

Bolsonaro's Brazil: understanding 'post-truth' development, conservation, biodiversity decline and denial

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INTRODUCTION

- 60% of all wildlife has disappeared since 1970
(Living Planet Report, 2018)
- Rates of extinction are accelerating – now at 200 per day; biodiversity thresholds may surpass planetary boundaries
(IPBES Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity, 2019)
- Brazil: holds 15-20% of all global species. 3000 animals are endangered or threatened, and many more plants (IUCN, 2013; WWF 2018)

WELCOME TO THE CLUB, BOLSONARO !



An extraordinary moment in politics, development *and* conservation



"The Amazon is practically untouched"

(Jair Bolsonaro, UN General Assembly, 24 September 2019)



UN General Assembly, 24 September 2019:



“The Indians are evolving, more and more they are human beings like us”

In interview, Janeiro 23, 2020

“The Indians do not speak our language, they do not have money, they do not have culture.... How did they get 13% of the national territory”

In interview, 2015

The presentation

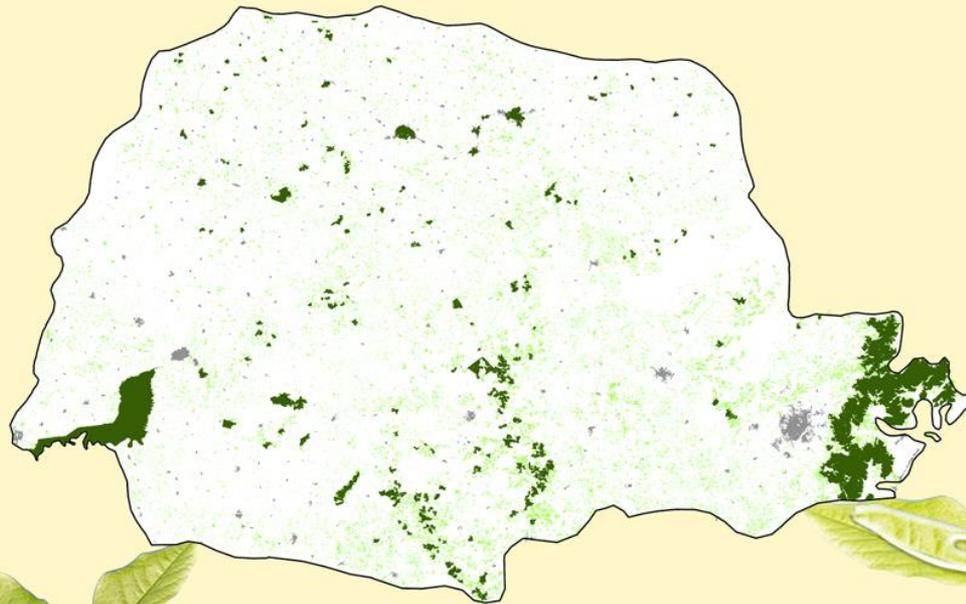
- The argument is that the new authoritarianism is closely linked to environmental governance and conservation processes
- *Authoritarian neoliberalism* is based on challenging an existing technocratic consensus on development and conservation –
- - but it also changes the landscape of power-knowledge relations. Underpinned by ‘post-truth’: a spread of confusion & obfuscation through which resource-based growth confronts conservation
 - the *Amazon Fund* and *INPE* debacles
 - Amazon fires and the soy and cattle frontier

CONSERVATION *IN* DEVELOPMENT

Development's *ecological contradiction*

- Cronon (1996); Buscher (2012); Brockington et al. (2008): a neoliberal consensus
- 'Fortress' conservation vs market-based 'New conservation' as the mainstream responses
- Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) schemes at the core of neoliberal environmental policy (agri-business and mining also contribute!)
 - *The Amazon Fund* (REDD+) the most significant
- Tourism viewed as central for key remaining sites

DESMATAMENTO NO ESTADO DO PARANÁ



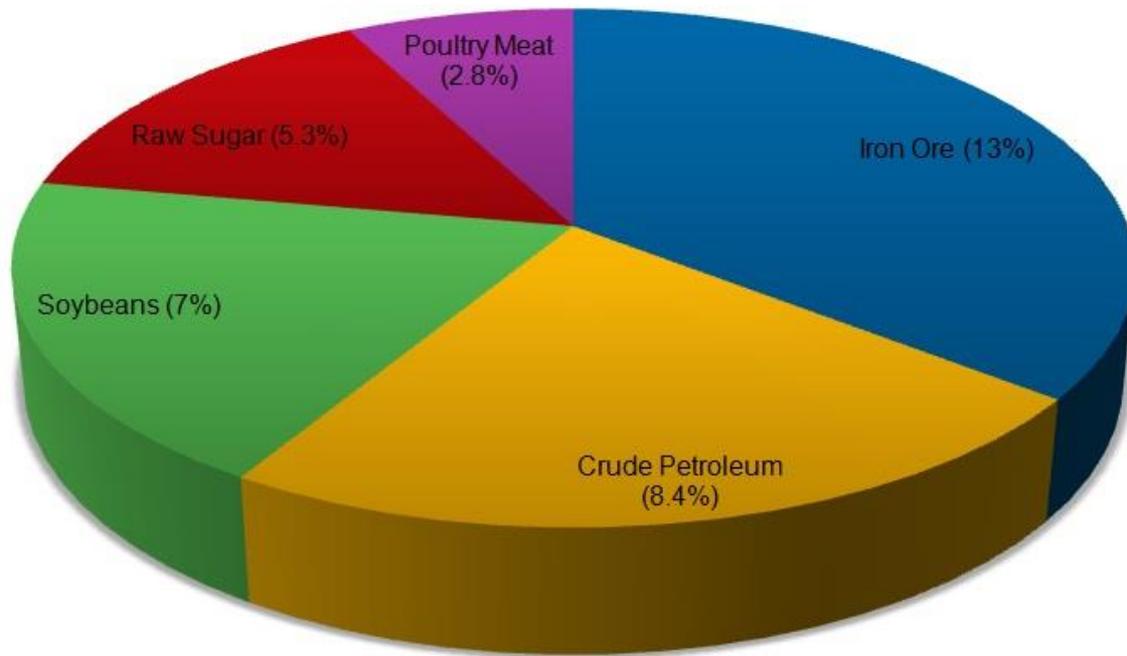
2016



*Where can expansion
go next?*

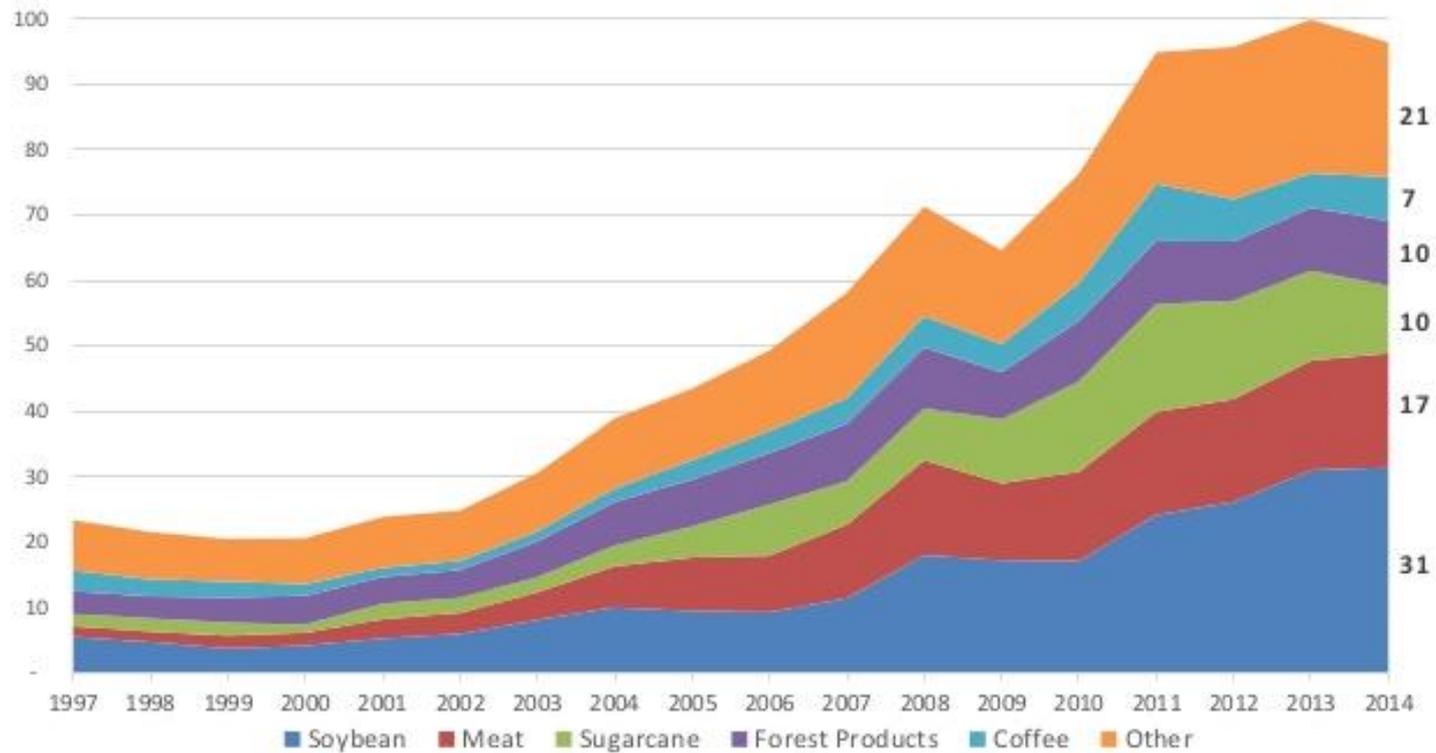


Brazil's Top Exports



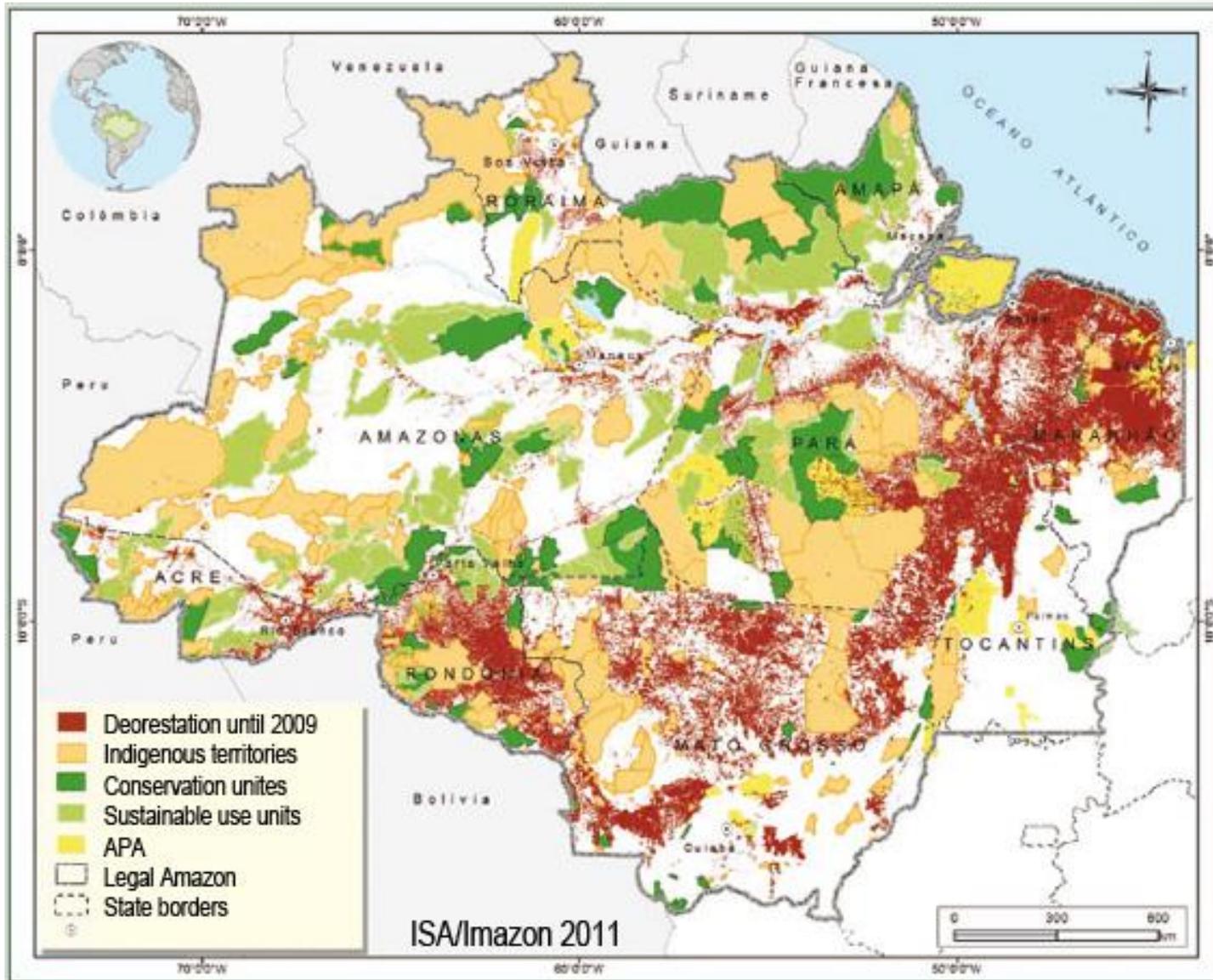
Products of Brazilian agribusiness exports, 1997 – 2014

(in US\$ billion)

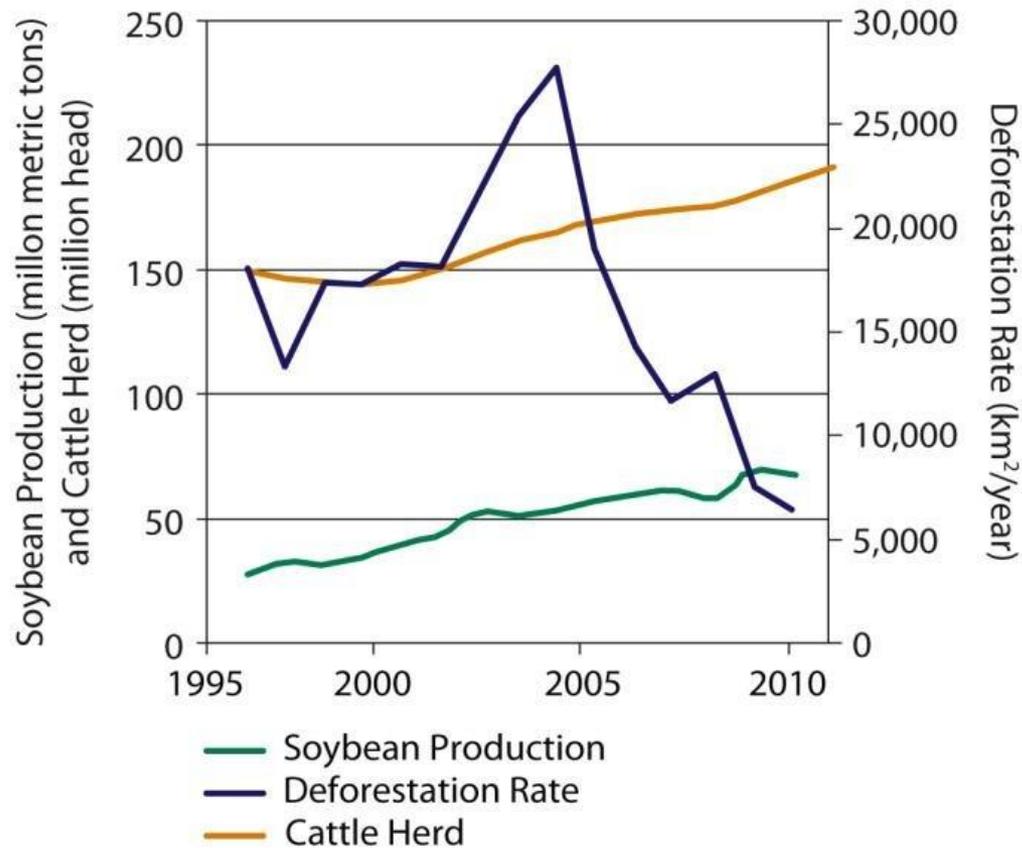


Conservation and Extractivism

- Brazil: at once the world's most biodiverse country *and* global leader in agricultural and mineral extraction
- In LA progressive neoliberalism (Fraser, 2017) was highly dependent on high prices of extractive and agrarian exports (Brazil: oil, minerals, soy, beef, and more)
- 58 \$ billionaires created in Workers' Party (PT) years
- Deforestation decreased after 2004 via 'fortress' and market-based conservation, e.g. Amazon Fund, while agribusiness expanded in the *Cerrado* (and Amazon)



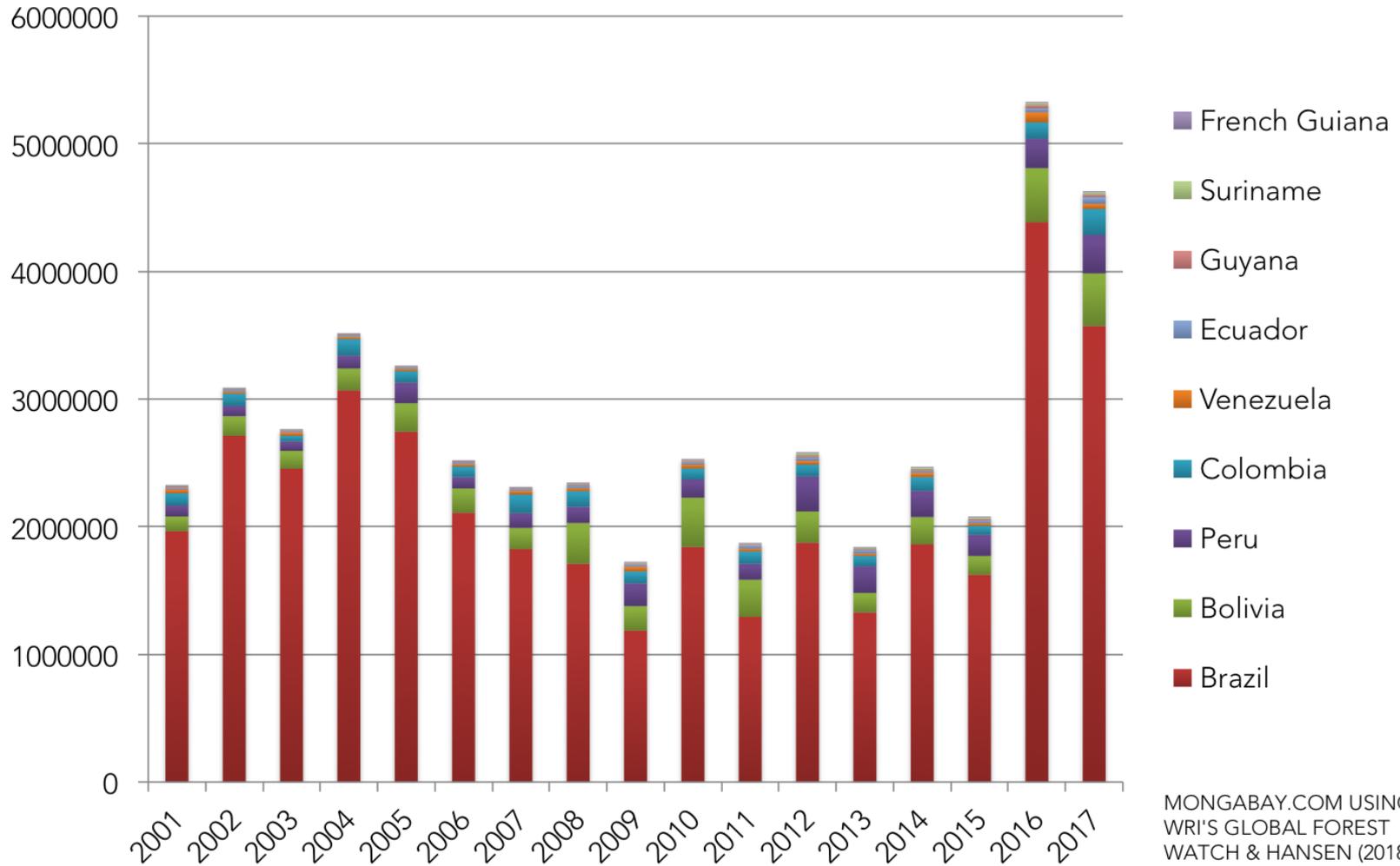
Deforestation and Cattle and Soybean Production in Brazil



Both cattle and soybean production have continued to increase steadily in Brazil in the past several years—even as deforestation rates have dropped to record-low levels.

Sources: FAS 2011; INPE 2010b.

Annual forest loss in the Amazon biome, 2001-2017



MONGABAY.COM USING
WRI'S GLOBAL FOREST
WATCH & HANSEN (2018)

End of 'progressive neoliberalism'

- 2008 crash led to an increasingly unstable tension between economic growth & resource conservation:
 - commodity prices remained low into the new decade
- EMBRAPA (2008): 'indigenistas' are an obstacle to development
- President Rousseff deposed in 2016 in dubious circumstances after 3 years of economic contraction
- the point at which the contradiction of the neoliberal development-conservation consensus 'burst'

Authoritarian neoliberalism?

- Bolsonaro won in 2018 with strong support of rightwing agribusiness for a renewed extractive push (Acosta & Gudynas, 2018)
- Allegations of corruption; media manipulation, lies and deceptions: judge Moro that incarcerated Lula is Bolsonaro's justice minister
- Key ministers: Paulo Guedes (Chicago economist, former Pinochet advisor) and Ricardo Salles (environment, SP). Only ministry where military figures *not* placed is Economy. *Ruralista* Tereza Cristina (agri) viewed as 'restraining' force

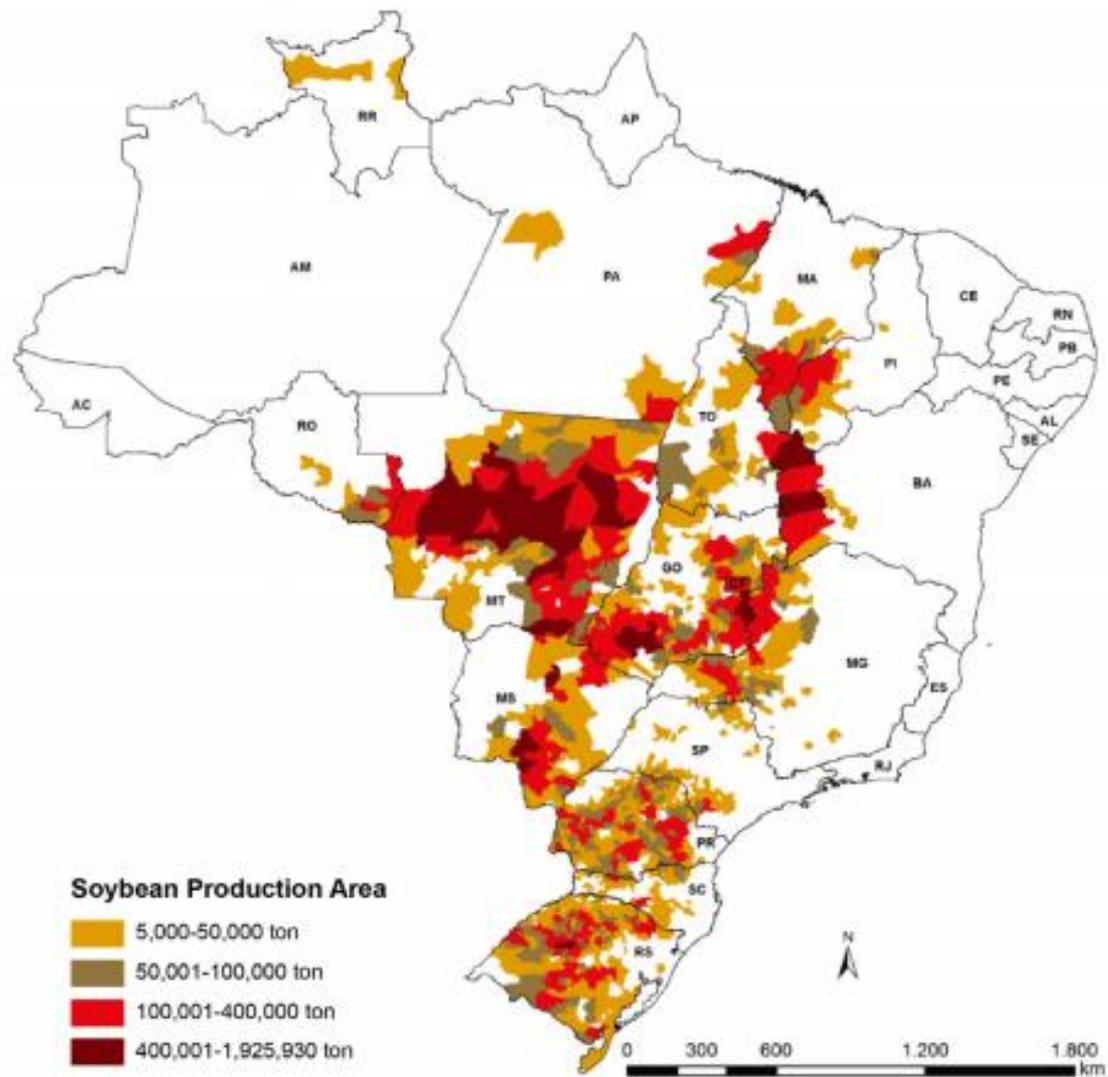
Brazilian Soy Acreage Continues to Rise With Global Demand, Despite Low Prices Currently

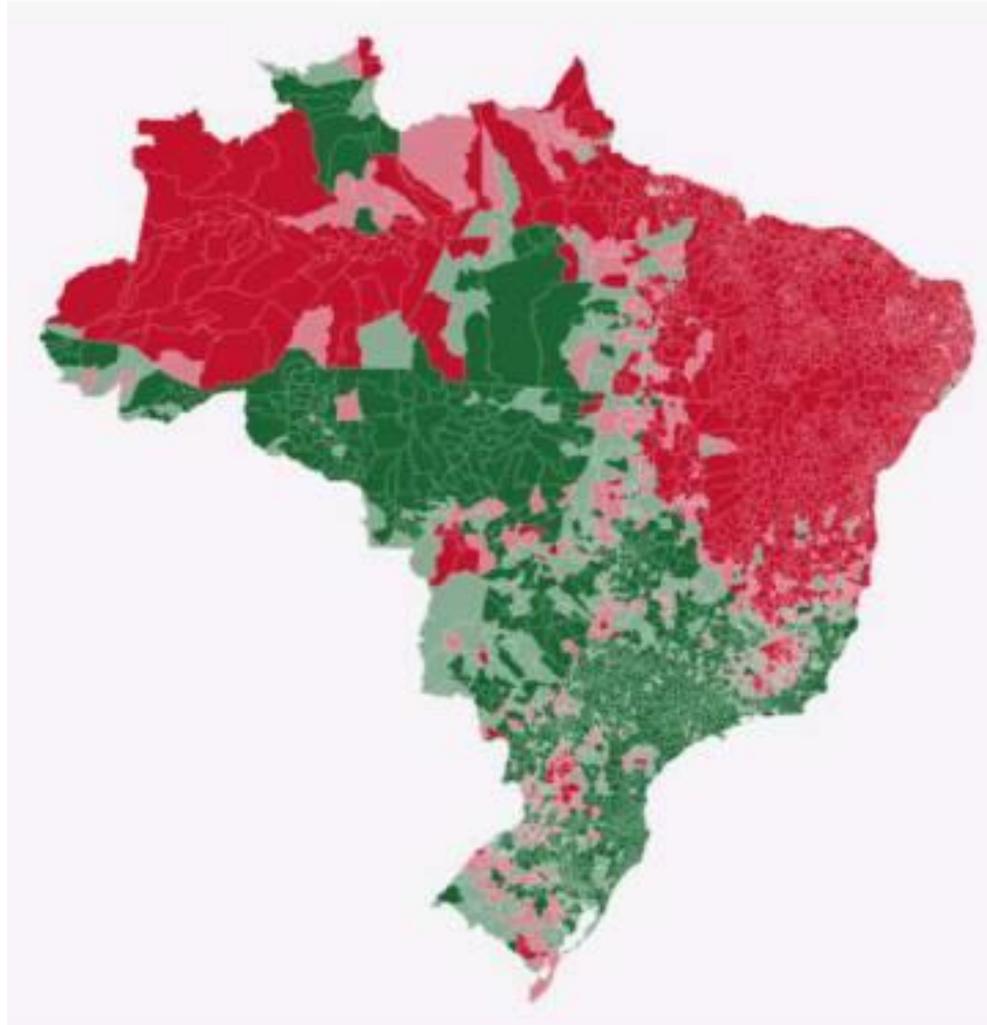


Data: USDA PS&D, IGC, Gro Intelligence

www.gro-intelligence.com







Brazil election
second round
votes, October
2018

POST-TRUTH AUTHORITARIANISM

New authoritarianism in Brazil

- Defensive rhetoric is ramped up: ‘Brazil is under attack’; ‘the Amazon is ours’; ‘our nature is untouched’!
- These are simultaneously calls to increase resource exploitation and prevent a challenge to resource ownership and growth
- values certain Brazilians, devalues others: ‘Indigenous have 14% of *our* land and do nothing’ (Bolsonaro, 28 August 2019)
- creating confusion and obfuscation is logical under neoliberal development, as the only way to return to growth under resource depletion is to deny *an* internal ecological contradiction
- ‘NGOs set fire to the Amazon in order to discredit Brazil’!

'Post-Truth'

- Reconfiguration in knowledge-power relations in environmental governance and biodiversity conservation: end of the neoliberal technocratic consensus
- Denial, discursive blur and smoke screens everywhere
- Government questioning rapidly and subsequently truth, science and ideology, played out in the media

NOTÍCIAS PRINCIPAIS 19 DE JULHO DE 2019 / ÀS 13:11 / HÁ 4 MESES

Bolsonaro vê "psicose ambiental" e diz que Inpe divulga dados "mentirosos" sobre desmatamento

Por Lisandra Paraguassu

4 MIN. DE LEITURA



BRASÍLIA (Reuters) - O presidente Jair Bolsonaro acusou o Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Espaciais (Inpe), que faz o levantamento de dados sobre desmatamento no país, de ter divulgado números "mentirosos" e chegou a insinuar que o presidente do instituto pode estar "a serviço de alguma ONG".



Controversy around INPE data



Ricardo Galvão: Ex-director of INPE



17 - maio - 2019

Improbo Ricardo Salles monta teatro para criminalizar ONGs e aparelhar Fundo Amazônia

Nota da coordenação do Observatório do Clima

Like 6.4K Share Tweet

BRASÍLIA/SÃO PAULO, 17/05/2019 – Depois de investir contra o Ibama e o ICMBio, o ministro do Meio Ambiente, Ricardo Salles (Novo-SP), direciona sua panfletagem política a tentar criminalizar as organizações da sociedade civil. Nesta



Últimas Notícias



20 - agosto - 2019

Desmatamento explica recorde de queimadas, diz Ipam

Novos dados do instituto mostram que seca não teve papel preponderante para o aumento de 60% no número de focos de calor em 2019

The development strategy

- keep opposition forces busy with lies, shocking statements and political incoherence while state institutions undermined
- factual truth of what actually happens in nature becomes less relevant to what is said about it – e.g. connect it with ‘being a patriot’
- 1 IBAMA officer for 11,000 sq km in Amazon; removal of IBAMA and ICMBio’s communication departments; implant military figures
- which allows mining and agri enterprises to expand freely without concern for legal compliance or interference
- indigenous, environmental, small farmer movements, and legal organs like GCU, MP, always dealing with the dismantling of environmental policy and disputing/revealing (post) truths



Photog

Politics

Bolsonaro's Words Are the Sparks as Brazil's Farmers Burn Amazonia

Far from authority, they feel freshly empowered to clear the land with fire

By [David Biller](#) and [Bruce Douglas](#)
September 6, 2019, 10:00 AM GMT+2

LISTEN TO ARTICLE

▶ 5:44

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Down a dusty road an hour outside the Brazilian city of Porto Velho, Irany Paradela used a flimsy rake to clear a charred plot. The fire she and her husband set "became a re... had no way to put it out."

The size may have been...

LIVE ON BLOOMBERG
Watch Live TV >



NOTÍCIAS COMO PLANTAR COLUNIS

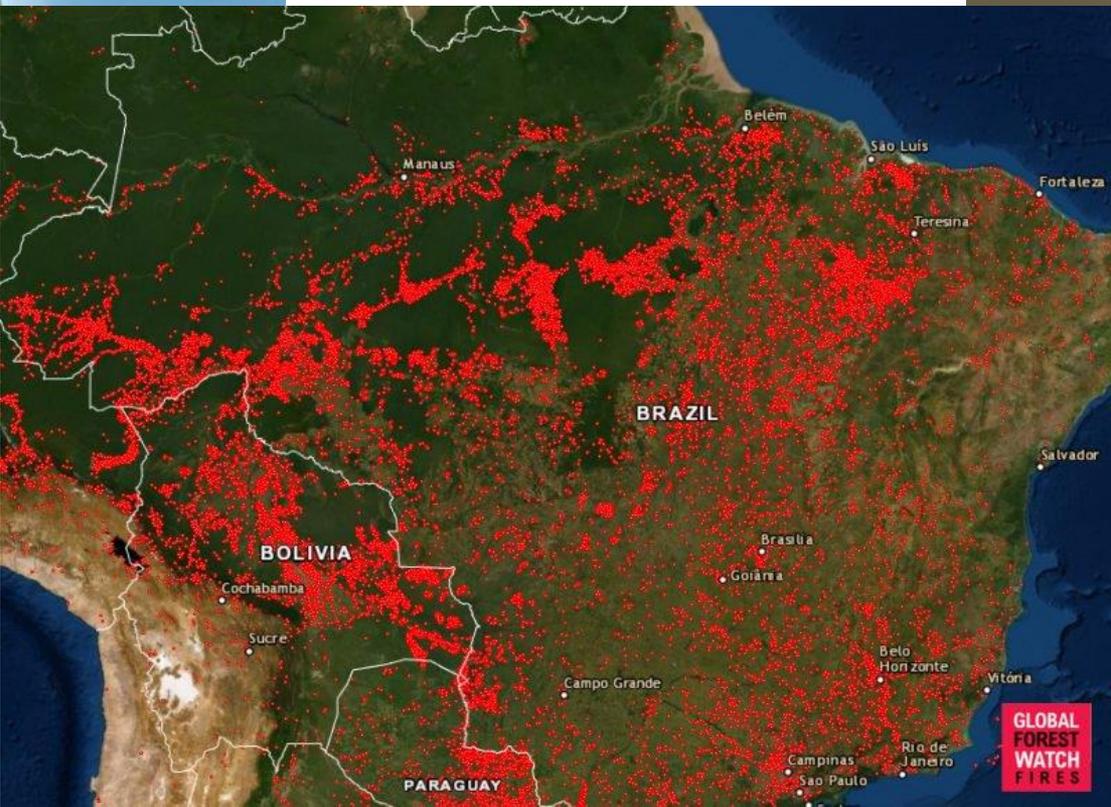
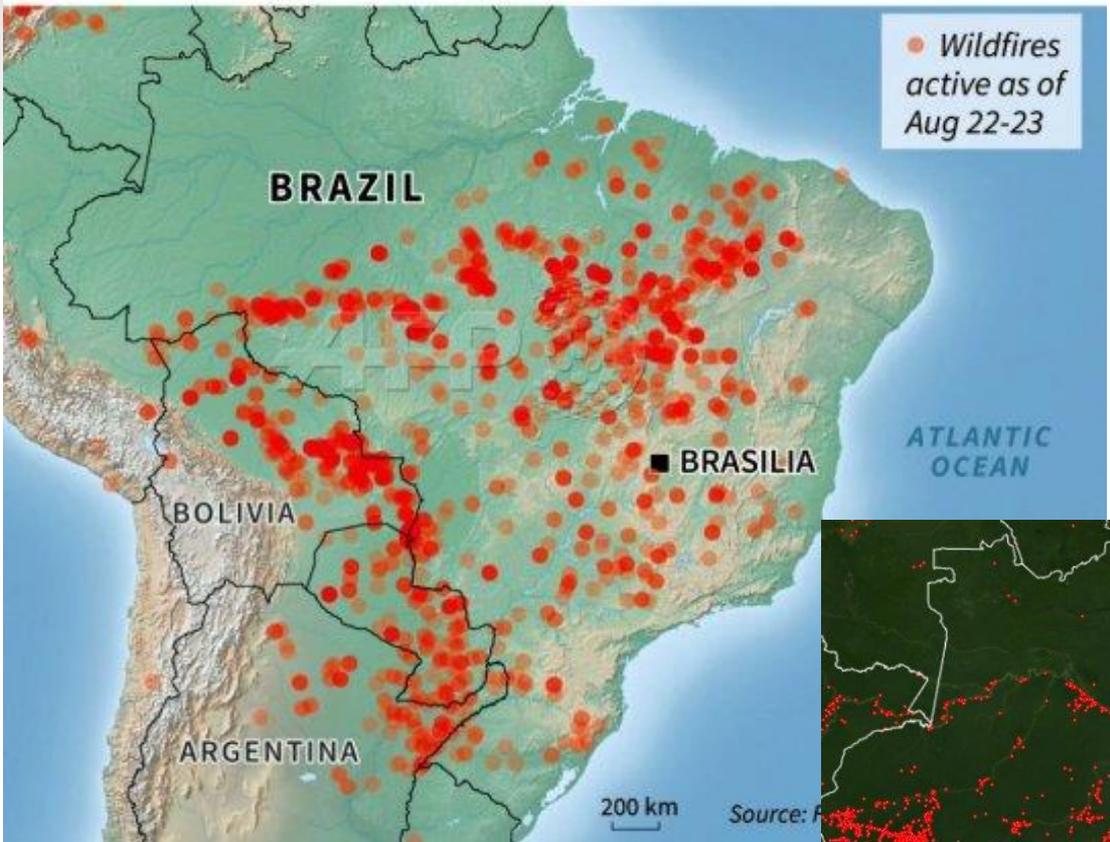
NOTÍCIAS

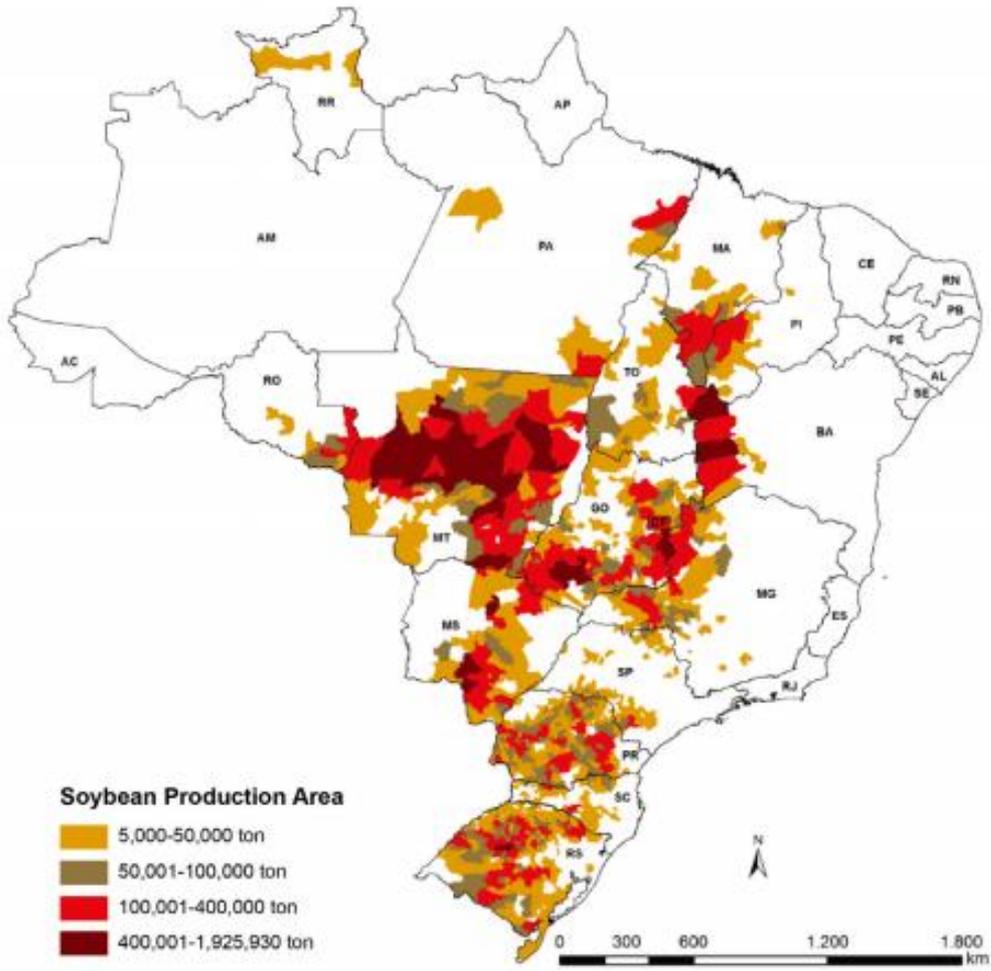
"Quadrilha reúne os maiores desmatadores da Amazônia", diz procurador

Paulo de Tarso Moreira Oliveira, de Santarém (PA), afirma que gente muito perigosa se utiliza do WhatsApp para organizar crimes como o 'dia do fogo'

↻ 5 min de leitura

The Amazon ablaze

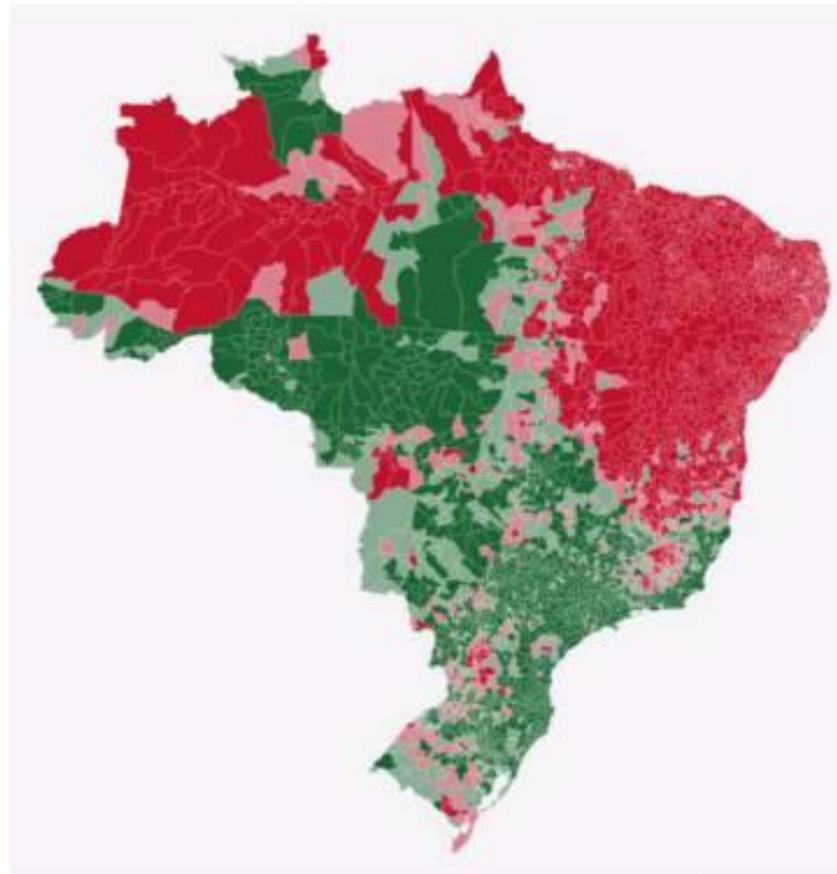




Bolsonaro
2.760
cidades



Haddad
2.810
cidades



Concluding remarks

- An apparent new phase of development consists of post-truth authoritarianism that enables the market to assert greater control
- Imminent loss of another 5th of the Amazon forest
- market violence aligns with state political obfuscation: development's ecological contradiction *must* be hidden
- Proponents of 'fortress' and 'market' modes of conservation can't account for their own breakdown under post-truth authoritarianism
- Environmental issues and movements must be central to resistance to authoritarian populist politics, and to finding progressive alternatives. 'Uncomfortable' alliances may be necessary

Thank You!

- Contact: robert.coates@wur.nl
- a new realistic approach to nature conservation *within* development must be found
www.convivialconservation.com
<https://conviva-research.com/>

