
Special Issue

Linha Verde-Estrada Cicatriz. Socio-environmental Conflicts and Impacts on the Northern Coast of Bahia

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Abstract

This article analyzes the socio-environmental conflicts and impacts that have emerged and intensified alongside the most recent wave of capital expansion on the Northern coast of the state of Bahia (northeastern Brazil), driven by the implementation of mass tourism. This process began with the construction of Brazil's first all-inclusive resort, Costa do Sauípe Resort, supported by public policies, notably through the construction and expansion of the BA-099 highway, known as Linha Verde. This qualitative investigation takes as its object of analysis the documentary *Linha Verde: Estrada Cicatriz* (Green Line: Scar Highway, in English), produced in 2008 by a team of researchers from the School of Communication at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), through the public call Ponto de Cultura. The documentary presents a diverse set of social actors who, through their testimonies, recount events and contradictions surrounding key transformations that reshaped the social and environmental fabric of Bahia's Northern Coast during the transition from the 20th to the 21st century. As a methodological strategy, this article presents seven units of analysis: two related to environmental impacts and five to socio-environmental conflicts, most of which occurred along the coast of the municipality of Mata de São João, where the resort is located. The article concludes that the objects of dispute are land and water territories (sea, mangroves, lagoons, and rivers) belonging to local communities, as well as their historically constructed ways of life, closely linked to natural assets and communal spaces, such as beaches.

Keywords: Ecosystem Peoples; Northern Coast Environmental Protection Area (APA); State; Capital; Tourism

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Introduction

During the colonial period, the Northern Coast of Bahia was home to the Garcia D'Ávila *latifúndio* (large rural estate), which was characterized by the occupation of land through agricultural, livestock, and extractive production systems. These were maintained under a rigid structure of labor control over indigenous and/or enslaved populations. Around this economic and political center, groups of leaseholders emerged, paying taxes for the use of land plots and remaining subordinate to the Garcia D'Ávila family until the mid-20th century (Bandeira, 2000). The communities that developed along the Northern Coast of Bahia structured their socio-economic systems around the use of land and water (sea, rivers, mangroves, and lagoons)

This paper addresses the transformations that have taken place on Bahia's Northern Coast from the second half of the 19th century until 2008. At the end of the 19th century, Sigisfred Sigismundo Schindler, a Prussian, naturalized as an American citizen, acquired vast areas of land and started coconut plantations and the extraction of natural resources such as *piçava* (*Attalea funifera Martius*), which was exported in raw form to British industries for the production of ship ropes and clothing buttons. Despite holding effective ownership and control over the land, Schindler maintained tenancy arrangements with traditional peasant communities already established in the region, relying on a common leasing practice that persisted in the Bahia and Pernambuco sugarcane plantation zones until the mid-20th century: labor in exchange for housing.

Map 01 – Municipality of Mata de São João, highlighting the coastal communities.



Source: Geographic guide to the beaches of Bahia.¹

In the second decade of the 20th century, S. S. Schindler sold these lands to a British rubber company — the *British and Brazilian Rubber Planters and Manufacturers* — which continued the lease-based land use system. After the company's bankruptcy between 1940 and 1950, part of the land

¹ Available on: <http://www.praias-bahia.com/mata-sao-joao/mapa.htm>. Accessed on: June 6th, 2017.

was sold to the Bank of London and the Brazilian construction company Norberto Odebrecht, which came to hold 1,700 hectares destined for real estate speculation (Stifelmann, 1997), ultimately resulting in the development of Costa do Sauípe Resort. At the time of the purchase, approximately 3,000 land occupants were already living on those lands (Mattedi, 2002).

Six key socioeconomic movements are crucial to understanding the dynamics of capital expansion and its structural impacts on the Northern Coast of Bahia from the 1970s until the early 2000s. The first was the creation² of the Northern Coast Forest District in the second half of the 1970s, which imposed changes in land tenure structures and in the way of life populations living inland but near the coast, leading to land expulsions and the dismantling of local livelihoods. The second and third transformations unfolded in tandem: as the state-sponsored construction of the BA-099 highway — the *Estrada do Coco* — connecting Salvador to Praia do Forte was taking place starting in 1975, Klaus Peter, a German-born landowner, was turning the fishing village of Praia do Forte into an ecotourism destination with the first large-scale hotel, currently known as Tivoli Ecoresort Praia do Forte, being inaugurated in 1981.

The fourth and fifth movements replicate this pairing of tourism development and state support: as a result of the state-sponsored extension of the BA-099 highway, the Green Line Road, northwards from Praia do Forte to the state of Sergipe in 1993, Brazil's first all-inclusive resort complex, Costa do Sauípe, was inaugurated in 2000. The sixth was the creation of the Northern Coast Environmental Protection Area (APA-LN) in 1992, which was implemented as compensation for the construction of the Green Line Road and as a tool for controlling the region's landscape, effectively turning it into a reserve of value for tourism capital. The dynamics of capital expansion and state intervention have generated significant consequences for the historically established peasant communities of the Northern Coast of Bahia (Cardel, 2016).

Table 1 - Socioeconomic movements related to the dynamics of capital expansion on the North Coast of Bahia, 1970 – 2000.

Nº.	Period	Socioeconomic change
1	In the second half of the 1970s	Creation of the Northern Coast Forest District
2	From 1975	Construction of the <i>Estrada do Coco</i> (BA-099), which connected Salvador to <i>Praia do Forte</i>
3	From 1975	The transformation of the fishing village of <i>Praia do Forte</i> into an area of administrative activity for Klaus Peter as the owner
4	In 1992	Creation of the North Coast Environmental Protection Area (EPA), Bahia
5	In 1993	Expansion of this same highway, now connecting <i>Praia do Forte</i> to the state of Sergipe
6	In 2000	Inauguration of the Costa do Sauípe Resort

Source: Capinan (2024).

Considering this brief historical overview of land grabbing on the Northern Coast of Bahia, the objective of this article is to contribute to this Special Issue by addressing the socio-environmental conflicts that occurred in the Northern Coast Environmental Protection Area (APA-LN) between the last decades of the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st century, using documentary analysis as a method. This method allows us to reconstruct an earlier historical period through images of the region and the vivid testimonies of social actors from different groups who experienced these processes.

² The North Coast Forestry District of Bahia was established by State Law N^o. 6,569, of January 17th, 1994, which provides for the Forestry Policy of the State of Bahia.

After this introduction, the article is structured in sections covering the following topics: methodological considerations, analysis of the conflicts recorded in the mini-documentary *Linha Verde: Estrada Cicatriz*, examination of the socio-environmental impacts reported in other sources used in this research, and final considerations.

1. Methodological considerations: documentary film analysis of “Linha Verde: Estrada Cicatriz”

The documentary *Linha Verde: Estrada Cicatriz* is 52 minutes and 32 seconds long. It was produced in 2008 by a multidisciplinary group of researchers from the Federal University of Bahia, with support from the Ponto de Cultura program, funded by the Bahian government. When we watch the documentary, it becomes clear that the team’s shooting script was structured around exploring the socio-environmental impacts and conflicts associated with tourism implemented in the Northern Coast Environmental Protection Area (APA-LN), through incentives and subsidies granted by all three levels of government (municipal, state, and federal). The very title reveals the filmmakers’ intention to portray the unfolding consequences of a highway whose construction cut across a region inhabited by ecosystem-based communities, fragmenting territories, cosmologies, lives, and everyday routines and, ultimately, producing socio-cultural fissures and scars under the pretext of the region’s “development.”

Starting from Salvador, the capital of Bahia, and heading toward the state of Sergipe, the film crew worked in three locations on the landward side of the coast (Barro Branco, Areal, and Vila Sauípe) and nine along the shoreline (Praia do Forte, Imbassaí, Diogo, Santo Antônio, Costa do Sauípe, Porto do Sauípe, Massarandupió, Subaúma, and Baixio), covering the Bahian municipalities of Mata de São João, Entre Rios, and Esplanada.

The way conversations are conducted in the documentary resembles what, in the social sciences, is defined as a “semi-structured interview,” in this case organized around tourism and its socio-environmental conflicts and impacts in the region. We identified 41 interviewees, who can be grouped into seven categories of social actors, listed alphabetically as follows: (I) four business owners, identified as guesthouse owners and, in some cases, without specification of their activity; (II) one researcher; (III) one property owner; (IV) four representatives of the public sector; (V) five representatives of civil society; (VI) four tourists; and (VII) 18 village residents. If we add the four people linked to civil society—because they are organizations formed by residents of the villages—to the other 18 residents, we find that 53.6% of the voices are those of people from the local communities in the region. There is also a predominance of male interviewees, 29 in total, compared with only 12 women.

It is also worth highlighting that the documentary is an important audiovisual document for research because it was produced during a period marked by intense transformations in the region, only eight years after the inauguration of Costa do Sauípe Resort and 15 years after the opening of the Green Line Highway. There had therefore already been sufficient time to observe and assess the consequences of these events, which were still vivid in the social memory of the actors living in the APA-LN. This article stems from Capinan’s (2024) doctoral dissertation, which drew on a variety of sources. Within the scope of this text, however, the documentary is treated as the central source of investigation, complemented secondarily by documents and bibliographic references.

Regarding the analysis of the documentary, it is important to note that it was necessary to wa-

th the film several times, as well as to revisit specific segments at different moments to verify information and interpretations. In the first methodological stage, we watched it from a broader perspective, to apprehend the general aspects of the audiovisual documentation project, while capturing images that would assist in understanding the region, the conflicts, and the socio-environmental impacts examined in this study. In the second stage, we rewatched the documentary to identify the units of analysis (Gaskell and Bauer, 2017). The criterion for selecting these units was the narration of a set of natural resources being disputed by actors affiliated with different social groups, based on socioeconomic and cultural distinctions.

The methodological stages mentioned above thus corresponded to the process of gaining an overall understanding of the documentary’s characteristics, selecting and capturing images, and coding the interviews according to the aforementioned code. The third stage consisted of transcribing the segments of the documentary’s interviews that had already been coded, in light of the object of analysis of this article. These transcriptions were completed during a third viewing of the film. The objective was to reproduce, as faithfully as possible, the interviewees’ actual words, including pauses and interruptions, given that they are treated as interlocutors in the debate on socio-environmental conflicts and impacts in the region.

In the fourth stage, the analysis of the material focused on three primary units—socio-environmental conflicts, socio-environmental impacts, and the actors involved—and, secondarily, we sought to understand the narrative about tourism put forward by the representatives of the state featured in the film. Regarding the social actors, we noted that everyone who appears in the documentary was considered and grouped into the seven categories described above.

Table 2 – Conflicts and socio-environmental impacts reported by the “Green Line: scar road” project.

Part of the Minidoc	Place of Conflict	Impact Site	Subject Of Dispute	Actors Social Whistleblowers	Social Actor Held Accountable
1	Praia do Forte		The territories of the Pau Grande and Barreto communities	-Edite Diniz (geographer, Praia do Forte) -Lourival Evangelista (businessperson, Praia do Forte)	Eco Resort Praia do Forte
2	Massarandupió		Massarandupió Beach	-Amaíse Tavares (merchant, Massarandupió) - Unidentified man (resident in Massarandupió) -Ivone Soares (artisan, Massarandupió)	PACAB - Entre Rios Village and Resort (Portuguese group)
2	Santo Antônio		The village of Santo Antônio	-Maria Mendes (merchant and artisan, Sto. Antônio) -Miúdo (Sto. Antônio) -Paulo Roberto Álvares Souza (“owner” of Santo Antônio)	Paulo Roberto Souza
5	Vila Sauípe		Swampy area of the part called Batinema	-Pombinho (Vila Sauípe)	“They”
5	Imbassaí		Occupation of wetlands and dune systems	- Paulo Novaes (Manager of APA-LN) -Gui Marcovaldi (Coordinator and founder of the TAMAR project)	Reserva Imbassay (hotel)
1		Vila Sauípe	<i>Pinicão</i> in Vila Sauípe	- Pombinho (Vila Sauípe) -João Paiva (Vila Sauípe)	Costa do Sauípe Resort
3		Porto Sauípe and Vila Sauípe	Mangue	-Paulo Novaes (Manager of APA-LN)	“Complexes” “Complex”

Source: *Linha Verde* (2008).

As can be seen in the table above, seven units of analysis involving conflict or environmental impact were identified in the documentary. The latter is understood as a consequence of human action on the environment, which may vary according to interests (use value and exchange value) and the stage of the dispute. As mentioned earlier, impact is commonly the outcome of a conflict, but reaching this stage of unfolding in relation to nature does not mean that the conflict has been resolved. It may, in fact, develop precisely through an impact that was not preceded by conflict.

There is no doubt that the two situations identified as impacts in the documentary are indeed impacts, but it is worth questioning whether their conflicts have reached a final outcome. We are led to conclude that they have not and that, in these two cases, as will be analyzed below, socio-environmental conflicts continue to coexist with the impact.

2. Estrada cicatriz: conflicts and socio-environmental impacts on the Linha Verde, Bahia

In this section, we move on to a descriptive analysis of the documentary. Given the breadth of information provided and in light of the objective of this article, we have chosen to focus on the statements of those involved in socio-environmental conflicts and impacts (those denouncing and those being held responsible), as well as of those who represented the state at some level. This is because, in recent history, starting in the 1970s, the state has been an important social actor in driving the changes that have been occurring in the environment and in the lives of communities on the Northern Coast of Bahia. Yet, under the mantle of developmentalist policy, the various branches of the state continue to neglect the consequences of tourism, as Luchiari (2000) states:

At the local level, it can be said that while tourism stimulates job creation (both direct and indirect), the expansion of road networks, improvements in urban infrastructure, and the growth of the construction and service sectors, it also exacerbates the problems caused by accelerated urbanization. In this context, there is an observable increase in the consumption of natural resources, a rise in the cost of living, real estate speculation, an expansion in waste production, and an intensification of socio-spatial segregation — even to the point of the formation of informal settlements — as well as the generation of migratory flows that introduce exogenous cultural models. Moreover, this process often results in the economic exclusion of the local population, which in most cases remains marginalized from this highly specialized sector. (Luchiari, 2000, p. 158)

This analysis synthesizes the typical trajectory of tourism along the Brazilian coast. The state, through its various levels of government, plays a contradictory role in this dynamic, often occupying positions difficult to reconcile—acting simultaneously as a promoter of tourism development and as an environmental governance body responsible for oversight and regulation. In theory, the state should act as an impartial defender of the rights and duties of all those involved in situations of environmental conflict and/or impact. This ambiguity is reflected in the statements of public officials featured in the documentary, as can be seen in the analytical description that follows.

At two different points, the documentary presents statements by Domingos Leonelli, who criticizes the model of tourism historically adopted in Bahia, which he considers to be centered on large hotels disconnected from the local economy and surrounding communities. According to this politician, this business model evokes what he calls “the great battle of humanity, perhaps the most powerful dimension of the class struggle in the world—if that dimension is, perhaps, life (and then

people think: between life and death), life and profit.” (Linha, 2008, Part 1, 5min. 11 s)³.

At the municipal level, the only public official interviewed in the documentary is the then-mayor of Mata de São João, João Gualberto, who argues that tourism has not brought concrete benefits to the municipality. According to him, tourism on the Northern Coast unfolded in three phases. The first was led by guesthouse owners in Imbassaí and Praia do Forte, including Eco Praia do Forte, pioneers who did not carry out feasibility studies. The second phase took place with the Sauípe Project, which he considers important for Brazil and Bahia, but not for Mata de São João—mainly due to a ten-year exemption from the Municipal Service Tax (ISS) and the lack of employment opportunities for local workers. The third phase, in his view, corresponds to large-scale hotel developments with a more sustainable outlook. When comparing the second and third phases described by him, it is reasonable to infer that the mayor implicitly criticizes the environmental aspects of Costa do Sauípe Resort. He also states that the resort failed to pay approximately BRL 7 million per year to the municipality.

Paulo Novaes, then manager of the Northern Coast Environmental Protection Area (APA-LN) and a representative of the public sector, not only reported conflicts and impacts but also criticized the lack of planning in the tourism initiatives implemented in the region. He pointed to what he regarded as “ideal” pathways for prior planning and socio-environmental monitoring—such as the need to prepare local populations to meet the demand for services and products, as well as the importance of guiding the creation of cooperatives.

Another state representative featured in the documentary is Érico Mendonça, who held the position of Secretary of Tourism when part of the Northern Coast was designated as an Environmental Protection Area (APA). He stated: “[...] the vast majority of areas of tourism interest are located within Environmental Protection Areas, which define a model of land use. They regulate territorial occupation, and this has given investors security [...]” (Linha, 2008, Part 5, 2 min 7 s). In other words, as can be inferred from his statement, this type of Conservation Unit (UC) was planned by the state as a strategy to preserve landscape value for the benefit of capital, oriented toward different tourism ventures.

Except for this last public official, who explicitly defended APA environmental policy as a legal instrument for establishing areas that preserve value for capital, the other politicians and the APA-LN manager lamented the characteristics and direction of tourism policies in Bahia. However, as mentioned earlier, we did not identify any changes—at least not significant ones—during their terms in office or in the administrations of the political parties with which they were associated, regarding the public management of tourism in the state. Their reflections and questions thus remained confined to the realm of discourse.

In line with the central objective of this study, as mentioned in the methodology, seven units of analysis involving conflict or environmental impact were identified in the film. Of these, three disputes involve Vila Sauípe and Porto de Sauípe, areas closer to Costa do Sauípe Resort and therefore more susceptible to socio-environmental conflicts and impacts. Among the cases identified, five were narrated by more than one person—for example, the situation in Santo Antônio, mentioned both by local residents and by the landowner Paulo Roberto de Souza. In total, six of the events

³ He was Secretary of Tourism for the State of Bahia during almost the entire first term of the Workers’ Party (PT in Portuguese) in the Bahia government (Jaques Wagner, between 2007-2014). This party is in its fifth term in the Bahia governor’s office, with the current governor’s first term expected to end in 2026. During these almost 20 years of PT administration in Bahia, we have not seen any change in the tourism development model criticized by Domingos Leonelli between 2007 and 2008.

took place along the coast of Mata de São João and one in Massarandupió, a village located on the coastal strip of the municipality of Entre Rios.

Figure 1 – Sapiranga Private Natural Heritage Reserve (RPPN), located in Praia do Forte, Mata de São João, Bahia (BA)



Source: Linha Verde (2008, Part 5, 3min58s).

The illustration above refers to Conflict 1 and was captured from Part 5 of *Linha Verde* (2008). It visually synthesizes the historical process of socio-environmental conflicts involving the communities of Pau Grande and Barreto, as well as the administrations of Eco Resort Praia do Forte and the Garcia D'Ávila Foundation—two legally distinct entities that, in principle, are part of an ecotourism project in Praia do Forte initiated by Klaus Peter. Several socio-environmental conflicts have involved Peter, his companies, and the local population. The conflict documented in the film centers on territorial disputes with these communities and is narrated by Lourival Evangelista and Elias Ferreira, representatives of their respective residents' associations, as well as by Edite Diniz, a researcher at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA).

According to Edite Diniz (*Linha*, 2008), the conflicts experienced by the communities of Pau Grande and Barreto stem from a conception of ecological reserve imported from the United States, which she summarizes as: “animals yes, people no!” It is also important to note that these communities are recognized as descendants of *quilombolas*, although the Technical Identification and Demarcation Report (RTID) related to their territorial claim has never been completed. This occurred due to an escalation of conflicts after their self-declaration as **quilombola** communities and their formal request to the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) for the demarcation of their lands as ethnic territories.

Researchers Francisco Brito (2018) and Edite Diniz (2007) are key references for understanding socio-environmental conflicts in *Praia do Forte*. According to Brito, this process began in the 1980s, when the German businessman Klaus Peters acquired the shares of two partners and became the sole owner of the lands in Praia do Forte. This triggered the first conflict related to the emergence of environmental tourism, legitimized by the National Environmental Policy Law N°.

6.938/1981 (Brasil, 1981), which establishes Brazil's environmental policy, its objectives, and its regulatory instruments. Under the mantle of legality, Peters implemented extensive ecotourism infrastructure in the region, creating the Garcia D'Ávila Foundation and instituting a series of control and expulsion measures directed against traditional residents.

In the wake of disputes over land for representatives of capital and over territories for the communities, there is also Conflict 2, which took place in the village of Massarandupió, where the object of dispute was the beach and its access routes. In this segment of the documentary, the filmmakers resort to the narrative device of displaying photographs taken during a key moment in the conflict, when residents gathered to remove fences. This act of resistance and the broader conflict it symbolizes is narrated in detail by Amaíse Tavares⁴. The critical moment in the struggle over access to common-use goods is also recounted by Ivone Soares and by an unidentified man. The social actor identified as responsible for triggering the conflict was the company PACAB Brasil Ltda., of Portuguese origin, which registered in Brazil the legal entity "Entre Rios Vila e Resort." According to the accounts, the company intended to develop tourism activities in the area. On the signs placed in the usurped territory, there were notices declaring it to be private property and prohibiting entry. Other signs adopted a more environmentalist tone, calling for the preservation of the area and citing the number of the decree that created the APA-LN—thus using environmental legislation as a strategy to legitimize the appropriation of customary rights, which in this case combine family landholding and a territory of communal use.

Maria de Lourdes Costa Souza (2015) investigated the production of space in Massarandupió and its surroundings. According to her, these processes involve internal dynamics ("horizontalities") and external forces ("verticalities"), both situated within the broader historical horizon of society. She argues that "market and state interests constitute verticalities and are historically hegemonic in the production of space" (Souza, 2015, p. 34). When this analytical framework is applied to the villages of the Northern Coast of Bahia, it becomes evident that the interaction between these dimensions (internal and external to the communities) generates events with a high potential for socio-environmental conflict, especially in light of the distinct conceptions and symbolic meanings upheld by ecosystem peoples and by broader biosphere societies.

This is precisely what Souza finds when reconstructing the recent history of the village, where three socio-environmental conflicts emerged. Before 1993, there were plans to install a pulp mill in Entre Rios by the company Copener/Norcel, which even considered Massarandupió as a possible site. However, the project failed at the environmental licensing stage for several reasons —

⁴ Amaíse Tavares's testimony is rich in details about the contrast between the customary landholding rights of local families and the codified system of property based on formal land titles. She reports that, in the 1970s, the company Barreto de Araújo appropriated land in the region with the help of hired gunmen. In 2001, to settle labor debts, the company put these lands up for auction, and they were later acquired by the Portuguese group mentioned above. Maria de Lourdes Costa Souza (2009) conducted a detailed investigation of the chain of land ownership in Massarandupió, not only confirming Amaíse Tavares's account but also deepening the description of land disputes in this community. Part of this conflict closely resembles the research conducted by James Holston (1993) on landholding and property disputes in the formation of São Paulo's urban periphery—especially the well-known chapter entitled "Legalizing the Illegal: Property and Usurpation in Brazil," which remains fundamental for understanding the complexities of Brazil's agrarian question. In this regard, it is worth highlighting one particular legal dispute: it involved the heir of Rosendo Serapião—who had requested a long-term land lease (*aforamento*) from the federal government in 1932—and an English company that held formal title to the land. As Souza reports: "Despite the legal victory granted to the English and also to the squatters, the lands were once again claimed in 1962 by Serapião's heir, and the court case in which the English had obtained recognition of their property rights over the land 'simply disappeared from the archives of the Entre Rios courthouse' (A Tarde, 2002). [...]" (Souza, 2009, p. 104).

among them, difficulties in securing financing, given the fall in international pulp prices, and the growing interest in turning the region into a hub for tourism expansion.

As mentioned in the introduction, between the 1970s and 1980s the village was already undergoing spatial transformations resulting from policies that had designated the region as a forest district, as previously noted. Another shift occurred due to land disputes, extensively described in footnote 4, in which Manoel Serapião “managed to register himself as the occupant of the disputed lands and, in January 1977, formed a consortium with Barreto Araújo Empreendimentos Imobiliários S/A [...]” (Souza, 2015, p. 104), which later sold the land to PACAB, giving rise to the conflict portrayed in the film.

The third conflict identified by Souza (2015) in Massarandupió arose between the municipal government and the village’s residents when, in 1998, the municipality designated part of the beach as a nudist zone through. Once again, the beach became an object of dispute—not only as a natural asset, but as a symbolic territory where the way of life of local inhabitants came into conflict with the municipal government’s economic ambitions to establish the first official nudist beach in Bahia.⁵ Rules were created to regulate access to the naturist area, but these also generated conflict—including one that prohibited unaccompanied men from entering or remaining there unless accompanied by someone of the opposite sex.

Returning to the conflict portrayed in the documentary, Souza (2015)⁶ it shows that the residents of Massarandupió mobilized to remove fences that had been installed in environmentally protected areas—such as dunes, mangroves, and lagoons—and that restricted access to the beach and to other natural resources used in artisanal production. The fences also blocked a stretch of the servitude road opened by the municipality in 2005. This broader context of conflict culminated in the creation of the SOS Massarandupió movement.

Amaíse Tavares, a resident of Massarandupió, stated: “We are not against development. We want development to come. I think everyone needs it and has the right to it. But it has to be sustainable development.” (Linha, 2008, Part 7, 4 min 9 s). This statement reflects the incorporation—into popular imaginaries—of a discourse that aspires to academic legitimacy but has, in turn, also been appropriated as a rhetorical strategy by both the business sector and the state. In this context, sustainability becomes a supposed point of balance between treating natural goods as such and appropriating them as exploitable resources for profit and capital accumulation, to the detriment of the environment and— in the case of the APA-LN—also of the local population.

This opens space for critical reflection, including the articulation of a broader counter-discourse on the real effectiveness of what this word — “sustainability” — promises and on its political use as part of the ideological apparatus of developmentalist *doxa*, in both the public and private spheres.

Conflict 3 is connected to the previous ones through the pair of opposing conceptions (land/resource/commodity-capital vs. territory/good/heritage of the extended family-community) and,

⁵ Massarandupió was not only the first official naturist beach in Bahia; it also remains the only one and has become a nationally and internationally recognized destination for this practice.

⁶ Souza (2009) reports that, in this context of legal dispute, the Association of Residents and Friends of Massarandupió (AMAM), founded in 1997, submitted a request to the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA) for the creation of a restricted-use Conservation Unit (UC) that would encompass the region’s dunes and *restinga* ecosystems. However, the request was never officially approved. In addition, according to the author, local craftswomen created and registered the Massarandupió Craftswomen’s Association (ADAM) in 2003.

in particular, to the second conflict, since it also took place in a coastal area. In this case, however, the entire village, and not only the beach, became the object of dispute. This is the village of Santo Antônio. The conflict is portrayed in a distinctive way in the documentary, as it is narrated both by the social actors who denounce it—Maria Mendes, briefly, and Miúdo, in greater detail—and by the actor held responsible, Paulo Roberto de Souza, who states: “[...] I have problems with the community inside the farm [...]” (Linha, 2008, Part 2, 3 min 22 s). After this initial statement, he adds that it is evident that the occupation goes back five or six generations, but insists that he was taken by surprise by events. He recounts that he had envisioned a different use for the area, although he claims to be concerned with preserving the land “for the natives.” According to Miúdo, a resident of Santo Antônio, the relationship between Paulo Roberto and the village developed as follows:

Miúdo: “He arrived here about 30 years ago. But he has always acted as if he were smarter than us, because we are from the countryside — we don’t have much... how do you say? We hardly know about these things. He would buy one plot of land, then another. The only one he didn’t buy — he simply took — was mine, because I never sold him anything. He would build a new house. He would build a house and take half of the plot. He gave the house to the person, and the person gave the land to him.” Interviewer [unidentified]: “So he traded the house for the land?” Miúdo: “Yes, he traded the house for the land. I told my people: ‘Look, open your eyes, this is not going to end well.’ He said it would, and now look. Now only the natives are left here, each with a small house and a tiny yard. The others have already — [he makes a gesture with his right hand opening and closing, indicating that they have gone]. They have all left.” (Miúdo, *Linha*, 2008, Part 2, 3 min 42 s).

A place without access to means of subsistence for an ecosystem people—where all that remains is a roof and a small yard, with no land to work or to leave as an inheritance to future generations—can hardly be considered a “preserved” place for its inhabitants. At the very least, this notion needs to be questioned, especially when Paulo Roberto de Souza invokes environmental legislation as a strategy to demarcate his property, converting it into a Private Natural Heritage Reserve (RPPN).⁷ By doing so, he effectively transforms it into a space of reserved value for potential tourism uses, in accordance with the legal permissions of an Environmental Protection Area (APA).

Thus, part of the community of Diogo and the entire community of Santo Antônio came to be located within a zone under the dual control of a single landowner—both through the property rights he claims and through the regulatory restrictions associated with the RPPN designation. This legal instrument is a recent strategy used by landowners, combining with historically rooted methods of expropriation—such as land grabbing, forced evictions, and other practices—to control and displace traditional communities from their territories. These processes are often carried out through a combination of legal mechanisms and physical and symbolic violence.

⁷ According to records from the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMBio), the Dunas de Santo Antônio Private Natural Heritage Reserve (RPPN) was officially created on May 21st, 2001 by Ordinance No. 65, published in the Federal Official Gazette on June 4th, 2001. The document classifies the RPPN as an area “of public interest and permanent in character,” covering 370.721 hectares, corresponding to the Riacho das Flores Farm and the Araken/Rozarinho Woods, owned by Paulo Roberto Álvares de Souza and Lindaura Soares de Carvalho. Satellite images available from ICMBio show that the reserve encompasses practically the entire dune system connecting the traditional communities of Diogo and Santo Antônio—a route frequently traveled on foot by local residents and others. The reserve extends to the vicinity of the Costa do Sauípe Resort’s boundaries and reaches the right shoulder of the BA-099 highway in the Salvador–Sergipe direction.

Miúdo also reports that many residents of Santo Antônio sold their land, but he resisted—although he did not know how much longer he would be able to remain, given the departure of longtime residents, pressure from the landowner, and the lack of basic public services. According to him, this depopulation process only began to slow with the arrival of electricity and running water.

In line with Miúdo's account, Edite Diniz states that the lack of access to essential public goods—such as electricity, sanitation, health, and education—also forces residents to leave, since these rights have historically been denied to rural populations. In another part of the documentary, the landowner Paulo Roberto de Souza mentions the absence of the state in regulating the disorderly occupation of land that accompanied the real estate boom triggered by mass tourism in the region—as if his own strategy of land appropriation were not itself a form of disorderly land use.

When we consider territorial expulsions in a country with a colonial history like Brazil—where structures remain deeply patrimonial, patriarchal, racist, and, to some extent, oligarchic—it becomes natural to think of land in the most radical sense of the term, whether improved or not. This simplification imposed by capital strategically reduces territories and biomes to simplified, monetized commodities. In this regard, Sassen (2016) argues that this process—in which foreign investors and governments acquire land in other nation-states—now occurs on a global scale, generating expulsions and socio-environmental impacts of great magnitude. She invites us to consider the multiple “channels of expulsion” beyond the commodification of land, such as those highlighted and critically examined by Miúdo and Edite Diniz in relation to the state's failure to guarantee basic services like sanitation, electricity, education, and public health.

Such channels of expulsion were identified in five socio-environmental conflicts and can also be observed in the two situations of environmental impact portrayed in the documentary. In other words, *Linha Verde* (2008) records multiple channels through which human and non-human forms of life have been expelled from the APA-LN as part of the broader expansion of capital accumulation.

The last two environmental conflicts in the Northern Coast Environmental Protection Area (APA-LN) are documented in Part 5 of the film and portray different perceptions involving, in each case, other social actors in addition to the communities and representatives of capital. The Conflict 4 took place in Imbassaí and lies on the threshold between socio-environmental conflict and impact. It emerged with the construction of the Reserva Imbassaí hotel, which was partially embargoed by the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA). According to Paulo Novaes, the conflict resulted from attempts by the developer at “occupation in wetland areas, due to a very large bridge that was built in Imbassaí and the attempt to occupy the dune belt with a hotel of 250 apartments [...]” Paulo Novaes (*Linha*, 2008, Part 5, 5 min 53 s).

The project is held responsible for the local dispute, and the individuals who denounced it were the then-manager of the APA-LN and Gui Marcovaldi, national coordinator and founder of the Tamar Project. The latter stated that the hotel had initially been planned for a site in front of one of the turtle nesting areas, which motivated his opposition and that of the entire environmental group to the project. The administrative director of the company Reta Atlântico BR, Paulo Seixas, appears in the film but does not address the conflict directly. He merely states that investors need clearer guidance from the state to invest with security. He is among those who point to the ineffective presence of the state in the region.

Cláudia Novaes Machado (2008) studied the relationship between environmental legislation and tourism in the production of space in Imbassaí and also analyzes this socio-environmental conflict

generated by the company Reta Atlântico BR during the construction of the Reserva Imbassaí development, offering new elements beyond those presented in the documentary. Her research confirms that the company intended to occupy areas prohibited by the APA-LN management plan. After a jurisdictional dispute between environmental agencies—IBAMA at the federal level and the Environmental Institute (IMA) at the state level—the company managed to exploit bureaucratic loopholes that ultimately allowed the occupation to proceed. In addition, the then-mayor of Mata de São João, Márcia Cavalcanti Carneiro Dias, of the Brazilian Labor Party (PTB), granted Reta Atlântico a ten-year exemption from the property tax through Law 193/2003 (Machado, 2008).

The Conflict 5, the last identified in the documentary, is closely related to one of the environmental impacts analyzed later on, as it also took place in the communities of Vila Sauípe and Porto de Sauípe, areas in the immediate surroundings of Costa do Sauípe Resort. This episode is narrated by Pombinho, a resident of Vila Sauípe, who reports the clearing of a freshwater spring microbiome carried out by *chegantes*⁸.

This conflict mirrors the dynamic described by Elias and Scotson (2000) between “established” groups and “outsiders,” in which the natives represent the established group—holders of a communal territory governed by their own sociocultural and economic norms. This setting was transformed both by tourism developments and by the arrival of outsiders, who interacted with land and natural goods according to logics different from those of the established group. Shortly before the conflict is made explicit, Pombinho tells us that he was pressured with conversations and promises of gifts so that he would “stop putting pressure” (Linha, 2008, Part 5, 3 min 24 s). He does not identify who these people were, nor does he specify a particular conflict; he simply refers to the harassers as “they.”

He then narrates: “[...] they still had a plot here, called Batinema, which is over on that side. They stayed there and... started clearing the marsh. Then I came over. I told them / I said they had to stop, because if they didn’t stop, I was going to IBAMA. They stopped” (Linha, 2008, Part 5, 3 min 59 s). If, in the first instance—the attempt to silence him—“they” tends to be interpreted as referring to some representative of mass-tourism enterprises, this second “they,” mentioned immediately afterward, points to the possibility of a different kind of interlocutor. Someone who is marked by alterity, but who is not necessarily endowed with differentiated economic power—quite the opposite, given that this second “they” are not described as the ones trying to “buy” Pombinho. He recounts issuing an order, “I told them” (in the sense of “I ordered them to”), then softens it (“I said they had to”), which still constitutes an exercise of power on his part. Whether it was an order or a request, the key point is that “they” left Batinema, and Pombinho’s presumption of authority over the place was accepted by the other party—by “them.” It would thus fall to the established group to indicate and “tell/ask” what should be done, and to the outsiders to respect the orders laid down by the people of the place.

The implementation of these complexes created pockets of poverty on the Northern Coast. The main example is Porto de Sauípe. Right. With the arrival of many people who thought [inaudible] there would be jobs in the Complex [here it appears in the singular], Porto de Sauípe and also Vila de Sauípe ended up being turned into precarious areas in terms of urbanization. Today, we have many informal occupations in the Sauípe River mangrove

⁸ According to Santos (2016), *chegante* is a term used to refer to people who came to work on tourism-related construction projects and decided to remain in the region.

because of this, since neither the government nor the enterprise knew how to include the community in this model of development. Paulo Novaes, manager of the APA-LN (*Linha*, 2008, Part 3, 5 min 54 s).

In line with this interpretation, the first socio-environmental impact is identified as the one resulting from what Paulo Novaes, manager of the APA-LN, defined as the legacy of tourism: “pockets of poverty.” He points out that this type of impact occurred most directly in Vila Sauípe and Porto de Sauípe, for the reasons already mentioned. Local residents expelled from their lands, along with workers left over from the civil construction phase of tourism developments, began to occupy areas further inland, including mangrove forests. The economic and social inequalities brought about by mass tourism are mentioned in various excerpts by business owners, guesthouse operators, and others, as can be seen in the quotation above from Paulo Roberto Souza, the landowner in Santo Antônio.

The second impact, and the last unit of analysis addressed here, is also the first situation presented in the documentary, involving both environmental impacts and conflict. These events took place in the community of Vila Sauípe, and the people who denounced them were Pombinho and João Paiva, both local residents, who held Costa do Sauípe Resort responsible for the environmental impact on the river resulting from the creation of a lagoon used to discharge effluents from the resort’s wastewater treatment plant—nicknamed *Pinicão* by the local population.

This sewage treatment plant has been identified by local residents as a symbol of resistance against the pollution of freshwater springs and watercourses. The waste management and storage model adopted by the resort discharges effluents directly into the ecosystem, including lagoons formed by the Sauípe River and mangrove forests at its mouth—destroying spaces traditionally used for recreational activities and work. As a result, the impact led to restrictions on territorial practices and daily routines following the construction of the Costa do Sauípe Complex. The *Pinicão* is an environmental impact widely known among residents and has been reported to the state through community mobilizations. This impact was the object of study by Liana Nascimento (2010, p. 57), who documented the following situation in the Sauípe River after the construction of the tourism complex:

The sanitary engineer Quize Maia, a specialist in the Environmental Impact Assessment Unit of the Environmental Institute, states that the Sauípe Effluent Treatment Plant is neither meeting local demands nor fulfilling the objectives of its original treatment plan. According to her, the plant was built by the government to support the implementation of the Costa do Sauípe Complex, even though the complex already had its own project for managing liquid effluents through a submarine outfall. The neighboring localities—such as Sauípe, Porto de Sauípe, and Curralinho—have only been partially served by the plant, with no prospect of full coverage. She emphasizes that the financial cost of this facility was significant, covering a large area with preliminary treatment infrastructure and maturation ponds. At the same time, the results of the treatment process have proven to be environmentally and socially costly. The construction errors, she explains, stem in part from the lack of public consultation with local residents regarding the discharge point, the characteristics of the treated effluent, and the risks associated with the river, fauna, and public health. The plant uses an algae-generation process as its final treatment stage; however, this technique alters the color, turbidity, and biochemical oxygen demand of the water due to the high concentrations of organic matter—ultimately resulting in negative impacts on water quality.”

Nascimento (2010) also reports that, since its implementation, sewage from the Costa do Sauípe Complex has been discharged at the bridge—a practice depicted in the documentary *Linha Verde*.

In response, the local population organized and turned to the competent institutions to resolve the dispute, which had been generating socio-environmental impacts since the resort began operating. The “[...] residents’ association denounced the situation in public meetings, newspapers, security and environmental agencies, and to the Public Prosecutor’s Office” (ibid., p. 60). Although the State Public Security Secretariat concluded that urgent mitigation measures were needed to address the impact caused by the effluents from the treatment plant operated by the Bahia Water and Sanitation Company (EMBASA), Nascimento notes that, up to the completion of her research in 2010, no effective measures had been adopted.

Returning to the quotation above, it becomes clear that EMBASA—the state sanitation company—must also be considered technically and politically responsible for the impact. The state government at the time took on the task of managing the resort’s liquid waste and altered the original plan, which had foreseen a submarine outfall under the responsibility of the developers: the construction company Odebrecht and its financial partner, the Pension Fund for Employees of Banco do Brasil (PREVI).

Socio-environmental impacts and conflicts have in common the movement of capital to transform everything—absolutely everything—into a commodity, which, as such, is to be sold, consumed, and used to generate profit, pushing to expand the legal limits of environmental exploitation on the Northern Coast of Bahia. The people of the villages are also folded into this relentless pursuit of profit, whether through the purchase of their labor power for various tasks—almost always manual—or when they are allowed to occupy specific, controlled spaces with their artisanal production, hovering on the boundary between being human subjects and serving as living ornaments of a supposedly “authentic local culture.”

The environment as a whole is disputed by capital, but land is undoubtedly the central element—especially land located in the coastal zone. The commercial tentacles of capital have also been extended over an entire village, such as Santo Antônio, as well as over the mangrove forests and wetlands.

These latter places have been occupied by construction workers who were laid off after the construction of mega hotel developments such as Costa do Sauípe Resort, as well as by local residents displaced from the coastal area by these same tourism projects. In addition, they have been affected by the creation of lagoons, such as *Pinicão*, and by the pollution of freshwater sources through the discharge of the resort’s sewage. If there are disputes over these areas located further inland, what happens along the coast is even more blatant, as in the appropriation of the beaches of Massarandupió and Santo Antônio. In the latter, the village and the beach form a continuum, to the point that the ground of the entire territory is covered with beach sand.

The state appears institutionally as the arbiter of the interests of all groups and should enforce environmental legislation that ultimately aims to safeguard the environment for future generations. However, what this research—and many others referenced in this section—has found regarding the implementation of tourism in the Northern Coast Environmental Protection Area (APA) is a flexibilization of the law, through a game of interpretations designed to guarantee broad and unrestricted financial returns for capital, to the detriment of the communities—some of them centuries old—and of the environment.

Final considerations

We have presented the perspectives and voices of traditional communities affected by various actions driven by the voracious expansion of capital through the massification of environmental tourism, as portrayed in the documentary *Linha Verde: Estrada Cicatriz*. The film, in turn, introduces a range of social actors who, among other aspects, reflect on the capacity of local residents to adapt to the arrival of mass tourism in their villages. Some express a sense of inevitability regarding the transformations under way and the loss of their traditional ways of life. Others, although equally apprehensive, adopt a more proactive discursive stance, seeking to engage with the development process without allowing their communities and territories to be consumed by tourism.

In this sense, responding to the invitation made by the research team in the final section of the documentary—concerning the long-term viability of native populations on the Northern Coast of Bahia—it becomes evident that, in order to persist as ecosystem peoples, the different social groups that have inhabited this region for centuries must resist and stand up, refusing to be defined solely by the logic that capital seeks to impose everywhere, on all forms of human and non-human life. Or, to paraphrase Souza (2015), it is legitimate to question the narrative of passivity often attributed to social actors who must deal with the *verticalities* imposed by biosphere societies—especially considering that environmental tourism itself is now caught up in a dialectical struggle to prevent its own decline, given that its practices are inherently and multiply predatory.

Thus, in light of what was discussed in the previous section, it becomes clear that, on one side, there are ecosystem peoples who have historically maintained relationships of physical and symbolic survival with the environment of the Northern Coast Environmental Protection Area (APA-LN), and, on the other, there is capital, which treats this protected area as a resource to be exploited in the pursuit of ever-greater profits, with the support of the state. The latter occupies a contradictory position, not out of impartiality, but because of its ambiguities. It is important to highlight the state's failure to ensure effective governance in terms of planning, monitoring, and overseeing the socio-environmental consequences of mass tourism in this APA, in keeping with its role as steward of natural assets.

Consequently, on the Northern Coast the process of territorial appropriation tends to favor external investors to the detriment of local residents. This dynamic is made possible by ambiguities and ever-shifting interpretations of the notion of sustainability, which serve to relax environmental legislation in the face of capital's interests. The affected communities, for their part—even when organized in associations—have shown limited organizational capacity to resist these processes, as illustrated by the conflicts and impacts presented in the testimonies featured in the film.

Public authorities have oriented their actions in the region mainly toward favoring large-scale enterprises, particularly through their management of technical reports (EIAs and RIMAs) for environmental licensing and by providing road infrastructure, basic sanitation, and other urban amenities that serve to create urbanized bubbles for tourism. They have also taken part in development plans that include recurrent tax incentives and, in less profitable phases, have even acted as direct financiers of tourism projects.

Based on what has been discussed, two inferences can be drawn. The first, of a conceptual nature, is that a socio-environmental impact does not necessarily bring an end to a related conflict. In

other words, the conflict may persist even after the impact has occurred, passing through phases of confrontation and moments of tacit or ritual suspension, until new dynamics rekindle the dispute. This continuity may stem either from the possibility of reversing the impact—restoring the object of contention as a common natural good and rehabilitating it environmentally, where applicable—or from the impossibility of such recovery. In the latter scenario, the conflict may continue to reverberate both in lived experience and in the collective memory of the affected group.

The second inference concerns Brazil's current environmental challenges in light of its colonial past, specifically the historically unresolved and deliberately neglected issue of the country's agrarian question. Brazil has never carried out a comprehensive legal distinction between public and private lands; it has failed to regularize land tenure for peasant communities, has not fully demarcated Indigenous territories, has not titled even half of the remaining *quilombola* territories, and to this day does not effectively enforce the basic constitutional principle of the social function of land. In short, in the words of one of the foremost specialists on Brazil's agrarian question, José de Souza Martins (2010), land remains a captive good since the enactment of the Land Law of 1850 and is treated as a volatile commodity within the various frameworks imposed by the expansion of capital.

Finally, we may conclude that in the documentary, issues such as ethnic rights, restricted access to coastal areas, basic sanitation challenges, constraints on subsistence and work practices, and the arrival of outsiders intersect with broader disputes over land ownership and land use on Bahia's Northern Coast, as can be traced in the conflicts and socio-environmental impacts identified in the film. The Green Line, as a trauma inscribed in the territories, cosmologies, and social memories of local populations, remains an open scar, vulnerable to new socio-environmental lacerations.

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Linha Verde-Estrada Cicatriz: Conflitos Socioambientais e Impactos na Costa Norte da Bahia

Resumo

Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar os conflitos e impactos socioambientais que surgiram e se intensificaram paralelamente à mais recente onda de expansão do capital na costa norte do estado da Bahia, impulsionada pela implantação do turismo de massa. Esse processo teve início com a construção do primeiro resort *all-inclusive* do Brasil, o Costa do Sauípe Resort, apoiado por políticas públicas, notadamente por meio da construção e ampliação da rodovia BA-099, conhecida como Linha Verde. Esta investigação qualitativa toma como objeto de análise o documentário “Linha Verde: Estrada Cicatriz”, produzido em 2008 por uma equipe de pesquisadores da Faculdade de Comunicação da Universidade Federal da Bahia (UFBA), por meio da chamada pública “Ponto de Cultura”. O documentário apresenta um conjunto diversificado de atores sociais que, por meio de seus depoimentos, relatam eventos e contradições em torno de transformações fundamentais que remodelaram o tecido social e ambiental do Litoral Norte da Bahia durante a transição do século XX para o século XXI. Como estratégia metodológica, este artigo apresenta sete unidades de análise: duas relacionadas aos impactos ambientais e cinco relacionadas aos conflitos socioambientais, a maioria dos quais ocorreu ao longo da costa do município de Mata de São João, onde o resort está localizado. O artigo conclui que os objetos de disputa são os territórios terrestres e aquáticos (mar, manguezais, lagoas e rios) pertencentes às comunidades locais, bem como seus modos de vida historicamente construídos, intimamente ligados aos bens naturais e aos espaços comuns, como as praias.

Palavras-chave: Povos Ecosistêmicos; Área de Proteção Ambiental (APA) do Litoral Norte; Estado; Capital; Turismo.

Linha Verde-Estrada Cicatriz: Conflictos Socioambientales e Impactos en la Costa Norte de Bahía

Resumen

El presente artículo tiene como objetivo analizar los conflictos e impactos socioambientales que han surgido y se han intensificado junto con la más reciente ola de expansión del capital en la costa norte del estado de Bahía (noreste de Brasil), impulsada por la implementación del turismo masivo. Este proceso comenzó con la construcción del primer resort todo incluido de Brasil, el Costa do Sauípe Resort, respaldado por políticas públicas, en particular mediante la construcción y ampliación de la carretera BA-099, conocida como Linha Verde. Esta investigación cualitativa toma como objeto de análisis el documental *Linha Verde: Estrada Cicatriz* (Línea Verde: Autopista Cicatriz, en español), producido en 2008 por un equipo de investigadores de la Facultad de Comunicación de la Universidad Federal de Bahía (UFBA), a través de la convocatoria pública Ponto de Cultura. El documental presenta un conjunto diverso de actores sociales que, a través de sus testimonios, relatan los acontecimientos y contradicciones que rodearon las transformaciones clave que remodelaron el tejido social y medioambiental de la costa norte de Bahía durante la transición del siglo XX al XXI. Como estrategia metodológica, este artículo presenta siete unidades de análisis: dos relacionadas con los impactos ambientales y cinco relacionadas con los conflictos socioambientales, la mayoría de los cuales se produjeron a lo largo de la costa del municipio de Mata de São João, donde se encuentra el complejo turístico. El artículo concluye que los objetos de disputa son los territorios terrestres y acuáticos (mar, manglares, lagunas y ríos) que pertenecen a las comunidades locales, así como sus formas de vida construidas históricamente, estrechamente vinculadas a los activos naturales y los espacios comunitarios, como las playas.

Palabras clave: Pueblos del Ecosistema; Área de Protección Ambiental (APA) de la Costa Norte; Estado; Capital; Turismo.

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