems and challenges are many and shared by women in the countryside and the city alike, women from different backgrounds joined together to denounce the environmental destruction and poverty caused by Aracruz Celulose's agroindustrial operations and the spread of agribusiness across the lands of Espírito Santo and Brazil as a whole. Together they raised the banner of agrarian reform and food sovereignty.

That same day, São Mateus, a city in the north of Espírito Santo, was the setting of a remarkable action organised by Via Campesina: 700 people, mostly women, marched through the streets until they reached the highway that passes through the city, the BR 101. There they set up a roadblock to stop the trucks that carry eucalyptus trees to Aracruz Celulose's processing plant, located in the municipality of Aracruz. Most of the corporation's monoculture eucalyptus plantations are concentrated in the northern part of the state, in the municipalities of Conceição da Barra (where they now occupy close to 70% of the municipality's territory), São Mateus (close to 50%) and Aracruz (close to 50%).

The theme of the two actions staged in Espírito Santo was the same: fighting back against the spread of agribusiness and its most faithful representative in this state, the Aracruz Celulose corporation.

On the morning of 11 September 2007, close to a thousand members of the Rural Women's Movement (MMC) and Via Campesina staged yet another action against the "green desert", barring the gates of the eucalyptus nursery run by Votorantim Celulose e Papel in Capão do Leão, near the city of Pelotas in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. This action was a follow-up to the one staged on 8 March 2006: "The objective was to draw attention to eucalyptus monoculture in the state, the resulting environmental destruction, the government's lack of interest in peasant farmers and food production, and the need for agrarian reform."⁵

The next day, the protestors marched through the city of Pelotas. According to the women who led up the action, the impacts of monoculture plantations in Rio Grande do Sul are already visible: the serious drought in the south of the state, where eucalyptus production is most prevalent; the

⁵ Movimento de Mulheres Camponesas (2007). "MMC e Via Campesina trancam portões de viveiros de eucalipto em Capão do Leão". Available at: <http://www.mmcbrasil.com.br/noticias/110907_capaodoleao.html>

abrupt changes in temperature; the disappearance of the pampa or temperate grassland biome, leading to the loss of extraordinary biodiversity; the decrease in food production; the drying up of water sources; the pollution and reduced water level in rivers; and the reduced fertility of the soil. Some cities have had to begin rationing water to make up for the shortage. In the regions most affected by monoculture plantations, there have been numerous cases of allergies and skin ailments provoked by the heavy use of agrottoxics by the corporations involved.

These regions have also seen the growth of poverty and unemployment, which has given rise to increased violence and an exodus from rural areas. In terms of specific impacts on women, in areas where monoculture plantations are most prevalent, an increase in prostitution has been observed.

Many families move to other areas in search of employment. In the meantime, new workers come to the region, drawn by the companies' advertising campaigns and promises of job creation. This has led to the formation of groups of workers without families, often unemployed, which has spurred the emergence of brothels around agroindustrial operations.

“The MMC believes in and fights for another kind of development and rejects the capitalist and patriarchal model that dehumanises men and women and destroys all life on the planet in the name of profits.” (MMC BRASIL, 2007, p. 1).

Actions like those carried out by the women in Rio Grande do Sul and Espírito Santo highlight the fact that environmental degradation and privatisation of the land are also *women's problems*. They concern women because they significantly threaten their quality of life and the lives of their families.

The last three decades have seen the emergence of grassroots women's organisations and increasingly active participation by women on issues such as violence, health and the environment.

“Many non-feminist women legitimate their activities in pursuit of the common good by identifying themselves as mothers. In most contemporary cultures, that means they are responsible for preserving the health of their children, for which they depend on a safe environment. If that environment begins hurting their children,⁶ many of the women will act.”⁷

The worsening of environmental impacts on the daily lives of women and their political and organisational response have taken place on a global scale, indicating that they are also victims of the voracity of hegemonic globalisation in various areas around the planet.

⁶ This observation by Temma Kaplan also applies in the case of women who face domestic violence in Brazil. Studies reveal that many women only report the abuse and act to remove themselves from situations of violence when the physical safety of their children is endangered.

⁷ Kaplan, Temma (2001). “Uncommon Women and the Common Good: Women and Environmental Protest”. In: Rowbatham, Sheila and Linkogle, Stephanie (Eds.), *Women Resist Globalization: Mobilizing for Livelihood and Rights*. London: Zed Books, p. 29.

Temma Kaplan maintains⁸ that over recent decades, factors like development and globalisation have resulted in dramatic changes in the roles, status and welfare of women throughout the world. A combination of wars, economic depression, environmental degradation, health problems and development programmes have left the populations of the South in an ever more vulnerable position.

At the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, it was observed that 70% of the world's poor people were women in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In other words, women were clearly among the main victims of the hegemonic model of development in force at the time. The structural adjustment programmes and privatisation measures dictated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, particularly in the countries of the global South, had resulted in cuts in spending on health, education and social welfare.⁹ These negative impacts have a direct effect on the living conditions of the poor and of women especially. This situation is even further aggravated when local populations who depend on ecosystems for their survival are forced to fight for them tooth and nail against agribusiness, which almost always ends up as the big winner.

In the case of Latin America, the destruction of ecosystems caused by large agroindustrial operations in particular has resulted in drastic changes in the surrounding environment for indigenous, African-descendant and rural communities, who are the populations hardest hit by these impacts. This has given rise to a vast range of material and cultural losses. In the specific case of women, they have faced profound changes in the sexual division of labour and in the roles they play in the family and the community, which have even further exacerbated their subordinate status.

A significant number of women's organisations from the countries of the South participated in the 1995 Beijing Conference, voicing harsh criticism of the hegemonic development model and stressing the responsibility of the North as the leading agent of environmental destruction. The Platform For Action adopted in Beijing specifically notes that those most affected by environmental degradation and pollution "are rural and indigenous women, whose livelihood and daily subsistence depends directly on sustainable ecosystems."¹⁰

The Beijing Platform For Action calls on national governments to integrate women, their perspectives and their knowledge, "on an equal basis with men, in decision-making regarding sustainable resource management and the development of policies and programmes for sustainable development, including in particular those designed to address and prevent environmental degradation of the land."¹¹ It also calls for recognition of the role of women "in food gathering and

⁸ Ibid., p. 28-42.

⁹ The "minimal state" approach — as opposed to the concept of the welfare state — guides the actions of the IMF and the World Bank, and has led to the privatisation of services that are essential to the population, especially in the countries of the South.

¹⁰ Cited in Paredes Pique, Susel (2005). *Invisibles entre sus árboles*. Lima: Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristán.

¹¹ United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995. Available at: <<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/index.html>>

production, soil conservation, [...] sanitation, coastal zone and marine resource management, integrated pest management, land-use planning, forest conservation,” and other areas.¹²

The fact that the Beijing Conference did not explicitly analyse the concept of “sustainable development” gives rise to the need for greater vigilance on the part of women’s movements, given the way in which the agribusiness sector has appropriated the discourse of sustainable development to legitimise its presence in the countries of the South and justify its destructive exploitation of their natural resources. At the same time, there has been a significant joint effort among women throughout the world to urge national governments and international organisations to recognise and value women’s traditional knowledge and their practices in the preservation and restoration of the environment. This recognition would imply the political inclusion of women, as their activities would serve as a potential means of greater emancipation, instead of reinforcing their subordinate status.

Nevertheless, despite the collective efforts of women’s organisations and the populations who suffer its impacts, the hegemonic development project continues to advance with giant steps, effectively trampling the remaining ecosystems while, ironically, legitimising its destruction with the discourse of socioeconomic inclusion and sustainable development, as in the case addressed here.

¹² Ibid, 1995.

Development and birth control in Brazil

The neo-Malthusian approach to environmental problems, which began to take hold in the 1960s, directed the attention of the North to population growth in the countries of the South and chose *poor* women as the targets of its policies. In a number of Latin American countries, programmes to stem population growth were established. In Brazil, these efforts were carried out by the *Sociedade de Bem-Estar Familiar* (Family Welfare Society, BEMFAM), with funding from the United States. BEMFAM operated primarily in the least developed regions of Brazil, such as the Northeast.

It started in 1974, when the US government began to devote money and diplomatic pressure to promote sterilisation campaigns in Brazil after the release of a classified memorandum by US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. [...] Endorsed almost entirely by President Gerald Ford in 1975, the Kissinger Report defended abortion as a contraceptive method and highlighted women's paid employment outside the home as an incentive for "smaller family size." It pinpointed a number of countries "where there is special US political and strategic interest," including Brazil. This gave rise to the widespread practice of sterilisation by tubal ligation. The biggest merit of this measure was that it was permanent. To justify it, the Kissinger Report stresses that in poor countries, rapid population growth is one of the causes and a consequence of poverty.¹³

According to the National Household Survey carried out by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) in 1986, 29.3% of women living in a stable union between the ages of 15 and 54 had been sterilised. That same year, a BEMFAM study revealed that 84% of sterilisations had taken place between 1978 and 1986.

¹³ Lage, Nilson and Chernij, Carlos. J. (2003) "Filhos da pobreza", *IstoÉ*, 5 March 2003. Available at: <http://www.terra.com.br/istoe/1744/ciencia/1744_filhos_pobreza.htm>

2. The battle between hard profit and the defence of life: Aracruz celulose vs. Indigenous and Quilombola women

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate the impacts of eucalyptus monocultures on women in the light of the experience of Tupinikim and Guaraní indigenous women and Quilombola women in the northern region of the state of Espírito Santo, Brazil.

2.1 Background

Beginning in the early 1960s, the Brazilian government energetically embraced initiatives aimed at the modernisation of the country and promoted the entry of agroindustrial projects seeking abundant raw materials and cheap labour. It was at the height of the developmentalist discourse of the Brazilian military dictatorship that Aracruz Florestal S.A. arrived in Espírito Santo in 1967, establishing its operations in the northern region of the state on the lands of the Tupinikim and Guaraní indigenous peoples. “In 1975, the 40,000 hectares of indigenous territory had already been devastated and would soon be transfigured into a vast monoculture of eucalyptus by this pioneering large-scale agroforestry project in Brazil.”¹⁴

“My cousins... when Aracruz came it drove them away. It was like an invasion. When it came, they got scared and abandoned their land and went away. It came with lots of tractors and drove over their little houses. The little houses where they lived were made of straw and clay. That’s what happened to my cousins, who want to come back and live in the village again.” (MARIA LOUREIRO, Tupinikim village of Irajá)

From there, the process of invasion started to spread. Public lands in the northern part of the state were occupied, reaching Sapê do Norte in 1974. Sapê do Norte was home to a number of rural black communities that have now been recognised as the remnants of *quilombos*, settlements formed by escaped African slaves.

“Located in the municipalities of Conceição da Barra and São Mateus, in the northern region of Espírito Santo, the Quilombola territory known as Sapê do Norte does honour to its namesake, because the native plant called *sapê* serves as a vegetable metaphor for the historic resistance of rural black communities, from the struggle against the slave system to the long trajectory of measures aimed at their eradication from the region, culminating [...] with the installation of the eucalyptus monoculture agroindustrial project by the multinational

¹⁴ Associação dos Geógrafos Brasileiros (2004). *Relatório de impactos da apropriação dos recursos hídricos pela Aracruz Celulose nas terras indígenas Guaraní e Tupiniquim*. Vitória: AGB.

corporation Aracruz Celulose, encouraged by the public land regime, the government policy of tax incentives and state development bank investments, consolidating the action of a state as the creator of their invisibility.”¹⁵

Aracruz began pulp production with the construction of its first mill in 1978 on the land of the indigenous village Macacos. At the time, environmentalist Augusto Ruschi¹⁶ publicly voiced his concern, drawing a portrait of a vast green desert in the state of Espírito Santo. Since then, the company has opened three mills to produce pulp for export. It currently produces 2.3 million tons of pulp annually, most of which is exported to countries in the North and used to manufacture disposable paper products.

The arrival of this agroindustrial project was devastating for local populations: out of 40 indigenous villages, only seven remain today.¹⁷ With regard to the Quilombola population, out of roughly 100 communities¹⁸ that once existed in the northern region of Espírito Santo, made up of close to 10,000 families, there are approximately 1,200 families left, scattered among 32 to 37 communities¹⁹ completely surrounded by plantations of eucalyptus trees and of sugar cane used for alcohol production.²⁰ In addition to the loss of territory, these populations have also been

¹⁵ Ciccarone, Celeste (2006). “Territórios quilombolas no Espírito Santo: a experiência do Sapê do Norte”. In: Castanhede Filho, Andréa et al., *O incra e os desafios para a regularização dos territórios quilombolas: algumas experiências*. Brasília: MDA/INCRA, p. 117.

¹⁶ Considered the world’s leading authority on hummingbirds, Espírito Santo-based ecologist Augusto Ruschi devoted his life to the environmental struggle. He died in 1986 at the age of 70. Source: *Folha de São Paulo*, originally published 4 June 1986. Available at: <http://almanaque.folha.uol.com.br/cotidiano_041jun1986.htm>

¹⁷ According to the demographic census taken by FUNAI (the National Foundation for Indians) in 2004, there are currently 2,765 indigenous people living in the region, of whom 2,552 are Tupinikim and 213 are Guaraní. The indigenous population occupies 7,061 hectares of land, divided into seven villages: Caieiras Velhas, Irajá, Pau Brasil, Comboios, Boa Esperança, Três Palmeiras and Piraquê-Açu (a village created recently in order to prevent the company Tothan from establishing an algae processing plant on indigenous land). In the most recent victory achieved by the indigenous population, 10,966 hectares of land under the control of Aracruz Celulose S.A. were officially recognised as indigenous land by virtue of a federal government resolution. This brings the total area of indigenous land in Espírito Santo to 18,027 hectares.

¹⁸ One hundred is the number used by Quilombola leaders based on the testimony of the oldest inhabitants of these communities. However, it is difficult to precisely determine the number of Quilombola communities that existed in the past, though there were certainly countless communities scattered throughout the Sapê do Norte region.

¹⁹ The Quilombola communities are currently passing through a process of recognition by the Brazilian state.

²⁰ The rights of the Quilombola community of Linharinho to 9,542 hectares of land were recognised through a federal government resolution signed in May 2007. Nevertheless, there is apparently still a long way to go before the land is demarcated. As a means of exerting political pressure to promote the demarcation of their territory, in August 2007 the community occupied a parcel of land currently under the control of Aracruz Celulose S.A., in which there is evidence that the land was illegally appropriated. The occupation was supported by other social movements and allies, and lasted a total of 21 days. A camp was set up that included numerous shelters, a community kitchen, a well, and plantations of native plants and fruit trees that brought new life to the former landscape of eucalyptus monocultures.

faced with cultural and environmental losses in recent years, resulting in a high degree of social disorganisation and loss of identity. There are currently around 200,000 hectares of eucalyptus trees²¹ in Espírito Santo. Of this total, Aracruz Celulose S.A. claims that 128,000 hectares are on its *own lands*,²² while the rest is made up of either plantations owned by the company on land belonging to third parties, or plantations owned by other companies.

Because of the heavy competition on the international pulp market, in order to be competitive and maintain a foothold, Aracruz Celulose needs to keep growing and expanding its production capacity. In order to do so, it has invested significantly in buying land in a number of Brazilian states. It even bought out the tree plantations and pulp mill formerly owned by Riocell in Rio Grande do Sul. In 2005, through a joint venture with the Finnish-Swedish transnational Stora-Enso, it opened its fourth pulp mill, known as Veracel Celulose,²³ in the south of the state of Bahia.

MONOCULTURES in BRAZIL

In Brazil there are currently 5.3 million hectares of monoculture tree plantations, 21.6 million hectares of soybean plantations and 5.8 million hectares of sugar cane plantations (Oliveira, 2007). In the case of monoculture tree plantations, the Brazilian government, seeking to increase exports of pulp and timber, has set a goal of five million more hectares by the year 2010. Of this total, 600,000 hectares will be in Espírito Santo. In the case of sugar cane, with the goal of promoting ethanol production, the Brazilian government plans to devote another 6.3 million hectares to this crop. Its ultimate goal is to produce 728 million tons of sugar cane and 38 billion litres of alcohol.²⁴

²¹ The federal government's goal, as set out in the 2005 National Forestry Plan, was to expand the total area of tree plantations in Brazil from five million to seven million hectares by 2007. For its part, the government of the state of Espírito Santo launched a strategic plan for the sector in 2005, aimed at doubling the area covered by tree plantations in the state by 2010.

²² In its calculations of its "own" land, the company includes indigenous and Quilombola lands that it appropriated as "public" lands, from the 1960s onwards, illustrating the Brazilian government's total failure to recognise these ethnic territories.

²³ Stora-Enso and Aracruz Celulose each own 50% of the shares in Veracel Celulose.

²⁴ Amato, Fábio (2007). "Produção de álcool no Brasil," *Folha de São Paulo*, 18 March 2007.

Twelve workers died in 2005 and another five died in 2006 while harvesting sugar cane, due to working more than the human body can withstand.²⁵

In spite of all the historical and cultural evidence of the centuries-long presence of traditional peoples in the northern region of Espírito Santo, Aracruz Celulose has safeguarded its possession of the lands it occupies by denying the existence of Tupinikim villages and the remnants of Quilombola communities, refusing to acknowledge their identity. The company claims that the Tupinikim now living in the area are the result of a major migratory flow sparked by the installation of its first pulp mill in the municipality of Aracruz; in other words, they are supposedly workers and their families who came to the area in search of employment. With regard to the Quilombola communities, the company went so far as to prohibit the use of this term during negotiations for the harvesting of the eucalyptus trees — an alternative means of survival found by these populations to confront the losses imposed on them. “Today they say, ‘Oh, there are no more quilombos.’ How can they say there are no quilombos, when we’ve been here since before 1888?”²⁶

In the case of indigenous populations, the company’s most shameless move was to hire a technical team — whose identities were intelligently kept anonymous — to carry out a historical-anthropological study which purportedly proves that the Tupinikim people²⁷ never populated this region. A pamphlet entitled “*A questão indígena e a Aracruz*” (The Indigenous Issue and Aracruz), featuring excerpts from the study, was one of the cornerstones of the company’s advertising and public relations campaigns.

“What’s happening now is like this: people started saying there in the stores that the Indians weren’t Indians anymore, talking like we were thieves, as if wherever we went we caused trouble, that’s what they said in the stores, right? A lot of them started watching us, saying that the Indians could steal things from the supermarkets, to keep the Indians from stealing. And there was discrimination in the schools. The teachers said that we weren’t Indians and made comments, especially with my niece. For a time there was discrimination in the schools from one of the teachers. She would come home crying and her

²⁵ Oliveira, Ariovaldo Umbelino de. “A questão fundiária, entraves, desafios e perspectivas: A questão da propriedade da terra no Brasil”. Presentation at the Land Seminar organised by the Partido dos Trabalhadores and MST/ES, Vitória, 14 September 2007.

²⁶ Miúda, Quilombola leader from the community of Linharinho and member of the Quilombola Commission of Sapê do Norte. See: Oliveira, Osvaldo Martins de, et al. (2006). “Quilombo: autodefinição, memória e história.” In: Castanheda Filho, Andréa et al., *O Incra e os desafios para a regularização dos territórios quilombolas: algumas experiências*. Brasília: MDA/INCRA, p. 123.

²⁷ The Guaraní people arrived in the region in the mid-1960s in their search for the *Land Without Evil* or sacred land and settled in the Tupinikim territory.

parents had to go to talk with them. The discrimination is like that, lots of jokes, it's like that. The parents have to go there, they have no way of talking with older Indians and they take it out on our kids, in the schools.” (ÂNGELA, Tupinikim village of Irajá)

The social, cultural and environmental debt owed to the indigenous and Quilombola populations is enormous. But the indigenous and Quilombola communities have fought back. They have organised various initiatives to recover their lands. And it is not only those who have experienced the most direct impacts who have taken action. Sectors of civil society angered by the consequences of this massive project and the complicity of government agencies have joined together to form a permanent alliance of communities living near the big plantations and civil society organisations: the Alert Against the Green Desert Network,²⁸ in which the World Rainforest Movement (WRM) has been a major ally.

2.2 Stories of life and death: Women's accounts of the impacts they have experienced

The current realities faced by the African-Brazilians of the surviving Quilombola communities and the Tupinikim and Guaraní indigenous peoples in Espírito Santo have been shaped by the history of the colonisation of Brazil, when indigenous and black people were enslaved to serve the interests of European colonial capitalism. Throughout more than three centuries, indigenous and African people shared the drama of slavery and abuse in “Brazilian territory”.²⁹ Women were beaten and raped. Black women were used as breeders of slave labour and nursemaids. It is a history that these populations will not allow to be forgotten, one that historically relegated them to a subordinate status in the process of building Brazilian society.

But alongside the tragedy of the violence and genocide suffered by these peoples, the last six centuries have also witnessed a remarkable history of resistance. The greatest proof of this resistance is the continued presence of indigenous and Quilombola peoples in every region of Brazil.

²⁸ The Alert Against the Green Desert Network is an informal network comprising communities that are suffering the impacts of eucalyptus monocultures, social movements and allied groups. It was formed in 1999 for the purpose of halting the continued expansion of tree monocultures and supporting the resistance struggles of those who suffer their impacts. The network first began organising in the northern region of the state of Espírito Santo and the southernmost part of the state of Bahia, where altogether there are approximately 500,000 hectares of land under the control of eucalyptus plantation companies. Subsequently, Minas Gerais — the state with the largest area of plantations in Brazil, with approximately two million hectares — became part of the network in view of the imminent installation of Aracruz Celulose in the northern part of the state, as well as in Rio de Janeiro. Finally, Rio Grande do Sul also joined the network due to the expansion of eucalyptus and pine monocultures in the southern and western regions of the state.

²⁹ Before the arrival of the European colonisers, this entire territory was made up of numerous different indigenous territories.

With the addition of a few modern, developmentalist ingredients, the relationship between the traditional peoples of Espírito Santo and Aracruz Celulose S.A. is essentially a rewriting of colonial-era history. Some might call it a post-colonial relationship, in which forms of domination typical of the colonial period have been reworked and transported to the modern era. In any case, it has imposed irreparable material and symbolic losses on the indigenous and Quilombola communities.

Today, just as they did in the Brazilian colonial period, indigenous and Quilombola women share the same experiences of abuse and disrespect. They are being robbed of their traditional knowledge, they are fighting against the scattering of their families, they are losing their traditional spaces for socialisation: the rivers, the forests, the places where they carried out their prayer rituals and celebrations. Nevertheless, the nostalgia they feel for times past is channelled into their steadfast hopes of recovering their territory and restoring their peoples' way of life.

The following stories and observations are not meant to address all aspects related to the lives of women, nor do they consider them with the depth that they deserve. Their purpose is to reflect these women's own perceptions of their realities, and the ways they have dealt with the process taking place over the last 40 years. These are women who have been rendered invisible by history, whether intentionally or through disregard. Women who throughout the last four decades have been transformed into agents of resistance and who have been boundlessly committed to the struggle of their peoples. This publication is essentially a written attempt to appreciate the experience of women in the context of large-scale monoculture in Espírito Santo.

“And for us, the women, there was also a very heavy impact. We have this feeling, this feeling of having lost our wealth.” (Maria Loureiro, Tupinikim and Guaraní Indigenous Women's Commission, village of Irajá)

“[...] Then it destroyed a part of our life, of our freedom and our culture, our daily life, our health. When the big companies came here it destroyed everything, it tore out a piece of us, it's like a piece, like part of us is living and the other part is dead, like we were the living dead, you see? Because of the big companies, after they came in here. We were happy, but not now, now our lives are unhappy, we have to fight for what is ours, for our territories, for everything they took from us, and when they took it we lost everything, everything that was ours, and all that's left for us is to protest, right? For us, and for the whole community.” (Eni, Quilombola community of São Domingos)

2.2.1 The cornerstones of life: Territory, land and work

“And so we have continued to struggle, together with the other 36 communities, struggling for our territory, for the lands that were stolen from our people, from our ancestors, and are now in the hands of Aracruz Celulose. So the struggle that unites us today is the expansion of eucalyptus plantations in our communities.” (KÁTIA, Sapê do Norte Quilombola Commission, community of Divino Espírito Santo)

In Brazil, the indigenous and Quilombola populations have historically lived on large expanses of land with dense forests. These are populations who directly depend on the forest ecosystem for the survival of their way of life, and who establish a form of community organisation in which land is a collective good and not a commodity used to accumulate goods and wealth. These are peoples who reject the modern concept of the separation of the self from nature, and who see themselves as a part of nature. As such, any form of aggression against the natural world is experienced as an attack on themselves. They believe that the land and everything it contains should be used by current generations with a great sense of responsibility and preserved for coming generations. It is no coincidence that these populations succeeded in preserving a significant part of their surrounding ecosystems until the mid-20th century, when Aracruz Celulose S.A. came to Espírito Santo.

The concept of territory that guides the lives of these peoples is profoundly different from that of the hegemonic nation-state that seeks to impose uniform standards of land ownership and use, to the exclusion of other forms of territorial organisation. In Brazil, the rights of indigenous and Quilombola peoples to their traditional territories were not recognised until the Federal Constitution of 1988 (and in the case of Article 68, relative to the Quilombola people, the right is merely recognised, but not translated into any means of regulation). Nevertheless, up until now, this constitutional recognition has not protected these peoples from the relentless advance of big agribusiness, which demands ever more “natural resources” for its continued expansion.

Records and statements attest that up until the 1960s, the indigenous peoples possessed 40,000 hectares of land within the Atlantic Forest region, which was used by 40 villages, while the Quilombola people had large parcels of land divided among the 100 communities³⁰ existing at that time. These two populations practiced very similar forms³¹ of territorial organisation: their houses were built well spaced apart, so that everyone could have enough space for raising animals and farming. They lived off of hunting and fishing and were highly self-sufficient.

“We lived in a village that was called Cantagalo, a bit further up past Pau-Brasil. [...] We did all of the work, we planted and picked beans, we picked all those things. We only bought what we needed to buy. [...] We lived up there in that village, and everything that we wanted was in the forest. The forest was full of all the things that people would make: wooden bowls, sieves, *tapitis* (a utensil

³⁰ These are the numbers cited by indigenous and Quilombola leaders. Although it is difficult to precisely state the size of the area occupied by these populations and the number of indigenous villages and Quilombola communities in existence before the 1960s and 1970s, the oldest members of these communities, who still remember the events of the distant past, are the principle sources of information for reconstructing the history of these peoples.

³¹ These populations had always made a common use of the territory. Nevertheless, in the 1960s the state of Espírito Santo, that wanted these lands to be classified as fiscal area, compelled the inhabitants of the rural Quilombola communities to claim individually for their small plot before the State government and to file it at the Land Registry. Unclaimed lands were classified as fiscal lands and were subsequently made available to Aracruz.

used to make cassava flour). All of these things came from the forest, and they supported us, because we sold what we produced. And there were rivers then too, and forests, there was hunting, lots of hunting, there was a lot of fish in the rivers. And we lived off of those things. Our parents took care of us, when the forest still existed, but after Aracruz came, it started pushing everyone out and buying everything up for almost nothing. They gave people a little bit of money and the people were convinced that they had to sell. They started pushing everyone out and knocking down the houses to make the plantations. [...] That Aracruz destroyed everything, you see? It destroyed everything we had, it destroyed our forest, it destroyed our river, the fish, the hunting [...]" (ROSA, Tupinikim village of Pau-Brasil)

As Rosa recounts, from the mid-1960s onwards, people's lives changed dramatically. After losing their land, many families sought other regions to live in. According to figures from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), there are approximately 8,500 indigenous people living scattered throughout the state, outside of their own villages, which is four times as many as those still living in indigenous territories. In the case of the Quilombola population, many of the families forced out of Sapê do Norte are now living in Morro São Benedito, a neighbourhood in the municipality of Vitória. There are also records of urban quilombos established after the mid-1970s in other areas of the metropolitan region, such as the municipality of Serra.

The 1960s, 1970s and 1980s witnessed profound impacts on the environment in Espírito Santo. The Atlantic Forest, one of the most biologically diverse ecosystems on the planet, was largely replaced by a grimly uniform landscape: large-scale eucalyptus monocultures.

"Because in the past it was very good, right? And now we are living in a place... if you go from one place to another, all you see is polluted river water, because we also, and nature also, because nature is also very important for us, right? Nature is the forests, it's everything, it's the animals, the birds, it's everything, that's why we have to protect nature." (NILZA, Tupinikim village of Comboios)

The disappearance of the majority of indigenous villages and Quilombola communities led a part of these populations to group together in the small bits of territory remaining of the surviving villages. Others sought out nearby regions to start their lives over.

"But I would like it if we had the lands to have something better to offer to our grandchildren. To have our own land, to grow things, to raise animals, to have more space to live in... that would be good, right? Because living crowded together like this is very bad. Living farther apart is good for raising animals, for our grandchildren and for us too, to be more comfortable. Because it's sad to live all crowded together and to have no space for anything, for our children to live crowded together and to have to run after them to keep them from running out into the street. It's better for us in a place farther away. It's better to be more comfortable. With more land things will get much better. It will be much better, God willing." (ROSA, Tupinikim village of Irajá)

“At first it was like that, everyone had their own piece of land, but now it’s not possible. Now everything is collective work. Communal. Some people have a little piece of land near their houses, but everyone is squeezed together. Like she was saying there, I have my little plot of pineapples, but if I plant pineapples, I can’t plant cassava. So you have to grow one thing and then grow another after. Yes, on the same land. So you have to wait, right, to let the land rest, there’s that whole process, before you can plant different seeds there.” (CLÁUDIA, Tupinikim village of Pau-Brasil)

“A lot of people here want to live off of the land. There are a lot of people who are in a dead-end street, they don’t do anything. We are too crowded in here to be able to plant anything. I think there’s a way out. We have to teach our children, and our grandchildren, so that they don’t let our culture die. We have to rescue it. My dream is to have farmland again.” (MARIA LOUREIRO, Tupinikim village of Irajá)

The reduction of the large farms of the past significantly changed women’s domestic activities. Women used to take care of their houses and gardens, grow herbs for domestic use, and raise small animals, which were also a source of food. Their children had enough room to play. Céia (a resident of the village of Pau-Brasil and a pastor in the Assembly of God) recalls with a sigh:

“Those were such good times. We did a lot of things. We worked, but we didn’t have as many worries as today. Women had more tranquility, even about their own children. We were much happier then.”

It is obvious that for women, the village, the community, was a safe place where they could calmly think about the future:

“Oh, I think it changed a lot, because back then, Sapê do Norte, when I was born and grew up and walked around and saw what Sapê do Norte was like, back then it was different from now. You could go anywhere and start up a farm. You could start up a farm, clear the land... first all of the people would gather together, relatives, friends, everyone. And you could set up a farm there, anywhere, and there were so many people! And in the end you had a farm. And now there are none, everyone is crowded together, what can you plant in such a small bit of land? It’s all squeezed in, there’s no way, because everything is surrounded by eucalyptus trees. All those families live all crowded together in that little space. There’s just no way, right? To raise a chicken, for example, it’s not possible, you can’t raise a pig and let it run loose, because animals have to run loose, you see? There’s no way to do it. They planted a bit of everything on that land, and now they can’t. You can’t even go into the eucalyptus plantation to gather a few

branches to toast cassava flour in the oven, because it's all fenced off. And Visel [the private security company contracted by Aracruz Celulose] even kicks the police out. If you go in there, they're right behind you, asking what you're going to do. If you pick up a few branches, they're right there asking what they're for. So everything I see now is very different. There is nothing. Even the plants that they plant don't grow like they used to, because they put all that poison, all those things, in the ground, right? That's why things are so hard. For me, everything has changed, because I knew Sapê do Norte in my mother's day, when I was a little girl, we had so much land over there where the eucalyptus plantations are. Now I have children who can't make a house of their own, we have to live like this, in other people's houses, because everything is squeezed in by the eucalyptus, it took over everything. That's how we feel. Everything changed a lot, really a lot, between the Sapê do Norte I knew back then and what it's like now. That's my opinion." (BENEDITA, Quilombola community of São Domingos)

Benedita's account of everyone "getting together" to establish a farm refers to a traditional practice of the Quilombola population. People regularly gathered both to help each other and for celebrations. Quilombola women, together with the rest of the community, would choose a spot to establish a farm, and the planting would be carried out collectively. Today, the reality faced by this population is different. While they continue to work communally, it is now a result of the need to take the fullest possible advantage of the land for agricultural purposes, given the shortages imposed on them. In the case of indigenous populations, each village reserves a parcel of land for raising crops. The parcel is divided up among those who contribute their labour. It is very common for women who are heads of the household or who have husbands working outside the village to organise collective work up through the harvesting stage. There are also men who participate. There are a few individual farming initiatives as well, although these do not always achieve the results sought. In addition to the lack of space, another problem faced by these populations is the loss of the soil's natural fertility and the process of desertification, which result from intensive and improper use of the land, the planting of eucalyptus trees in short harvesting cycles and near springs, and the heavy use of agrochemicals.

"The situation there in Caieras is the same as the situation described by the sister from Pau-Brasil: years ago, many years ago, when I was still a little girl, I remember that we grew beans. The beans were different from the beans today, because no chemicals were used on the soil. It was really nice back then; the potatoes, the cassavas, were really different. And now, [...] in a spot where they already cut down some of the eucalyptus trees, Paulo [her husband] cleared a piece of land and planted a little garden. He planted cassava and it was really hard to even get the root to grow. The corn he planted also stayed really small, very different from what it was like before. Before, the land was good. Now, it's

been destroyed by the eucalyptus plantation. The river has no more water and the land is all dried out.” (BENILDA, resident of the Tupinikim village of Caieiras Velha and a member of APOINME)³²

“Because of the plantations, now you have to put fertiliser on everything. Before you didn’t need to fertilise the soil. Now, if you want to plant anything, you have to use fertiliser, because the soil is sandy. That’s because of the eucalyptus trees, because they took all of the vitamins out of the soil. [...] Before, when there were no eucalyptus trees... it seems as if the climate changed, inside the village. It changed because even the rain... these are the changes that the eucalyptus brought. The rivers used to have a strong current, and now there’s just a trickle of water left. How are we going to be able to plant? There are times when you have to be watering the garden all the time, because the soil is dry and cracked. The problem today is that to have healthy food you have to plant and spread manure. Otherwise you have to buy food in the store, or the market, but even that’s not healthy, because they’re not going to have time to be spreading manure on the soil to grow organic food, they don’t have the time. So I think that to get things back to the way they were before, we’re going to have to fight hard, and it’s not going to be the same as before, you know? But at least if we could get back even half, you know? And not for us, but to pass it on to our children, and our grandchildren.” (CLÁUDIA, Tupinikim and Guaraní Indigenous Women’s Commission, Tupinikim village of Pau-Brasil)

“When there were no eucalyptus trees, you could plant everything mixed together and it would grow. My father planted cassavas and he planted beans in the middle of them. By planting a litre of beans, he could grow 80 litres, and that was when they were growing next to the cassavas. After he picked the beans, the cassavas grew bigger. Today you can’t do that. If you plant cassavas on a little piece of land, you can only plant cassavas. If you plant beans, it can only be beans. If you mix them, one interferes with the other. The land doesn’t have the mineral salts and complete vitamins for growing everything together anymore. You can’t do it. A lot has changed. Now you can plant on a small bit of land and that’s it. And it doesn’t even provide enough to live on anymore.” (ENI, Quilombola community of São Domingos)

There are historical records from the 19th century that refer to the large-scale production of cassava flour in Sapê do Norte, initially carried out by slave labour on large estates. When slavery ended, Quilombola communities continued this practice, and were renowned as major producers

³² APOINME stands for Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Nordeste, Minas Gerais e Espírito Santo (Association of Indigenous Peoples of the Northeast, Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo).

of cassava flour and *beiju* (a traditional flatbread made from cassava flour), products that they still supply to nearby regions.

“I always tell about what my mother told me: that there used to be lots of hunting, lots of fish. Now the São Domingos river has no more water, and there are no more animals to hunt. Just armadillos and capybaras... The fish are gone forever, too. If you want fish, you have to buy it in the city, because it’s all gone. My kids don’t even know what it is. Before there were forests, there was a lot of *sapê* (a native grass) and the older people who had cattle could let them out to graze. That’s all gone. And that’s what’s happening. Things are getting worse every day. That company [Aracruz Celulose S.A.] destroyed all the things that used to be here. There used to be cassava, there used to be... I want to find the things that used to be here, but I don’t know what they are anymore. People planted gardens, and banana trees. Before they grew nice and big, now they die and don’t grow a single banana. There’s no more cassava here, it’s what my parents used the most. Beans, my father planted lots of them. Beans, squash... That’s what I have to say.” (DOMINGAS, Quilombola community of São Domingos)

“Oh, people used to tell stories and laugh, it was really fun. There was all that good water, everyone could go for a swim. On hot days the kids could go swimming as much as they wanted. It was great. On Thursdays everyone gathered together to grate cassava, they made *beiju* to take to the market, and *pamonha* (a kind of cake), and coconut *beiju*. It was lots of fun, everyone working together, helping each other, you know? It was really great. All that makes you really nostalgic...” (BENEDITA, Quilombola community of São Domingos)

“We quilombolas always produced things. My grandmother used to travel on the river by canoe to sell cassava flour in the port of São Mateus. She had production, she had coffee, she had cassava. That’s what we have to do so that our sons and daughters, our children, so that we have our own production.” (OLINDINA, Association of Black Women of São Mateus and Quilombola Commission of Sapê do Norte)

“Before [...] people lived better. You could breathe easier. We produced honey, we made *beiju*, we sweetened everything with honey, we made *fubá* (corn meal) cake. [Today] our main income here comes from the production of cassava flour and *beiju*,³³ but that income is starting to run out, because they don’t have

³³ An important Quilombola community initiative headed up by women is the Beiju Festival, an annual event that brings together the different communities in an effort to revive and strengthen traditional Quilombola culinary practices.

enough land to plant cassava. So we are struggling together with various people, various communities, all united. And the goal is for all of us to struggle to get that land.” (ELISÂNGELA, Quilombola community of São Domingos)

Faced with the reduction of their territory, many people had to leave the places where they lived to look for work. As a result, many women became domestic workers, babysitters, day labourers, and washerwomen, among other tasks. In most cases, they work for officials from Aracruz or its subcontractors.

“I worked for many years in a house in Coqueiral. The husband of the woman I worked for was an official at Aracruz Celulose. I walked from the village to their house to work, rain or shine. I had small children and no one to leave them with. My eight-year-old daughter had to take care of the smallest ones. But I had to work, because I needed to feed my children. [...] I practically raised those people’s children. I couldn’t take good care of my own children, but I took care of theirs. Now they are grown up, but even today, when I run into them on the street, they call me mama, even though I haven’t seen them for a long time.” (MARGARIDA, indigenous name Ipotyrobó, Tupinikim village of Caieiras Velha)

“Indigenous women face more difficulties today, because in the past there was an abundance of everything. Indigenous women stayed home with their children and they grew a lot of different crops and devoted themselves to picking leaves, while their husbands were doing other things. There was an abundance of everything. Today, besides the fact that they don’t have a lot of crops, there’s a lot of unemployment. Today, to have a little bit extra, people are trying to support each other in groups, with different projects and things to make it a little bit easier to deal with the difficulties. Because in the past, indigenous women didn’t have to work as maids. Now they have to look for work to help support the household.” (ALEIDA, indigenous name Anama, indigenous educator, Tupinikim village of Irajá)

“Before, we only worked inside the village, in the fields, with our children. You would go out to the fields and take your children with you, to plant cassava, and corn... that’s the way it was. You would take a big piece of cloth to make a net, and you would leave your children there while you weeded and planted the crops. Now the company has brought an end to all of that. Today most women have to go and work in other people’s houses, poor things. A lot of young girls have gone to look for work in Coqueiral.³⁴ Before they didn’t need to, because there was work

³⁴ Coqueiral is a neighbourhood of the municipality of Aracruz, created by the company to house his employees.

for Indians. Just a few days ago, my niece was saying, “This is all the company’s fault.” [...] Aracruz doesn’t give people work, but there are some people who work for their subcontractors, but very few women. [...] The company hires people from outside, it doesn’t hire Indians. There are some women working outside, but just a few, and some are also domestic workers. Domestic workers earn minimum wage or even less.” (MARIALOUREIRO, Tupinikim and Guaraní Indigenous Women’s Commission, Tupinikim village of Irajá)

According to Maria Loureiro from the village of Irajá, in 2006 there were only around ten women from the village employed as domestic workers “because they don’t hire Indians anymore because of the demarcation [of indigenous territory].” Indigenous women looking for employment come up against racial discrimination.

“Maria, who lives in Caieiras, was complaining yesterday at FUNAI that she is having a difficult time because nobody wants to give her a job. And on top of that, they tell the Indians, ‘You don’t need to work.’” (TURETA, local representative of FUNAI, 2006)

Indigenous women now have the benefit of part-time preschool services in the villages where they live, which has made their lives somewhat easier. Nevertheless, this measure does not fully solve the problem of their absence from the home.

“Nowadays children here aged four and up are in preschool until 11:20. When school is over they stay with their fathers or with a neighbour. And when there are older children, aged 12 or 13, they go to school in the morning and then look after the smaller children when they get home. Very often children stay with a neighbour or with relatives. There is no daycare centre here, only the preschool which is for children between the ages of four and six. It makes things difficult for some women.” (ALEIDA, indigenous name Anama, indigenous educator, Tupinikim village of Irajá)

The fact that women are forced to be separated from their children at an earlier stage in order to work outside the villages interferes with the process of breastfeeding, which is usually continued for a much longer period. Cláudia recounts:

“Six months is enough, that’s what the doctors say, right? But we used to breastfeed our children until they were two or even three years old! Now, even if you wanted to, you have to work.”

And she adds:

“The problem is that you have to go out and work. That one right there, she nurses when I get home from work.”

Benedita laments:

“But most women stop breastfeeding their children when they’re small, when they’re still such weak little creatures, you know?”

There are some indigenous women who have formal jobs: they work in the schools and polyclinics in the villages, and are viewed by the community as people in a privileged position, since they have a guaranteed monthly income, unlike most of the local population. According to information provided by the women themselves, there are around 12 indigenous women working in the Aracruz Celulose nursery. The company tends to hire women for the work of raising seedlings, because it requires a delicate touch, patience and care, and is thus considered typical “women’s work”. A few are also employed by subcontracting firms, usually for tasks similar to those involved in domestic work, such as cooking and cleaning.

Before the cancellation of the agreement signed³⁵ in 1998 between Aracruz Celulose and the indigenous communities, Aracruz offered hairdressing, manicure and cosmetology courses for women, waiter/waitress courses for men and women, and mechanics and carpentry courses exclusively for men.

“That was an agreement between Aracruz and SENAC³⁶ to offer courses there in the village. The make-up course for women was taught by Jetibá’s wife [Jetibá was the company’s advisor for indigenous affairs].” (TURETA, local FUNAI representative, 2006)

Given the high rate of unemployment in the indigenous villages, Aracruz’s strategy was to offer them professional training courses as a means of making a good impression. It did not want to be known as the company that tore apart and impoverished these communities, especially since they live so close to its plant. Such a reputation would tarnish the company’s image. The courses were used in its advertising and public relations campaigns. The goal was to transform *idle* hunters, farmers, herbalists and craftspeople into *civilised workers* integrated into the modern system of labour relations, and thus cut off from the land and nature for their means of survival. Nevertheless, even those who took the courses remained unemployed.

³⁵ The agreement was signed as a response to the second self-demarcation process initiated by the indigenous communities in 1998. The strategy adopted by Aracruz — in conjunction with the office of the Presidency of the Republic (under then-president Fernando Henrique Cardoso), the National Foundation for Indians (FUNAI) and the Federal Police — was to isolate the leaders of the indigenous movement in Brasília, forcing them into a 20-year agreement that was highly advantageous for the company. The agreement stipulated that the indigenous communities would not challenge the Brazilian government’s unconstitutional decision to transfer indigenous lands to Aracruz. In return, the company would provide funding for projects in the indigenous villages for 20 years. Through the agreement, the company was able to successfully undermine the self-demarcation initiative.

³⁶ SENAC: Serviço Nacional de Aprendizagem Comercial (National Commercial Training Service), a private institution.



Severina, a Guarani leader, with her children.



Quilombola woman and her daughter.



Women at the occupation of Linharinho.



Francisca and her mother, village of Irajá.



Women fighting for their rights.



Sara, Quilombola child.



Céia, indigenous woman from Pau-Brasil, coordinating the opening ceremony.



Deusdéia, indigenous name Yara-Tupã, Tupinikim Indigenous Women's Commission, Pau-Brasil.



Marilza and Margarida, Guaraní women from the village of Piraquê-Açu.



Bedita, Quilombola community of São Domingos.



Ana Lúcia from the Association of United Women of Cariacica Seeking Liberation (AMUCABULI).



Marinete, village of Comboios, and Aleida, village of Irajá.



Rosa, 77, Tupinikim village of Pau-Brasil.



Quilombola woman and her son at the occupation of Linharinho.



Quilombola woman preparing lunch.



Indigenous women and other supporters at rally in solidarity with the occupation of Linharinho.



Zumira lives in Caieiras Velha and is a member of the Congo band of Caieiras. She is 92 years old.



March 8, women fighting for their rights (2007).



Quilombola woman from the community of São Domingos who prepared food for the meeting.



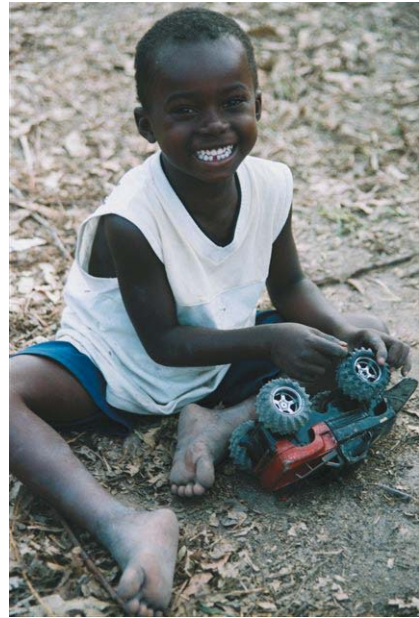
Meeting between the Indigenous Women's Commission and a group of Quilombola women, held in the Quilombola community of São Domingos. It was at this meeting that the women were interviewed on 4 August 2007.



Geiza, from the MST.



Aleida, indigenous leader, speaking at the rally in solidarity with the occupation of Linharinho.



Quilombola child playing during the occupation of Linharinho.



Joana, a Guaraní woman, with her grandson.



Preparing food.



Edna, Espírito Santo Women's Forum, and Marcilene, village of Caieiras Velha.

“So the women have to take the courses, but they also have to seek continuity, and develop projects [that contribute to reviving their culture] and to be self-supporting. [...] Because if they have to leave the village to work it will cause problems in the community. If they learn and practice something inside the community, there’s no problem. For example, the waitressing courses — if a married woman takes a waitressing course to work outside the community... Sometimes there are couples who come to an agreement, but if they don’t come to an agreement, it will cause problems for the family. There will be problems between wives and husbands.” (ALEIDA, indigenous name Anama, indigenous educator, Tupinikim village of Irajá)

Another ingredient that makes the indigenous reality even more complex is related to the concept of work brought to the villages by non-indigenous people. Women from urban backgrounds marry indigenous men and believe that the best form of employment is a job that guarantees their husbands a monthly salary, and preferably with a formal contract. In a world plagued with uncertainties, such employment provides both these women and their children with a greater measure of economic stability. But situations like these contribute to further altering the indigenous way of life.

While there have been impacts that specifically affect women, there are also others that affect the lives of men. Indigenous and Quilombola men who once farmed, hunted or fished are now either unemployed or used as fodder for the large pools of cheap labour. The raw materials used by men, such as bulrushes, reeds and certain kinds of wood for making bowls, sieves and *tapitis*, have disappeared. These changes and losses have drastically altered men’s role in the community and family. The hunter was once a symbol of courage and strength in indigenous cultures, a man who guaranteed his family’s survival. Now the hunters have been stripped of their place in society and thrown into a void.

“The Guaraní have always been hunters. Boys have to learn how to hunt, and so they go with their fathers when they go out hunting. Except now when they go out to hunt and roam all night long, all night long, and don’t find anything to hunt, nothing, nothing... That is very sad for a Guaraní. Sometimes they find a paca (a type of large rodent) or a possum, but that’s very little. And so they go out at night but come back the next day without anything to show their family. There have been times when we’ve gone out and the guards from the company (Aracruz) detain us. They say we’re hunting on property that belongs to them. I don’t know why they put up those signs, “Hunting wild animals is prohibited.” I don’t know why. In the middle of all that eucalyptus there’s nothing. No animals live in the middle of all that eucalyptus, not even birds, just ants and termites live in the middle of the eucalyptus.” (TONINHO, indigenous name Werá Kwaray,

Guaraní Cacique [Chief], in a statement presented at a public hearing of the Legislative Assembly Environmental Committee, 2002)

The loss of hunting has brought an end to a traditional rite of passage practiced for centuries by these populations: a process that prepares indigenous boys for adult life. Among the Guaraní and Tupinikim people, the absence of this ritual creates a void in the process of the construction of male identity. If they cannot hunt, what can men do? Thus men's role in the community and the family has become profoundly weakened, verging on obsolete:

“We [indigenous women] are facing major difficulties, including difficulties in finding work. Men have also been left without their work. Now they go out into the forest and they come home worried because they can't find anything to do, you know?” (MARLI, indigenous educator, Tupinikim village of Irajá)

“My mother says that when my late father went out hunting, he killed all different kinds of animals. [...] My father, before he died, would go out hunting and come home with all different kinds of animals. Sometimes, she even had to throw meat away because it had gone bad, because there were no refrigerators in those days. You had to salt the meat so it wouldn't go bad. But not today. Sometimes, you know, the impact that I think, that women feel, is... for example, my husband, right? Women's husbands go out to hunt, but they don't hunt anything, and that makes you sad, you know?” (KÁTIA, Tupinikim village of Irajá)

“They go out hunting and sometimes they don't hunt anything. They go out hunting, but they don't find anything. Sometimes, they go out the first day, the second day, the third day, until they finally bring back some little thing. It's interesting that, when they get back, they divide up whatever it might be for all the families. But there are times when they go out and don't get anything, you know?” (KÁTIA, Tupinikim village of Irajá)

“Because today, if you observe inside our community, the women work more than the men, because the men don't have any work to do. The men don't have work. For example, fishing... all the families here used to live off of fishing, and now, there are only a few families who go to the sea to fish, because of the impacts. There are no longer lots of shellfish, like there used to be. Except in our family, we didn't lose that tradition. My husband fishes, and her husband, who is my brother-in-law, he fishes, right? Because, although there has been this impact of the forests being destroyed and a lot of the rivers have dried up, if you don't make the effort, our culture will be lost little by little. Fishing, crafts, hunting, the little that we have, we can't lose it, because it's our culture. Even if you have another job, you have to stand firm and resist in order to survive. And for us women, the impact was very heavy too. (ALEIDA, indigenous name Anama, indigenous educator, Tupinikim village of Irajá)

“But now, when they go out to hunt, they don’t find anything, and when they get home, you can see the sadness in them. Sometimes, the kids... sometimes their father goes out hunting, thinking he’s going to bring something home. He comes back but he doesn’t bring anything. And the whole family feels worried.” (MARLI, indigenous educator, Tupinikim village of Irajá)

“If the hunters went out to hunt right in the village, they would get put in jail! Because they can’t hunt anymore right in the village itself! Is it their fault? No! It’s the people from outside. Today, if you want to eat wild meat, you have to do it in secret, otherwise IBAMA³⁷ will come and put you in jail. A lot of people from outside go hunting, and they take away what they have hunted, but they just do it for fun, right? But now if you want to kill a wild animal out there, to eat it, to remember the old times, you can’t. Because we used to live off of hunting, and fishing!” (CLÁUDIA, Tupinikim and Guaraní Indigenous Women’s Commission, Tupinikim village of Pau-Brasil)

“And also, if you go out hunting, you don’t find anything. IBAMA, you know? Chasing people down. And turtles too, we used to live off of turtles, the elders killed turtles and ate them, they ate the eggs, and now, if you kill a turtle, you’re bound to end up in jail. And so we’re... how can Indian culture survive like that?” (NILZA, Tupinikim and Guaraní Indigenous Women’s Commission, Tupinikim village of Comboios)

“When I was a little girl, over there in the village, we used to live over there in the village. My father hunted a lot, and there was a lot of hunting there, in Pau-Brasil, in those forests. Now the forests aren’t there anymore, and instead of the forests there are eucalyptus trees.” (CÉLIA, Tupinikim village of Pau-Brasil)

Older indigenous women observe changes in masculine behaviour, especially since the 1970s. The first change is related to the fact that men frequently leave the villages and seek out relationships with non-indigenous women. This type of behaviour destabilises families and makes women more susceptible to contracting sexually transmitted diseases.

“I believe it’s true. Now they go out hunting other prey outside [a reference to possible relations with other, non-indigenous women]. Sometimes, instead of being hunters, they become the prey (laughter). Like my father-in-law, right? Like my husband was saying, my father-in-law... he left the village very little,

³⁷ IBAMA: Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e dos Recursos Naturais Renováveis (Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources), an agency overseen by the Ministry of the Environment.

only to buy oil, or rice. Everything else they produced here, like cassava flour, beans, hunting, they had chickens in the yard. But they very rarely went out. Today, you see that the majority of Indians have to work. To support the village, they have to go outside the village, and it's hard to get work outside the village. (MARIA HELENA,³⁸ Tupinikim village of Pau-Brasil)

The second change is related to the increase in alcohol consumption by the men in the villages. There are also women who drink, but in much smaller numbers. Today, alcoholism in the villages is a fact, and it is a fact that also has an impact on women, who must deal with the effects of alcohol abuse on their husbands and sons.

“There are a lot of people who drink here in the village. Sometimes, men stop taking care of their children, of their families, and spend all of their time drunk.”

The same woman added:

“It's already a disease, because, for example, it's just not because of our difficulties and losing... The loss is, what are you going to do when you're drinking all the time? Because I say, if you spend all your time drinking and drinking, you're not going to solve any problems, you're going to make our problems in the community worse.” (ALEIDA, indigenous name Anama, indigenous education, Tupinikim village of Irajá)

Women point to alcoholism as one of the factors that have contributed to the increase in domestic violence, an issue that is still treated as somewhat of a taboo.

“I suffered abuse by my husband. Twelve years ago... by my first husband, because he was an alcoholic. He used to beat me, until I finally had to go to the police. My daughter was three years old at the time, and because he was a very violent person, he hit her. That's when I went to the police. But that's when I made the decision myself, because I saw that the police weren't going to resolve my situation. That's when I made the decision to break up with him. I kicked him out.” (DEUSDÉIA, indigenous name Yara-Tupã, Tupinikim and Guaraní Indigenous Women's Commission, Tupinikim village of Pau-Brasil)

³⁸ Maria Helena is not indigenous; she is married to a Tupinikim man and lives in the village of Pau-Brasil.

“My husband drank a lot, until one day he tried to hit me and I hit him in the face with the lid of the pressure cooker and kicked him out. He said he didn’t want me anymore because I was an Indian.”³⁹ (MARGARIDA, indigenous name Ipotyrobý, Tupinikim and Guaraní Indigenous Women’s Commission, Tupinikim village of Caieiras Velha)

Today it can be observed, particularly since the murder of two indigenous women — one Tupinikim and one Guaraní — that indigenous women’s groups in the villages want to break the taboo and discuss the issue of violence against women, to help find ways to confront the problem. They have also been encouraged by the recent adoption of the Maria da Penha Law⁴⁰ on domestic violence in Brazil.

Child prostitution and monocultures

According to the Public Prosecutor’s Office for Minors in Espírito Santo, it is in the extreme northern region of the state, where the Quilombola communities live, that the highest rates of child prostitution are recorded. The factors that contribute most to this problem are poverty (particularly as a result of monocultures of eucalyptus and sugar cane) and the seasonal work of cane cutters, who come from long distances away and stay in this region for only short periods. The situation is even further aggravated by the fact that the BR 101 highway cuts through the area. There are an ever growing number of reports of teenage mothers and women infected with HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

“In our region, that [prostitution] is what has grown the most. The sugar companies bring people here from other regions. There’s a company here called *Saionara*.

³⁹ Margarida’s ex-husband was not indigenous.

⁴⁰ Federal Law N° 11.340/07, better known as the Maria da Penha Law, was adopted in compliance with the Convention of Belém do Pará (the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women). The law classifies domestic violence and violence against women as human rights violations and changes the Penal Code by significantly lengthening jail sentences for perpetrators and eliminating “pecuniary penalties” (small fines formerly used to punish perpetrators). It also provides for unprecedented protective measures for women whose lives are at risk, such as removing perpetrators from the home and prohibiting them from approaching the women and their children.

We even had a meeting in Conceição da Barra with the mayor, around three people from *Saionara* and around ten people from the communities. We talked about this there, because they're the ones who bring people here. And once they're here, they don't care about health, the police... there's no security. That's what's causing the biggest problem in the region, because too many minors are becoming involved. In Conceição da Barra we told them that it's gone too far." (MARIA GORETI, Quilombola community of São Domingos)

The shortages imposed on the communities have forced men who used to be hunters to depend on "odd jobs" or seek work in construction, among other fields. Among the Quilombola population, unemployment is extremely high, and many families who used to engage in agricultural or extractive activities are now forced to make a living by collecting eucalyptus wood scraps to sell as firewood.

"And now things have got very bad. Where is there work now? Disa⁴¹ still hires the odd person to work now and then, and Plantar gives work to a few people, but unemployment is everywhere. Most people are out of work. Now, when they come to give us those bits of waste from the eucalyptus, looking down on us, you know? Nobody wants it. And they bring it when they feel like it. But it's just a pastime, because what we want is our lands back." (BENEDITA, Quilombola community of São Domingos)

One of the characteristics of Aracruz is that it avoids hiring local workers from the communities near its operations. A number of indigenous women talked about the situations they have faced in their villages:

"I wanted to talk about what goes on over there in the village of Caieiras. When the people there, the young people, find out that a company has work to offer, they go there, except they don't like to show their indigenous identification. A lot of them go and get white identification for this. And they say that they don't live in the village. Someone went there who only had indigenous identification, because he didn't have any other documents, and they told him, 'I'm not going to hire you, because you're an Indian.' And he said, 'I'm an Indian but I don't

⁴¹ Disa (Destilaria Itaúnas S.A.) is a company that produces alcohol and operates large sugar cane plantations, while Plantar is a company subcontracted by Aracruz to take care of its eucalyptus plantations.

live in the village, I'm against the fight for the land.' And so they gave him a job, but the company sent someone to investigate. He went to the city of Aracruz, for a few days, to the house of some relatives there, but later he came back to the village, and he got fired from his job." (BENILDA, indigenous women's representative in APOINME, Tupinikim village of Caieiras Velha)

"They don't give work to the men or the women. If there's anyone working there now, it's because they started working there before the demarcation,⁴² they've been there for about ten years. But after the demarcation it became difficult to find work. That's exactly what they say: that because of the demarcation, we don't need to work, because we have our own resources. This is a lie, because it's still being studied, it hasn't been completely resolved. That's when things became difficult, no employment, no jobs." (ALEIDA, indigenous name Anama, indigenous educator, Tupinikim village of Irajá)

"Now there isn't even any work to be found, you know? Everyone is out of work, having a hard time. Why is everyone out of work? They go out to look for a job, but nobody will give them a job because people don't understand our situation. They don't like Indians and they say it right to our faces. They think that Aracruz helps the Indians a lot. Aracruz says that it helped us. How did it help us? All it did was destroy the forests." (MARIA, Tupinikim village of Caieiras Velha)

"To get a job, this happens to the quilombolas too, for quilombolas to be able to take a course, they have to deny that they're quilombolas." (OLINDINA, Association of Black Women of São Mateus and Quilombola Commission of Sapê do Norte).

One of the most significant impacts of the lack of employment is the shortage of food. Women, who have the responsibility of ensuring that their families are fed, face the challenge of dealing with the shortages on a daily basis.

"Can you imagine what it's like for a mother who tries to find some little thing to give to her children but she doesn't have anything? A bit of coffee, or milk, but she has nothing? No bread, no food. Because children have no idea where the food comes from or how it comes. And so mothers worry even more. Mothers know whenever something runs out in the house. Fathers, for example, if they

⁴² Aleida is referring to the self-demarcation initiatives undertaken by the indigenous populations to recover their territory. These initiatives have been undertaken three times, the first in 1981, the second in 1998, and the most recent in 2005.

have jobs, they leave the house in the morning, take a packed lunch to work, and don't get home until the evening. Mothers have all the responsibility. And so mothers constantly worry about their families, and have to go out and look for something to bring back to the house. Because mothers are there every day.” (ALEIDA, indigenous name Anama, indigenous educator, Tupinikim village of Irajá)

“It's sad when a mother arrives home and her small children say, ‘Mama, give me something to eat’ and she doesn't have anything to give them. It's really sad!” (MARLI, indigenous educator, Tupinikim village of Irajá)

In the past, these populations used a barter system⁴³ in which money was rarely involved. Today money is crucial to ensure survival.

“There used to be a lot of everything. Everyone raised pigs and things like that. But there were days when there was nothing, right? And sometimes a neighbour... because everyone walked everywhere in those days, you know? So sometimes people would go to Barra to buy fish and then bring back a little fish for everyone. Or they would take bananas, or make polenta or beiju and go to the beach to trade it for fish. The fishermen would get back to shore hungry... they would give people the fish and the people would give them some food and bring the fish back here. Sometimes they would take food to trade for fish and they would eat the food on the way because they were hungry (laughter).” (GLÓRIA, Tupinikim village of Pau-Brasil).

“In terms of agriculture, today everything has to be bought. Before, like Glória was saying, before you could get enough by bartering. It was difficult, but it was good. Today, you need money for everything, you can't take a step in Barra do Sahy if you don't have money. Today there is very little bartering. Some people still trade the odd thing, but much less than before.” (DEUSDÉIA, indigenous name Yara-Tupã, Tupinikim village of Pau-Brasil)

“[...] We had everything we needed to feed our children. [...] I am the mother of thirteen children. My kids grew up eating fish and wild meat. [...] Now I have grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and they have to buy everything, you know? And before, we didn't buy anything, except rice, or oil. We hardly bought anything. We raised our own pigs. The things we planted on our land were used to feed our pigs, our chickens. We raised lots of chickens, and our children grew up in the midst of abundance, but from there, from that land. But after Aracruz

⁴³ Even today there is no word meaning “sell” in the Guaraní language.

came, it destroyed everything. [...] And everything came to an end, Aracruz Celulose destroyed everything we had. Now we live like this, everything has to be bought, we work to buy everything, it's not like it was before." (ROSA, Tupinikim village of Pau-Brasil)

In the face of all these losses, crafts have emerged as a potential solution for dealing with the resulting shortages. Groups of women artisans seek to combine the cultural function of indigenous crafts with the generation of income. However, the loss of the forests has greatly limited the availability of the raw materials used to produce these traditional crafts.

"Then our crafts would have more value! [...] There's *urucum*, there's *jenipapo*... it's used more for body painting, but also, red clay, sugar cane leaves, the leaves of the *pé de araçá* [...] They're all natural dyes. Even São Caetano melons... they had a natural dye. [...] It's through our crafts that we talk about our culture. They are an important thing. When you buy crafts you want something pretty, but that's not what it means to us. When you buy our crafts, you take away a little bit of our culture with you." (DEUSDÉIA, indigenous name Yara-Tupã, Tupinikim village of Pau-Brasil)

"[...] because women, in the past, could do a lot of things to support themselves... There were materials to make crafts, which women made a lot of. And today there is very little. To make a necklace you have to go far away, because the little bits of forest around here... they don't have many of the things you need. There's some material close by, a few seeds you can gather... For example, if you get some seeds and plant them, a plant might grow and then you will have those seeds to make crafts. But the seeds that used to be near the houses don't exist anymore. So it's more difficult to gather materials. And today, the women in the community have to go out and look for a job to help support their families, right?" (MARIA LOUREIRO, Indigenous Women's Commission, Tupinikim village of Irajá)

"[...] You can't find vines anymore. You can't find straw anymore. If they wanted to... Before, the Indians made their houses from straw, they had enough straw to make houses, there was straw and there was wood. Today you can't find anything. So things got very hard. They really destroyed the indigenous people, the people in the villages. All of the villages were affected." (MARLI, indigenous educator, Tupinikim village of Irajá)

Despite the various difficulties they face in the production of crafts, indigenous women are becoming increasingly organised, seeking ways to bring about the recovery of traditional raw materials, the physical and material conditions needed for their work and alternatives for marketing their products. According to these women, craft making is a means of achieving economic self-sufficiency, which also helps them avoid having to leave the villages in order to look for work.

The difficult choice: to go or to stay

Up until the 1960s, there were very few non-indigenous people living in indigenous villages. With the arrival of Aracruz and the new land division, a series of events altered the daily lives of these populations, who began to live in much closer contact with non-Indians. As a result, it is quite common, especially among the Tupinikim, for indigenous men to be married to non-indigenous women, and for indigenous women to be married to non-indigenous men. Given this new reality and the drastic reduction in territory, indigenous populations have found themselves obliged to regulate the entry of non-indigenous people. Under these new rules, an indigenous man should take his non-indigenous wife to live in the village, but an indigenous woman married to a non-indigenous man should leave the village. In other words, she is expected to place priority on accompanying her husband, who is the head of the family. Nevertheless, in cases where both she and her husband wish to live in the village, they are able to do so if they have the consent of the community. It has been observed that women face more difficulties than men when entering into relationships outside the indigenous community.

“That’s also the rule in Pau-Brasil: if a woman marries a man from outside, she has to leave. But this doesn’t actually happen. It’s the rule but it’s not the practice. For example, if I married a white man I couldn’t live in the village, but that’s not the way it happens. Likewise, if an Indian man marries a white woman, he’s supposed to live in the village, but what if she [the wife] doesn’t want to? ‘I have to go live in the village?’ [...] Because men are the heads of the household. In Pau-Brasil... because if the man has the right, the woman has the right too. If the man is going to bring the woman, they both have to respect the village’s rules. So the woman who is going to bring a man has to respect the village’s rules too.” (MARIDÉIA, Tupinikim and Guaraní Indigenous Women’s Commission, Tupinikim village of Pau-Brasil)

2.2.2 The river: A meeting place

“It was so wonderful to have the river open to us. We washed clothes, we collected water for drinking, for cooking... You could catch fish, you could scoop them up with a sieve. All those women... there would be so many there together! It was the place to wash clothes. You would finish washing clothes, then take a swim and leave, you know?” (MARIDÉIA, Tupinikim village of Pau-Brasil)

According to the *Relatório de Impactos da Apropriação dos Recursos Hídricos Pela Aracruz Celulose nas Terras Indígenas Guarani e Tupiniquim* (Report on the Impacts of the Appropriation of Water Resources by Aracruz Celulose on the Guaraní y Tupinikim Indigenous Lands) prepared by the Association of Geographers of Brazil (2004), in the municipality of Aracruz alone, 430 km² of native tropical rainforest were deforested to make way for eucalyptus plantations. Rivers that played an essential part in the lives of indigenous peoples like the Guaxindiba and Sahy and flowed past the village of Pau-Brasil practically disappeared.

“What I have to say has already been said by the other women. But I’m going to talk a little. I was born here 42 years ago, but it has changed a lot from what it used to be like. It has been very difficult for us, because we used to live from... we used to use the river to catch fish. And now, this problem... the river dried up because of the eucalyptus, right? You can only blame the eucalyptus. It made things very difficult for us. But women have always suffered because of this, because of the lack of water. Before there was piped water but it didn’t reach the houses properly and we suffered a lot.” (MARIDÉIA, Indigenous Women’s Commission, Tupinikim village of Pau-Brasil)

“Then they started throwing in the pesticides like this girl here was saying, they started destroying everything. The pesticides killed the wild animals, and the birds, and they polluted the water too, they killed the fish, the crabs, like over there in Pau-Brasil. There’s a stream there that used to flow up towards Barra do Sahy. But that river was destroyed, right? The fish were all killed too by the poison they threw everywhere, they destroyed all of our fish, our crabs. There’s nothing left in the mangroves. You can go there to take a look, there’s nothing to see anymore, *guaiamu* crabs, all of that was our food, it was what fed us. We had everything we needed, we could feed our children.” (ROSA, Tupinikim village of Pau-Brasil)

“It was Aracruz that shut down the river, because it planted eucalyptus trees and took away the water, the river... Now everything... And also lots of dams, lots of sewers, lots of drainage, you know? The water lost its strength and that’s when the river dried up. Before it had a strong current, and now, where is it?” (FRANCISCA, Tupinikim village of Irajá)

This drama has also affected the region where the Quilombola communities live. According to researchers, these communities “have witnessed the death of almost all of the 14 rivers and streams that used to flow through the entry to Itaúnas and the centre of Conceição da Barra. In 1999, only the São Domingos, a tributary of the Cricaré [River], still had water.”⁴⁴ The other rivers are clogged with sediment and/or polluted.

The Comboios River is a prime example of Aracruz Celulose’s arrogant and abusive approach to water resources. In 1999, the company diverted the water from the Rio Doce river basin to the Riacho river basin by constructing the Caboclo Bernardo canal, as a means of ensuring the supply of water for its third pulp mill. “Between the canal and the pulp mill lie the village of Comboios and the Comboios River [...]. Since the construction of the canal, it is no longer possible to use the water for drinking or bathing, because it induces fever, vomiting, and skin rashes.”⁴⁵

“Today the river is polluted. We don’t use the water to drink, we don’t use the water to bathe, we don’t use the water to wash clothes, we don’t use it for anything, you know? That means that the difference is a big difference, because we used to have our good river, our river was clean, the water was like glass, you could look into it and see your own shadow, you could see the little fish swimming along the bottom, and today, you can’t see anything, all you can see is darkness, you know? I think it’s more like coffee, because the difference is really a lot, it wasn’t like that in the past.” (NILZA, Indigenous Women’s Commission, Tupinikim village of Comboios)

The river was a space where women socialised:

“[...] Our concern was the lack of river water, and now it’s much worse. It’s just like you said, bathing, washing clothes, having water in the house. Like you said, it’s not really something men worry about, right? And when there was a river here, the women would grab their bundles of clothes... and it was like a party on the riverbank, all of them washing clothes. It was mostly on Saturdays, and for those who had time, during the week. It was one less chore, because there was all of that water in the river, and everything was easier. [...] When we had to get water from the well, and go down the slope to where the well is today... So this isn’t really something men worry about, it’s more of a women’s concern, and when there’s no water in the tanks or there’s a problem with the pump, then men aren’t going to pick up a pail... there are very few men who will

⁴⁴ Ferreira, Simone R. B. (2002). “Da fartura à escassez: a agroindústria de celulose e o fim dos territórios comunais no extremo norte do Espírito Santo”. Dissertation (Master’s Degree in Geography), School of Philosophy, Literature and Human Sciences, University of São Paulo.

⁴⁵ Associação dos Geógrafos Brasileiros (2004). *Relatório de impactos da apropriação dos recursos hídricos pela Aracruz Celulose nas terras indígenas Guarani e Tupiniquim*. Vitória: AGB.

pick up a pail and go down the slope, right? And when there was only a little bit of water, people started changing. But it's really a woman's concern, right? To go down and get water from the well to have water in the house. Until... what I mean is, when there was a river, it was less of a concern, because at least for washing clothes, you had a way to solve the problem. The problems got worse when this whole process started, when the eucalyptus came and started sucking all the water from the river until it reached the point that it's reached today." (MARIA HELENA, Tupinikim village of Pau-Brasil)

"Yes, I would love it if the river came back. It would be like a dream, if it was like it was before. You could bathe in it, and wash clothes, you know? I'm sure that it would be full of people on a hot day like today. But I think it would be very difficult for it to come back like it was before." (CÉLIA, Tupinikim village of Pau-Brasil)

"I think the river would bring people closer together, because on the riverbank people wash clothes, and chat, and enjoy themselves. I think that also [...] it would be like a kind of mental cleansing, and the kids, we wouldn't be so afraid about them learning to swim. [...] In the river there was bamboo for making sieves... shrimp... *pitú* (a type of shrimp), you know? It had all that..." (DEUSDÉIA, indigenous name Yara-Tupã, Tupinikim village of Pau-Brasil)

The younger generations have lost any familiarity with the water of the rivers, and as a result many indigenous teenagers do not know how to swim, something difficult to imagine in the Brazilian social context. The Tupinikim, who belong to the Tupí linguistic branch, have always lived on the banks of large rivers. For indigenous women, the lack of water and water pollution are problems that affect the daily lives of their households. They are the ones who must cook, wash clothes, and have water to drink and to bathe their young children.

"And then there's the lack of water, right? Over there, a lot of people, the elders say that because of the eucalyptus plantations, the rivers are drying up, right? We went through a time, a long time, practically four months, with no water at all. We had to get water from other places to survive, to drink. And now that it has rained, the rivers got a bit fuller over there, but now water is running short a lot again. A lot of people say it's because of the eucalyptus, you know? Over there, the people..." (ÂNGELA, Indigenous Women's Commission, Tupinikim village of Irajá)

"We fished with hooks, we fished with nets, we would lay traps and catch animals, right? An armadillo, very tasty. Now if you go... I think that if you kill an innocent person you don't even get sent to jail, but now, just for hunting an animal or catching a fish, they send you to prison for who knows how many

years, they say. But they destroyed all our fish. São Domingos, Santana, we used to go with those baskets we used for fishing and we caught lots of fish. Now that's all over. The creeks all dried up, right? If there was a creek left, but nobody is going to eat a black fish, like someone here was saying, the water is black, right? That black water that nobody... Mother of God! Not even... clothes, what clothes? Nobody would do that! It's all over. Our culture, our little birds, those delicious little birds that you could catch and fry up to eat, right? Those things everyone did, real countryside things. And now it's all over." (BENEDITA, Quilombola community of São Domingos)

"My father is gone now, but he used to tell me a lot about the stream in São Jorge, it was really important to them [the Quilombola community]. It was important for us, too. But how can you take care of the river when it's all polluted with the pesticides that they use to keep... to export their fancy paper. And so to export their fancy paper, they pollute the river, they destroy the lives and the health of all of us. And we're the ones who suffer the most, because they have no direct contact with the poison in the river. It's us and their workers who have contact with it." (OLINDINA, Association of Black Women of São Mateus and Quilombola Commission of Sapê do Norte).

The river was a meeting place for women. It provided a moment for rest, conversation, the sharing of experiences and knowledge, a space to come together and reinforce friendships and community ties, which have now been weakened by the establishment of pulp agribusiness operations:

"We washed a lot of clothes together. That was the place. When the women laid the clothes out in the sun to dry, they would all get to talking. People leave clothes to soak in powdered detergent, right? But not them. The bleach they used there was papaya leaves, right? (laughter) And they would lay out... on those big grass fields on the riverbank, they grew those plants and they got the sheets so white, the clothes so white, it really bleached them. Sometimes some of that bit of water would splash onto something and it would bleach it, it really would." (ENI, Quilombola community of São Domingos)

"[...] like what they were saying about the water, right? That in the past the meeting place was the river, where you would go to wash clothes. Sometimes it would leave you... it would leave you more relaxed, you could relax while you were washing clothes, you know? There was so much water. That's what I wanted to say." (KÁTIA, indigenous village of Pau-Brasil)

One of the points in the agreement signed between Aracruz Celulose and the Tupinikim and Guaraní Indigenous Association in 1998 was the company's commitment to rehabilitate the rivers

in the indigenous territories. Nevertheless, this commitment has remained on paper only, and the situation has grown even worse since then. The women who have faith in nature's capacity for regeneration dream of the day when they will once again be able to bathe in the rivers of the old days.

2.2.3 Healing with prayers and medicinal plants

“Medicinal plants may have died in our kitchens, but not in our hearts, because they are a part of health, they are an alternative and I think we have to fight for them. That's why they are always interviewing the adults, the oldest people.” (Deusdéia, indigenous name Yara-Tupã, Tupinikim village of Pau-Brasil)

“Natural medicines are important. You have to take them until you get better. My grandmother used to tell us what we should take. You have to ask God to show you the true medicine. We believe in living medicines.” (JOANA, indigenous name Tatatxî, Guaraní village of Boa Esperança)

With their vast knowledge of biodiversity, these populations have been prevented from continuing to use their traditional medicine practices. The destruction of the forests and the establishment of polyclinics in the villages began to make it difficult to keep up the production and use of natural medicines. With the passage of time, it has become ever more difficult for the older generations to pass on to the younger generations their knowledge of the various species of medicinal plants that once made up the Atlantic Forest. Many of these species are now extinct, while others are in the process of becoming extinct. The situation has been made even worse by the increase in health problems among the local population:

“There's a lot of high blood pressure... Isn't there a medicine for high blood pressure? Isn't there a medicine for diabetes? (DEUSDÉIA, indigenous name Yara-Tupã, Tupinikim village of Pau-Brasil)

Respiratory problems are very common among the inhabitants of the villages, especially the village of Pau-Brasil, located three kilometres from the pulp mill. It is children who suffer most from this problem:

“Today children are born and when they are just one month old — right Helena? — they are already getting nebulisations. And what is that? That's the impact of the company, you see? From what comes in the air. Those diseases weren't Indian diseases: cancer... because now everything is artificial.” (DEUSDÉIA, indigenous name Yara-Tupã, Tupinikim village of Pau-Brasil)

Since medicinal plants are ever more scarce, women, who are responsible for looking after the health of their children, face difficulties in dealing with their family's illnesses. And because they have no alternative, they turn to conventional medicine. Today, the use of pharmaceutical drugs is quite common among indigenous populations.

“A lot of pharmacy medicines are coming into the villages.” (DEUSDÉIA, indigenous name Yara-Tupã, Tupinikim village of Pau-Brasil)⁴⁶

“We used several different plants for stomach aches. For headaches we used urucum leaves, but now people prefer going to the pharmacy instead of taking home remedies. Syrup made from passion fruit leaves or arnica leaves can cure people who have problems. *Carobinha* cures itching, it cures everything. Bathing in it is very good. We aren’t doing very much because we don’t have the plants.” (NILZA, Indigenous Women’s Commission, Tupinikim village of Comboios)

“I lived in the country, I used to live in the country, I lived there for a long time. I had all of my children with a midwife. Here the thing that women complain most about is having children... they call and after they call there are always problems. People say that there are no more medicines, the ones that they used to make herbal tea. Some made tea, others made potions. Today that doesn’t exist here anymore, because the forest doesn’t exist anymore. They say that forest is gone. Oh, Jesus, where is that forest? [...] Now there are no more medicines from the forest. The pregnant girls start doing prenatal at the hospital right away and when they come back they are full of problems...” (MARIA GORETI, Quilombola community of São Domingos)

Childbirth is a very special event in the lives of indigenous populations. In this new context, however, childbirth has become a challenge, involving choices never even imagined before: will it be a normal delivery or a caesarean delivery? Marilza, whose indigenous name is Keretxu-Endi, is a wise old woman and Guaraní community leader who shared her thoughts on why it is now so difficult for women to give birth with the help of a midwife. She observed that midwives are disappearing and indigenous women are being treated during pregnancy by doctors from the National Health Care Foundation (FUNASA), which does not support the work of midwives. Looking back on times past, this Guaraní indigenous leader and member of the Tupinikim and Guaraní Women’s Commission recalled with pride:

“Women used to have five, ten, eleven children and they had no problems. Now they have problems. Because often, now, women get sick more because they don’t look for medicines from the forest. They go to the doctor and he tells them, you’re not going to have five or six children, because you have problems. [...] My grandmother said that the whites who want to get rid of all the Indians don’t want Indians to have a lot of children. My mother used to help my grandmother with the deliveries. Now she doesn’t do it anymore. Before there were midwives

⁴⁶ Deusdéia works at the polyclinic in the Tupinikim village of Pau-Brasil, which is run by the National Health Care Foundation (FUNASA).

and the medicines were from the forest. I never went to the doctor, I had all my children at home, with a midwife.” (JOANA, indigenous name Tatatxî, indigenous educator, Guaraní village of Boa Esperança)

The experiences recounted by indigenous women are similar to those of Quilombola women with regard to the disappearance of midwives and the problematic adoption of medical treatment through the Unified Health System (SUS).⁴⁷

“San Bartô was the patron saint of midwives. San Bartô helped when babies were born at home. There were midwives. My own mother was a midwife. [...] Now all the babies are born in the hospital, because there are no more midwives. The midwives are all gone, now there are only doctors. Back when there were only midwives, there were no doctors, and if there were doctors, they didn’t go there, no. My mother was the same as a doctor. She solved all the problems. But I didn’t learn to do what she did, I was much younger then, though she did teach me a few things.” (BENEDITA, Quilombola community of São Domingos)

Other information refers to the physical changes in women’s bodies. Obesity among pregnant woman and their babies during gestation makes natural childbirth more difficult. This situation has been attributed to the fact that women today consume processed food, unlike the past, when the food they ate was produced in the villages or harvested from the forests, with no chemical additives. This change in diet is also considered responsible for the early onset of menstruation among girls, who are becoming pregnant at ever younger ages.

“In any case, the rate of caesarean deliveries today is much higher than before. Natural childbirth is sometimes difficult because the women put on a lot of weight and have to have caesareans.” (MARIA HELENA, Tupinikim village of Pau-Brasil)

One of the ways in which some women combat obesity is through the use of weight-loss drugs.

“That didn’t exist before. Nobody worried about being fat or thin. For example, I... my own family... my mother was tall and sturdy, you know? But she didn’t worry about losing weight to look pretty. She always said that it is God who makes people beautiful. Now you see a lot of drugs for losing weight that are

⁴⁷ The SUS is the Brazilian public health care system. The National Health Care Foundation (FUNASA) is one of its agencies.

causing a lot of problems for women who want to make themselves more beautiful by using all these drugs. Some women here in the village take them. I talked this week with some of the women who are taking weight-loss drugs. But now these drugs are causing problems. I myself have never taken them and I never intend to take them.” (ALEIDA, indigenous name Anama, indigenous educator, Tupinikim village of Irajá)

Another factor that has made natural childbirth more difficult in the villages is related to the fact that women are much more sedentary today. Because of the decrease in physical space and the shift to new forms of work unlike those traditionally carried out by indigenous women, their bodies are more fragile and susceptible to disease. In the past, according to a Guaraní woman leader, “[...] women had stronger legs.” Stories of women who have been subjected to caesarean section are very common. There are numerous cases of infants dying during childbirth, which is a particularly serious and painful experience for these populations.

“We Guaraní people need to think about Guaraní health care. My wife had a baby. It was the first time that a woman in my family was operated on to have a baby. She and the baby almost died. The baby is still in the neonatal intensive care unit in the hospital over in Vitória. When my wife came home, her stomach was bloated. I made her tea and it was thanks to that tea that I realised something was wrong. I took her to the hospital here in Aracruz. They had to open up her stomach again and they discovered that the doctor had forgotten to take out the... what’s it called? The thing that the baby comes inside [the placenta]. Yes, they forgot to take out the placenta, and she almost died because of it. They even told me that I could sue the doctor if I wanted to. So if it wasn’t for the tea, she could have died. (TONINHO, indigenous name Werá-Kwaray, Cacique [Chief] of the Guaraní village of Boa Esperança)

With regard to another aspect of women’s health, Marilza, a wise old Guaraní woman, told us that women had more control over their own bodies in the past, or in other words, they were able to control their fertility:

“When Guaraní women wanted to have a lot of children, there was a vine in the forest that they could use, but it doesn’t exist anymore. And for the opposite too. When Guaraní women didn’t want to have children, they drank a potion [made of herbs] that also came from the forest.” (MARILZA, indigenous name Keretxu-Endi, Guaraní village of Piraquê-Açu)

Many women report that they got pregnant every two years, which demonstrates that they practiced their own particular form of family planning. Today, the most common methods of birth control are contraceptive pills or tubal ligation.

Strong religious beliefs, guided by the presence of Ñhanderu and Tupá,⁴⁸ play a crucial role in the lives of these populations. Among the Guaraní, there are still many prayer rituals conducted by *pajés* (healers), as a means of curing disease and promoting health.

In the case of some rituals, it is difficult to determine if they are indigenous traditions or the result of contact with non-indigenous religious practices. One example is the practice of *benzimento* or blessing.

“I learned from [...] my grandmother, my great-grandmother, who gave blessings... I started blessing when I was 12. I have that gift. [...] That was when I started blessing. I bless people from the village and people from outside the village. I have even blessed people from Ibirapu. People have come from Vitória and have gotten better. When I pray, I pray at night, using the person’s name. The herbal tea depends on who it’s for. There are not many herbs because a lot of them are gone now, because Aracruz cut down a lot of strong trees that had them, it cut down the medicines that used to be there. It’s hard to find herbs in the forest, but I look around the houses... you don’t find very many, but you can still get *capim-cidreira*, *macaé*, *cidreira*, *pitanga*, which also makes a good tea, and bananas, which are good for diarrhoea.” (MARIA LOUREIRO, Tupinikim village of Irajá)

Women are currently working on organising projects to plant both community and individual gardens in their villages in order to produce food and medicinal plants. They are aware that some of the raw materials used for their home remedies are extinct, but their efforts are concentrated on those that are on the way to becoming extinct. The desire to recover their territory inspires hope for the recovery of the forests, and with them, a large number of the trees and other plants that constituted the basis of indigenous and Quilombola health care practices.

During the last four decades, these populations have experienced much more intensely the meaning of the word disease. Health is associated with life, with nature (which encompasses a significant part of the material and symbolic content of their cultural practices); disease is associated with the death of nature, with the presence of monocultures on their territories. Victory in the fight against monocultures is the victory of life over death.

⁴⁸ Ñhanderu is the Guaraní God, Tupá is the Tupinikim God.

3. Summary of impacts

The invasion of local populations' territories by the Aracruz Celulose S.A agroindustrial project, established in Espírito Santo in the 1960s and 1970s, caused enormous material and symbolic losses for the indigenous and Quilombola communities. Some of these losses are irreversible. Since then, a new territorial configuration has been imposed, interfering drastically in the sexual division of labour and, as a consequence, in the social and family roles of men and women.

A large proportion of these populations have become scattered. Some took refuge in regions surrounding their former territory, while others searched for somewhere to live in the cities of the Greater Vitória metropolitan region. Women have been forced to deal with the separation and dispersion of their relatives. Families that have managed to remain in their own territories are squeezed together on small bits of land.

In this new context, some of the impacts experienced by men and women are similar, but others are gender-specific. With the loss of territory, women have lost their farms, places to plant their gardens, to raise small animals and to grow medicinal plants.

The replacement of the forests by eucalyptus plantations led to the loss of food formerly supplied through gathering, hunting and fishing. The destruction of the tropical rainforest also led to the disappearance of rivers and streams, which were once the meeting places for women and a privileged space for sharing female knowledge. Indigenous and Quilombola women have been forced to live with the pollution of their surroundings by the agrochemicals used in monoculture industries. The disappearance of the forest has also meant the loss of the raw materials used in the production of utensils and crafts, an activity that was primarily the domain of women in indigenous communities.

The loss of biodiversity has also signified the loss of a large number of natural medicines derived from the plants, roots and animals of the forest. It has deprived Guaraní indigenous women, who formerly used plants to stimulate and reduce fertility, of the right to family planning, leaving them hostage to contraceptive pills and tubal ligation. In addition, indigenous and Quilombola women can no longer find the vines, trees and animal fats they once used for medicinal purposes.

Without the ecosystems that ensured the reproduction of the way of life of these traditional peoples, men's role within the family and community/village has become obsolete. These once great hunters, fishers and farmers have been obliged to sell their labour to Aracruz Celulose's subcontractors, and in the case of Quilombola men, to alcohol producing companies as well, such as Disa-Destilaria Itaúnas S.A. Even so, the majority have found themselves unemployed, since the companies have a policy of not hiring indigenous or Quilombola workers, for the purpose of forcing those who have remained in the region into leaving. The weakening of men's role has subjected women to living with rising rates of alcoholism among their partners as well as greater domestic violence.

Some indigenous women, bearers of a wealth of knowledge about native flora and fauna, have become domestic workers, day labourers, babysitters and cooks for Aracruz Celulose officials. The obligation to take on these new tasks has impacted on their role as mothers, forcing them to give up breastfeeding their children at a very young age or to leave them with others while they are still infants, in order to look after the children of urban women.

Faced with these drastic transformations, these populations have built alliances with social movements and NGOs that support their struggle. Today they are joined together through a network aimed at further strengthening their capacity to resist. Women, who also play a leading role in these battles, have also embarked on a process of organising in specific spaces to discuss the impacts of eucalyptus monoculture on their lives and ways to contribute to resurrecting the way of life of their peoples.

4. Final considerations

One of the signs of life that has characterised the trajectory of these populations is their capacity to resist. In coordination with other movements such as Via Campesina and the Alert Against the Green Desert Network, they are leading up the biggest socio-environmental movement in Espírito Santo, carrying out countless actions to fight back against eucalyptus monoculture agribusiness. Today, these populations are backed by important organisational instruments and significant support from local, national and international social movements and NGOs.

Women, for their part, are seeking an ever greater space within this process of struggle. When “[the] environment begins hurting their children, many of the women will act.”⁴⁹ This sums up the experience of the indigenous and Quilombola women of Espírito Santo: for close to 40 years they have lived with the impacts of large-scale monocultures together with their families and their peoples, as the violence and oppression have fanned the flames of their anger. These are women who have now chosen to occupy a public space as messengers of their people’s protests.

The organisation of women in specific spaces is a recent process. In the case of indigenous women, for example, there have been groups organised in each village for producing crafts and recovering the knowledge and use of medicinal plants. Some have reached an advanced stage of organisation, while others are just beginning. Just over a year ago, as a means of reinforcing this organisational process, they created the Tupinikim and Guaraní Indigenous Women’s Commission, which is aimed at linking the indigenous women in all of the villages to undertake activities and struggles of shared interest. All of these organisational efforts spearheaded by women have boosted public recognition of the diverse roles they play: on the battlefield, fighting for the self-demarcation of their territory; in the clash with the police during the occupation of the Aracruz plant (in 2005); in the kitchen, preparing food for the big indigenous assemblies. In this way, they have increasingly expanded their spaces for socialisation⁵⁰ while struggling to maintain, at least in part, those which have been taken away from them. The process of organising has also increased their self-esteem. These are women who recognise themselves as indigenous and feel responsible for sharing their conquests with other women.

The Quilombola women, who are much more numerous, have also embarked on the process of organising. There are women who represent their communities on the Quilombola Commission of Sapê do Norte, while others are working to coordinate grassroots women’s groups.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Kaplan, Temma (2001). “Uncommon Women and the Common Good: Women and Environmental Protest”. In: Rowbatham, Sheila and Linkogle, Stephanie (Eds.), *Women Resist Globalization: Mobilizing for Livelihood and Rights*. London: Zed Books, p. 28-42.

⁵⁰ As a result of the political presence of indigenous and Quilombola women in specialised women’s forums, a motion of solidarity with the indigenous peoples of Espírito Santo was passed at the last National Conference on Policies for Women, held in Brasília.

⁵¹ More recently, during the occupation of a tract of traditional Quilombola land in Linharinho currently under the control of the Aracruz corporation, a group of women who attend the “Quilombola School” — a popular education initiative of the Federation of Social and Educational Assistance Agencies-Espírito Santo (FASE-ES) — released the Manifesto of the Quilombola School Women’s Group, voicing their anger over the federal government’s delay in recognising and demarcating Quilombola territories.

In August 2007, during the occupation of a parcel of territory belonging to the Quilombola community of Linharinho, which is currently under the control of the Aracruz corporation, Quilombola women marked their presence in different ways: in the political leadership of the movement; in the kitchen, preparing food for those taking part in the occupation; and in the protest actions, when they released the Manifesto of the Quilombola School Women's Group,⁵² voicing their anger with the federal government's delay in recognising and demarcating Quilombola territories.

Indigenous and Quilombola women, who for so many decades have shared the impacts of eucalyptus monocultures, are now seeking to share their organisational experience, discovering the paths to freedom together. These women are increasingly joining together, giving each other strength in their shared struggle against the oppression of agribusiness and the patriarchy.

⁵² The *Escuelita Quilombola* or Quilombola School is a popular education initiative of the Federation of Social and Educational Assistance Agencies-Espírito Santo.

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