Brazil's deferred highway: mobility, development, and anticipating the state in Amazonia

Jeremy M. Campbell
Roger Williams University
Department of Anthropology and Sociology
Dirección electronica: jmcampbell@rwu.edu

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Abstract. Four decades ago, Brazilian officials plotted designs for colonization and resource extraction in Amazonia; subsequently the region has become a test-lab for successive development regimes. Along the Santarém-Cuiabá Highway (Br-163) in the state of Pará, residents have engaged in a range of licit and illicit activities as official development policy has shifted throughout the years. Despite assertions that living along the unpaved road is tantamount to "being stuck" in place and time, residents move widely throughout the region, using the road, trails, streams, and rivers as thoroughfares. I argue that "being stuck" functions as a discursive label for illegible mobilities and the speculative economies they support as agrarian reform clients, ranchers, and others compete for position in anticipation of the road's paving. Novel forms of resource speculation result from the labor of moving and maintaining anticipatory structures along the road, a process that remains obscure from state development projects.
Keywords: mobility, intimacy, futures, participatory development, Amazonia.

La autopista diferida de Brazil: movilidad, desarrollo y anticipación del estado en la Amazonia

Resumen. Hace cuatro décadas, funcionarios del gobierno brasileño diseñaron planes para la colonización y extracción de recursos en la Amazonia; desde entonces, la región se ha convertido en un laboratorio de prueba para sucesivos regímenes de desarrollo. Quienes habitan a lo largo de la carretera Cuiabá-Santarém (Br-163) en el estado de Pará, han participado en una serie de actividades lícitas e ilícitas, mientras que la política oficial para el desarrollo se transforma a través de los años. A pesar de las

afirmaciones según las cuales vivir a lo largo de la carretera sin pavimentar equivale a "estar atrapado" en un lugar y en el tiempo, los habitantes se mueven ampliamente en toda la región, utilizando la carretera, trochas, arroyos y ríos. En este artículo sugiero que "estar atrapado" funciona como un rótulo discursivo para las movilidades ilegibles y las economías especulativas que dichas movilidades sostienen. Mientras el mundo de lo ilegible y lo especulativo prospera, los programas de reforma agraria, los ganaderos y los otros actores intentan posicionarse en espera de la pavimentación de la carretera. Nuevas formas de especulación alrededor de los recursos empiezan a consolidarse como consecuencia de la labor de mover y mantener "estructuras de anticipación" a lo largo del camino, un proceso que permanece en la oscuridad para los proyectos de desarrollo estatales.

Palabras claves: movilidad, intimidad, futuros, desarrollo participativo, Amazonia.

Opening

It's easy to lose one's way on the *picada* heading into the woods east of Bigode's homestead along the unpaved Santarém-Cuiabá (Br-163) highway in the Brazilian Amazon. In the area around Castelo de Sonhos, where Bigode and I are hiking with a friend from another roadside settlement, it is common for a colonist to confuse his *picada* —essentially a long forest trail that doubles as a boundary marker— with someone else's. "When that happens," Bigode explains, "it's usually just the case that the poor sunuvabitch is lost, and wanders into some strange area, where sometimes the other guy is waiting and just shoots him. Happens around here a lot," he says, and adds some nonchalant emphasis by flinging a stick at a nearby brazil-nut *(castanheira)* tree trunk. The stick comes to rest near our friend Raimunda, a fellow agrarian reform activist who is visiting Castelo de Sonhos to participate in a regional participatory planning seminar. "We wouldn't want to get stuck out here," she quips, "Or else those guys from Brasília might have to come out here and get us!" We decide to turn back so as not to miss the "participatory development seminar" that promises to discuss the latest plans to pave the long abandoned Br-163 highway that links this former gold-mining region in the midst of the Amazon rainforest to the expanding agricultural heartland of Brazil's center-west.

As we hike the eight kilometers back to Castelo, I ask Bigode and Raimunda what they are more scared of-taking the wrong picada home or missing the chance to participate in the development seminar. "That's easy," Bigode answers, "what we need to be afraid of is not getting the government's attention, finally after all these years. If we don't, there will be a maze of picadas out here soon." "And a bunch of pistol-men patrolling them," Raimunda adds. Bigode admits the stakes couldn't be higher: "If more money and guns muscle up from the south, then that's the end for us. We've got to convince the government that we're stuck, out here on this road. If it's to be paved, it can't be paved on our backs."[1]

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1 This conversation took place on May 15, 2007, in Castelo de Sonhos district, municipality of Altamira, Pará, Brazil. The meeting which we later attended was regional a regional seminar in which the Federal government and a semi-public research agency (EMBRAPA) divulged the

In this exchange Bigode and Raimunda are highlighting, with a wink and a nudge between them, their working knowledge that contemporary debates over development in Amazonia are structured by a need to identify villains and victims. Stuck between the prospects of being blamed for the forests' destruction on the one hand and the daily realities of violence, displacement, and government inattention on the other, longtime colonists like Bigode and Raimunda willfully construct themselves as *needing help*. In this framing, these smallholder colonists *(posseiros)* are literally and metaphorically stuck in an out-of-the-way place with little hope for social mobility, given government inattention and the risks of being associated with more recently arrived ranchers, loggers, or speculators.

Each year since the Br-163 Highway was inaugurated in 1974, seasonal rains have rendered the road impassable for four to seven months out of every twelve. Land reform colonists such as Bigode and Raimunda are only one social group that narrate the region as retrograde, as truckers, ranchers, and even itinerant river traders describe the area's woes through use of the same idiom: "stuck," not moving. Yet as I show in this paper, this claim to being stuck is a situated and tactical diversion away from the undeniable facts of life in Amazonia: people move, and in so doing construct vibrant economies and relations. As the Brazilian government has recently turned towards a participatory development model in Amazonia, native residents, long-time settlers, and non-local speculators have found themselves in a chorus of voices calling for governance and investment along the Br-163 highway. Why these diverse groups, despite their differences, would each narrate the region as stuck in arrested development is the paradox from which this paper begins (vide figure 1).

The available literature on colonization in the Amazon —and for that matter the attitudes and pronouncements of government and NGO planners (Alencar, 2005; Brazil, 2006)— seems to endorse the idea that life along the Br-163 is stuck. The standard histories of government megaprojects in the region see roads as having paved the way for deforestation and the expansion of cattle ranching rather than any intended socioeconomic benefits of land reform (Schmink and Wood, 1992; Nugent and Harris, 2004). While this explanation may hold along the paved and more thickly settled Transamazonian Highway, the unpaved and rather inchoate Br-163 shows that land reform colonists did not wholly give way to loggers, gold-miners, ranchers, and land mafia speculators in quick succession (compare Moran, 1979). Nor did governance simply vanish, as national banks continue to finance large agricultural projects and government corruption plays a key role in local economies (Modesto dos Passos, 2007: 34-41). People arrived and continue to move throughout the re-

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results of a three-year zoning study within the "Area of Influence of the Br-163." This study, known as ZEE (Zoneamento Ecológico-Econômico), was discussed in an audience of approximately 500 Castelenses at the Catholic pavilion in the settlement. See Baletti (2012) for more on the participatory zoning process in Pará.

gion, and if we follow their mobile practices, we see how Amazonians piece together unofficial economies that remain vital precisely because of official misrecognition. When called upon to participate in planning seminars or otherwise interact with distant bureaucrats, a diverse array of roadside residents deploys a refrain of "being stuck" along the Br-163 highway. Yet these same residents constantly engage in speculative activities in the effort to become economically (and spatially) mobile: being-stuck thus serves as a prophylactic, constructing a buffer of official ignorance to the illegible mobilities of a cross-section of Amazonians.

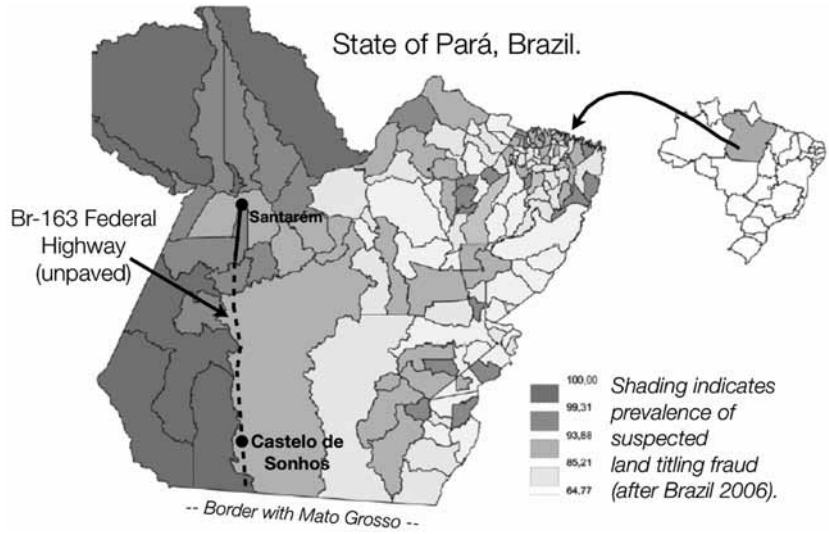

Figure 1. Map of Study Area

In this paper I employ a research methodology developed by ethnographers studying mobility along Amazonian rivers, where they have found that rhythms of movement help construct senses of place and social obligation (Harris, 2000; Raffles, 2002). I apply these insights to the dynamic mobilities and interactivities that attain along the Br-163 in and around Castelo de Sonhos. After a brief review of the history of development in Amazonia, I will trace the arrival stories, daily itineraries, and economic practices of two very different residents of Castelo de Sonhos, Bigode and Claudio, as they move widely throughout the region. As these men profess their lack of physical or economic mobility, they also negotiate —by moving about the landscape— a range of anticipatory practices that help them cement ties to places, resources, and the mutual obligation of others along the road. To understand the relationship between residents' unofficial mobilities and speculative practices, I develop the concept of *intimate mobilities* to track those mobile practices through

which roadside residents construct future-making projects that make selective use of development promises and rumors. This is patchy ground, where migration stories and histories of developmentalism layer upon one another, bringing the territorial practices of native peoples, rubber tappers, exhausted goldminers, agrarian reformers, ranchers, and real estate barons into close proximity. Rather than taking for granted residents' admissions of "being stuck" and therefore disconnected from the rest of Brazil, attending to the intimate mobilities of roadside residents opens to the practices through which new relations to old promises are being worked out in a "forgotten" frontier zone in Amazonia. Residents' itineraries, and the stories to which they attach themselves, reveal an array of future-projects roadside dwellers have in mind for the region, situated as they are in locally manifest histories of violence, speculation, and affiliation.

Development in Amazonia: From *Ditadura* to Participation

The dream of a north-south artery linking central Brazil to the Amazon River first circulated in print in 1844, in a short pamphlet passed around the imperial court which argued that a railroad should be built where the Santarém-Cuiabá Highway (Br-163) would eventually come to be located. Brazil's version of continental expansionism got its first formal theorist in 1931, when Colonel Mário Travassos popularized the notion that the central government should invest in infrastructure and resettlement in the nation's vast Amazonian possessions (Travassos, 1947). After the military dictatorship *(ditadura)* came to power in 1964, leading generals hailed Travassos's ideas and made them the foundation of the junta's "security, sovereignty, and development" stance towards Amazonia. In a now famous phrase, President-General Emilio Medici announced that roads, agrarian reform resettlement, and other broad investments in the region "will link land without men in Amazonia to men without land in the Northeast" (1970: 79). The east-west Transamazonian Highway and its north-south equivalent, the Br-163, were the first roads to be built during the ditadura's "National Integration Plan" (1970-1974); the Transamazonian was largely paved from the start, whereas the Br-163 has been paved gradually over the last three decades, and only in Mato Grosso state.[2]

Analysts rightfully critique the ditadura for the arrogance and short-sightedness of its Amazonian development plans. Many read the "failure" of the generals' roads to secure socially- and ecologically-just development as very much the point: agrarian reform was not a real priority for the junta, which only ever desired a military, and later corporate, presence in the region (Bunker, 1985; Little, 2001). If development

2 Adrian Cowell, close associate of the indigenist Vilas-Boas brothers, accompanied an advance crew of natives and government scouts who were charged with surveying the Br-163's right-of-way and removing indigenous groups to the Xingú National Park (1973).

"failed" to provide land and opportunities to Brazil's poor, the regime's backers could be assuaged by the impressive figures sustaining the erstwhile "Brazilian miracle" (Schmink and Wood, 1992: 58-89). Ethnographers have chronicled how contradictory federal policies towards the Amazon encouraged violent confrontations between corporations and peasants, especially along the Transamazonian Highway (Schmink and Wood, 1992; Hecht and Cockburn, 1989), and in the larger ambit scholars have argued that the generals' roads —unmanaged and unpoliced— are ultimately responsible for the Amazon's haphazard settlement and alarming deforestation rates (cf. Fearnside, 2007; Lisansky, 1990, London & Kelly, 2007). These approaches, though powerful in their illumination of the role that roads have played in the repeated making and unmaking of Amazonian development policy, have told us little about the conduct of daily life along the roads themselves. When critics do see roads as populated and socially diverse, roadside communities nonetheless seem predestined as vehicles for inevitable "frontier expansion" (Foweraker, 1981) or as embattled societies in the midst of a receding natural world (Lisansky, 1990, Schmink & Wood, 1992). Elsewhere I have argued that there exists a wide gap between the figural developmental plans articulated at great distances from the Amazon and the material realities that settlers, speculators, and migrants confront and construct as they move through the region at the behest of such state visions (Campbell, 2012). Logistical challenges of traveling along unmaintained highways in the region notwithstanding, migrants continue to come to Amazonia, pushed by the imbalance of resources in other parts of Brazil or pulled by rumors of gold or other prospects. Along the unpaved Br-163, residents certainly have inherited "failed" government policies, and have also engaged in widely destructive economic activities, but the sheer remoteness of the region and its distinctly rural character set it apart from the roads analyzed and critiqued in the literature.

The Brazilian and international press lately has begun focusing on the expansion of soy cultivation on the southern fringes of the Amazon rainforests, and the Br-163 is very much at the center of this unfolding drama (cf. London & Kelly, 2007). Two themes emerge in this coverage, the first of which echoes foregoing scholarly work on Amazonian roads: in addition to presenting stark deforestation figures, journalists describe towns along the road as tinder-boxes of social unrest, defeatism, and ennui. Though these people received "development," one observer notes, "they are in desperate need of truly sustainable choices" (Philips, 2006). The second prevailing theme in this coverage is the measured hope that soy cultivation might provide the incentive for consistent government attention in the region. Tax revenues from soy farms will "finally attract governance," and strike a balance between "rational productive activity and conservation" (London & Kelly, 2007: 115; cf. The Economist, 2004). "Stuck" since having been duped by broken development promises, Amazonians seem poised to receive progress with a program that "recon-

ciles growth with respect for the environment," while also, "providing opportunities for all to share in the wealth."[3]

It is not surprising that popular media outlets would promote these two visions of roadside life —fraught with decay, but retaining one last hope for progress— as it is these very images that are promoted in the policies put forward in Brazil's latest development plan to pave the Br-163 (Brazil, 2006). Inspired by good-governance sociology (Sachs, 2001) and conceived with input from a broad array of public institutions, research NGOs, multi-lateral lenders, and roadside residents like Bigode and Raimunda, the "Plano Br-163" proposes to pave the Br-163 to achieve several economic, ecological, and social goals (cf. Alencar, 2004, 2005; Margulis, 2003). Though the plan has its critics (notably Fearnside, 2007) and it remains unrealized at the time of writing, this "participatory and sustainable development plan" for paving the Br-163 responds to the critiques leveled at the ditadura's methods and goals.[4] While it cannot undo what has been done, one official described the Plano Br-163 to me in the following way: "it's the right vehicle for getting funds to the region, for pumping life back into it, while also securing the future of conservation and traditional peoples' rights."[5] Whereas the generals built their roads to secure territory, the Plano Br-163 looks to build a road to ensure a stable, rational, and thoroughly modern region, and proposes to do so by way of a deliberative, transparent, and democratic process.

In forty years, the endpoint of Brazilian developmentalism has shifted, but it is not altogether different: the generals and the democrats both dream of a *proper* road and the kinds of efficient and legible mobilities that go with it. Traveling from Cuiabá to Santarém would take only twelve hours on a hardtop road (instead of nearly four days now), and the difference here is both the result and harbinger of *progress*. I would like to interrupt this tendency —among backers and critics— to interpret good mobilities as standard, fast, and modern. In so doing, I engage with

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3 This spike in popular attention paid to the impending paving of the Br-163 can be linked to the year-on-year rise in global commodity prices, which for soy and rice have been rising steadily since 1995 (Steward, 2007). In 2000, the North American cereal giant Cargill constructed a grain elevator and shipping facility in Santarém, and hopes to receive cereals from Mato Grosso via a newly-paved Br-163. The retooling of western Pará's infrastructure for grain export has caused tremendous controversy, and the Cargill facility has been subject of many campaigns by Greenpeace and other activist organizations. A federal court order closed the grain elevator was closed during my fieldwork due to irregularities in the facility's environmental impact reports.

4 Barbosa de Almeida (2002) and Chernela (2005) are foremost among many who have chronicled how social movements (among rubber tappers or fishing communities) pressed for the end of the dictatorship, and have subsequently engaged a patchwork of development realities since the *abertura* (democratization), including the proliferation of global actors (NGOs and multi-lateral lenders) on the scene.

5 Conversation with a Brazilian Forest Service official, Santarém, May 28, 2007.

ethnographers of riparian communities throughout the Amazon, who have keenly observed the ways in which slow and deliberate travel rhythms synch with labor, the upkeep of kin relations, and the maintenance of intimate local knowledges along rivers (Harris, 2000: 125-64; Raffles, 2002: 180-206). Away from development deliberations, mobility occupies many more states than "stuck" or "modern".

Following mobilities within development encounters offers two key insights into social relations along the Br-163. First, as I traveled to and from dozens of public meetings along the road in 2006-07, it became clear that the "development state" that appeared so inert in documents and policy papers is stitched together in social practice. Engaged and knowledgeable bureaucrats were neither out-of-touch nor unsympathetic to roadside peoples as they came to know them through their travels (see Mathews, 2011). Nor were state representatives naïve to the range of licit and illicit activities that supposedly "stuck" villagers were pursuing. NGO activists and low-level officials were often critically self-aware of the limits of dialogue, the relative "thinness" of state promises, and the logistical challenges to implementing policy, no matter how well-conceived (Mosse, 2005) (vide figure 2).

Figure 2. Stuck in the Mud, outside Castelo de Sonhos (February 2008)

Second, Br-163 residents' mobilities powerfully illustrate that there is much more going on in rural people's daily lives than progressive narratives might predict. Thus even if development is seen as a failure, and even if roadside residents are resignedly critical of the state's ability to deliver on decades worth of promises, people continue to engage state plans. This is a different formulation from that

of James Ferguson, who has argued that Zambians have experienced "a crisis of meaning," leaving them abjectly hopeless as they come to see modernization as a myth (1999: 14). Though the ethnographic details of Zambia and Amazonia differ greatly, roadside residents (especially native groups and agrarian reform colonists) have suffered similar disappointments and abjection. I offer that our ethnographic analysis should not end with this "end of development" dystopia; instead, I am drawn to how rural peoples challenge "specific structures and processes of *dis*connection" when they move to forge unofficial connections with one another, landscapes, and state actors (Ferguson, 1999: 238).

Intimate Mobilities and Speculative Practices

Taking mobilities seriously means taking forms of intimacy seriously. In a highly influential formulation, Michael Herzfeld develops the concept of "cultural intimacy" in order to get inside how "social actors use, reformulate, and recast official idioms in the pursuit of often highly unofficial personal goals" (2005: 2). For Herzfeld, the formal doctrines of the state —the authorized versions of life along the Br-163, for example— are juxtaposed to their pragmatic actualities, in which "intimate self-knowledge" is worked out, locally and surreptitiously. Applying this distinction to Amazonian development encounters, we can see narratives of being-stuck or being-abandoned by a corrupt state as "pervasive essentialisms" effective at both the official and vernacular levels (Herzfeld, 2005: 3-14). Along the Br-163, residents participate in constructing these essentialisms, and take part in official development encounters (public meetings, documents, planning commissions), which no one trusts represent reality fully. By meeting the requirements of being-stuck, roadside residents make themselves legible to the prevailing development optic: if they are stuck, they must require the state's attention and patronage (Scott, 1998). In practice, roadside residents who play along with the official rhetoric of development are ensuring that their vernacular practices —which include moving and speculating and (for some) growing fabulously wealthy along the Br-163— remain uninterrogated by the developmentalist state.[6]

I am interested in the kinds of moving, forms of relation, and modes of narrating daily life that fall out of official discourses but nevertheless help structure residents' livelihoods and future prospects; after Herzfeld, I am calling these intimate mobilities. When analyzing these practices, the distinction between "official" and "vernacular" seems to blur, and here Kathleen Stewart's recent work on "ordinary affects" is instructive. Stewart contends that "public feelings begin and end in broad circulation, but they're also the stuff that intimate lives are made of" and that "public

6 I am grateful to Andrew Mathews for suggesting the correlation between Herzfeld's views on "cultural intimacy" and my own observations on the publicly-private realms of interaction along the Br-163.

and private spheres draw into a tight circuit, giving the ordinary the fantasy quality of a private life writ large on the world" (Stewart, 2007: 2-3, 104). It is this language of fantastically unpredictable concomitance of the public and the private that I would like to apply to stories and circulations along the Br-163. Development encounters are shaped by much more than the instrumentalism of patron-client relations between the state and subjects, and tracking to what degree on-the-ground behaviors match official rhetoric only takes analysis so far. For squatters, itinerants, and ranchers along the Br-163, there is a familiarity with locally salient rules of engagement —even amongst putative enemies— that remains obscure to government prescriptions about Br-163 subjects and their futures in development (cf. Bobrow-Strain, 2007).

Intimate mobilities are important because it is via the peculiar character of circulation along the Br-163 that people create speculative practices that both anticipate the state's next moves and function beyond the state's regulatory reach. Through the daily routines of moving and affiliating, by gathering and spreading resources and rumors, and in curating and telling histories that seem charged with the capacity to predict the future, roadside residents pursue speculative activities and come to know and narrate future-projects. By tracking these itineraries and outlooks, we encounter an improvised realm of resourcefulness, what Anna Tsing has called "the quick, erratic temporality of rumor, speculation, and cycles of boom and bust" that literally produces the frontier as an imaginative project "capable of molding both places and processes" (2005: 59). In this strange public-private realm, people move to interact with (or remain obscure from) the state, the lines of legality and illegality persistently shift, and the world of resources can become imbued with an irresistible attraction, charm, and agency. Knowing your way around these affective nodes requires an intimate familiarity with formal rules and government expectations, but also with possibilities and lines of flight. In this analytic, roadside residents appear very differently than either the development optic or the literature on Amazonian roads predicts: rather than being-stuck, squatter, rancher, and itinerant migrant alike are constructing and negotiating a realm of public intimacy wherein secrets are known and prophylaxes like "stuckness" come to be thinkable.[7]

In Amazonian studies, much attention has been paid to the most renowned cultural practice associated with speculative activities in the rainforest, *grilagem*. "Grilagem" refers to the common practice of falsifying land claims to make them look authentically old;[8] in this scheme, prospectors or agents of the *grileiro* mafia secure large parcels of land for real estate speculators by paying off government

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7 Herzfeld, in his analysis of Cretan property regimes shifting during the period of Crete's autonomy (1999), gives a wonderful example of the concomitance of public and private knowledges in making state regimes of legibility.

8 The word derives from the Portuguese for cricket, "grilo", due to the practice of placing false deed documents in a box of crickets, hastening the browning and "aging" processes. For more detailed analysis of grilagem and other land schemes in contemporary Amazonia, see Campbell (2009).

officials, forging documents, and running off other squatters by force. The prevailing academic critique of grilagem historicizes it as an outgrowth of the military regime's corrupt push into the Amazon in the 1970s: financial backers of the grileiro gangs responded to the threat of inflation in the Brazilian economy by securing salable, tax-free assets —Amazonian land— to use as leverage in sunnier economic times (c.f. Louriero & Pinto, 2005; Margulis, 2003). In grilagem, absentee "owners" collude with their agents in the field to secure land, bribe government officials, and terrorize smallholders who may have settled legally. The end of the 1970s brought the end of many hopes for agrarian reform in Amazonia and the retrenchment of the federal agencies responsible for titling and managing vast tracts of land. Though many individual prospectors and agrarian smallholders like Bigode and Raimunda stayed on, grileiros began earnestly to secure parcels of land to sell to absentees, often resulting in horribly violent confrontations (cf. Oliveira, 2006). This type of grilagem —in which a vertically-integrated regional, national, or international corporation seeks to horde land as a value sump— still occurs in Amazonia, as critics and officials hasten to point out. What the literature has missed, however, is that the methods through which grilagem is practiced have widely diversified away from the two classic methods of document fraud and chasing off squatters.[9] In anticipation of future development plans, both humble and powerful actors have taken up the delicate, dangerous, and intimately situated work of forging documents and patrolling land parcels. Grilagem-as-speculation is an example of a public-private secret, pulled off by actors who intimately know their surroundings and, in another register of intimacy, know the risks involved in trying to turn illict into right and proper claims on future development resources. Though officially the Brazilian government has begun to crack down on grilagem in Amazonia, the ethnographic accounts in the following section suggest that the practice is more widespread now than ever, especially as efforts to pave the Br-163 fuel speculation in land values.

Along the Br-163, grilagem is the principal speculative activity, and it shimmers with intimate affect: official stories circulate of single men owning forest tracts the size of France, and are quickly followed by vernacular versions in which goons nab a recalcitrant homesteader, beat him to a pulp and deposit his near lifeless body in a sack of rock salt. Government agencies commit to "operations" to limit real estate fraud, *pistolagem* and other illegal activities, but rumors of their surprise raids circulate long before officials appear, often only to receive a bribe *(propina)*.

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9 Hecht (1985) was as early observer of how grilagem leads to intensive agribusiness in Amazonia, as early posseiros clear homestead lands, then sell out to (or are forced out by) grileiro syndicates, who in turn profit from selling the land to ranchers, loggers, other absentee owners, government officials, or colonization companies. See also Schmink & Wood (1992) for comparative material on land fraud and political corruption in Amazonia; also, Holston (2008) offers a useful analysis of land swindling in the context of urban São Paulo.

Rumors of murderous and corrupt land reform activists interrupt public allegations of collusion between illegal loggers and the leaders of an indigenous group with newly-demarcated land. Stories of sheer violence and sheer accumulation seem to follow on one another, and in Castelo de Sonhos the social logic of land speculation has a determining force that draws entire communities into its orbit. These are stories of promise, of luck and of a certain survivalist swagger. But in these stories, and in the mobile and speculative practices that are their sources, we can also glimpse the lineaments of distinct future-projects. I turn to these now.

Moving around Castelo

Castelo de Sonhos —which translates as "Castle of Dreams"— is a town of 4,200 people located along the Santarém-Cuiabá highway at a point where two rivers rise to flow north towards the Amazon. In large part due to the road's impassability, the region around Castelo de Sonhos is thinly settled, resulting in a regional community that has persisted throughout several booms and busts in the local economy. The villa only received its evocative name eight years after it was first settled, when gold was discovered in the eastern hills and a song named "Castle of Dreams" was the only phonograph record the early prospectors had amongst them.

The Santarém-Cuiabá Highway remains unpaved south of the regional center Santarém all the way to the Pará-Mato Grosso border. Castelo de Sonhos is located 150 km north of that border, making the closest city (Guarantã do Norte, Mato Grosso, where the paved road begins) a fifteen-hour bus journey during the dry season. During the wet season, travelers may remain stranded on buses or jeeps for days, awaiting tractors to dig them out the Br-163's quick-mud. Technically speaking, Castelo de Sonhos is a district in the largest municipality in the world in terms of land: Altamira, Pará. To reach the municipal seat, located along the Xingú River, the traveler requires at least five days along the Br-163 and Transamazonian Highways. Castelo de Sonhos is surrounded by recently declared indigenous territories,[10] conservation units, and national parks.[11] Though the village has few permanent native inhabitants

10 The process of recognizing, demarcating, and homologizing indigenous territories in Brazil is notoriously slow. Along the Br-163, thirteen indigenous territories have been recognized since the implementation of the 1988 Constitution, but only one *(Terra Indígena Kayapó-Mekragnotire)* has been completely legalized: the process took 14 years, April 1994 through June 2008.

11 On February 12, 2005, the American-born Brazilian nun Dorothy Stang was assassinated in the rural section of Anapú, along the Transamazonian Highway. Perhaps fearing the international reaction that accompanied Chico Mendes's assassination under similar circumstances seventeen years earlier, the Lula administration quickly responded by declaring nine new conservation units and national parks in western Pará. This action caused outrage in Castelo, where some longtime residents found their properties unilaterally incorporated into "paper parks." Some immediately sold out to grileiros, while others vowed to stay on, betting that park lines could be renegotiated.

(of the Baú and Mekragnotire ethnicities), Castelo's population is rather evenly split between *nordestinos* —mostly smallholder farmers or agrarian reform clients born in Brazil's impoverished Northeast—and *sulistas* or *gaúchos,* migrants to Amazonia from southern Brazil who are mostly descended from early 20th C. European immigrants. Roughly speaking, the former arrived when Castelo's main street was still an airstrip that the *garimpeiros* (gold miners) used, whereas the latter began arriving in the early 1990s, pursuing ranch and farmlands. Sulistas typically brag that it was they who leveled off the old airstrip and turned it into a proper avenue, São Antônio.

By 1986, over 10,000 prospectors were living and working in the region, drawing attention from financial backers in São Paulo as well as from landless workers throughout the country. The forests around Castelo de Sonhos swelled with land claims, and the resultant tenure confusion gave rise to the most infamous gold baron in Brazilian history, Márcio Martins, otherwise known as "Rambo." Martins built several dozen airstrips to transport gold, cash, workers, cocaine, and at least one gubernatorial candidate in and out of Castelo de Sonhos. At his height, he commanded over forty gold mines and had at least 6,000 garimpeiros working for him. Rambo's demise at the hands of the Brazilian army in 1992 brought with it a population exodus from Castelo, in which thousands fled to large Amazonian cities. Those who stayed became involved fledgling industries like timber or ranching, or began cutting picadas through the forest, laying claim to abandoned properties (vide figure 3).

Figure 3. "The Rambo of Amazonia," Márcio Martins

Castelenses are fond of recalling the "Rambo" years, even if they were not in the area at the time of his exploits.[12] When recalling their own personal histories in the region, residents will deploy the wild-west image "Rambo" cuts to opine on Castelo's remoteness from the state, how seemingly anything goes here. Stories of Rambo —and of other larger than life figures— can reveal a very precise, morally-charged way of speaking about others' movements *(fluxo)* and resource-extraction or speculation (*pescar*). Stories highlighting the region's *fluxo* —or flux, dynamism— comment on the ways in which residents rarely stay in the same place after the arduous initial migration to Amazonia. People move about: checking on opportunities, visiting associates or kin, making requisite appearances before a bureaucrat, even if they have a home base in a small village like Castelo. This fluxo becomes a point of contention for those who desire a more "settled," less frontier-like regional social fabric. Those who move around with the intention of quickly striking it rich in gold, timber, or real estate, are said to be *"pescando,"* or fishing for opportunities. The more in flux the region becomes, in this idiom, the more opportunists, drifters, and no-account adventurers will pass through looking for a score. Perhaps not surprisingly, this resolute localism which critiques outsiders is in fact more often deployed amongst long-term residents (with 10+ years) in Castelo de Sonhos. As ranchers and squatters vie for the moral high ground by trading accusations of "merely fishing," they animate a tension in which each community displaces accusations of fecklessness onto the other while refusing to allow one's own speculative or hasty activities be interpreted as pescando.

In the wake of the gold bust, many former prospectors also found employment as pistol-men or squatters in the economy of grilagem. My hiking companion Bigode, an Afro-Brazilian migrant who arrived in Castelo de Sonhos in 1976, estimates that two hundred people have died there in squabbles over land tenure since 1995 (see Simmons 2005 for a region-wide account). Violence accompanies daily travels through the bush, and many smallholders who attempted to confront the grilagem gangs have been murdered in Castelo. Since the assassination of the activist Bartolomeu Moraes da Silva in 2002, the land reform movement has stalled and splintered into rival factions. Bigode is one of the remaining activists who are working to establish a communal settlement named in da Silva's honor. He points out land reform in the region, "is challenged by the fact that none of the folks signed up to get land are around much!" He puts a fine point on this: "It's the way things started

12 From January to May 2007, I conducted a household census survey in the village center of Castelo de Sonhos, and I later expanded this set to include residents in key rural settlements (principally former gold mines and ranching conglomerates). From August 2006 through Dec. 2007, I interviewed over 350 individuals along the Br-163 throughout western Pará, and conducted life history interviews with 51 individuals in Castelo de Sonhos. The following discussion is based on meetings with "Bigode" on March 12th & May 19th, 2007, and with "Claudio" on April 2nd, 17th & Nov. 9th, 2007.

for people who came here to Amazonia, so every few months you just expect to move. And after a while you have kin or relations from Belém to Porto Velho, plus the folks you left behind. Everyone wants a piece of land, but a city job becomes more attractive, or your mother gets sick and you have to go to her".

Bigode was born in the northeastern state of Ceará, but left for a land reform settlement along the Transamazonian Highway in 1971. After ten months, he left the settlement, as the government was not providing housing or agricultural assistance. Bigode relocated his wife and child to the Tapajós River town of Itaituba, but left his family there in 1976; he has not seen them since. During the dry season of that year, Bigode first traveled —via hitching and hiking— the length of the Br-163 south from Itaituba all the way to Mato Grosso state. He soon headed back north, walking along the unpaved Br-163, until he came to Castelo de Sonhos. Bigode spent 1979 through 1983 in the forest, opening up trails, following streams, and hunting and foraging.

After gold was discovered in 1982, Bigode started to earn quite a bit more through his work as a trailblazer. Bigode's knowledge of the forest around Castelo, and his familiarity with the rubber-tapper communities living along the upper Curuá River helped facilitate the goldrush of 1982-1992 in the area, a fact for which he expresses some guilt today. With several other long-term residents, in 1994 Bigode staked a claim by cutting picadas to mark a 100-hectare plot of land a few kilometers north of Castelo de Sonhos. The squatters took turns patrolling their lands from grileiros, keeping the men too busy to work. To this day Bigode retains effective ownership over his parcel of land as a farmer who does not farm. Instead, he makes a living as a trader throughout the rural sections of Castelo. He explains:

> So many people are just waiting, you know, for the land situation to get figured out. So only "the big guys" *[os grandes]* farm, and the rest of us wait to be vindicated. But that means there's a lot of valuable stuff on our lands, stuff that we can trade, like Brazil-nuts, fruits, fish, and palms. We produce what the big guys can't anymore since they cut down the trees (fieldwork conversation).

Every week, Bigode visits several dozen rural squatters to facilitate trade, using a bicycle or motorbike to negotiate the Br-163 and several side-roads and picadas. Twice a year, at the beginning and the end of the rainy season, he takes a barge along the Iriri River to visit old gold-mining communities in the interior. While there, he trades, advances loans, and shares stories about the price of land, plans to pave the road, and the most recent influx of migrants. "Those camps are depressing," Bigode admits, "and although I make some money from them, I would rather have those miners start to squat with us as colonists (*posseiros*). But they're too frightened of the grileiros running them off."

Bigode is interested in a smallholder future for the Amazon, and speaks eloquently in favor of this at planning meetings in Castelo and beyond, condemning

the activities of absentee landlords and ranchers. Still, Bigode does not see recent arrivals as the only challenge to land reform along the Br-163, despite the 300% spike in the unofficial value of land in the past two years. He is quick to point out that "the little guys" *(os pequenos)* also engage in violent and fraudulent grilagem. Two years ago, smallholder colleagues recruited Bigode to scout out an area for a new sustainable foresting project to settle some of the area's landless poor. After completing his work, Bigode learned that the settlement was a fraud. He learned from a forest department official passing through Castelo that the land he had surveyed was part of a newly declared national park, and therefore off-limits to claimants. In subsequent visits, Bigode discovered three clandestine airstrips being used to remove parcels of noble woods out of the region. Each airstrip had a makeshift sawing area, where mahogany and castanheira trunks are cut into manageable parcels, loaded onto a single engine plane, then smuggled south. Bigode believes that this illegal operation is receiving the blessing of corrupt federal officials, and that leaders of rival land reform factions profit from the sale of the wood.[13]

In the woods east of Castelo, knowing your way around is imperative. Picadas can disappear altogether after a grileiro sends a crew with chainsaws to widen it or to hem it in. If smallholders do not walk their picadas regularly, as Bigode says, "that invites encroachment." At the end of his picada, just at the point where other paths marking other homestead claims meet, is a portage point for an old gold-miner barge, one of the most active spots in the bush east of Castelo. If you cross the river and begin walking along the trail to the southeast marked by a mahogany tree and a St. Christopher's shrine, you will eventually arrive at Claudio's ranch, some 12 km from Castelo. Claudio bought three smaller parcels of land (totaling 450 hectares) in 1993, when he arrived from Mato Grosso state. Since that time, he has earned a reputation as a no-nonsense businessman who hates smallholder squatters almost as much as he hates absentee landowners and their grileiro goons.

"The frontier is here to be occupied," Claudio states plainly one morning over the southerner's drink of choice, *chimarrão*. "There's no other way to see it, and I wish the government would do something about it." Claudio, now 45 years old, grew up believing that the United States and U.N. had designs on Amazonia, and would soon occupy it if Brazilians did not quickly civilize the region. Before moving to Castelo, Claudio, his wife, and brother were part of a land reform settlement program

13 Though Bigode is angry with his fellow smallholders who here were engaging in grilagem under the cover of a "sustainable development project," a more sympathetic analysis might show how these "green" squatters were simply trying to compete with other, more cut-throat speculators who were systematically breaking unions, assassinating leaders, and dashing hopes for agrarian reform settlements. I thank Mark Anderson for pushing me to see this; his analysis (2007) of how Garifuna activists in Honduras have positioned themselves as indigenous in order to enlist state support in fending off land speculation illuminates a similar process.

in Peixoto de Azevedo, Mato Grosso. They had a small farm, and managed to save enough through odd jobs to purchase land outside Castelo "free and clear" of the government. Claudio was born in Paraná in the extreme south of Brazil, and initially came north to Mato Grosso to work the gold fields there in the late 1980s. He fondly likens his migration to Amazonia to his own grandfather's migration from Germany to Brazil at the end of the First World War.

Accounts of post-ditadura migration to Amazonia state that migrants like Claudio filled a regional vacuum left by mismanaged agrarian reform along regional highways (Lisansky 1990). Claudio's history in Castelo suggests a messier affair: like many sulistas in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, Claudio asserted himself in Amazonia amidst a fraught land tenure situation wherein legality was ambiguous, state organs were present but corruptible, and the criteria for proving ownership were ambiguous and contradictory. After clearing between 50% and 80% of standing forest on parcels to "prove" ownership, grileiros sold 300-500 hectare lots to the highest bidder, often with the guarantee that squatters and other claimants would be "cleaned" off the property. However, as part of an emerging regional elite in Castelo, Claudio works to secure the hegemony of the notion that southerners took it upon themselves to fill, and civilize, an empty space in Amazonia.

Despite the fact that he was once a beneficiary of agrarian reform in Mato Grosso, Claudio is opposed to creating new settlements, especially in Amazonia. He cites as evidence for his position:

> They don't work. Look at the land reform settlement here, it's empty, and those who are there are worthless. The government is too far away, and none of those people really want that land to work on, they just want corrupt bureaucrats to sign the land over to them so they can sell it. Then, they'll go blow their money on sex and liquor. They just sit on their land and wait for more handouts! (fielwork conversation).

In public planning meetings, Claudio speaks for a laissez-faire approach to settlement, in which the government builds all-weather roads and protects property rights. He publicly laments the fluxo he sees in the region, and argues that settlers have had to take the law into their own hands to protect themselves from those who pass through the region pescando. His daily routines make Claudio's Castelo distinct from that of Bigode: he leaves his home in the village, checks grain and livestock prices at the market, then on occasion meets with other members of the land-owners association over which he presides. He often visits other members' small farms, too, all of which Claudio proclaims have been "purchased legally, grilagem free." Though Claudio is proud to own his land, he is reluctantly aware of the fact that the smaller lots he bought were almost certainly sold to the previous tenants by grileiros. Rumbling along in a pick-up to his ranch east of Castelo, Claudio is careful to avoid any confrontations with the region's grileiros as they hold down properties for absentee

landowners in southern Brazil. He boasts: "I've been pretty high on their wanted list, for the work we're doing getting farms set up. They just want to run us off." Claudio is rumored to have killed at least two grileiro pistol-men who threatened his brothers' properties just south of Castelo. Nominally, he is a rancher, though due to transport difficulties ranchers in Castelo can only keep up appearances: cattle get fat in the fields as they graze, but can only be marketed locally because of the unpredictable Br-163. From January through August, Claudio makes a usurious profit from pulling stuck vehicles out of the Br-163's mud with his Caterpillar tractor.

The key feature of Claudio's vision for Amazonia is private property. Shortly after the Br-163 was completed in 1974, the military government proclaimed that 100 km on either side of it would become federal property, destined for land reform or colonization. Due to this fact, and the ambiguities that corruption and grilagem introduce, buying and selling land along the Br-163 is a risky deal, and often technically illegal. Claudio maintains strong connections with colleagues from Paraná, German-descendents like himself who feel crowded out of the land market in southern Brazil. Like Bigode, Claudio sees a respite from the violence and arbitrariness of grilagem through thickening the numbers of people who see a similar future for Amazonia as he does. If Bigode's compatriots are spread throughout Amazonia as so much flotsam of earlier booms and busts, Claudio's ilk are in southern Brazil, still yearning for open country and room to breathe on the frontier. Both visions seem to require government intervention, and both visions are situated in histories of occupation, survival, and accommodation to Amazonian realities. Both men narrate their projections from a stylized position of being stuck between anarchic violence and the irredeemable boredom of being marooned in an unproductive forest. These stylized self-presentations as "stuck," put forward through use of various Portuguese words (*travada, parada, abandonada,* etc.), stand in marked contrast to these colonists' everyday mobile practices.

Just as Bigode's illegible mobilities allowed for him to participate in, then denounce, smallholder fraud at a sham settlement, Claudio's speculations also depend on official ignorance. Neither man wants the "broad reach of governance," though both have used just this phrase in appealing for proactive interventions. For Claudio's part, he is keen to be tipped off when the federal forest service predictably visits Castelo each dry season to fine (or receive bribes from) illegal lumber extractors. Claudio gets his flatbed truck ready for a harvest of sorts. He explains: "Inexperienced loggers drop their loads when they hear or see the forest service around."Claudio seizes on the opportunity: he and 3-4 workers patrol the side roads between Castelo and the old gold fields, and load up any logs and pieces that had been dropped by nervous smugglers. Though he is shy to admit it, Claudio directs his harvest of contraband wood south to associates in Mato Grosso and beyond, over circuitous forest trails and picadas.

Constructing Abandonment

In a recent book exploring "the will to improve" as a constitutive element of development practice, Tania Li highlights some of the complexities of rural relations to expert knowledges: even well-meaning experts fail in their attempts to comprehend the nuances and peculiarities of local societies (Li, 2007). Yet still, the "will to improve" presses all sides in development encounters, leaving a discourse and a stance towards improvement, progress, and development as common currency between varied social actors —technocrats, indigenous groups, smallholder farmers, or local politicians— that bring different motives and meanings to bear. In their interactions with the government and NGO architects of the recent sustainable development plan to pave the Br-163, Bigode and Claudio both call for a vague but decisive government intervention in the region. In a certain light, these men could not be more different: Bigode is an Afro-Brazilian migrant campaigning locally for land reform with real teeth, a man who has spent most of the last three decades in Castelo de Sonhos scouting, trading, and squatting. As a counterpoint, Claudio is a white southern settler dreaming of a civilized agricultural frontier, even as he engages in open warfare with the very grileiros whose speculative and violent property regime has prepared the lands around Castelo for southern migrants. In March 2007, both men spoke on a shared stage in front of traveling government officials and planners in Castelo de Sonhos, imploring them to pave the road and bring progress to the region. Later, Bigode and Claudio would travel 900 kilometers to Santarém (the former by bus, an eight day journey; the latter by Hillux pick-up truck, and made it in two) to describe Castelo de Sonhos as "poor," "tired," "abandoned," stuck in another era.

Despite their clear differences, both men favor a paved Br-163, and to distant planners, both Claudio and Bigode appear to be exhibiting the will to improve. However, I read their common narratives of lack and disconnection as tactical deployments of a generic road-dweller. Neither Claudio nor Bigode are operating under false consciousness when they sublate their particular histories when speaking for development. Rather, the proliferating claims to being-stuck fit within the local logic of invention and speculation traced here in Bigode's and Claudio's arrival narratives and daily itineraries. In line with David Cleary's observation that "Amazonians actually seek out risk, since in a highly inflationary economy the ideal is not incremental gain but large, short-term payoffs," I see Bigode and Claudio inviting development opportunities in a common idiom, then positioning themselves within local legacies of development as a kind of gamble (Cleary, 1993: 347).

This claim to being-stuck requires the invention of a public persona of road-dweller: this is, generically, the colonist who came to Amazonia at the invitation of government schemes from 1974 onward. This colonist was just doing what he was told, is not responsible for the alarming deforestation or murder rate statistics, and in fact is entitled to redress from the government. All Castelenses have a version of

this story, but within the micropolitics of land tenure, and the forms of relation and corruption that hold together the social practice of grilagem, subject-positions relate differently to the narrative of collective abandonment. In the examples of Bigode and Claudio above, both privately admit to the less sanguine activities they have been involved with over the years in Castelo, and each continues to pursue these activities in a speculative spirit. What to the outside seems like generic abject lack becomes more clearly a field in which difference and alliance are negotiated when viewed up close: the stuck road dweller is one kind of prophylactic tactic that fits within a larger historical structure of gambling with development (vide figure 4).

Figure 4. Castelenses participating in development workshops, March 2007

The appearance of stuckness is both required by and a function of the logic of development-from-a-distance in Amazonia. The state's reformist turn to pave the Br-163 and atone for past development mistakes originates in analyses conducted in Brasília and Belém, far from the highway. From this distance, Bigode and Claudio realize, one had better appear as a victim of prior development failures rather than as an opportunist. In being-stuck, roadside residents signal a justification for outside intervention, even as they position themselves locally to profit from or adjust to possible future developments. The participatory development model —forged with neoliberal democracy in mind— does not recognize the historical layering of previous development schemes in Amazonia. The Plano Br-163 sees speculation

only as crime to be stomped out by aggressively combating criminal gangs and their corrupt associates. It does not recognize the speculation inherent in Bigode's and Claudio's personal histories or daily itineraries, nor does it reconcile their widely different visions for the future of their homelands. In theory, participatory development gathers discrete "stakeholders" to the table, incorporating nominal differences between a range of subject-citizens into a big-tent development dream. In practice, different groups along the Br-163 are faced with the same overdetermined "choice" as in previous development packages: when called upon, say "yes" or "no" to the plan on offer, then work out the unpredictable real-life effects on the ground with the aplomb, inventiveness, luck, or sheer power of the speculative.

Why do roadside residents present themselves as being-stuck for development audiences, and for that matter why are both Claudio and Bigode in favor of a paved Br-163? A paved road offers no clear benefit to either man, as it comes without guarantees for agrarian reform, the legalization of the land market, soy expansion, conservation, or governance. Still, the possibility that after so many years the state will do something with the Br-163 is one possibility (among many) to which residents like Bigode and Claudio must make certain concessions: this possibility is the source of their instrumentality. A paved road would change the rules of engagement along the highway, and both men see a proper Br-163 as amenable to discrete regional futures. However, neither is waiting for the manifestation of state promises: being-stuck to participate in official development proceedings is just one sort of gamble along the unpaved Br-163.

Castelo residents enter into a range speculative gambles without complete knowledge of outcomes, of competitors' motives, or access to the myriad factors that influence the unfolding of events, but not without tools (rumors, myth, guns, affiliations, mobilities) to influence the outcome of the gamble: this is the kind of *in situ* speculation that has interested me in the paper, and the kind that has been largely understudied in academic accounts of grilagem or Amazonian development. The logic of moving-to-speculate —what I have suggested calling intimate mobilities— reveals much about how subjectivities (e.g. "land reformer" or "southern colonist") and discourses ("sustainability," or "participation") settle out in social practice, and are made to perform appropriate functions at opportune times. Still, even an instrumental prophylaxis such as "being stuck" is deployed to ward off official scrutiny, it also comes to inhabit an affective realm in which its effects are transitory and indeterminate. In the intimate, public-private space of open secrets, being-stuck matters less and less as a position in development praxis: in these stories we have seen it as a cipher in struggles over resources, livelihoods, and futures along the Br-163.

In this paper, I have argued for the importance of considering intimate mobilities and anticipatory practices as a dynamic realm of politics and social reproduction that often goes unmarked in contemporary debates around Amazonian development.

Behind the scripted development encounters in which colonists and officials agree that the region is *in need,* there is a public-private realm of speculative practice that is dependent on colonists' intimate knowledge of the surrounding region. Here I have suggested that, instead of taking engagements with the developmentalist state at face value —narratives of stuckness, hopefulness, or abjection— we should instead view roadside residents' relationships to development narratives as distinctively situated projects. I have argued that intimate mobilities are a realm of politics not recognized by official discourses, and that the reformed development optic sees roadside residents as stuck, a refrain which they in turn endorse. Focusing on speculative intimate practices, roadside residents do not look at all how the development optic would predict, as either victims of past errors or as stable populations awaiting state intervention.

For over thirty years in Castelo de Sonhos, residents have received and worked through development promises, rumors, and programs through practices of speculation—forging fragile alliances, squatting, keeping secrets and spreading misinformation. The specific forms that residents' future-making projects take are situated in their relations to one another, knowledge of the landscape, connections to outside capital, and their abilities to negotiate systems of corruption, the politics of appearances, and the occasional lucky break. As Bigode's and Claudio's stories illustrate, visions of the future become plausible tools with which to articulate subject-positions in the making: though both are stuck, both are clearly going different places as they wait out what might happen next. A kind of insurance policy, "being stuck" constructs a buffer of official misrecognition of extant realities; beyond this buffer residents continue moving, and speculating, in historically structured ways. The realities of their daily movements rhetorically concealed, Claudio, Bigode, and others are free to call upon the state to decisively pull the Br-163 into a developed future, even as they position themselves to benefit from government inaction.

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