

Contested futures: Scenario Building for the Eastern Amazon at the crossroads of sovereignty, conservation, and development

di Bruna Barbosa

Abstract

The Eastern Amazon, particularly the state of Pará, lies at the epicenter of tensions between environmental conservation, economic exploitation, and the territorial rights of traditional peoples. This article inverts the conventional foresight lens by asking: what futures would the Amazon itself demand? Drawing on Causal Layered Analysis and Three Horizons, the study maps the structural forces and worldview conflicts shaping Pará's trajectory toward 2050. At its core, the research identifies a fundamental tension between a dominant paradigm in which sustainability serves capital and an emergent one in which sustainability functions as a societal commitment. Contrasting scenarios are developed and assessed in terms of their impacts on Indigenous peoples, Quilombola communities, riverine populations, urban residents, and private actors. The article further offers anticipatory recommendations aimed at fostering a more equitable and regenerative Amazonian future, grounded in climate justice and shared territorial governance.

Keywords: Strategic Foresight, Eastern Amazon, Extractivism, Territorial Sovereignty.

What if the Amazon could undertake a Foresight exercise? This article seeks to understand what an ideal scenario for the Amazon Rainforest and the ecosystem it sustains would look like, encompassing its rivers, fauna, trees, and, perhaps most significantly, its human inhabitants, and what would be necessary to reach it. What concessions does it ask of us? Whose interests are disrupted by its demands? Who loses and who gains power as the forest's voice grows louder? And, ultimately, what do these answers reveal about who we are, who we are becoming, and what we aspire to be as humanity?

Methodology

For this foresight process, the following stages were developed: Horizon Scanning, Interviews, Causal Layered Analysis (CLA), Three Hori-

zons, Impact and Uncertainty Matrix, 2x2 Scenario Matrix, Backcasting, and Strategic Directions.

The overarching framework follows Scenario Planning methodology, complemented by two additional tools. The first is Causal Layered Analysis (CLA), developed by Sohail Inayatullah, which operates on the premise that social problems do not exist in a single dimension: they manifest at the surface level but are rooted in structures, worldviews, and mythic narratives that rarely emerge in public debate. The second is Three Horizons, developed by Bill Sharpe and colleagues at the International Futures Forum, which enables participants to organise change over time not as a linear progression but as the coexistence of three distinct patterns of future already present in the current moment, in permanent tension. The inclusion of both tools proved essential for an in-depth understanding of the forces and tensions shaping the Brazilian Amazon.

Drawing on the interviews, all stages were conducted collaboratively. Diversity of participant profiles was sought, with individuals occupying strategic positions across the following areas: innovation funding acquisition, research institutes focusing on major project impact assessment, the Government of Pará, riverine community cooperatives, ESG directors at major consultancies, researchers in biochemistry and soil quality, local NGO directors, businesses supporting traditional communities in resource mobilisation, employees from major maritime logistics companies serving agribusiness, and local consultants. Significant concern over the confidentiality of names was noted. In order to carry out the research, it was necessary to protect the identities of all participants.

With the aim of capturing the major debates and the economic, political, and social discourses at play in each area affecting the Amazon, observational participation was conducted at events focused on agricultural innovation, launches of proposals to promote impact businesses in the Amazon, FAPESP research results presentations on the Amazon, presentations of the Brazilian government's climate action agenda for the coming years, and events convening indigenous community discussions and agendas.

Based on the Impact and Uncertainty Matrix, the political climate among project participants became increasingly strained, particularly in response to demands from riverine and indigenous participants regarding certain governmental decisions, which led some members to withdraw from discussions and workshops. The research continued nonetheless,

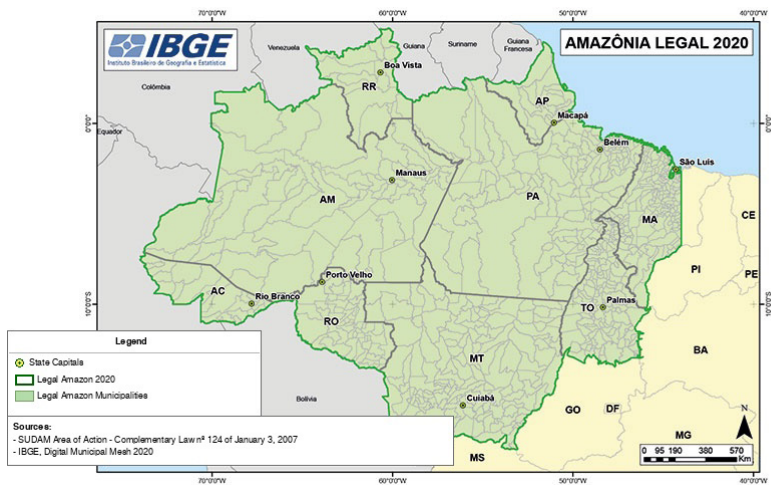
incorporating the objections, concerns, and stated reasons for withdrawal of departing participants into the scenarios and variables, treating these as conflicts and forces of tension running through the scenarios.

Context and Literature

The Brazilian Amazon

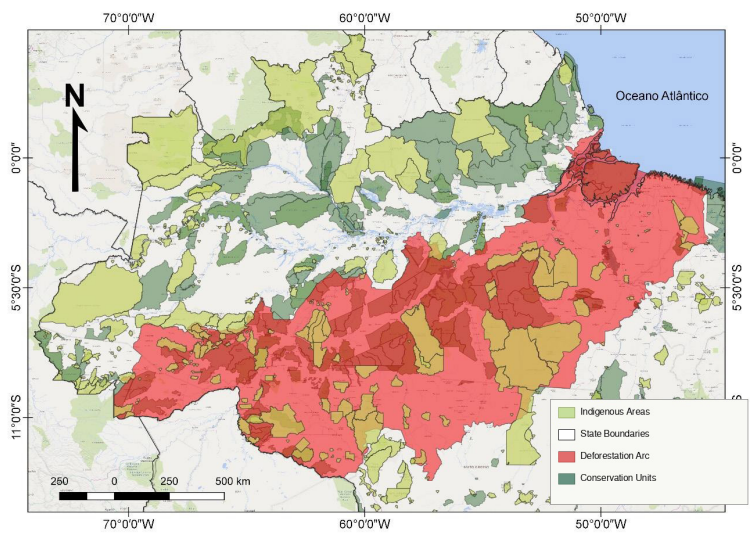
The Brazilian Amazon covers 58.9% of the national territory, distributed across nine states (IBGE, 2022). Its vast extension harbours unparalleled biodiversity: more than 30,000 plant species have been catalogued, along with 311 mammal species, 163 amphibian species, 550 reptile species, 1,300 bird species, and 1,800 fish species. Of this total, 152 plant species and 24 animal species face extinction risk (Embrapa, 2023).

However, reducing the Amazon to the image of an untouched forest is a misconception. The biome is also an inhabited territory: 867,900 indigenous people are distributed across villages and demarcated lands (IBGE, 2022). Yet the Amazon is equally urban: 76% of its population lives in cities (AMZ2030, 2024), comprising 772 municipalities and 9 state capitals (IBGE, 2022). Many of these cities depend on the forest’s ecosystem services for water supply, climate regulation, and food security. To ignore any of these presences is to ignore an essential part of what keeps the biome standing.



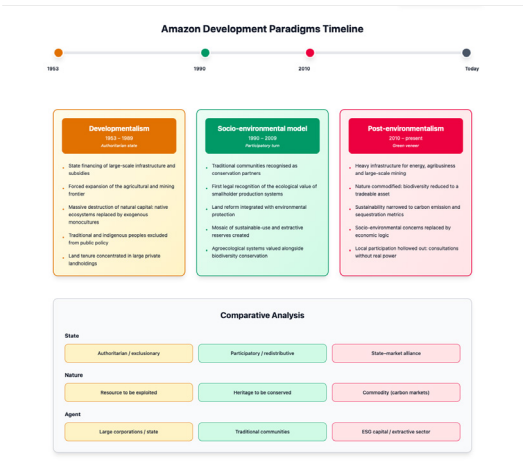
In an attempt to reconcile territorial protection and use, 45% of the Brazilian Amazon is comprised of protected areas, known as Conservation Units. These units are divided into two categories. Integral Protection Units aim at the preservation of nature, permitting only indirect use of resources, such as ecotourism and scientific research. Sustainable Use Units seek to reconcile conservation with the utilisation of natural resources, allowing extractive and economic activities, provided they are subject to good practices that ensure the continuity of ecological processes (MMA, n.d.).

Despite the existence of Conservation Units, the adopted model has been the subject of growing criticism, both for the fragility of effective protection and for the political manoeuvres that enable the exploitation of formally conserved areas. Through changes in legislation, the Amazon Rainforest has already lost Conservation Unit areas equivalent to 57 cities the size of São Paulo, via legal mechanisms that convert Integral Protection areas into Sustainable Use areas, or that reduce the perimeter of existing units – mechanisms that have been systematically deployed to open territories to economic exploitation (InfoAmazônia, 2025).



These problems reflect the historical trajectory of development paradigms that have shaped Brazilian territorial policy for the Amazon. From the 1990s onwards, a new approach emerged, incorporating traditional

populations as partners in conservation and land-use planning, and recognising the ecological value of smallholder farming systems. This shift, however, was reversed from 2010 onwards, when the Amazon returned to being treated as a resource provider for sectors such as energy, agribusiness, and large-scale mining. As a consequence, settlements and conservation units were drained of financial resources and technical assistance, losing their capacity to fulfil their socio-environmental function. Smallholder farmers, pressured by bureaucratic requirements they cannot independently meet, enter into unequal partnerships with timber operators, causing low-impact local extraction practices to be progressively displaced by mechanised agriculture, while local communities face increasing proletarianisation. The outcome of this trajectory is a 69% increase in deforestation on small properties and a 63% reduction on large properties since 2005 (Toledo *et al.*, 2017).



This exploitation landscape also intersects with global geopolitical interests. The energy transition, for instance, has already generated 5,046 applications for the extraction of critical metals in forested areas of the Amazon, of which 1,205 fall directly on indigenous territories (InfoAmazonia, 2024). The Amazonian subsoil is therefore not only a target of expanding agribusiness and conventional mining, but also of a new race for strategic resources driven by global demand for clean technology.

The United States, for example, intensified its presence in the Bra-

zilian mineral sector in February 2026, when the American government closed a US\$ 565 million deal with mining company Serra Verde prior to any official treaty between the two governments, a move analysts have identified as narrowing Brazil's negotiating leverage over local processing and technology transfer (CNN Brasil, 2026; Click Petróleo e Gás, 2025). This economic advance may be read as a reconfiguration of American policy in the Southern Hemisphere, particularly when considered alongside the recent military intervention in Venezuela in January 2026, justified by narco-terrorism accusations and characterised by Trump himself as an application of the Monroe Doctrine (Le Monde Diplomatique, 2026). The event was classified by the UN Secretary-General as a "dangerous precedent" (ONU News, 2026). In the same vein, the American government is considering designating the PCC and Comando Vermelho, criminal organisations operating in Brazil, as foreign terrorist organisations, a measure that specialists warn could pave the way for military operations on Brazilian soil (Agência Brasil, 2026). Taken together, these developments signal that the dispute over the future of the Amazon cannot be resolved solely among local actors.

The carbon market does not escape this logic of dispossession either. REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation), frequently presented as a market-based solution to the climate crisis, operates in practice as yet another mechanism for the appropriation of the forest and its peoples. In analysing 111 REDD+ initiatives, Furtado *et al.* (2024) found that the projects prove ineffective in containing deforestation, as they are incapable of restraining large landowners and agribusiness, while simultaneously allowing major corporations to purchase the right to continue emitting. Compounding this are methodological frauds and the commercialisation of carbon credits applied to public lands, extractive settlements, indigenous territories, and quilombola lands, frequently without the knowledge, participation, or consent of the affected communities, who discover after the fact that already-registered projects were profiting from their territories. To legitimise the avoided deforestation service, the documentation for these projects resorts to a displacement of responsibility, whereby traditional communities and smallholder farmers themselves are portrayed as the agents of deforestation. The impact is a severe restriction on land use, with families prevented from carrying out traditional land management practices, subsistence farming, and hunting, directly undermining their food sovereignty and ways of life.

At the centre of all this, one state stands out: Pará.

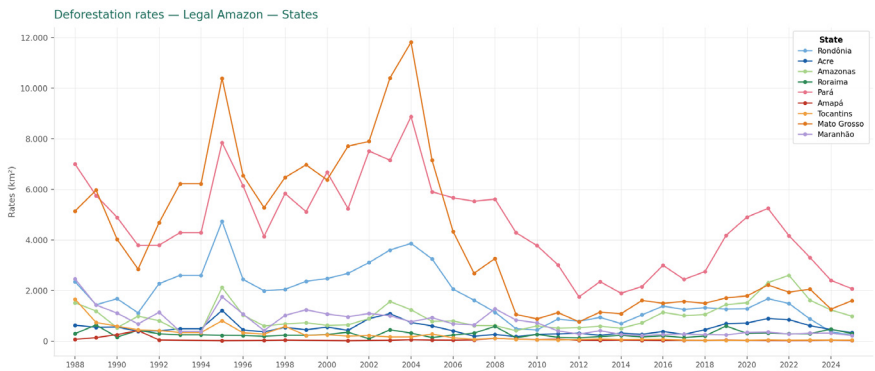
The State of Pará

Pará is the second largest state with Amazon rainforest within its territory, encompassing 24.84% of the Brazilian Amazon, and concentrates the highest GDP in the Northern Region, accounting for 41% of the regional economy. According to the most recent data released by the state, annual growth in Pará reached 5.79%, comfortably surpassing the national average of 3.4%. This performance is sustained by three main sectors. The services sector contributed 4% growth. Agriculture and livestock represent 12% of the state GDP and recorded an expansion of 21.83%, with 65% of production destined for export. Mining, in turn, accounts for 16.7% of the state GDP and for 43.5% of the total value of minerals exported by Brazil in 2023 (FAPESPA, 2025).

The two municipalities that contributed most to the state GDP were Canaã dos Carajás and Parauapebas, with mining as the primary economic activity in both. Here, a critical impasse emerges: there is no legislation establishing how the revenues generated by this mining activity must be redirected to society (FAPESPA, 2025).

Despite its wealth, key indicators of quality of life in Pará remain low. Brazil has 27 states, and Pará ranks 23rd in education (INEP/MEC, 2023), 22nd in household income (IBGE, 2023), and 23rd in the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2022).

Regarding the preservation and stewardship of the forest, the State of Pará is the leading driver of deforestation in the country.



Beyond deforestation rates, the recent weakening of environmental licensing for oil exploration at the mouth of Amazonian river margins produced an accident, causing the leakage of toxic substances into the rivers (Guerreiro Neto, 2026). The peoples of three Indigenous Lands are fighting to prevent oil exploration in the region from proceeding, and IBAMA had already issued warnings regarding the elevated risk of spillage in the area, with its technical assessment overridden by political lobbying (Moliterno, Noberto, 2025).

Infrastructure projects also present significant challenges in reconciling sustainability with economic interests. In August 2025, the federal government signed Decree No. 12,600, incorporating the Tapajós, Madeira, and Tocantins rivers into the National Privatisation Programme for navigability and dredging concession studies. The measure generated strong opposition from indigenous peoples and environmentalists, who warned against the waiver of environmental licensing and the risk that dredging operations could disturb mercury deposits settled on the bed of the Tapajós River as a result of illegal gold mining (Carneiro, 2026). From 22 January 2026 onwards, approximately 20 indigenous peoples blockaded access to the Cargill terminal at the Port of Santarém, a direct target given its role as the region's primary grain export logistics hub. Following 31 days of mobilisation, including the interception of a barge and the occupation of the terminal by more than one thousand indigenous people, the government revoked the decree on 23 February, after negotiations between indigenous leaders and Ministers Guilherme Boulos and Sonia Guajajara (Poder360, 2026).

The economic consequences of the conflict, however, extended beyond the revocation of the decree. The terminal, responsible for 70% of the grain shipped through the Pará port, was completely halted during the crisis. According to journalist Elio Gaspari, Cargill transferred to Ecuador a US\$ 250 million project aimed at cultivating cocoa in degraded pasture areas in Pará, motivated by the legal uncertainty exposed by the episode (Carneiro, 2026).

The account makes evident two interrelated dynamics. First, the incentives for sustainability in the Amazon follow contradictory pathways, with the same corporation that funds environmentally harmful projects also financing their remediation, thereby generating complex political lobbying when projects involving these entities are challenged. Second, indigenous political mobilisation has reached a new level. The even-

ts received significant circulation on social media platforms, with many indigenous people using these channels to present their own accounts, introducing a narrative distinct from that conveyed by mainstream media outlets.

The expansion of internet access among forest communities represents an emerging trend with positive implications for conservation. Social media platforms have become a mechanism for sharing daily life, cultural practices, and denunciations that previously did not reach the general public.

Another group acting forcefully to valorise Amazonian culture and smallholder farming is the chefs of Pará cuisine. Many purchase directly from forest communities and actively promote indigenous traditions through local dishes, while also engaging with political agendas when necessary. A clear example arose when açaí and tucupí were banned from COP 30, on grounds of contamination risk and insufficient confidence in the production process. Notably, açaí had been permitted at COP 28 in Dubai. The producers involved held international certifications and met all requirements for participation in the event; what differed was solely their mode of production, which diverges from globally standardised practices. The episode generated widespread public outcry and the notice vetoing the foods was subsequently revised (CNN Brasil, 2025).

A new business culture is also taking shape locally. Universities are increasingly educating students and local entrepreneurs in Bioeconomy, as illustrated by CESUPA University and the EMBRAPPI Bioeconomy units, which provide resources for research and development projects within the Federal University of Pará.

Emerging businesses focused on supporting traditional communities in accessing carbon credits and local technological development are also beginning to appear, enabling greater participation of indigenous communities in financial resource flows.

Results

In constructing the CLA, it became apparent that Brazil currently operates what may be described as a sustainability circus. This, however, is not an exclusively Brazilian problem. Pará cedes a significant portion of its resources for export, and there is political pressure for the state to con-

tinue supplying its goods to Brazil’s international partners. In this context, where capital needs and political interests are not adequately met, sustainability cannot be achieved. This becomes particularly relevant in a context of instability in international agreements and policies.

For this mindset to change, sustainability must become a shared commitment. It is essential that the issue transcends local public policy and becomes an international agenda capable of reshaping the global economy.

CAUSAL LAYERED ANALYSIS — CONTESTED FUTURES: EASTERN AMAZON, PARÁ (2050)

	Present	Future (2050)
LITANY	Visible problem Pará accounts for 40% of the accumulated deforestation in the Amazon.	Change of course A new national plan sets limits on Amazon exploitation, establishes control mechanisms, and incentivizes local businesses.
STRUCTURAL CAUSES	- National development plans incentivize extractive industries and agriculture in Pará - Some cities depend on an extractive culture to exist - Agriculture and extractivism are owned by outsiders with little connection to the land - The incentive for sustainability is focused on large-scale capital and technology, not on protecting traditional communities	- The national development plan considers natural resources, but more actively incentivizes forest protection - Growth in species mapping studies and local biotechnology - Local plans to foster new economic foundations - Valuing traditional knowledge and culture by national and local media - Increased sustainability credits and new incentive structures for forest protection
WORLDVIEW	Sustainability serves capital. If there is no capital, there is no sustainability.	Sustainability as a commitment, shaping new ways of thinking and acting.
MYTH / METAPHOR	Bread and circus politics: people are distracted by greenwashing while sustainability narratives are used to reduce local political power and open the door to big business. "Carbon market is a big incentive." — ESG Director	The world as a forest: the perception that natural biomes are essential to human existence, and the reconfiguration of the economy so that nature protection becomes mandatory and placed above political interests. "How do you measure if the forest is happy?" — Indigenous interviewee

Entrevista - Futuros do Consumo / ESRM - Bruna Barbosa - Joice Pereira

Several relevant questions were raised by participants in the interval between the CLA and the Three Horizons exercise. They emphasised that, within the context of a desirable future, international pressure must operate on two fronts: the sanctioning of political lobbies that undermine sustainability, and a significant shift in economic metrics, incentives, and governance frameworks capable of enabling a sustainable territories economy, thereby preventing populations from being left without support. In short, for sustainability to be prioritised, the existing global economic order must incorporate mechanisms that allow forested territories to survive and prosper when confronted by private and extractivist interests.

Despite current policies failing to translate into resources for the population, all participants, with the exception of indigenous representatives, expressed concern that the low financial returns and limited scalability of the bioeconomy could negatively affect the local economy. This indicates that

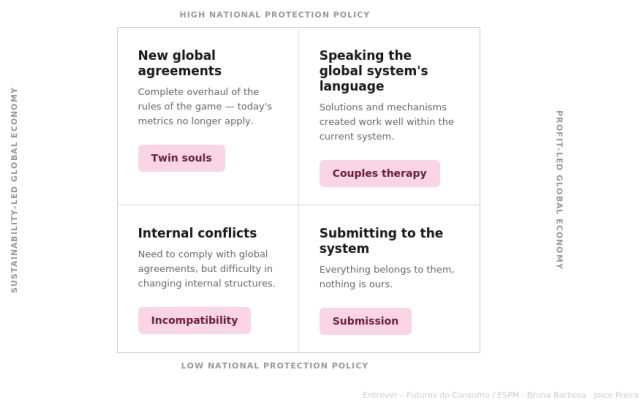
the sustainability discourse, as it stands today, also functions as a means of ensuring control over and submission of a territory. There exists a pursuit, a moral expectation, and even an obligation towards sustainability, yet there is no collective incentive to understand local realities and develop economically viable sustainable models.

In the Three Horizons workshop, the signals of preferable futures identified in the present were: increased investment in biotechnology, the growing capacity of indigenous communities to communicate with urban centres through internet access, and rising interest in the Pará economy.

The preferable future identified was one of sustainability above profit, capable of generating significant change in both local and global economic models.

To make this model viable, participants identified the following requirements: an international climate of cooperation rather than distrust between nations, including the creation of a Nations for Climate Organisation, a body responsible for building new global economic agreements and monitoring sustainability initiatives across countries; education and awareness-raising among Brazilians in the Southeast and in the political centre of Brazil (Brasília) regarding the reality of the Amazon; the creation of Floresta Conecta, a programme offering satellite internet access across the full extent of the forest, enabling rapid communication between indigenous and riverine peoples and protective bodies in cases of environmental crimes, wildfires, and other emergencies; the valorisation of local currency based on the quantity of preserved forest, indigenous peoples' wellbeing, and reforestation areas; and a green tax, an additional levy on large-scale mining and agribusiness, with the percentage increasing in accordance with the scale of risk and the area exploited.

In constructing the Impact and Uncertainty Matrix, participants identified the following variables: intensification of forest protection policies; level of technology and readiness for satellite-based monitoring; degree of incentive for sustainable projects; degree of prioritisation of economic development; volume of investment in infrastructure and development projects; development of public policies to return benefits from sustainable activities to society; political mindset of the region; international interest in rare metal extraction; degree of investment in innovation and forest research; and level of political conflict. The variables selected for scenario construction were the intensification of forest protection policies and the degree of prioritisation of economic development.



Scenario 1: New Global Agreement

The climate crisis drove a reorganisation of the global economy through the New World Pact, an international agreement that ties the value of currencies and corporations to their capacity to regenerate the planet and improve local infrastructure. Consumerism and high productivity are no longer incentivised, and environmentally harmful businesses come to operate under collectively defined regulations and limits. In Brazil, this new arrangement weakens the mining and agribusiness lobby, triggering a regional economic reorganisation: Pará cedes its leading position to Amazonas, whose higher percentage of preserved forest becomes a central economic asset. To manage the sustainable economic transition, the country launches the Science for the Forest Plan, which brings together researchers and traditional communities in the valorisation of bioactive compounds, while municipalities with decommissioned mines are redirected towards reforestation programmes and sustainable land use.

Scenario 2: Internal Conflicts

The transition towards a sustainable economy took place, but under considerable tension. The global agreement was forged in an atmosphere of distrust, and cultural and historical differences between nations resulted in poorly defined rules, with an emphasis on economic sanctions

rather than effective transition support. Certain powers used this punitive mechanism as an instrument of control over territories rich in natural resources. In practice, regions such as the Amazon were unable to adapt quickly enough, as the agreed terms proved economically unviable for them. Legal delays and regulatory ambiguity created openings for agribusiness and mining lobbies to deliberately stall the approval of new protective frameworks while continuing to legally exploit forested areas. The result was an intensification of violence against indigenous peoples: roads, rivers, and communication channels with urban centres were sabotaged to isolate communities, while strategic burning and blocked access routes hampered environmental enforcement and ensured maximum territorial exploitation before new legislation could come into force.

Scenario 3: Speaking the Global System's Language

Brazil commits to sustainability against the current of a world that continues to follow predatory capitalism. The country develops its own forest protection mechanisms, including Floresta Conecta, a platform for the reporting of environmental crimes by traditional communities, yet the response infrastructure remains insufficient. The outcome is a Pará in permanent conflict: bioeconomy businesses coexist with forest exploitation, municipalities with greater forest cover gain prominence, but the granting of environmental licences remains hostage to political circumstances. Sustainability has advanced, yet it still lacks sufficient power to overcome the economic structures that depend on forest exploitation.

Scenario 4: Submitting to the System

The climate of global conflict has intensified and distrust between nations is extreme. This is not a moment for envisioning new economic models or pursuing significant transformations. Charting entirely new pathways carries risk, particularly where no secure foundation exists. In this scenario, Brazil prioritises geopolitical positioning, and the use of its natural resources to that end becomes essential. Any demands from traditional communities become secondary in the face of prevailing challenges. Sustainability has declined considerably, and there is little to no incentive to keep the forest standing.

Preferable Scenario

For this study, the scenario identified as preferable is Scenario 1.

Backcasting

For the realisation of this scenario, a number of significant events were identified, described in the table below:

TARGET SCENARIO – 2040 The New World Pact			
The climate crisis has driven a global economic reorganisation: countries and companies are valued by their capacity to regenerate the planet. Brazil launches the Science for the Forest Plan. Para loses economic leadership to Amazonas, whose preserved forests become a central economic asset.			
YEAR	ENABLING CONDITIONS	CRITICAL INTERVENTIONS	STAKEHOLDERS AND ROLES
2038	Amazon bioreconomy surpasses mining in local jobs in pilot municipalities. Mining and agribusiness lobbies politically weakened in Congress. First international reports show reversal of deforestation trends.	Full implementation of the Science for the Forest Plan with guaranteed funding. Negotiations with de-commissioned mines in advanced economic reorientation programme. New World Pact legal framework being internalised by signatory countries.	Northern state governments (BRICS) Traditional communities as economic protagonists Private business sector (LULA / Para resources)
2036	Ecosystem collapse across multiple global regions catalyses adherence to the New World Pact. Mercosur EU agreement in force with binding environmental clauses. First Amazonian bioactive reach international commercial scale.	New World Pact signed by Global South bloc led by Brazil. Science for the Forest Plan approved with guaranteed federal budget. BRICS currency becomes a reference for natural resource transactions.	House of State (Ministries of Science and Environment) LULA / ANA (Indigenous peoples as knowledge holders) CITT / UN / IMF
2034	Mineral commodity prices falling under European regulatory pressures. BRICS currency operational in bilateral transactions. Bioreconomy model demonstrates consistent business viability. Bolsonaro in electoral decline.	Brazil creates a sovereign bioreconomy fund for the Amazon. Legislation requires full environmental accountability from extractive companies. Indigenous and quilombola communities gain economic autonomy over their territories. Binding ecological-economic zoning in Para.	Senate / House of Representatives (Ministry of Science) Public / traditional sectors (Brazilian sector) Para municipal governments
2032	Extreme climate events in the Amazon historic drought, fires, at critical point generate domestic political pressure for change. First measurable results from the Amazon Fund. BRICS consolidating financial alternative to IMF and World Bank.	Launch of the National Amazon Bioreconomy Fund. Major international corporations adopt ESG metrics tied to the Amazon. Para state government launches Economic Transition Plan. LULA and ANA expand bioactive research with public funding.	Para and Amazonas state governments (SAMA / KREIA) Indigenous movements (INDI / IPAN, SA, MACON) Europe / Research institutions
2030	Continuity of environmental political project post Lula. COP30 legacy (debates 2023) with binding commitments. Bolsonaro electorally marginalised. BRICS with growing economic weight. Pressure from European and Arab consumers for environmental transparency.	Legislation on ecosystem services payments directly to traditional communities. Completion of priority indigenous land demarcation. First BRICS financial mechanisms for green projects. Bioreconomy pilot programmes in deforestation-free municipalities.	Federal government (FUND / IMF) Amazon Fund investors (Indigenous collaborations) IMB / SA
2028	Trump's departure (impasse) or end of term) reduces US geopolitical pressure in Latin America and weakens the Bolsonaro family's discourse prioritising pro-US domestic policies. Growth of global climate movements. BRICS with advanced discussions on alternative currency.	Launch of BRICS currency pilot protocol. Approval of Brazilian legal framework for bioreconomy. International campaign coordinated by NGOs and influencers on the challenges of the Amazon. Indigenous peoples gain international visibility in the search for new alternatives to the climate crisis.	BRICS countries (Brazilian Congress) NGOs (MACON, JAMA, SA) LULA / Ministry of Science
2026	Possibility of Trump's impeachment, considerably reducing US domination in Latin America and weakening the Bolsonaro family's discourse prioritising pro-US domestic policies. Growth of BRICS power and contribution of their own currency. Increased local awareness of bioreconomy and the rights of indigenous peoples.	Continue the creation of a BRICS currency and the search for mechanisms for a new deflationary economy. Coordinated communication strategy on the challenges of the Amazon through NGOs and influencers.	BRICS countries (NGOs / Influencers) Indigenous peoples (FUND) LULA / Ministry of Science

Conclusion

It may be considered common knowledge that protecting the environment matters for human survival. But in what context, and at what cost?

To listen to the voice of the forest means recognising that Brazil lacks sufficient economic, legal, and political foundations to protect it, its populations, or the cities surrounding it, if the forest’s survival continues to be treated as an obstacle to development. Building that foundation is a collective and international endeavour: Brazilian, European, North American, Chinese. What the forest provides far exceeds the domestic market, sustaining, above all, global export chains.

Today, development and sustainability appear so irreconcilable that merely speaking of protecting the forest, or placing an indigenous representative and an ESG director in the same room, is enough to generate di-

scomfort. In one of this project's dynamics, a director from a major consultancy chose to leave the activity upon hearing an indigenous representative speak. Protecting the forest is a dangerous and profoundly uncomfortable subject.

It is equally important to question what discussions we are placing on the agenda under the banner of sustainability. Carbon capture is a globally accepted metric, yet one that may prove inadequate in many contexts. The energy transition is essential, but under what conditions will it be carried out? How will the impacts of this process be addressed?

Are we bringing to the discussion table those whose voices we need to hear when thinking about sustainable pathways? Are we genuinely willing to listen?

As next steps for this work, I propose deepening the discussion for the general public through the presentation of the preferable scenario to society, drawing on Futures Personas and futures artefacts across social media platforms, museum exhibitions, university presentations, and other venues.

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