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Social Capital and Peasant Rationality in the Amazon: Towards a Relational Model for Sustainable Transitions

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Why Social Capital matters in the Amazon?

- This work revisits the articulation between social capital and sustainable development through the lens of peasant rationality. Rather than treating rural families as passive recipients of top-down policy, it recognizes them as situated agents, whose land-use decisions are shaped by symbolic investments, cooperation, and embedded social relations.

- The research challenges neoclassical assumptions of utility-maximizing behavior and highlights the limits of development policies that ignore local socio-symbolic dynamics.

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A Relational Framework for Peasant Decision-Making

Grounded in ecological economics, Bourdieu's field theory, and Costa’s reproductive efficiency model, the paper advances a relational understanding of peasant behavior.
This approach emphasizes the need to model how decisions are made not just economically, but socially and symbolically—under the pressure of market forces, environmental changes, and institutional blind spots.
Peasant economies are not marginal: they are resilient systems of adaptive logic.

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From Theory to Application: Next Steps

The paper proposes an empirical agenda connecting social capital metrics to land-use strategies and reproductive rationality.

An application is currently under development in an Extractive Reserve in Pará, aiming to map how economic, symbolic, and relational capitals mediate adaptation and sustainability.

This research contributes to transition debates by foregrounding the agency of rural communities and advocating for context-sensitive policy tools.

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Thank you!



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