



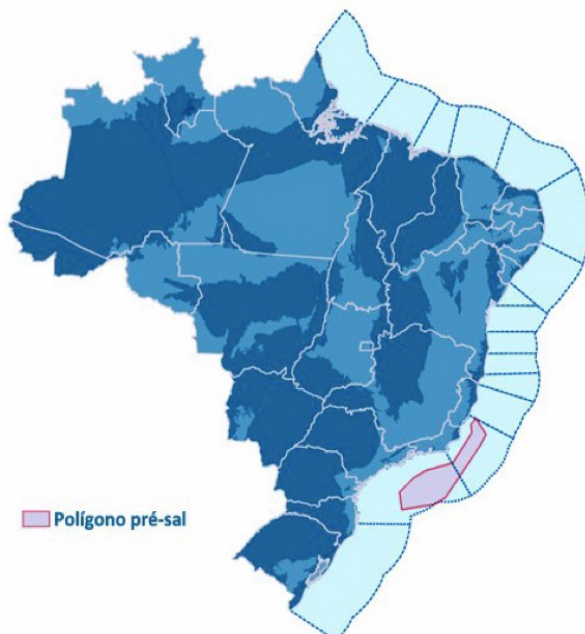
Photo Ricardo Sá

Pre-salt reserves in Brazil: Shell's new frontier

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Espírito Santo/Brazil phase

Although it is heavily promoting its commitments and green targets to tackle the climate crisis, the Anglo-Dutch oil company is competing for exploitation of the largest offshore oil and gas reserve in Brazil.

The so-called Pre-salt Province is located in the southern Atlantic, off the coast of the States of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Espírito Santo. Its exploration is one of the main activities in Shell's global investment portfolio.



Source: Brazilian Government, 22/12/2017.

According to Rio de Janeiro State University (UERJ), the country's pre-salt reserves contain around 176 billion barrels equivalent¹, placing Brazil in 10th position worldwide in terms of the largest oil reserves².

Since it was discovered by Petrobras in 2007, during Lula's second term (2007-2010), and under the governments of Dilma Rousseff (2011-2016), Michel Temer (2017-2018) and Jair Bolsonaro (2019-2022), the pre-salt layer has been at the centre of State investment strategies and policies.

The various governments of different economic and ideological persuasions, ranging from the traditional developmentalist left to ultra-liberal fascism and neoliberalism, have viewed pre-salt exploration as an important lever for the national economy.

The announcement of the discovery of pre-salt has also had a strong impact on Brazilian society, being explored in depth by Petrobras and Lula's government, based on its political and oil ambitions. Through the expansion of Petrobras and petroleum exploitation in Brazil, a national-developmental left wing orchestrated a pact of power with the old right wing and large national business operators such as Eike Batista, Camargo Correa, Odebrecht, OAS, etc. According to the logic of the time, expansion of the oil industry would guarantee the government's social security policies.

From 2003 to 2013, in the Lula/Dilma era, despite the international crisis of 2008, the oil sector jumped from 3% to 13% of Brazilian GDP. At over USD 100, the international price per barrel guaranteed the public and private investments needed to prepare the infrastructure for pre-salt exploration and extraction: ports, platforms, shipyards, refineries, fertilizer plants, oil and gas storage and supply terminals, pipelines and roads. After its discovery, the expectation around pre-salt production stimulated other sectors of the economy, such as construction, the steel industry, mining and the metal-mechanical sector.

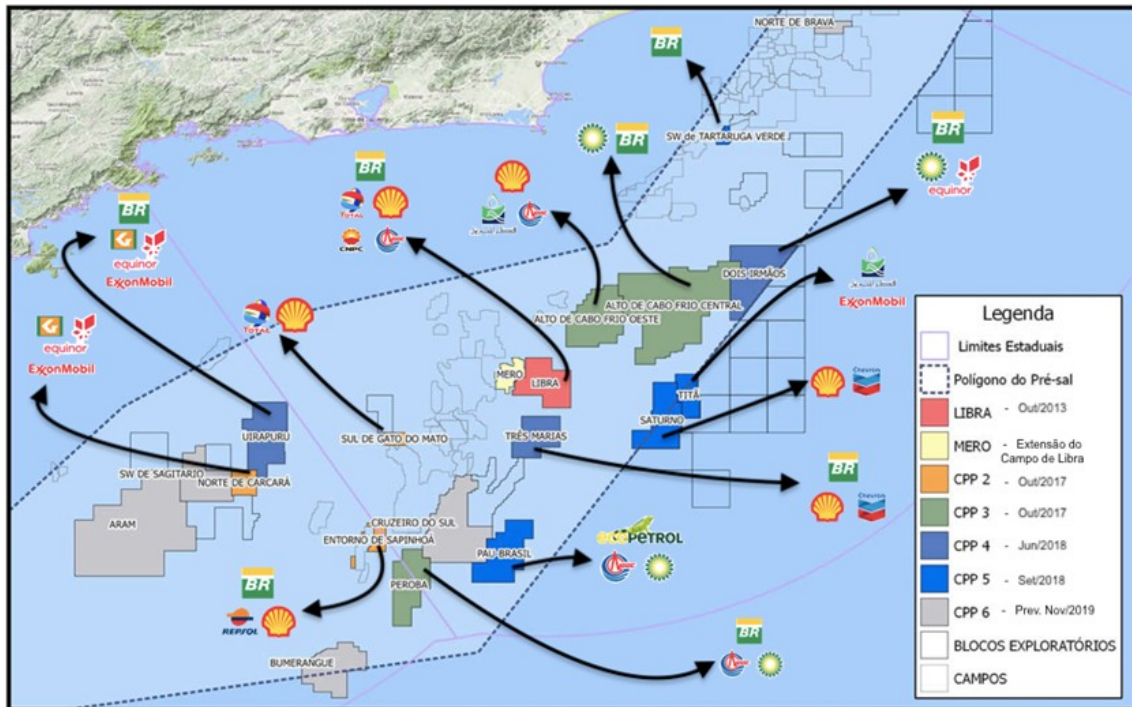
With a near monopoly over economic exploitation, but keen to attract multinationals like Shell, Statoil, Chevron, Chinese companies, and others, Petrobras was also the main orchestrator of political arrangements between the federal, state and municipal levels, as well as between the developmentalist left and the old regional and business oligarchies.

At the end of 2014, under Dilma Rousseff's government, when the international price per barrel had fallen from USD 100 to USD 40, that pact crumbled and a radical political crisis took hold, stemming from reports of corruption in the Petrobras contracts.

In 2018, after a further four auctions, Shell was the largest foreign pre-salt operator in Brazil, present in six of the 14 active exploration consortia; its presence almost equals that of Petrobras, which is present in eight consortia. With the privatization of Petrobras and an intense run of auctions for new exploration blocks, planned by Bolsonaro through to 2022, Shell could become the largest oil company operating in pre-salt.

1 G1 – Globo, 10/08/2015.

2 National Petroleum Agency (Agência Nacional de Petróleo - ANP), 01/08/2018.



Map prepared based on information from Pré-Sal Petróleo S.A.35

While, on land, petroleum operations are usually more controllable and are performed at shallower depths, yet are still highly complex and risky, with frequent accidents, explosions and spills, offshore operations 300 km off the coast, with 12-metre high waves, currents of two knots, at underwater depths of 7,000 metres, under high pressure and with temperatures of up to 150 degrees Celsius, are considerably more risky. It is an extreme energy³.

By operating in the extraction and exploitation of pre-salt reserves, Shell is accelerating global warming, disregarding human and environmental rights, and increasing the consumption of petroleum derivatives.

In presenting its green discourse about climate change and promoting its false commitment to reducing CO2 emissions, Shell omits and conceals the reality of its operations in the exploration areas.

A territorial perspective: a case in the south of Espírito Santo

Although still in its infancy, pre-salt exploration already represents a serious social and environmental problem in traditional territories and communities, particularly those located near the Atlantic coast.

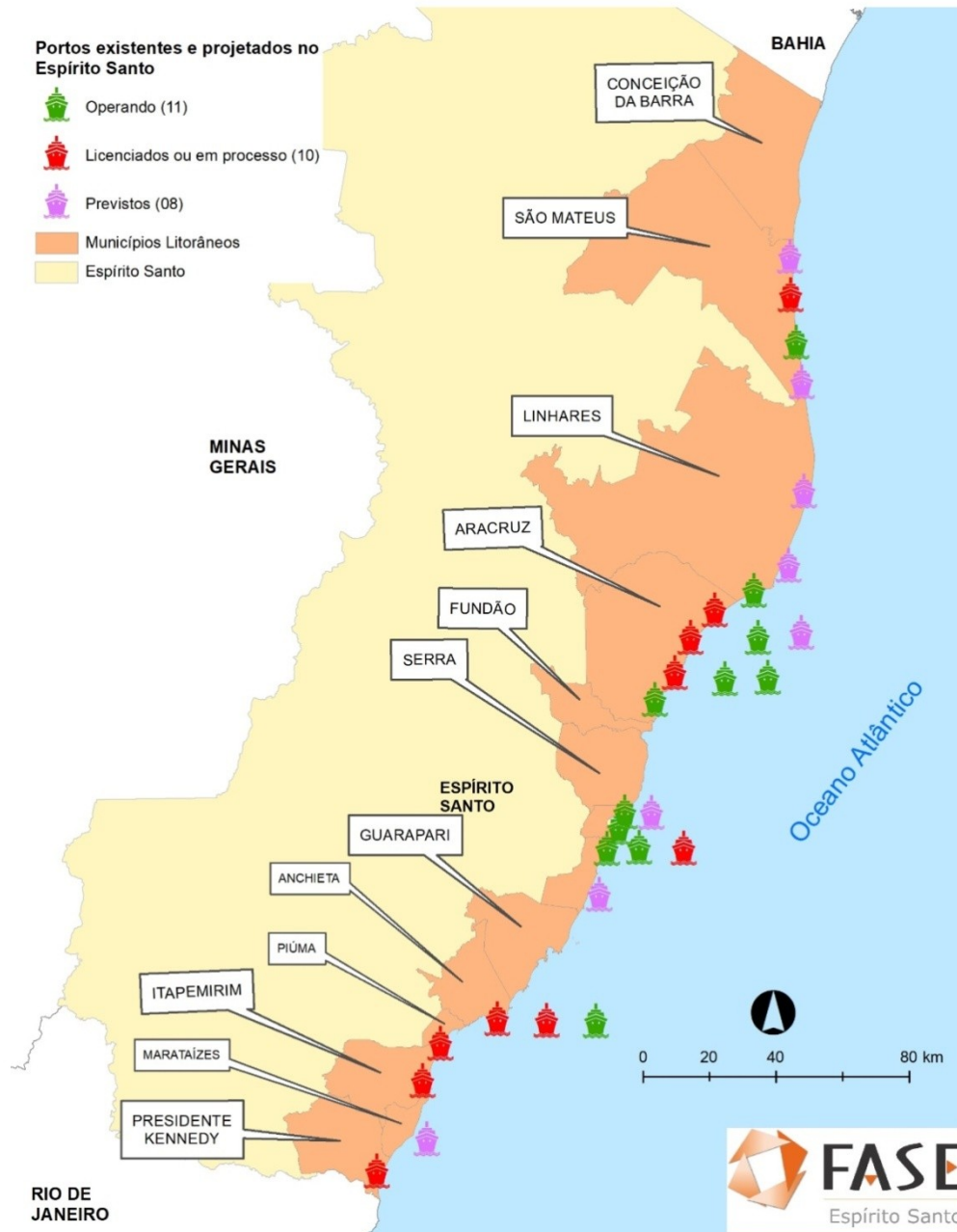
With the construction of shipyards, ports, platforms, pipelines and roads, oil infrastructure is the main cause of the pollution and expropriation of beaches, mangroves, fish and shellfish nursery grounds, and whale and dolphin routes.

In destroying socio-biodiversity, the oil industry is primarily violating the ways of life of small-scale fishing communities, as well as *Quilombola*, indigenous and *Caiçara* communities, depending on the region. At the same time, the industry is building urban peripheries in port and industrial towns and districts. From any

3 Pré-sal: Energia extrema das entranhas da Terra, 2017.

independent perspective, the expansion of the oil industry into pre-salt completely disrespects human and environmental rights.

Just one example, from many, is the case of the state of Espírito Santo. The construction of 27 ports is planned along the coast, to export commodities, particularly oil, wood, cellulose and minerals.



Map prepared based on information gathered from the media⁴ and documents from the environmental bodies.

In the south of the state alone, three major ports are being built: C-Port in the district of Pontal in Marataízes; Itaoca OffShore in Itapemirim; and Central Port in the municipality of Presidente Kennedy.

⁴ Logistics magazines and major newspapers.

This is a region of coastal wetlands and mangroves, where fish nursery grounds and small-scale fishing communities abound. The regional economy has long been based on fishing and tourism, crafts and the famous seafood-based cuisine. This socio-biodiversity will not be able to coexist with the invasion of its territories by ships, trucks, dredging works and spills.

In the opinion of Maria Bonita, a fisher from Ponta de Marataízes and a regional leader of female fishers:

“They want to destroy this whole bay and its beaches. Apparently they plan to enter via the mouth of the river and go as far as the mangrove, which we still depend on for our crabs and shellfish. They haven’t said anything about their sea operations, but I know they’re going to block our access to the nursery grounds and our fishing routes because I saw that happen in Guanabara Bay in Rio de Janeiro, as well as in Pernambuco, in the area around Suape Port.”

In Presidente Kennedy, near the border with Rio de Janeiro state, the Dutch company Port of Rotterdam is the main investor in the construction of Central Port. Neither the culture of small-scale fishing, the well-preserved coastal wetlands protected by state law nor Santuário de Nossa Senhora das Neves, which is protected by law as cultural heritage, proved to be obstacles to the expropriation and acquisition of land or the granting of the licence to construct the port. The Environmental Impact Study and Environmental Impact Report do not contain consistent, adequate plans for such a major undertaking. The public meetings did not serve to inform or consult the communities. Rights violations and damage are played down while all the attention is focused on the jobs generated.

According to a researcher in the region, Isabel:

“They haven’t explored, for example, how to avoid violence against women in the region, when thousands of young workers arrive to build the port and industrial complex. How is a municipality with a population of 11,000, and a district with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants, going to cope with the arrival of 3,000 to 5,000 men? The local authorities don’t know what to do either. How many women’s protection police units are going to be set up? The health centres aren’t prepared for the new diseases that will come. How will the public security service, nurseries and schools cope?”

When invited to take part in the Ports Seminar organized by civil society in July 2019 to discuss ways of preventing damage and ensuring safeguards for local society, the port companies did not even justify their absence. They only participate in events controlled by them or by the state.

Moreover, investments in pre-salt in the south of Espírito Santo are riddled with corruption, which is expanding at the same rate as the construction of the ports and oil operations. In the municipalities of Presidente Kennedy, Marataízes and Itapemirim, dozens of members of parliament, municipal staff and mayors have been imprisoned for corruption. The old regional oligarchies are competing with each other to secure the relationship with Dutch investors.

Shell's prominence in the pre-salt block auctions

After more than a century in Brazil, in distribution, in 2003, just six years after the national market was opened up, Shell became the first international operator to produce oil on a commercial scale in the country, in the Bijupirá and Salema fields off the coast of Rio de Janeiro.

It was also the first international oil company to carry out a complete project in the country, from the exploration phase through to the first oil, at Parque das Conchas located in block BC-10 off the coast of Espírito Santo. In the area of pre-salt, Shell is involved in five discoveries in Santos Basin, in the Lula, Iracema, Sapinhoá and Lapa fields, and the former Greater Iara area (Berbigão, Sururu and Atapú Oeste).

The first pre-salt auction took place in 2013. The National Petroleum Agency (ANP) anticipated that as many as 40 companies might take part in the auction for the Libra field. ExxonMobil, Chevron, BP and BG showed an interest, but on the day of the auction only one consortium submitted a bid, and won. It was made up of Petrobras and Shell, together with Total and the Chinese companies CNPC and CNOOC. Given the lack of competition, the consortium of oil companies agreed to pass on to the Brazilian Government 41.65% of the excess oil (profit oil) extracted from the field, the minimum percentage set by the government in the public auction notice⁵.

The British magazine *The Economist* considered that the submission of only one bid for the Libra pre-salt area demonstrates the weakness of the model adopted by the country to develop its oil reserves⁶. International oil companies were keen to reduce the obstacles posed by Brazilian legislation that still protected the reserves and made the involvement of Petrobras compulsory.

Due to the deep political crisis that gripped the country in 2014 and 2015, any further auctions were put on hold. In 2016, President Dilma Rousseff was removed from office by impeachment; one of the main reasons for this was the allegation of administrative misconduct involving so-called “fiscal pedalling” that concealed the deficits of both the government and Petrobras. Petrobras’ 2014 financial report was only certified after a deficit of R\$ 6 billion related to corruption in the overbilling of expansion works and projects had been recognized.

Within 90 days of President Temer taking office, the bill put forward by Senator José Serra (Brazilian Social Democracy Party - PSD) to change the pre-salt regulatory framework was approved in the form of Law 13.365⁷ of 29 November 2016. Since then, it has not been obligatory for Petrobras to operate the pre-salt blocks or even take part in the consortia. As the legislation was being changed, new pre-salt auctions were already being prepared.

In March 2016, as was later revealed by *The Guardian*⁸, the UK’s Trade Minister, Greg Hands, met with the Executive Secretary of the Brazilian Ministry of Mines and Energy, Paulo Pedrosa, to directly discuss the interests of the British oil companies British Petroleum (BP) and Shell in relation to taxation and

5 Agência Brasil, 08/11/2014.

6 Brasil Econômico, IG, 02/09/2016.

7 Law No. 13,365/2016.

8 *The Guardian*, 19/11/2017.

environmental licensing. In August of that year, the federal parliament approved Provisional Measure 795, which was later converted into Law No. 13,586 and granted considerable tax exemptions to foreign oil companies.

In December 2016, Temer's government announced the guidelines for holding the second round of auctions. As anticipated, Shell and BP won the second pre-salt auction. Shell is the operator of the Gato do Mato and Cabo Frio fields. In a consortium with other oil companies, Shell also took control of the Sapinhoá field, making it the second largest pre-salt operator in Brazil.

Following the report in The Guardian revealing the British Government's links to Shell's growth in Brazil's pre-salt sector, the journalist Roberto Rockmann undertook a more thorough investigation, which was published in Repórter Brasil⁹. He discovered not only that other meetings had taken place between British authorities and senior members of the Brazilian executive, as well as with the top executives of the Anglo-Dutch company Shell.

In March 2017, the British Government organized an event in Rio de Janeiro to discuss energy in Brazil, entitled "UK Energy in Brazil". That was the start of an intense trilateral agenda between Shell and the Brazilian and British Governments. Shell's Brazil Country Chair, André Araújo, met with the then-Minister of Mines and Energy, Fernando Coelho Filho. Two days later, President Temer and his Minister of Finance, Henrique Meirelles, met Shell's Global CEO, Ben van Beurden. On 11 April, eight days later, the Brazilian Government announced that new areas would be auctioned off by 2019.

The second and third production-sharing rounds took place in October 2017, when six of the eight areas on offer were sold, with the federal government receiving R\$ 6.1 billion. Shell secured two areas as the operator and one as a participant, reaffirming its strong interest in Brazilian pre-salt. Four months later, in January 2018, Shell's CEO met with Temer during the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Ben van Beurden left the meeting feeling "optimistic" about Brazil.

Another strategic space where Shell is active in Brazil is in the Brazilian Petroleum, Gas and Biofuels Institute (IBP), the main organization responsible for lobbying and representing the petroleum industry in the country. In 2018, Shell sat on its Board of Directors as an equity advisor, on the Supervisory Board as an effective member, and also on the Executive Board. It does not only represent Shell, but also Raízen, its subsidiary. Omnipresent in the IBP, Shell is also on the Exploration and Production (E&P) Board of Directors, the E&P Executive Board and the Natural Gas Executive Committee. Petrobras is the only other company that has a similar presence on all the boards and committees of the Institute.

Shell plays a prominent role not only in pre-salt but in all activities related to petroleum in Brazil, as well as in decisions about lobbying to promote the interests of the oil industry.

⁹ Repórter Brasil, 22/05/2018.

Shell's lies: manipulating public opinion and climate concerns

Shell's position of proactivity and leadership in the expansion of the oil industry into pre-salt is especially contradictory and anachronistic given the climate commitments made in the Paris Agreement.

According to Adam Vaughan's report in The Guardian, Shell's continuous lobbying efforts in the UK began days after the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Climate Change (COP 23) in Bonn, where British ministers promoted the UK's leadership in the reduction of carbon emissions.

In the view of Rebecca Newsom, Head of Politics at Greenpeace:

"This is a double embarrassment for the UK Government. Liam Fox's Trade Minister has been lobbying the Brazilian Government over a huge oil project that would undermine the climate efforts that Britain made at the UN summit in Bonn¹⁰."

Shell has been lobbying to get the Brazilian Government to accommodate its regulatory and fiscal interests, while also investing in winning over public opinion. To that end, it uses articles and reports in newspapers as well as intensive advertising and highly visible support for cultural, social and environmental projects.

In Brazil, in September 2018, a month before the presidential elections, the issue of pre-salt regulation took centre stage when the candidate Fernando Haddad (Workers' Party - PT) announced that he would restore the regulatory framework to how it had been from 2010 to 2016¹¹.

Two of the most important print newspapers in the country, O Globo and Valor Econômico, published reports on the benefits of the 2016 change in the legislation, and how it would be a huge mistake to go back. On 21 September, the two newspapers featured 16 pages of paid advertising for the IBP and an insert containing reports with titles like *"Delaying exploitation of pre-salt riches would compromise Brazil's development"*¹². The role of the IBP in Brazil is similar to that of the API (American Petroleum Institute) in the USA. They both lobby their governments and seek to manipulate public opinion.

A common strategy of oil companies is to fund scientific research. One example of this is Petrobras' partnership with the Engineering Centre at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (COPPE/UFRJ). In 2018, Shell announced the creation of the Centre for Innovation on New Energies (CINE) in São Paulo, in partnership with São Paulo state's main universities (USP and Unicamp), the Energy and Nuclear Research Institute (IPEN) and the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP).

In the name of science and development, they steer research and public universities towards the companies' profit-maximizing interests. In addition to the fields of engineering, health sciences, human sciences and communications, the oil industry promotes scientific research and post-graduate courses throughout the

¹⁰ Financial Times, 04/05/2017.

¹¹ Extra, 05/09/2018.

¹² Brasil 247, 21/09/2018.

country. It funds theses and dissertations that develop methodologies that defend it against evidence of its responsibility for global warming or, more locally, the respiratory diseases of populations living near its operations.

In another strategy to win over public opinion in Brazil, the oil industry widely sponsors activities in the spheres of art, culture, sport and education. Petrobras has the Petrobras Cultural Project which, for example, sponsors three high-profile film festivals, and the Symphony Orchestra, which have been affectionately named the “Petrobras Film Festival” and “Petrobras Symphony Orchestra”. The company also organizes public selection processes for socio-environmental projects and supports various independent productions like films and even street runs. Shell supports the Shell Theatre Award, the Shell Scientific Education Award and the Shell Open Air film festival, as well as funding theatre and film productions and sponsoring the Museum of Tomorrow in Rio de Janeiro.

Internationally, there are campaigns that directly question the involvement of oil companies in the funding of museums and other cultural and artistic projects and funds. In a statement to Vice, Mel Evan, author of the book “Artwash: Big Oil and the Arts”, said that sponsorship of the arts by oil companies, specifically¹³ BP in her example, amounts to “artwashing”.

“Artwashing procures oil companies a social licence to operate [...] It’s a careful PR strategy because the industry realizes if they are to survive they must find acceptability while doing something people find unacceptable, and the arts is central to that.”

In 2007, as explained by Érico Pagotto¹⁴, consumers complained to the National Advertising Self-Regulatory Council (CONAR) about a Petrobras advertisement in the “More Energy for the 2007 Pan American Games” campaign. In a 30-second advert, the video showed flows of renewable energy such as solar and wind energy strolling through forests and castor oil plantations, and wind turbine blades visiting the main tourist spots of the city of Rio, which was hosting the event, finally ending up on the podium together with the athletes.

The purpose of the advert was clearly to promote the image of Petrobras. Companies promote themselves as supporters of sports and the environment to win the sympathy of the public. The use of charismatic and environmental sounds and images diverts the focus from their activities, which have a huge environmental impact; indeed, images of oil infrastructure are carefully avoided. As has been well illustrated by Pagotto, this is a clear *greenwashing* technique, whereby a green, sustainable image is promoted when the reality is exactly the opposite.

On its Brazilian website, Shell has a page dedicated to the environment, where it states that it is committed to environmental initiatives. The first such initiative it lists is “to produce more natural gas”. There is a growing attempt to present natural gas as a green alternative as the oil industry tries to dress its fossil fuel exploration activities in ecological clothing.

On its website, Shell also cites commitments such as “developing low-carbon sources”, “improving its energy efficiency”, “preventing spills” and “protecting

¹³ Vice, 24/04/2015.

¹⁴ PAGOTTO, 2013

biodiversity". By stating the obvious with a commitment to preventing spills and leaving its commitment to biodiversity vague, Shell is constructing a discourse where it does not actually commit to any specific action. Its text is pure rhetoric, with key words and phrases that create as green an image as possible, to fit in with the current moment and its environmental concerns, even though that image is not consistent with its actual practices.

The study presented by Pagotto shows that although many organizations have environmental responsibility policies, often they do not implement them unless there is pressure from the government, their clients and society.

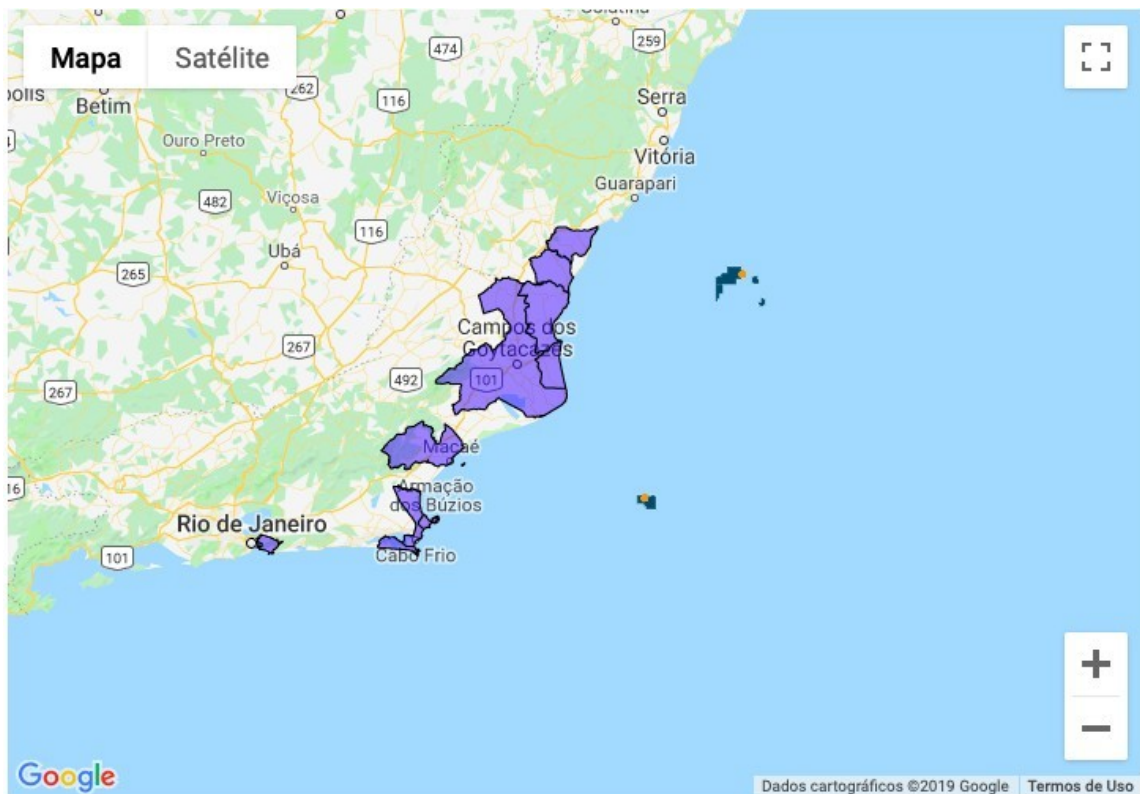
In addition to strategies aimed at the general public, companies adopt specific strategies in relation to communities in the area of influence of their projects, in order to comply with legal obligations.

This is the case of the conditions established by the Brazilian Environmental Agency (IBAMA), the body responsible for licensing pre-salt operations. The conditions IBAMA stipulated for Shell include an Environmental Education Project, which is absurd: a company that first pollutes and then promotes environmental education! In exchange for destroying fish nursery grounds, Shell must teach people how to protect the environment; moreover, it is supposed to deliver this teaching to fishers and the local population, who have always known how to protect nature.

As another condition for its offshore operations, Shell is promoting Quilombos in the Environmental Education Project (QUIPEA). This project began in 2010 as Shell's Environmental Education Project; its first phase was in response to a demand from IBAMA and was intended to mitigate the impact of Shell's operations in the area of influence of its undertakings in the states of Rio de Janeiro and Espírito Santo.

This acknowledges the fact that the communities in question are affected by the impacts of the internal migration of large flows of people attracted by the prospect of the generation of jobs and income in the oil industry, which threatens the communities' ways of life and preservation of the areas in which they live. Following that logic, it is also an acknowledgement by the company that it is responsible for that impact and that all the other communities in the same area are vulnerable to it too.

The environmental project that Shell flaunts with so much pride, even specifying the area of influence on a map (below), completely disregards the existence of all the other impacted peoples and communities in the same area. In defining its priority audience and having that project accepted by the environmental watchdog as a mitigating condition, all the other communities in the region are overlooked. It generalizes the impacts but minimizes the reparations and compensation.



Map of the area of action of the QUIPEA projects⁴

The actions carried out within the framework of the QUIPEA project in the municipalities shown in purple on the map is minimal when compared with the scale of the impacts generated by Shell. Indeed, the area of influence of its undertakings in the Campos Basin is divided into 27 coastal municipalities, from Niterói (RJ) to Linhares (ES), with 15 priority municipalities which are deemed more vulnerable to the impacts of the oil industry: Niterói, Arraial do Cabo, Armação dos Búzios, Cabo Frio, Macaé, Campos dos Goytacazes, São João da Barra and São Francisco de Itabapoana in the state of Rio de Janeiro, and Presidente Kennedy, Marataízes, Itapemirim, Piúma, Anchieta, Guarapari and Vila Velha in Espírito Santo.

The map, which is available on the QUIPEA page of the IBP website, highlights the whole of each municipality, suggesting that the company's scope of action covers the entire marked area when, in truth, it only works with a few families, in small communities within those municipalities.

The struggle at sea: expropriation and pollution v. small-scale fishing communities

The impacts on Brazil's Atlantic coast of the exploitation of oil and gas at sea go beyond the deaths of marine species during seismic surveys and operations at sea, or the recurrent oil spills.

Petroleum operations create exclusion zones for small-scale fishing communities living on the Brazilian coast. Fishers are prohibited from entering huge areas around platforms, ports and fuelling facilities. Limits are also imposed on the movement of small fishing boats due to the increase in the flows of large ships and vessels. In addition, the oil industry disturbs the conditions for the reproduction of various marine species as a result of dredging and landfill

operations to build its infrastructure. From the perspective of the oil industry, the sea is never for fish.

In 2014, the Ministry of the Environment published Ministerial Order 445¹⁵ with the aim of prohibiting industrial fishing and protecting 475 species considered to be at risk of extinction due to the lack of control of catches. The National Fishers' Movement (MPP) pointed out that, in practice, the Ministerial Order banned the fishing of the main species sold by small-scale fishers, which are also a staple food of those traditional communities.

This government measure forced small-scale fishing communities out of their traditional territories and turned the region over to large companies, with no guarantees that the species would in fact be preserved.

According to IBAMA, oil companies themselves are responsible for reporting any spills; however, fishers in affected communities in Espírito Santo and Rio de Janeiro say they have lost count of the number of times they have found the sea full of oil slicks, without having received any communication from the company or the regulatory body. For example, one morning fishers in the community of Campo Grande, in the north of Espírito Santo state, woke up to the surprise that an oil pipe had broken in the middle of the mangrove that provided the community's supply of crab. The spill was not repaired and the community's traditional crab festival was seriously affected.

Oil and gas leaks are not limited to the huge oil spills that are covered by the media. Smaller leaks occur daily, with both society and the state remaining oblivious to them, as explained in an article in the newspaper *Século Diário*, and also reported in the magazine of the "Nem Um Poço a Mais!" ("No More Wells!") campaign¹⁶.

In Guanabara Bay, Rio de Janeiro, fishers from AHOMAR (the Association of Men and Women of the Sea) developed a monitoring model they have christened the Environmental Fishing Patrol as a strategy in response to having suffered recurrent impacts from the oil industry in the region. Starting with a spill of 1.3 million litres of oil in 2000¹⁷, the fishers say there has been an intensification of offshore activities in the region, leading them to believe that the spill had also been a way of keeping them away in a manner that would be imperceptible to the eyes of the media. The impact and damage from the accident prompted the fishers to unite to resist, and during Rio+20 in 2012, AHOMAR, together with other civil society organizations, put on a parallel event they called Rio+Tóxico¹⁸, which included a 'toxic tour' of the Guanabara Bay area to denounce the recurrent bad practices in the region.

On 22 June 2012, the last day of Rio+20, two fishers linked to the association and known for fighting for their rights, disappeared. They were murdered some days later¹⁹. That was not the first time AHOMAR had faced violence from the militias that came with the arrival of the oil companies. Since 2009, when it opposed the construction of Rio de Janeiro Petrochemical Complex (COMPERJ), there had been constant threats and recurrent attacks against the association's leaders, resulting in one of the fishers being included in Rio de Janeiro state's

15 Ministry of the Environment Order No. 445.

16 www.areaslivresdepetroleo.org 01/05/2017.

17 Agência Brasil, 19/01/2016.

18 Rio+Tóxico.

19 Heinrich Boll, 29/06/2012.

protection programme for human rights defenders. After 2012, the fishers became better organized and began using the GPS equipment on their boats and the cameras on the mobile phones to track and monitor the activities of Petrobras and its subcontractors in the region.

Since then, the so-called Environmental Fishing Patrol²⁰ has been carrying out checks and inspections at sea and in the rivers of Guanabara Bay, detecting irregularities such as tugboats with their GPS switched off, oil leaks or construction work being commenced before the corresponding licence has been issued, to then report them to the public authorities. Having established close links with organizations with judicial power and social and environmental movements, AHOMAR strongly maintains its resistance and defence of small-scale fishing areas.

In December 2018, the Environmental Fishing Patrol reported a large oil spill in Guanabara Bay to the press and environmental defence bodies²¹.

According to Petrobras, the spill was of 60,000 litres of oil, but the fishers suspect that the volume was at least double that figure given the size of the area affected by the oil slick²². This illustrates the importance of the presence of traditional communities in their territories, and how inconvenient it is for the industry to have people in the region who are able to speak out about what they see. The articulation of resistance groups in networks and close contact with the press and the judiciary are also fundamental to gain strength and visibility, and inhibit possible violent retaliations by the company.

In November 2018, the first Latin-American Meeting of Fishing Communities Affected by Extractive Activities was held in Lorica and other locations in the department of Córdoba in Colombia. The gathering of fishers from various parts of Brazil, Colombia and Honduras proved that fishers in the Pacific, Caribbean and Atlantic are speaking the same language.

Taking part in meetings like this one gives fishers impetus to continue defending their livelihoods and territories, free of the presence and impacts of large extractive activities.

20 Facebook page of the Environmental Fishing Patrol.

21 Jornal do Brasil, 10/12/2018.

22 Collaborate Project, 10/12/2018.



The exchange of information between the leaders present revealed that companies and governments in different countries operate in similar ways, which makes it possible to develop joint strategies.

Visiting different regions helps build closer links and a stronger network, increasing the weight and articulation of the movements and their organizational possibilities. Like a net built by fishermen, it is not enough to have strength without weight, a woollen thread does not go far, even if it is thrown with great strength. However, once it has been wound into a ball, it has the necessary weight to go far.