

Slow violence and mental health: effects of the Estreito Hydroelectric Plant on the Baixão settlement in Babaçulândia - TO

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Abstract

The construction of the Estreito Hydroelectric Plant in Maranhão left enormous liabilities in the states of Maranhão and Tocantins; among those affected are the residents of São José Island, who were relocated to the Baixão settlement in the municipality of Babaçulândia/TO. The aim is to analyze whether the extraordinary violence of forced displacement persists as slow violence in the daily lives of those affected and its effects on mental health. To this end, an analysis of the social support and mental health conditions of 13 residents was carried out, and four of them were interviewed. The results followed the normative standards of the instruments used, and the interviews were processed in WebQDA software using content analysis parameters. The findings point to a high level of emotional suffering resulting from multiple forms of state violence that manifest themselves in the public authorities' neglect in resolving issues raised from the outset, such as the lack of drinking water, the lack of access to the river, the lack of production infrastructure, and changes to the way of life. It is concluded that the dam becomes entrenched as practices of slow, everyday violence that persist over time and space, significantly altering the living conditions of the riverside communities.

Keywords: Dam-affected people. Slow violence. Mental health. Settlement. Estreito Hydroelectric Plant.

Violencia lenta y salud mental: efectos de la Central Hidroeléctrica de Estreito en el asentamiento Baixão en Babaçulândia - TO

Resumen

La construcción de la Central Hidroeléctrica de Estreito/MA dejó enormes pasivos en el estado de Maranhão y de Tocantins; entre los afectados se encuentran los moradores de la

Isla de São José que fueron reubicados en el asentamiento Baixão en el municipio de Babaçulândia/TO. El objetivo es analizar si la violencia extraordinaria del desplazamiento forzado se perpetúa como violencia lenta en la vida cotidiana de los afectados y sus efectos sobre la salud mental. Para ello, se realizó un análisis de las condiciones de apoyo social y salud mental de 13 habitantes y se entrevistó a cuatro de ellos. Los resultados siguieron los estándares normativos de las pruebas utilizadas y las entrevistas se trataron en el software WebQDA utilizando los parámetros de análisis de contenido. Los resultados muestran un elevado nivel de sufrimiento emocional derivado de múltiples violencias estatales que se evidencian por la falta de interés del poder público en solucionar cuestiones planteadas desde el principio, tales como la falta de agua potable, de acceso al río, de infraestructura para la producción y de cambios en el estilo de vida. Se concluye que la represa se estabiliza como prácticas de violencias lentas cotidianas que perduran en el tiempo y en el espacio, alterando de manera significativa las condiciones de vida de los ribereños.

Palabras clave: Afectados por presa. Violencia lenta. Salud mental. Asentamiento. Central hidroeléctrica de Estreito.

1. Introduction

Brazilian energy policy has long been organized together with capital in order to guarantee conditions for the growth of the country and of large corporations, and the Estreito Hydroelectric Plant, located between the states of Maranhão and Tocantins, was no exception (Sieben, Cleps Junior, 2012); arising from the Growth Acceleration Program, it was installed in the sub-basin of the Tocantins River and forms part of the Amazon basin (Sousa, 2025). The hydroelectric undertaking, like others across Brazil, was/is marked by a range of conflicts with local populations and environmental agencies, which gave rise to forced evictions, resettlements, and changes to ways of life and community life, among other issues that interfered with traditional communities of fishers, riverside dwellers, floodplain farmers, babassu coconut breakers, and others (Rocha, 2016; Sousa, 2025). The construction of the undertaking affected ten cities in Tocantins, listed in alphabetical order: Aguiarnópolis, Babaçulândia, Barra do Ouro, Darcinópolis, Filadélfia, Itapiratins, Palmeira, Palmeirante, Tupiratins, and Wanderlândia; and two in Maranhão: Carolina and Estreito.

Sousa (2025) points out that the first mentions of the plant's implementation date back to the late 1990s, with the Ten-Year Plan for the expansion of electric power in the country, the first studies having been carried out in 2001 by Eletronorte and Ibama. However, the first contacts with local communities began only in 2007, and the expropriations date from 2009. The consortium that won the right to build and operate the plant is made up of Alcoa Vale, Camargo Correia, Tractbel, and Suez, responsible for the entire process.

The city of Babaçulândia/TO was one of those most affected by the plant (AMORIM, JESUS, 2006), including São José Island, forty kilometers from the city, where 142 families lived, engaged in the activities of fishers, floodplain farmers, artisans, extractivists, and others. The residents of this island were displaced to four new settlements: Mirindiba (Araguaína/TO), Bela Vista, Santo Estevão, and Baixão (all in Babaçulândia/TO). The latter, the focus of our research, received twenty-six families, with approximately one hundred people in the locality. In the Baixão settlement, minimum conditions were not guaranteed, with no drinking water available for drinking, cooking, personal hygiene, or planting; it is located twenty kilometers from the city. According to Pitombeira (2018), 80% of the relocated residents changed their form of work and occupation. It is important to stress that these riverside dwellers, born and raised on the riverbank, came to live far from the river and without adequate access to water (Leite Sousa, 2025).

The succession of acts of violence perpetrated by the company responsible, with the connivance of the public authorities, produces what Nixon (2011) calls slow violence, which consists of a process of marginalization over time that affects, above all, populations on the economic, racial, and social margins of society. Slow violence differs from structural violence in that it involves environmental questions, that is, groups already historically marginalized as a result of multiple inequalities, among them the spatial ones, afflicted by processes across various spheres, often in an almost invisible manner. Such a process produces varied effects on the socioemotional conditions of the community or group.

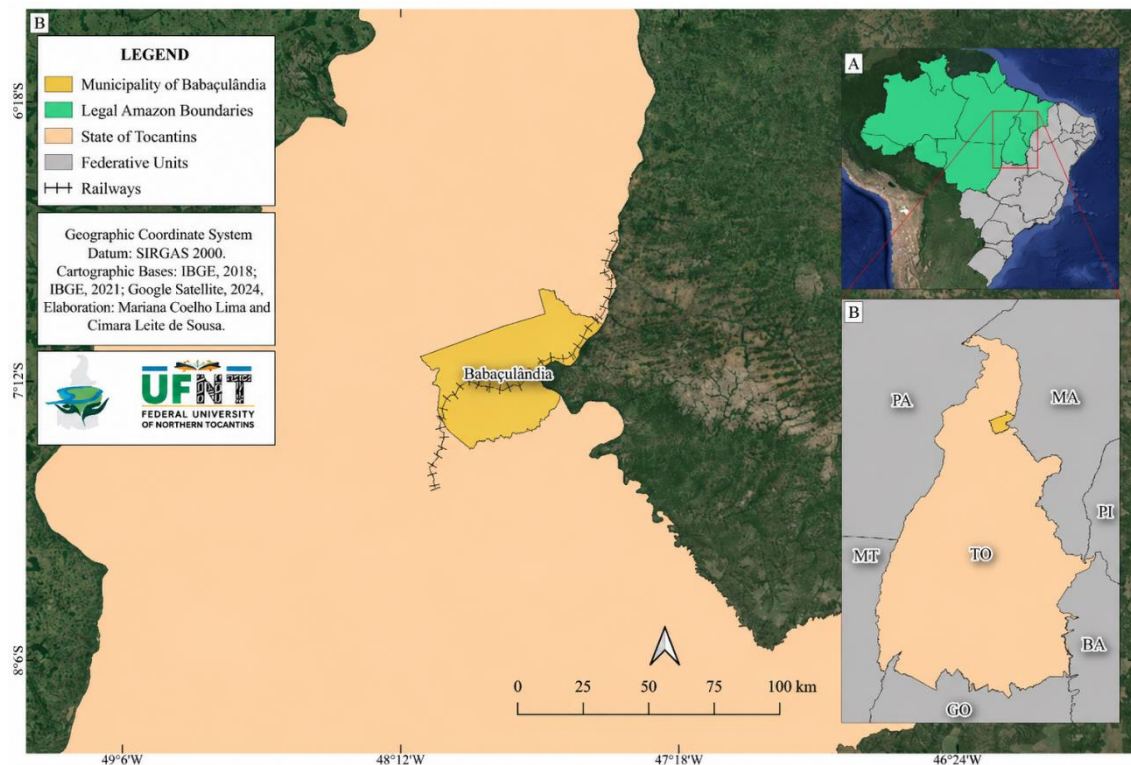
It is this universe of families, relocated after the submersion of their homes and lands, that this research addresses, with the aim of analyzing psychological suffering through the perception of social support, the prevalence of indicators of mental illness, and the degree of hopelessness among the adults of the Baixão settlement, as well as establishing correlations between emotional suffering and the slow violence produced by the effects of the construction of the HPP.

To this end, the article is presented in 4 sections, in addition to the introduction and the final remarks. In the first, we characterize the Estreito HPP and the Baixão/Babaçulândia settlement; in the second, we discuss slow violence and mental health; and in the third section we present the results and discussions.

2. Territory, power, and inequalities: The Estreito Hydroelectric Plant and the liabilities in the Baixão/Babaçulândia settlement

The municipality of Babaçulândia, with a population of 7,780 people and a demographic density of 4.40 inhabitants/km² (IBGE, 2022), is located in the state of Tocantins, in the North region of the country, belonging to the so-called Legal Amazon (Image 1). The Brazilian Amazon was established by federal law in 1953 (BRASIL, 1953), constituting the concept of the Legal Amazon, which encompasses regions with similar social, economic, political, anthropological, and environmental characteristics and challenges as part of a plan for the development and occupation of the region. The territorial delimitation established takes a regional sociopolitical bias as its parameter; thus, the Amazon biome, although predominant (49%), is not the only reference point, also containing the Cerrado. The 1988 constitution reaffirms this division, encompassing eight states (Acre, Amapá, Amazonas, Mato Grosso, Pará, Rondônia, Roraima, and Tocantins), equivalent to almost 60% of the total Brazilian territory (IPEA, 2008). According to Mota et al. (n.d.), the concept of the Legal Amazon is an invention for planning purposes whose goal was to economically integrate the region into the country's economy.

Image 1: Location of Babaçulândia/TO



Source: taken from Leite Sousa and translated by the authors, 2025, p. 25.

More than half a century after the region was established, it can be stated that the goal of integrating and articulating local development with the country's macro-political and economic ambitions was not achieved, and the advance of agromineral exploitation has been generating various environmental and/or social liabilities for local populations. Diniz *et al* (2007, p. 4) show that the Legal Amazon reproduces the country's characteristics of inequality, “(...) Brazil is not a poor country, but a country with many poor people, whose poverty does not originate in a scarcity of resources”; they further state that the region's potential wealth could eliminate inequalities and put an end to destitution in an area known for its multiple forms of poverty.

Within this logic of reproducing inequalities, the region is considered an asset on account of its hydromineral wealth, which, however, is transformed into hydrobusiness. Oliveira (2020) shows that hydrobusiness is a way of offering a response to the needs of capitalism through the use of water for energy generation, agriculture, and so on. And the Amazon region, especially the basin of the Araguaia and Tocantins rivers, is geographically attractive on account of its water capacity, leading to the installation of the Estreito, Lageado, Peixe Angelical, Tucuruí, São Salvador, Cana Brava, and Serra da Mesa plants (Soares, 2023, p. 189). Sieben and Cleps Junior (2012, p. 189) note that Brazil works toward a “monoculture of waters,” owing to its having hydroelectric plants as the primary alternative for energy generation, “displacing more than 1 million people through its 2 thousand constructed dams”. And like any monoculture, its interest is on behalf of big capital, “the hydroelectric complex of the Tocantins River mainly serves the energy needs of the Japanese aluminum-producing companies” (Sieben, Cleps Junior, 2012, p. 190).

Martins (1993) shows that, in general, the impacts on the lives of residents of localities affected by dams generate severe consequences.

It is not a matter of introducing anything into the lives of these populations, but of taking from them what is vital for their survival, not only economically: lands and territories, the means and conditions of material, social, cultural, and political existence. And as if they did not exist or, existing, did not have the right to the recognition of their humanity (Martins, 1993, p. 63. Translated by the authors).

Specifically, the Estreito HPP was responsible for the changes in the locality of the study, having been financed by the BNDES (National Bank for Social Development), which, through a corporate consortium, received the financial assets of the project; reproducing the logic of exploiting common goods on behalf of small economic groups. In short, with the public financing of the project, the profits go to big capital, while the environmental, social, and emotional liabilities go to the local riverside populations (Soares, 2023).

It was by this means that the population of Babaçulândia experienced the advance of the waters for the constitution of the Estreito Hydroelectric Plant (HPP), which definitively altered the lives of many residents, including those living on São José Island. It was the consortium responsible for the construction of the dam that acquired the area for the resettlement of the residents and was thus directly responsible for the choice and relocation as a form of reparation to the residents. Pitombeira (2018) writes that eighty percent of the residents of São José Island changed occupation after the move and saw their contact with the waters and nature, their way of life, and their community relations change tragically (Pitombeira Carvalho, Sieben, 2019).

Residents of São José Island, the riverside dwellers lived surrounded by the Tocantins River, subsisting on floodplain planting, fishing, the production of babassu coconut oil (abundant in the region and which gives the locality its name), among other activities; Pitombeira Carvalho and Sieben (2019, p. 198) explain that “all of this shaped the group's subsistence culture and the human-nature relationship (...)” The construction of the HPP led to the filling of the lake and to significant changes in ways of living, especially for those who were relocated to the Baixão settlement (Pitombeira, 2018).

3. Slow Violence and Mental Health in the context of displacement

As a theoretical framework, we have two perspectives that converge through looking and through a return to listening to the spoken word. The first is grounded in Nixon (2011), who offers an understanding of slow violence, showing that certain lives are more exposed to violence on account of multiple determinants than others, in addition to becoming frustrated with the possibilities of reparation and justice. It is shown that the attempts to be compensated also play out as a continuation of the violence.

Nixon (2011) uses an adjective to qualify violence: slow. In the dictionary the adjective refers to something sluggish, indolent, something unhurried, devoid of movement, lax, and so on. Something almost of the order of imperceptibility, but which is nonetheless present, producing effects wherever it takes hold. Thus, “we

need to account for how the temporal dispersion of slow violence affects the way we perceive and respond to a variety of social afflictions [...]”¹ (Nixon, 2011, p. 3). It is Das (1995) who warns that the production of pain and its use by the theologies of suffering combine in an intricate strategy to maintain the *status quo* of society; in this way, the successive invisible forms of violence produce individualization and resentment, generating no effects of a collective social bond, hindering the struggle against exploitation and facilitating manipulation.

Nixon (2011, p. 2) sets out “by slow violence I mean a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all.”² It differs from the usual notion of violence that pervades the view of the spectacle, of that which breaks the logic and is rapidly demonstrable, like the explosion of a bomb, a shooting, a car accident. Slow violence “a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales”³ (Nixon, 2011, p. 2). It is of a kind that affects peripheral social groups, victims of social disqualification historically produced by racism, social and spatial inequalities, and environmental events that produce accumulations of expulsions (Nixon, 2011; Sassen, 2016).

Slow violence is understood as producing and reproducing emotional suffering by keeping alive the succession of traumas experienced as a result of interventions in daily life, but also by producing various ways of continuing to live, circumventing and resisting it (Martins, 2016). In another context, Das (2020) shows that violence combined with the impossibility of overcoming it produces “communities of resentment,” revealing how the politics of affect constitutes new forms of sociability. Resentment, when it reaches an entire community, produces immobility by inscribing itself in daily life in a lasting way and producing “small psychic catastrophes” (Das, 2020, p. 16).

It is extraordinary events such as the dispossession of ways of life through the implementation of a dam that this work is interested in, or else how the Nation-State, through its homeopathic doses of “expulsions” (Sassen, 2016), produces intangible effects on the human beings who experience them.

The second theoretical point underpins the understanding of the effects on the mental health of those people who were affected by the construction of the dam, in the possibility of listening to what is said beyond consciousness, in search of a subject who is not reduced to organic pathologies and who offers, in their own life history, that which animates mental facts, that is, the social and the relations established with it in the production of individuality and its consequences. For Lacan, it is the social genesis of personality that guides the understanding of what one is today, of subjectivity and its pathologies. “Personality is formed through the socialization of the individual within nuclei of interaction such as the family, social institutions, and

¹ “We need to account for how the temporal dispersion of slow violence affects the way we perceive and respond to a variety of social afflictions [...]” (Nixon, 2011, p. 3).

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³ “A violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales” (Nixon, 2011, p. 2).

the State” (Safatle, 2018, p. 21). Safatle (2018) states that suffering is a political condition determined by a socio-historical time, which tells how subjects are marked and redefined; he states that overcoming this does not necessarily pass through a better adaptation.

Having set out the theoretical strands, we reaffirm the perspective of the research, which is to listen to how the slow violence resulting from the installation of the HPP brings about changes in the ways of being of the subjects affected by it, producing or not producing changes in their mental health.

Two aspects are considered in the analysis of mental health. The **first** refers to social support, since the perception of support from one's environment functions as a predictor of health or illness; in other words, if the person feels that they have affective, material, and informational support from the people around them, social support functions as a buffer against emotional suffering and can reduce exposure to anxiety, depression, and chronic diseases; on the other hand, if the person feels that they have low social support, they become more exposed to mental and physical illness (Cardoso; Batista, 2014). Social support, in general, is understood in three dimensions: affective, instrumental, and informational. The affective refers to the perception of being loved and that people care about them and give them due attention and value; the instrumental relates to the possibility of accessing material and financial resources, such as money, having help to go to the health center, and feeling helped with one's needs; the informational is the understanding that one receives adequate information for decision-making (Cardoso, Batista, 2014; Siqueira, 2008).

The **second** aspect was the screening of indicators of common mental disorders, with emphasis on hopelessness, which is a fairly strong factor and is related to depression and anxiety. Hopelessness arises from the sensation of feeling that one has failed in life (Oliveira *et al*, 2006); it is a cognitive factor of a future without new possibilities or prospects, a belief that life is not worth living and that it presents itself without the slightest motivation. Hopelessness is related to suicidal ideation and is a descriptor of mental health or illness (Marback, Pelisoli, 2014). These aspects helped us to trace both the slow violence and its effects.

4. The methodological path

The work in question is interdisciplinary in nature and aims to capture human movements and feelings within a given social reality; thus, the means used can determine its end, and it is through this that one reaches the empirical data that supports the research (Minayo, 2007). The research is qualitative in nature and was conducted with 13 adults⁴ who were displaced from São José Island to the Baixão settlement in Babaçulândia. Data collection took place at two moments in the Baixão community. **In the first**, the following instruments were applied: (i) **Social Support**

⁴ The research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Northern Tocantins under no. CAAE 80827324.0.0000.0342.

Perception Scale – EPSUS – A⁵: is a scale with 36 items grouped into four dimensions, namely: (D1) 17 affective items, (D2) 5 of social interaction, (D3) 7 instrumental, and (D4) 7 of problem coping; answered on a four-point *Likert* -type scale that receives 1 point for ‘never’ up to 4 for ‘always’. The score can range from zero to one hundred and eight, and the higher the score, the greater the perception of social support. The analysis and classification of support was given by the test's parameters for the Brazilian population; (ii) **Beck Hopelessness Scale – BHS:** like the EPSUS-A, the Beck Hopelessness Scale (BHS) is an instrument for the exclusive use of the psychologist and had its use assessed and approved by the SATEPSI system. The BHS is a scale that measures a person's level of hopelessness, indicating their pessimism in relation to the future. It is considered an indirect indicator of the risk of suicide and depression. It is a dichotomous scale in which the subject responds between two alternatives, true or false, scored as 0 or 1, the result of which allows classification as normal hope, or minimal, mild, moderate, or severe hopelessness, according to the test's scoring guidelines; (iii) **Self Reporting Questionnaire – SRQ-20:** the Self Reporting Questionnaire (SRQ-20) is an instrument developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) with the purpose of producing a test that is easy to apply and free to use for various professional profiles, especially those in the health field, with the aim of facilitating the screening of common mental disorders in developing countries. It is widely used in Brazil and in other countries around the world; it does not function as a diagnosis but offers reliable indications for screening (Cardoso *et al*, 2023). It was created by Harding *et al* (1980) and adapted to Brazil by Mari and Williams (1986). The SRQ-20 is composed of 20 dichotomous items, to which one can answer yes or no for each of the statements. The score is 0 or 1, and the result indicates the presence or absence of common mental disorders.

In the **second moment**, four interviews were conducted, with interviewees randomly selected from among those who had responded to the tests. The interviews aim to understand the process of removal from São José Island and of settlement in the new locality, with the intention of verifying the perception of the levels of violence and whether it persists over time, producing slow violence. The procedures were recorded and transcribed.

We present the results on two fronts: (i) individual analyses of each instrument (EPSUS-A, BHS, and SRQ-20) were carried out, based on their own parameters, and the results presented; (ii) content analysis was carried out according to the technical parameters of Bardin (2016), through the operationalization of the WEBQDA software, specific to qualitative or mixed research.

5. Results: Slow Violence, Mental Health, and Social Liability

⁵ The Federal Council of Psychology, since 2003, has established the Psychological Test Assessment System (SATEPSI), which analyzes and monitors the validation of tests used in Brazil, issuing a favorable opinion or not on their use. The aim of SATEPSI is to constitute a reliable base of psychological tests that assist psychologists and researchers in their practice, based on psychometric tests that have adequate parameters for the Brazilian population (Cardoso, Batista, 2014). The scales used in the work have a favorable opinion from the Federal Council of Psychology.

First, we work with the results of the mental health assessment tests of the thirteen research participants, in order to subsequently present the results of the interviews.

In Table 1 we present the results of the EPSUS-A test

Table 1: Results of the EPSUS-A Test

Participants	Dimension	Value	Perception
Participant 1	Affective	48	High
	Social Interactions	11	High
	Instrumental	15	Medium high
	Problem Coping	18	High
	Total Score	92	High
Participant 2	Affective	47	High
	Social Interactions	7	Medium low
	Instrumental	11	Medium low
	Problem Coping	10	Medium low
	Total Score	75	Medium high
Participant 3	Affective	35	Medium low
	Social Interactions	8	Medium low
	Instrumental	13	Medium low
	Problem Coping	13	Medium low
	Total Score	67	Medium low
Participant 4	Affective	34	Medium low
	Social Interactions	10	Medium high
	Instrumental	14	Medium high
	Problem Coping	14	Medium high
	Total Score	72	Medium low
Participant 5	Affective	33	Medium low
	Social Interactions	6	Low
	Instrumental	14	Medium high
	Problem Coping	4	Low
	Total Score	55	Low
Participant 6	Affective	49	High
	Social Interactions	9	Medium high
	Instrumental	17	High
	Problem Coping	17	High
	Total Score	90	High
Participant 7	Affective	46	High
	Social Interactions	8	Medium low
	Instrumental	21	High
	Problem Coping	15	Medium high
	Total Score	92	High
Participant 8	Affective	39	Medium low
	Social Interactions	3	Low
	Instrumental	11	Medium low
	Problem Coping	7	Low
	Total Score	60	Low
Participant 9	Affective	44	High
	Social Interactions	8	Medium low
	Instrumental	18	High
	Problem Coping	11	Medium low
	Total Score	81	Medium-high

Participant 10	Affective	30	low
	Social Interactions	10	Medium high
	Instrumental	17	Medium high
	Problem Coping	15	Medium high
	Total Score	74	Medium low
Participant 11	Affective	24	low
	Social Interactions	4	low
	Instrumental	9	low
	Problem Coping	6	low
	Total Score	49	low
Participant 12	Affective	41	Medium high
	Social Interactions	13	High
	Instrumental	10	low
	Problem Coping	15	Medium high
	Total Score	78	Medium high
Participant 13	Affective	11	Low
	Social Interactions	2	Low
	Instrumental	1	Low
	Problem Coping	2	Low
	Total Score	16	Low

Source: prepared by the authors.

In the EPSUS/A test we note that, with the exception of participants 1 and 6, all the others have changes in their perception of social support. Participants 1, 6, 7, and 9 already present changes in some types, but still remain within a good standard. Recalling that social support can function as a buffering factor in coping with psychic and social problems, that is, the greater the perception of support, the lower the chance of emotional illness. We also highlight participants 3, 4, 5, 8, 11, and 13 with a low perception of social support in almost all types (affective, social interactions, instrumental, and problem coping); thus we see that six of the thirteen participants do not feel supported and welcomed in any of the sectors of their lives, constituting a serious indicator and a predictor of future psychosocial problems.

Let us examine the screening for illness. In Table 2 we have the results of the SRQ-20 test.

Table 2: Result of the SRQ-20 test – Self Reporting Questionnaire

Name	Result	Analysis
Participant 1	14 points	higher risk of mental suffering
Participant 2	10 points	higher risk of mental suffering
Participant 3	9 points	higher risk of mental suffering
Participant 4	8 points	higher risk of mental suffering
Participant 5	2 points	lower risk of mental suffering
Participant 6	4 points	lower risk of mental suffering
Participant 7	5 points	lower risk of mental suffering
Participant 8	10 points	higher risk of mental suffering
Participant 9	6 points	lower risk of mental suffering
Participant 10	11 points	higher risk of mental suffering
Participant 11	4 points	lower risk of mental suffering
Participant 12	10 points	higher risk of mental suffering
Participant 13	6 points	lower risk of mental suffering

Source: prepared by the authors

In Table 2 we see that participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, and 12 present a higher risk of mental illness, this being a very important indicator in the decision regarding psychological referral. Of the 13 participants, we have 7 with concerning indications of mental health. Recalling that this test is recommended by the WHO for the purpose of screening psychic illness in developing countries.

Furthermore, in the mental health screening, we see in Table 3 the results of the BHS test.

Table 3: Results of the BHS Test

Name	Result	Analysis
Participant 1	50	Minimal level of hopelessness
Participant 2	48	Minimal level of hopelessness
Participant 3	54	Mild level of hopelessness
Participant 4	52	Mild level of hopelessness
Participant 5	46	Minimal level of hopelessness
Participant 6	50	Minimal level of hopelessness
Participant 7	42	Minimal level of hopelessness
Participant 8	44	Minimal level of hopelessness
Participant 9	38	Minimal level of hopelessness
Participant 10	52	Mild level of hopelessness
Participant 11	46	Minimal level of hopelessness
Participant 12	55	Mild level of hopelessness
Participant 13	48	Minimal level of hopelessness

Source: prepared by the authors.

We found a mild level of hopelessness in participants 3, 4, 10, and 12; in the others the level is minimal, which means that the majority have a positive attitude toward life.

In Table 4 we examine the compilation of the test results for each participant.

Table 4: Compilation of the tests

Participants	EPSUS	SRQ20	BHS
Participant 1	High	higher risk of mental suffering	Minimal level of hopelessness
Participant 2	Medium-high	higher risk of mental suffering	Minimal level of hopelessness
Participant 3	Medium-low	higher risk of mental suffering	Mild level of hopelessness
Participant 4	Medium-low	higher risk of mental suffering	Mild level of hopelessness
Participant 5	Low	lower risk of mental suffering	Minimal level of hopelessness
Participant 6	High	lower risk of mental suffering	Minimal level of hopelessness
Participant 7	High	lower risk of mental suffering	Minimal level of hopelessness
Participant 8	Low	higher risk of mental suffering	Minimal level of hopelessness
Participant 9	Medium-high	lower risk of mental suffering	Minimal level of hopelessness
Participant 10	Medium-low	higher risk of mental suffering	Mild level of hopelessness

Participant 11	Low	lower risk of mental suffering	Minimal level of hopelessness
Participant 12	Medium-high	higher risk of mental suffering	Mild level of hopelessness
Participant 13	Low	lower risk of mental suffering	Minimal level of hopelessness

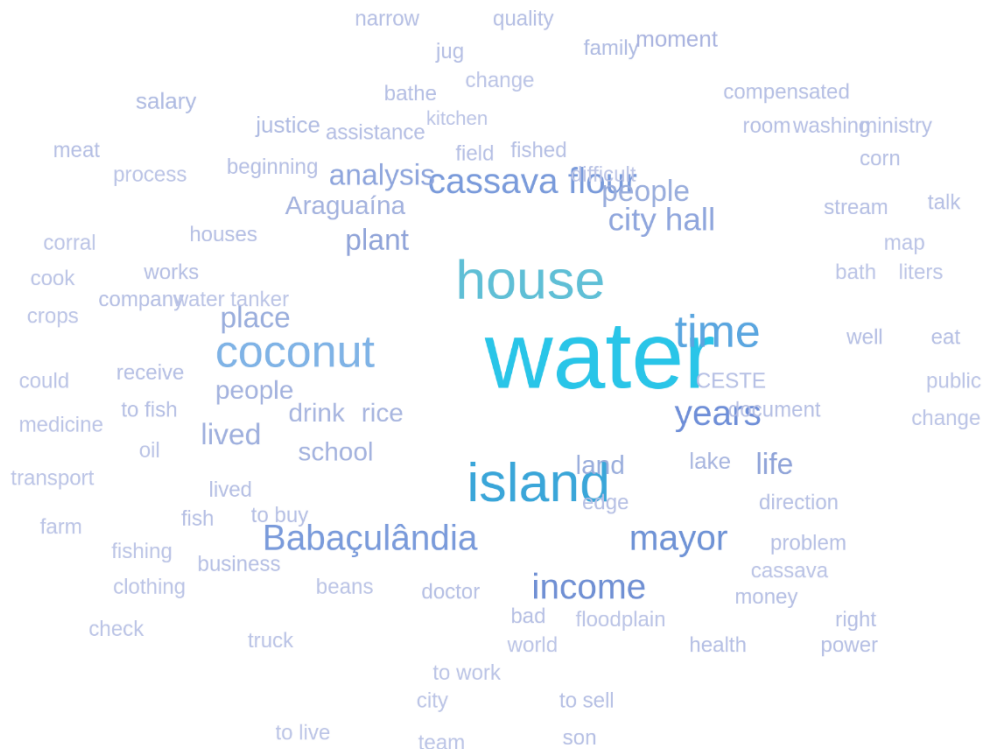
Source: prepared by the authors.

In the mental health screening, it is important to stress that the indication of a change in one of the tests, the SRQ20 or BHS, already functions as an alert for the participants' mental health, while the EPSUS is a marker of social support that can facilitate or hinder the situation. Thus, we can say that of the thirteen participants, seven have markers for psychic illness. Furthermore, in the compilation of tests we see that: (i) participants 3, 4, and 10 present important indications of illness, hopelessness, and a lack of social support, constituting a very serious situation; (ii) participants 1, 2, 8, and 12 present at least one marker of emotional suffering; (iii) participants 5, 11, and 13 do not present indicators of emotional illness; however, they have low social support, which may constitute a factor that can generate emotional suffering in the medium term; (iv) participants 6, 7, and 9 do not present any indicator of change in mental health.

In general, we can state that in the mental health screening of the Baixão settlement, there is a high incidence of indicators of mental illness and, consequently, of a serious collective health situation. We work with the hypothesis that this high index is related to the slow violence (Nixon, 2011) imputed to the community since the construction of the dam and the forced processes of expulsion (Sassen, 2016) and resettlement. However, further research is needed to confirm such a correlation and to compare it with other settlements that were not formed on the basis of the violation of rights.

In this second moment, we present the results of the interviews, which were processed in the WebQDA software following the methodology of Bardin (2016). In the exploration of the material and to serve as a first organization, we present in Image 2 the one hundred most repeated words in the interviews.

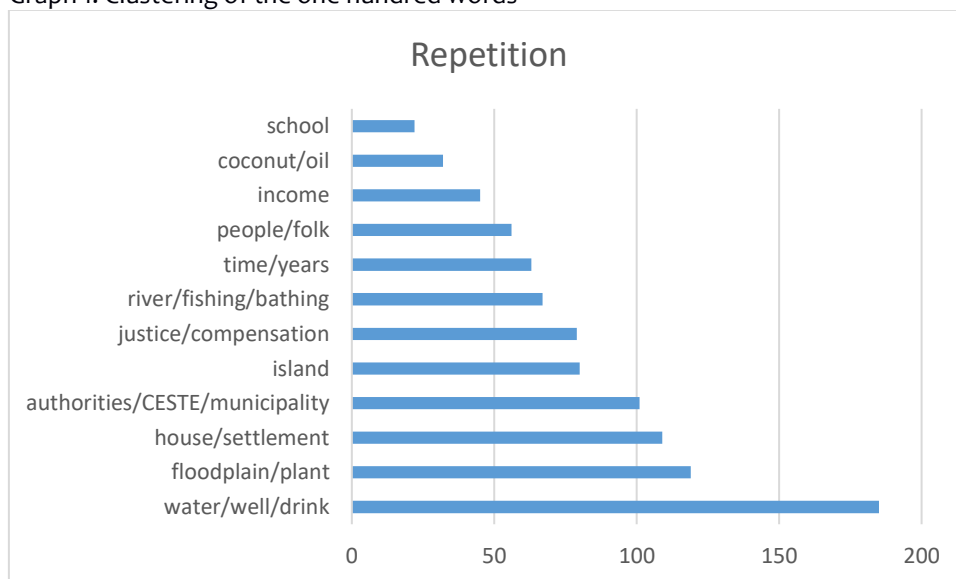
Image 2: One hundred most repeated words



Source: prepared by the authors with WebQDA.

The exploration of the word cloud helps us to compose the first ideas of what is or is not significant for the interviewees and to compose the first proposal for the categorization of the material. We organized the one hundred words in Graph 1 in order to better gauge what is relevant.

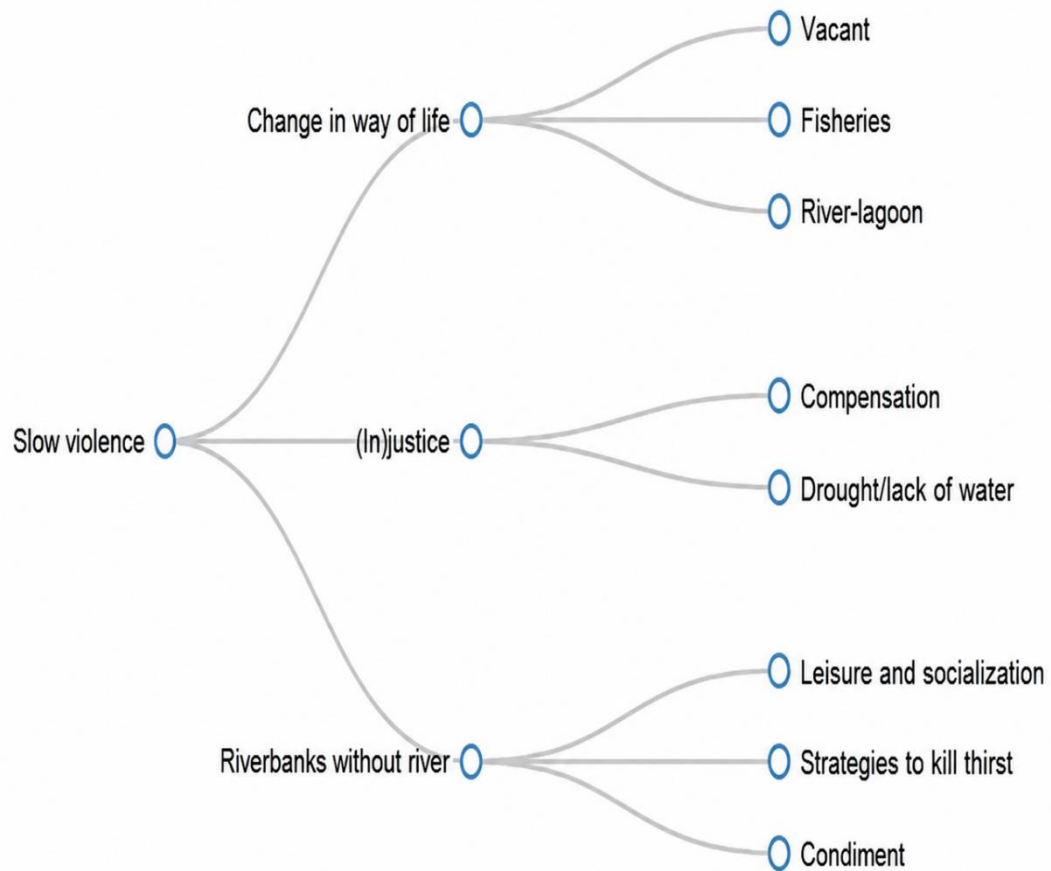
Graph 1: Clustering of the one hundred words



Source: prepared by the authors.

These sets of words gave support to the construction of the categories that bring together the idea that slow violence is the organizer of this community's life ever since the event of the dam. The most repeated have to do with the question of water, but all the others organize themselves around it; for example, speaking of the new house and of the settlement refers back to the changes imposed by the change in access to water and to the river; also the changes in ways of life owing to the end of fishing, of the island's floodplain; and the social injustices imposed from then on. In this way, we present in Image 3 the tree code with the categories of analysis.

Image 3: Tree code



Source: prepared by the authors.

For organizational purposes, the categories and subcategories linked to slow violence will be presented and exemplified with two excerpts of material from the interviews. We begin with the category **Change in the way of life** which represents the characteristics of significant changes in the way of living and supporting oneself. This category is divided into three; in the first, **Floodplain**, we present how the impossibility of planting alters the form of sustenance and leads families to take up the so-called corner-shop diet (Schor, 2015), or else how this will transform the 'water-people' into the poor (Brum, 2021).

It was rice, watermelon, and squash. What I produced most was watermelon and squash. And rice and beans. It was the biggest production we had on the bank of the Tocantins River. Today we no longer have that

production. Today, if we don't have money at the supermarket, we don't buy anything. Because the land where we live today is very dry. (Participant 6, 2024. Translated by the authors).

on the island where we lived, we had a production of many things. Bananas... there was a lot we had, you know? And here they gave us everything cleared, so we managed to plant again. We fought for them to compensate us, but they didn't compensate us. (Participant 6, 2024. Translated by the authors).

We see the variety of production on the floodplain: rice, watermelon, squash, banana, among so many others cited by the other interviewees. These products served both for the family's food and for exchange and sale. The end of the possibility of planting is also marked by changes in the way of eating, since it now depends on what is on offer at the market. The change in the food produced is an impact on the participants' income and health.

The second subcategory is **Fishing** which deals with the abundance of fish and the practice of fishing when one lived on São José Island. The move to the settlement, far from the river and without access to drinking water, brings countless issues, among them the impossibility of fishing to feed oneself, to sell, to relax, and so on.

It was easier because we, for example... I would put the rice on the fire, and when it dried up, I would dig a worm out of the ground and go there to the water, cast the hook, and catch several fish. And here I don't do that. Here, if I put on white rice, I'm going to eat it plain. And there, no, there was that other income given by nature, by God. And man took it away and it doesn't come back. (Participant 6, 2024)

There's nothing here... There's no river here... no place that has fish. (...) Mister! I'm a first-rate fisherwoman. Every fish that came onto the hook. (...) I fished with a line, with a net, with a casting net. (Participant 1, 2024. Translated by the authors)

Like the floodplain, the river is no longer available for fishing; although there is fish in the lake, these are considered to be of low quality, with an altered flavor and low variety. Moreover, the fishing techniques developed and learned over time do not work for fishing in the lake, which has different characteristics from the river. The impacts go beyond the issues of the fisher's labor alone, but invade food security, the quality of food, and access to protein.

The third subcategory **River/lake** was developed when the reference came in the form of longing for the way of life, or as something distant that does not come back.

I was born and raised... I just wasn't raised right inside it, but all I did was cross the river... I was raised beside the (river) Tocantins, but I had my children and raised them there. My husband was born there and was raised there. (...) Every now and then I go near there, but right there, no. (...) I don't even have the courage to go into the middle of that water. (...) A person gets uneasy about things like that. (...) No, nothing. It's because, I don't know, everything is different from when we lived there. (Participant 10, 2024. Translated by the authors).

For those who used to come before, compared to today, I think there's a big difference. Now, for those who didn't know it before and arrive there today, they find it beautiful. Now I no longer find it beautiful. (...) I miss the river; we used to bathe, fish, break coconuts. So much... (Participant 6, 2024. Translated by the authors).

The violence of the removal is great enough to make people not frequent the shore of the Tocantins River lake. There are several accounts like these in which people either do not go in or do not even go near, as if there were something wrong with the waters. The lake is the representation of the violence itself and of the permanently revived damage, making it impossible to enjoy what remained. It is worth stressing that the lake today is exploited for tourism, but the main affected people do not enjoy the space, neither as tourists nor as entrepreneurs in the sector.

In the second category of slow violence we have **(In)justice** which highlights the narratives of how the expulsions were not duly compensated. This category is subdivided into two. In the first, **Compensation**, we see that there is a perception that the company did not bear the material damage caused by the change of territory.

No, they promised us everything good, but halfway down the road they abandoned us, together with our politicians, and left us, because ever since they put us here, they kept forgetting, just forgetting. Until they forgot. If we don't have a public authority that looks upon us with a kind eye, things are bad. And so we can't leave here, otherwise who would we sell to? Who? Nobody wants it. (...) There are three things that have to be done here. It's good water, the houses, and the land deed that were supposed to be given within five years and never were. (...). (Participant 6, 2024. Translated by the authors).

In the house I would change everything, I would turn the house around... because they made the doors wrong, you know? The CESTE people did everything backwards. (Participant 3, 2024. Translated by the authors).

In both narratives there is the demonstration that there was no reparation and that even what had been promised was not fulfilled. For the interviewees, the houses were poorly built, without iron columns, which results in countless cracks and even the possibility of collapse; even down to the lack of a kitchen of adequate size or the positioning of the property. The settled lands have no water for personal use or for farming or raising animals. And to round off the problems, the residents did not receive the land title deed. These three points clearly describe the succession of violence that is permanent and enduring over time.

In the subcategory **Drought/lack of water** we include the narratives that describe the lack of water for the main daily chores, such as drinking and cooking.

He started by bringing water, a water tanker, potable. Then he supplied some jugs, then he cut it off and said that we had to drink this water. As if we were obliged to. No, we are not obliged to, because wherever it passes, this water kills the crops. (...) Yes, we took it to court, but we had no recourse. The first thing the courts demand is an analysis of the water, and each analysis costs 3,000 reais. We don't have... we don't have the means; sometimes we have it, sometimes we don't. (...) We managed it, we did a private analysis and it did not come out good. Then they came back with the jug and now they are saying the water is good, and the municipal

government of Babaçulândia did two analyses and the water did not come out good. Except that they don't bring it to us so that we can take it to the Public Prosecutor's Office; for them to bring it to us we have to pay 3000. (Participant 6, 2024. Translated by the authors).

Then when we got here... the water... the most complicated thing here is the water. The water they gave us "is really pure water and not this and that." So we got all the residents together here and had this water analyzed, and the answer we got was that this water is not even fit for the animals. (Participant 10, 2024. Translated by the authors).

It is important to stress that slow violence becomes established on various fronts; here we see it reported through the insistence on the potability of the water and the lack of sensitivity of the bodies that ought to facilitate mediation, such as the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Municipal Government, in demanding an analysis that it would fall to the public authorities themselves to carry out.

The category **Riverside dwellers without a river** marks out the consequences generated by all the changes brought about; it is not only a change of locality, but various changes brought about in the ways of being and doing that impact subjectivity and constitute successive forms of violence. Within this, we divide it into three subcategories; in **Leisure and socialization** we see that the traditional ways in which the riverside dwellers relate to one another, with close neighborly and community relations established over family generations, have been broken. Likewise, the leisure that derives from the water—bathing, swimming, fishing—no longer exists.

It's like this... what I think turned out "worse" is because we got split up, because there our relatives were all there on the island... all our friends. Then when we came here it divided us up. A good number stayed here, a number went to that other settlement, others elsewhere, from Araguaína onward... (Participant 6, 2024. Translated by the authors).

Everything! Just the peace and quiet you had there was the best thing in the world. (...) We bathed in the river, drank from the river, washed in the river, everything. (...) To play, we played in the river too. In the beach season it was wonderful. (...) Every day. I walked on the beach because it dried up, you know? It wasn't like in the rainy season when it stayed on the bank. So in summer you had to... walk on the beach. (...) No, like, because there we had our own people, everyone known to us. And after that dam came along, that ended. Some went one way, others went another. (Participant 10, 2024. Translated by the authors)

The second subcategory **Strategies for quenching thirst** deals with the individual ways found to access water fit for the maintenance of life. As narrated below, the interviewees fetch water in other localities, such as the Corrente River and other properties, and store it in twenty-liter jugs.

I'm going over to the Corrente in a little while; after 1:00 p.m. I'll bring water from there for us to drink, ten kilometers from here. (...) I put it in the 20-liter jug and put it in the car and bring it. And whoever has nowhere to fetch it drinks the water that's like salt water. And they have to drink it because there's nothing else. (...) In the 20-liter jug. And then, when it runs dry, I

fetch it over in Babaçulândia, at my father's house, at my brother's house. I fetch it from the Corrente that's there on my father's smallholding. I fetch it from the neighbors who have a spring. (Participant 6, 2024. Translated by the authors).

We fetch it over at my father's, because here there's no water. My husband carries it on the motorbike, in the canisters. That's right, in a 20-liter canister. (...) Then we strain it, put it in this big drum here, and from here, to put it into the 2-liter bottles, we strain it again. (Participant 1, 2024. Translated by the authors).

In the last subcategory **Illness** we see the narratives concerning the perception that the event of the dam and the changes in ways of life generated physical and/or emotional illness.

It used to happen; our skin wasn't used to it and many people got itchy. Not anymore now, it's gotten used to it and there's no more itching. I myself had itching. (...) but there were people who had it, whose kidneys got sick. (...) No, when I lived there I didn't have the problems I have here. Because I didn't go to the doctor, you know? I didn't take controlled medication for anxiety, I didn't have that. So much, you know? Cholesterol. (...) It was the water; we bathed... we would go break the coconut to extract the oil. So you'd go do that work, you know? And here, when water is lacking, we feel sad. Everyone gets sad because of the water, because there isn't any, you know? (Participant 6, 2024. Translated by the authors).

Yes, because there we almost never lived ill, and here it's like one thing on top of another. (...) There we rarely got sick enough to reach the doctor, you know? Because often the older folks had some remedies... they came up with some remedies, you know? Here we really do come up with them too, only it seems they don't work. (Participant 1, 2024. Translated by the authors).

It is interesting to see the account that physical and emotional illnesses appeared after the change of territory. Self-perception is considered a reliable indicator of emotional suffering. It is no wonder that, with so much damage, people generate pathological responses to the situations experienced over the course of a decade and a half. In Table 4 we visualize which areas are impacted, how they were before the dam, and the effects for the present.

Table 4: Changes in the way of life and the fine filaments of slow violence

Type of Impact	How it was	How it turned out – fine filaments of violence
Food	Fishing – access to fish and rays to feed oneself	The river is no longer available; sometimes one manages to fish. Protein has to be bought
	Floodplain – planted fruits, vegetables, and greens	There is no longer any way to plant
	Drinking Water – access to drinking water to drink and to offer to the animals, to bathe, cook, and wash household utensils and clothes	The locality has no drinking water for any of the activities

Playfulness	Beach – the river guaranteed access to the beach that appeared each dry season	The beach no longer exists. And the place of residence is far from the lake
	Playing – the river was the place for games, such as swimming, playing hide-and-seek at the bottom of the water, playing in the sand	This possibility no longer exists
Socialization	Neighborhood – everyone lived on the island in a community with communal social bonds. They shared festivities and customs	Interaction is less, but even in this case the residents were placed in the same settlement
Health	Water – drinking water allowed a life without major problems of contamination and illness	The use of local water for cooking food leads to many stomach problems, such as diarrhea.
	Food – food was produced on site, which allowed a healthy diet, without ultra-processed foods, without pesticides.	There is a perception that one now gets sick more and needs more medical care.
	Home remedies – in community life, home remedies were shared and sufficient for daily life	Illnesses are more intense, so there is a need to resort to the health system

Source: organized by the authors.

We note that the dam had a marked impact on four fronts: food, playfulness, socialization, and health. All as a result of the change in the riverside way of life, whose relations of socialization and leisure are altered, whose sources of food and fishing are modified, and consequently whose health is compromised. What is revealed is the absurdity of placing riverside dwellers far from the river, in a settlement without water; in an attempt to forcibly transform them into peasants, instituting successive forms of violence.

Final Remarks

In the literature we have various studies that show the perverse effects of dams on the environment and on communities, but few works have given voice to the affected people and/or made an assessment of their mental health state. In this study, we fulfilled the two points listed: we brought the voices of the affected riverside dwellers and we analyzed their mental health condition. This is important, since the impact reports produced by the perpetrating companies report little on the medium- and long-term effects for the affected communities. Thus, almost fifteen years after the removals, we found that a significant portion of the riverside dwellers of São José Island, resettled in the Baixão Settlement, finds itself in a concerning mental health situation and living in inhumane conditions with regard to access to drinking water. We see here how slow violence, dispersed over time, produces effects on the individual as small psychic catastrophes that generate illness. We can state that, although the effects are individualizing, the causes are social, and the community effects produce a pathology in and of the social.

It is unacceptable that riverside dwellers should be relocated far from a river, and worse still, that they should have no access to drinking water while living in one

of the regions with the largest arsenal of freshwater in the world. We see that the slow violence perpetrated ranges from the highest degree of visibility, as in the case of the forced removals and the lack of water, to the fine filaments of daily life, always making itself present in a gradual relation of destruction that disperses over time.

These results show that the dam produces slow violence or, as Nixon (2011) puts it, attritional violence, imperceptible and fluid across temporal scales. Such a situation hinders resistance and social organization, both because of the pathologizing situation itself and because of how the invisibility of the violence prevents social bonds of collective claims. Overcoming the situation passes through restorative justice and through collective and individual support for the community.

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