

## Tracing out scalable landscapes: interpretative layers about the plantation designs

**Deadline for abstracts: 15 July 2022**

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### **Description**

The aerial views presented by television commercials show us, almost regardless of the season, plants sprouting in parallel lines, machines crossing low to the ground and taking the harvest to railway lines and roads crossing less desirable places. We are faced, therefore, with scalable and replicable models (Tsing, 2015), a construction of landscapes through technical dexterity. The infrastructure of modern mining, hydroelectric plants, industrial plants and agribusinesses eschew this kind of “samefication” process, which intertwines more than human subjects, institutions and artifacts.

**From an STS perspective, this thematic cluster proposes to explore and reflect on those process of designing and altering landscapes, its effects and connections, within the framework of recent debates on the *plantation*** (Haraway et al. 2016, Haraway 2015, Latour et al. 2018, Davis et al. 2018, Ishikawa and Soda 2020; Li and Semedi 2021). Those emphasizes the transformation of several types of man-managed farms, pastures and forests into extractive and enclosed plantations and the new relationships that emerge from these processes, that make possible to transform ecologies into something completely different by modifying plants, animals and organisms (including people), even if their locations are very distant. Thus, thinking about a **plantation ecology** (Tsing, 2015) allows to question what kinds of simplification over singular and diverse landscapes were made possible through the , artifacts and relationships of the plantation system. More than an abstract and enclosing concept of plantation, it can be characterized by the emphasis on the sociotechnical entanglements that allow – but also those that escape – the scalability logics.

The perspectives posed by STS highlight technoscience as a privileged apparatus for sustaining global capitalist connections, since such knowledge and practices are an inherent part of arrangements that strives for repetitions and interventions often legitimized by the triad “State, Science and Entrepreneurs”, identified by Stengers (2015). It should be noted that the expansion of such designs, anchored in techno-scientific knowledge, do not take place on terra nullius, once it frequently clashes with other configurations of the world, based on another forms of knowledge. The arrival of the plantation at new frontiers brings with it not necessarily, or not only, the promised progress, development or modernization, but population displacement, diversion of water courses, concentration of land and resources, environmental degradation.

So the landscapes standardized and reiterated by the plantation ecology obliterate ways of existence based on other compositions of the world, menacing the lives of peasants, riverside dwellers, indigenous peoples, *quilombolas* and other communities. However, unlike what development projects do with their designs of pre-figured paths, what many of the “target communities” of these interventions shows us are designs that shape environments for life, evoking new creative, changeable and moving entanglements (Ingold, 2014). In these terms, we highlight that designing a desirable landscape or expanding the scale of a profitable design is not an innocuous process, as it involves establishing new relationships, whether of resistance, dispute, alliance or negotiation.

The expanding frontiers of agribusiness in the Brazilian Cerrado, the plantations of Indonesia, among other Asian, Eastern European and Latin American countries - the 'Global South' - also involve the design of globally connected infrastructure, eclipsing unique, diverse and unstable landscapes. There are embankments, direct planting, diversion of waterways, irrigation channels, sowing machines, harvesters, aerial spraying of agrochemicals, machines of all kinds, railway tracks, highways that cross countries and increasingly larger liming ports that sustain global commodity chains and are reproduced in different contexts. So, in this thematic cluster we also want to experiment with the idea that what is at stake in this global landscape is not only how to produce and exploit, but **how to transport and to join different elements**. Such connections are expressed, for example, in the design of “logistics corridors”: spaces that will integrate a wide range of enterprises (railways, highways, ports, pipelines, hydroelectric dams, monoculture farms and mineral extraction sites) to unblock capital flows and circulate commodities. This is what we observe in the Nacala Logistical Corridor, where railways cross northern Mozambique carrying iron ore to the largest deep-water port on the entire east coast of Africa, bringing with them the promise of large-scale soybean production and financial investments.

Tracing these connections, as well as observing the type of knowledge and relationships that consent to the maintenance of a predatory productive model, whose deleterious effects are first seen in social inequality and the depletion of nature, is a task shared by contemporary social sciences. Thus, this thematic cluster has as its *locus* of inscription a debate which intertwines the distinct interpretative possibilities of STS around an open issue. Mobilizing a socio-anthropological approach of the global connections (Ong and Collier 2005; Tsing 2005; Marcus 1995) and science technology and society studies (Latour 2017; Mol and Law 2002; Stengers, 2000; Woolgar and Latour 1986) contributions, we hope that this thematic cluster make it possible to add new interpretative layers to a phenomenon on the move and, therefore, in dispute.

### **Potential themes**

- Debates about the production of knowledge that enables scalable designs and (re)production of landscapes, such as techno-scientific, bureaucratic or economic knowledges;
- Descriptions and interpretations about the frictions between different ways of designing and inhabiting worlds, expressed in alliances, negotiations and conflicts among different social actors;

- Reflections on the dilemmas and challenges of doing research on this theme, such as: the transit between analytical scales, the theoretical-empirical articulation, the access to data and the relationship with interlocutors.
- Considerations on the role of infrastructure in landscape transformation (or maintenance) processes;
- Contributions that emphasize the specificity of bodies and landscapes in the global south, from the interface with other theoretical-epistemological perspectives (such as decolonial debates and black geographies),

### Practical information

Your proposal should consist of an abstract (ca. 300 words) and a brief biographical note (ca. 100 words). Please submit abstracts **by 15 July 2022** to Ângela Camana ([angela.camana@hotmail.com](mailto:angela.camana@hotmail.com)) and Vanessa P. Perin ([vanessa\\_pperin@hotmail.com](mailto:vanessa_pperin@hotmail.com)) with the subject “**Tracing out scalable landscapes**”. If accepted, full 8000-word drafts must be submitted **by 15 October 2022**. This thematic cluster is planned to be published during the second half of 2023. Further information about the text format can be found directly on the Tapuya's website: <https://tapuya.la> .

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