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Corrections and context: oil exploration, social inequality and the local reality in the Amazon

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The Amazon is at the center of international attention on offshore oil exploration as well as the organization of COP30, as shown in the above editorial [Fearnside and Leal Filho].

However, I believe that a fundamental correction is in order. Specifically, when the editorial says that “the Ministry of Mines and Energy is opening new oil and gas fields in the Amazon forest and in offshore areas, including its drilling plan in the mouth of the Amazon River, near the site of the upcoming COP”.

There is a clear confusion here between sedimentary basin and mouth, which are very different concepts. Although the sedimentary basin is called "Foz do Amazonas" (Amazon Mouth), the well in question is 540 km away from the COP30 headquarters in Belém, a distance similar to that between New York and Montreal. This confusion generated other conclusions in the text that are perhaps far from the Amazonian reality.

Unfortunately, the editorial also failed to address another fundamental aspect that affects climate change, which is poverty and income inequality. After all, the transfer of income is important to prevent the deaths of children and women [Richterman]. For example, Amapá, the Amazonian state where an oil well is planned to be drilled, has 60% of its population dependent on income transfers and a GDP per capita of US\$ 5.6 dollars. For comparison, Norway's, which explores oil, is US\$ 87.9 dollars [World Bank].

Therefore, we Amazonians, and in particular scientists, are contributing strongly to the debate on the Amazon and its seas [Santos Filho et al], with a close eye on the important international context, but mainly on scientific initiatives as RENORBIO (Northeast Network of Biotechnology) that take into account local and ancestral knowledge from Amazonians and Northeast people, where we include those from indigenous people, quilombolas, and riverside dwellers who inhabit the North and Northeast of Brazil [Castro and Barros].

References

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