

COP30: Between the Showcase of Green Capital and the Urgency of a Popular Ecological Transition Project



Mundano (Brazil), *O Brigadista da Floresta* (The Forest Firefighter), 2021. A 46-meter-high mural made of

ashes collected from 4 Brazilian biomes devastated by fire. Reinterpretation of *O Lavrador de Café* (*The Coffee Farmer*) (1934), by Cândido Portinari.

Greetings from the Nuestra América Office of the Tricontinental Institute for Social Research,

The 30th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change or COP30, was just held in the Brazilian Amazon. To better understand the dynamics in place, we asked Bárbara Loureiro from Brazil's Landless Movement (MST) to contribute to this debate:

COP30, held in Belém do Pará, deep in the Amazon, between November 10 and 21, centered the debate on the climate crisis. At the same time, it clearly revealed the extent to which environmental policy remains captured by corporate interests, financial capital, and the colonial rationale that transforms forests, rivers, sun, wind, and peoples into objects of management for the benefit of rich countries and economic elites.

More than a diplomatic meeting, COP30 served as a mirror: on one side, the celebration of the so-called “market solutions” and financial decarbonization; on the other, and in a parallel and autonomous way, the growing strength of the popular movement, which made Belém a territory for denunciation, internationalist solidarity, and the construction of real alternatives. This tension ran through all the debates, decisions, and disputes that marked the event.

The dominant climate policy is based on the idea that it is possible to tackle the ecological crisis without confronting its drivers, believing that the only way to address it is by aligning it with market principles: capitalist accumulation, colonial exploitation and the expropriation of territories, and the power of transnational corporations.

In Belém, this contradiction became even more evident in the context of the celebration of the ten-year anniversary of the Paris Agreement. Despite being widely hailed as a historical landmark, the Agreement has failed to put the world on a viable path to address global warming. In practice, it only served to deepen the regulation and spread of mechanisms for the financialization of nature, without tackling the structural causes of the climate crisis.

Official projections indicate warming of around 2.5°C by the end of the century, while the deep cuts in Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions needed to keep warming to “just” 1.5°C remain distant and politically blocked.

COP30 made it even clearer that contemporary environmental policy is profoundly subordinate to capital and structured by a colonial rationality that persists in the 21st century. International climate decisions—which supposedly should address the ecological crisis—do not stem from the conservation and recovery of ecosystems, but from the need to guarantee the continuity of accumulation, transforming forests, rivers, sun, wind, and territories into strategic financial assets.

This logic is articulated around two central pillars: the absolute primacy of accumulation (which places market solutions above ecological integrity) and the colonial view that treats the Global

South as sacrificial zones, intended to provide “environmental services” to maintain the standard of living and consumption of the Northern powers. Thus, while the Amazon and its biomes are sliced up into carbon metrics, “management plans,” and so-called renewable energies, there is no international willingness to confront the core of the problem: the capitalist mode of production, which continues to define technological, regulatory, and financial standards that bind the Global South in a subordinate role.



MAHKU Collective (Brazil), *Rashuaka*, 2022.

Trillion-Dollar Promises, Symbolic Deliveries

The so-called Baku to Belém Roadmap promised to mobilize \$1.3 trillion for mitigation and adaptation. But it is a paper giant: it mixes international resources with national funds that many countries don’t even possess, lacks monitoring mechanisms, and follows the logic of financial capital, which favors low-risk projects with high economic returns—exactly the opposite of the adaptation needs of peripheral countries.

Governments, scientists, and experts criticized the lack of binding mechanisms, the absence of clarity regarding the true origin of resources, and the imprecision of goals. The final COP30 document was widely interpreted as insufficient and disconnected from the climate urgency. The main criticism is that there are no guarantees of implementation and no accountability instruments. In practice, the countries only agreed to ‘strive’ to triple funding, but without

specifying who pays, how much, and where the financial resources come from.

Without robust and redistributive climate finance, NDCs (national emission reduction plans) remain fragile and insufficient. In the Brazilian case, for example, although the country presents goals to reduce emissions by 59% to 67% by 2035 (relative to 2005), zero illegal deforestation by 2030, and eliminate all deforestation by 2035, there is no indication that the agribusiness production model—the origin of deforestation—will be confronted. This is a model that continues to expand, especially over the Amazon biome, even if its narrative claims that this predatory expansion is not part of a supposed “rational, modern, and technological agribusiness,” but rather an outdated part of the agricultural sector.

Furthermore, the Brazilian government remains surrendered to agribusiness, which captures public structures like public companies, universities, and research centers in pursuit of a “greening” effort. One consequence of this capture is that the government refuses to impose specific and restrictive targets on the sector, which is **precisely the country’s largest GHG emitter**. Thus, climate promises coexist with the continuity of an agricultural model that blocks real progress and prevents the necessary structural transformation.

The Brazilian Showcase and the People’s Trap

The Tropical Forests Forever Facility (TFFF), a proposal from the Brazilian government to create a global and permanent financing mechanism for the conservation of tropical forests and announced as a major innovation for protecting forests, synthesizes the colonial logic of financialization. It is devised based on the idea that the forest will only be preserved if it has economic value. That is, the forest does not have value in itself but will only be preserved if a price is assigned to it. Billions of dollars would be raised by multilateral banks which would buy public and private bonds from the Global South, and these countries end up paying interest to the very agents who “finance” their preservation. It is a mechanism that transfers wealth from the South to the North while turning forests into assets, and territories and ways of life into risk metrics.

With payments of at most four dollars per hectare and criteria that criminalize traditional practices, the TFFF neither reduces deforestation nor addresses its causes, but merely reinforces financial control over the Amazon. Not by chance, European countries backed away due to the “high risk.” Initial expectations of \$125 billion proved to be a fantasy; even the reduced goal of \$10 billion was not reached by the end of this COP.

The most worrying aspect is that this initiative was accepted by some progressive segments and even defended by these sectors as a step forward, despite representing a deepening of the financialization of nature, as the TFFF will price not only carbon but several other “environmental services.” This thesis follows the supposed defense of the international leadership of the Lula government on the environmental issue. However, this leadership will be devoid of meaning if its content does not point to concrete solutions for the environmental crisis constructed by the people.



Denilson Baniwa (Brazil), *Natureza morta 1* (Still Life 1), 2016.

The Protagonism of Corporations at the COP

COP30 consolidated the corporate capture of the climate crisis. Banks and large transnational corporations transformed pavilions, events, and thematic houses into centers for lobbying and business opportunities. **Corporate media received environmental sponsorships from companies with extensive social and environmental liabilities**, affecting the independence of the coverage. A revealing scene showed **1,602 fossil fuel lobbyists freely circulating in the negotiations**, a presence larger than that of almost all countries, except for the Brazilian delegation itself.

Although Brazil advocated for the construction of a “Transition Away from Fossil Fuels Roadmap”, the final text did not include any concrete commitment to eliminate the use of these resources, did not set dates for the end of oil, gas, and coal production, and ignored scientific recommendations for a rapid phase-out of fossil sources. The absence of this commitment was considered by international experts a “structural failure” of COP30 and is due to direct pressure from the lobby of producing countries and companies in the sector.

Agribusiness: The Invisible General of the COP

Agribusiness acted as one of the most organized and influential blocks at COP30. Its objectives were clear: to present itself as the protagonist of the climate solution through technological fixes, to expand its access to public and private financing, to block stricter environmental regulations, and to direct the global climate debate according to its interests.

To achieve this, it exhaustively used terms like “regenerative agriculture,” “tropical agriculture,” and “bioeconomy”—discourses that seek to greenwash practices based on monocultures, intensive use of pesticides, and territorial expansion. This strategy relies on the narrative that Brazilian agribusiness is highly technological and, therefore, automatically sustainable, even when its environmental impacts indicate the contrary.

The Agrizone, the space led by the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (Embrapa) during COP30, was heavily sponsored by corporations like Bayer and Nestlé, in addition to hosting structures of the federal government itself. It served as a privileged showcase for that project: business environment, lobbying, and reputation engineering that reinforces the corporate capture of climate policy.

It is worth remembering that Brazil is one of the countries with the highest number of murders of environmentalists and leaders of rural and forest peoples in the world. This act is the front line before the deforestation of forests. Data from the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) reveal an alarming picture: 2024 presented the second-highest number of conflicts in rural areas since 1985. The Amazon remains the most vulnerable region, and the state of Pará, site of COP30, leads the records of murders and attempted murders. That scenario of structural violence is directly linked to the expansion of agribusiness and its model of conservative modernization, which deepens historical contradictions regarding the use, tenure, and ownership of land in Brazil, as well as different ways of understanding the relationship between humanity and nature.



Hulda Guzmán (Dominican Republic), *"Come Dance" -Asked Nature Kindly*, 2019-20.

The People's Summit and the Popular Counterpoint

While COP30 expressed the advance of financial enclosures over nature, the People's Summit, held from November 12 to 16 in parallel with the official Conference, expressed the strength of the resistance. Over 25,000 registered participants, more than 1,200 articulated organizations, and an internationalist boat protest with over 200 vessels; the global march had 70,000 people. Delegations from 60 countries produced a document denouncing environmental racism, the power of corporations, and the false solutions of green capitalism, identifying capitalism as the engine of the climate crisis.

The Summit reaffirmed that there is no climate solution within the system that created the crisis, and that only popular organization can confront the common enemy: capitalism in its imperialist, racist, and patriarchal expressions.

The number of demonstrations in various spaces within COP30 and at the Agrizone also expressed discontent with the incapacity of these global governance structures, led primarily by the UN, to present effective solutions to the various global conflicts.

COP30 demonstrated that the climate debate is also a debate about the model of society, as shown by the dossier from the Tricontinental Institute for Social Research, *The Environmental Crisis Is a Capitalist Crisis*. For popular movements, there are three urgent and necessary tasks:

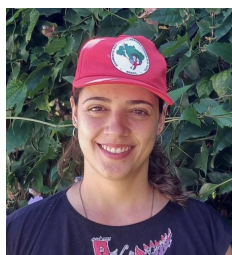
1. **Politicize the Environmental Dispute:** It is essential to continue building the environmental struggle by directly confronting agribusiness and mining, sectors that remain untouched at the center of emissions and territorial destruction. Politicizing the dispute also means denouncing the false solutions that are gaining traction, based on the financialization of nature, carbon markets, and “green” funds that deepen dependencies and render the structural causes of the crisis invisible.
2. **Expand Popular Mobilization:** For the climate agenda to become a transformative social force, it is urgent to broaden the capacity for popular mobilization, strengthening grassroots organizations, localizing the environmental debate, and connecting issues such as housing, sanitation, food, transportation, energy, and access to land with the climate struggle.
3. **Build Its Own Program for a Just and Popular Ecological Transition:** Movements need to project a transition program that confronts corporate power, recovers the centrality of common goods, and reorganizes the economy based on the needs of the people. This implies massifying the production of healthy food, strengthening agroecology, guaranteeing energy sovereignty, and placing water, soil, forests, and energy outside of financial markets.

COP30 clearly exposed that dominant climate policy remains aligned with capital, and that there is no solution capable of addressing the structural causes of the ecological crisis within these frameworks. At the same time, it showed that there is an insurgent path, built by peoples, movements, and territories that, in their daily lives, produce the only solutions truly rooted in life and socio-environmental justice.

The historical task before us is to transform that social force into a political project: a popular, anti-colonial, agroecological, and anti-capitalist ecological transition, because there is no real way out of the climate crisis without a rupture with the capitalist model, and there is no possible rupture without popular organization, without collective struggle, and without confronting the structures that profit from devastation.

Greetings to all,

Bárbara Loureiro



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