

8. Negotiating Solutions for Local Sustainable Development and the Prevention of Deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon

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Until the 1980s, deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon has been largely the result of public interventions, such as fiscal incentives for the creation of large cattle ranches and investments in dams, roads and railroads. In the 1970s and 1980s the new infrastructure opened up formerly closed areas of lowland forests, facilitated planned colonisation and stimulated spontaneous migration towards the region (Mahar 1988; Browder 1988). The result was a dramatic increase in both urban and rural population, and the disappearance of 10 per cent of the original forest cover.

Since the 1990s, with basic infrastructure installed and cattle-ranching turned profitable due to innovations, deforestation is based on endogenous dynamics which occur independently from public investments. In the meantime, civil society organisations mushroomed in the Amazon, often with support from foreign NGOs. Today, they are important partners for sustainable, bottom-up development strategies. They now focus their attention on new federal investments in infrastructure in the heartland of the Amazon rain forest, as became evident in the broad political mobilisation of social movements and NGOs against two large public infrastructure investment projects: the hydroelectric plant in Belo Monte, nearby Altamira, at the conjunction of the Transamazônica and the Xingu river (see Box 1), and the paving of the federal road BR-163 between Santarém and Cuiabá (see Box 2). This chapter explores how local civil society organisations perceive these projects, which importance they assign to their environmental dimension, how they position themselves and which alliances and partnerships they build with local, national and international actors in order to achieve their aims.

In the following section, we will highlight the dynamics of tropical deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon. Next, we will explain the conceptual framework and methodology used in this research. Then, we will proceed by presenting and discussing the findings regarding the national setting for environmental policy, the main impacts of the projects under study, the local environmental capacity identified and the role of international relationships. Finally, we formulate conclusions and recommendations for the further strengthening of environmental capacities to combat deforestation.

Structural change and deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon

Deforestation has continued throughout the 1990s and reached 14,2 per cent of original primary forest cover in August 2000,¹ representing an annual deforestation rate above the average during the first deforestation wave in the late 1970s. In the past, the economic integration of the Brazilian Amazon happened largely under conditions of a military regime, but today, new social and political actors have arisen, especially in the federal state of Pará. The local population is organised in social movements such as trade unions and peasants' associations and there is a considerable number of NGOs working for social, environmental and scientific purposes. The largest number of NGOs and social movements is concentrated in the state of Pará, in the Eastern Amazon. Pará is also the location of the largest public investment in infrastructure and mining (now privatised), symbolised by the Transamazônica highway and the *Programa Grande Carajás*. These projects attracted large numbers of migrants into the state, who either came as settlers or turned to agriculture after construction works were finished. Today, only 25 per cent of Pará's population live in the capital Belém, while the rest is distributed between the rural area itself and small and medium towns. Rural

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Pará is characterised by violent land conflicts between large landholders and peasants. It was the resistance against the impunity of rural violence and the social costs of the large public projects which led to the emergence of peasants' unions and NGOs related to their cause, often with a strong backing by the Church.

International attention was attracted to the Amazon by alarmingly high indices of both violence and deforestation. Mainly church-based development organisations started to support local resistance in order to strengthen the capacities for coping with the impacts of social and economic change. With democratisation in the late 1980s and the Rio Summit in 1992, the number of NGOs increased drastically in Brazil as a whole and also in Pará.² Today, the largest NGOs in terms of annual budget based in Pará focus on socio-environmental issues (Buclet 2002).

Besides civil society, local political and economic elites in the Amazon also started in the 1980s to claim more participation rights in decision-making on local and regional economic development. The new democratic constitution of 1988 responded to these claims and created ample possibilities for political participation to local and federal-state governments as well as to social movements and the population as such. Participation rights are especially broad when it comes to environmental protection.³ This means that nowadays local stakeholders and their interests have to be taken into consideration when the federal government plans new investments in the Amazon.

Another new actor is the federal Ministry of the Environment which was created in 1992 and since then has put a special focus on the Amazon region. Two motives which may have influenced this strategic decision are of particular interest in the context of this paper: (1) the creation of the Pilot Programme to Protect the Brazilian Tropical Forests (PPG7), which channelled huge funds into the Amazon region and the federal environmental bureaucracy;⁴ and (2) the Brazilian environmental movement which, together with public opinion, steadily increased pressure for more effective public policies in order to promote forest protection and sustainable development strategies. The Ministry of the Environment, and especially its Secretariat for the Amazon Region (SCA), has strongly promoted alliances with social movements and NGOs during the last years, and used the instruments provided by the PPG7 for this purpose.

Conceptual framework and methodology

The conceptual framework of the research was based on the *capacity development in environment* (CDE) concept, elaborated by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD in the aftermath of the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 (OECD 1994 and 1995). This concept was strongly influenced by the findings of comparative environmental policy analysis (Jänicke and Weidner 1995; Weidner and Jänicke 2002) and focuses on the systemic problem-solving capacity of public and private actors. Its starting point is that environmental policy needs negotiated solutions in order to overcome the obstacles set by short-term economic, political and social interests, uncertainty and cross-sectoral complexity. CDE is understood as 'the ability of individuals, groups, organisations and institutions in a society to devise and implement solutions to environmental issues as part of a wider effort to achieve sustainable development' (OECD 1995, 12). Among other things, an increased capacity to negotiate and to establish cooperative relations between politics, economics and civil society is paramount for this purpose, as the measures necessary for increasing environmental sustainability typically have a cost in the short term, while their benefits often appear only in the long term. This is why they often generate more opposition than support. Moreover, many solutions require that people change their habits and they need to be convinced that this is in their own interest. Therefore, negotiations and alliances with civil society may enhance the problem-solving capacity of public administration in areas where the application of conventional instruments of public administration (laws and sanctions) does not have much chances of success.

The concept of environmental capacity has been operationalised by Jänicke (2002) in order to analyse and compare the environmental policy performance of different countries. He

distinguishes five central categories of this concept, with various dimensions: (i) actors, their capacities (strength, competence and configuration) and resources (economic, financial and technological); (ii) strategies; (iii) the structure of the problems to be solved; (iv) the structural context; and (v) the situative context. The structural context encompasses factors which are not subject to rapid changes, such as the structure of the economy and the existing capacities for introducing technological and organisational innovations. But it also refers to the structural conditions for successful environmental policy, such as the existence of environmental information and the degree of public awareness and the existence of policies, laws and procedures for the coordination of activities of the public administration and other relevant actors. The situative context refers to short-term variable conditions of action such as elections, catastrophes or other events which influence public opinion and create sudden windows of opportunity for introducing institutional change.

Hamacher, Heidbrink and Paulus (2001) developed a set of questions based on Jänicke's categories in order to facilitate the mapping of capacities held by all relevant actors and use the concept as a heuristic tool in the analysis of environmental policy. This set of questions was adapted to the research presented here and helped to structure information on:

- the identification of the relevant actors to be considered;
- the identification and analysis of strategies pursued;
- the structure of the environmental impacts related to the infrastructure projects in question;
- the systemic framework conditions for environmental policymaking (environmental laws and administrative bodies in Brazil, economic conditions and environmental awareness);
- the situative opportunities, in particular due to the change of government.

Capacity mapping helped to organise empirical research in Brazil, providing the structure for the qualitative interviews carried out with more than seventy representatives of public bodies, private sector, NGOs and social movements in Belém, Santarém, Altamira, Brasília and São Paulo. The interviews provided qualitative data on:

- the benefits and impacts actors associated with the infrastructure project in question, and on the importance they assigned to the environmental dimension as compared with the social and economic dimensions;
- their general interests and specific objectives and strategies regarding the projects;
- the alliances and partnerships they constructed (or not) for achieving these objectives on the local, national and international level.

In the study, special emphasis was put on the willingness and capacity of actors to engage in cooperative politics, that is in processes of dialogue, negotiation and the construction of alliances and partnerships or networks. In this chapter, we understand *alliances* as a common action of various organisations with a specific objective. The alliance ends when the objective has been attained. *Partnerships* are understood as a rather stable relationship between two or more organisations around common objectives, based on shared ideals and worldviews. *Networks* are larger groupings of organisations, generally created for information exchange and sometimes for common action. The relationship among organisations is subject to change, depending on their objectives, strategies and the situative context. It may turn from a network into an alliance, while some of the organisations involved built up a partnership.

There are various reasons to put emphasis on cooperative politics. First, alliances and partnerships constitute political resources which are especially important in a relatively weak policy area such as environmental policy. Networks, in particular, facilitate policy coordination among sectors as well as between governmental and non-governmental actors, in order to increase policy coherence and combine efforts for collective purposes. In addition to that, networks can 'supplement bureaucratic approaches, regulation and incentives and legal systems with voluntary action at the national, regional and local level' (OECD 1995, 42; Jänicke 2002, 10). These arguments reflect the importance given in environmental policy analyses to participation as an instrument for creating transparency, legitimacy and trust. The first objective of participation would be to guarantee *transparency* of the environmental policy process. When this is achieved, *legitimacy* of public policy decisions and *trust* in public actors could follow.

Box 1 – Impacts of the hydroelectric complex of Belo Monte

The Belo Monte project is the successor of the hydroelectric complex of Kararaô and Babaquara which was stopped in 1989 after protests of the indigenous people of the Kayapó and the peasants' trade unions in Altamira. This project included a flooding of at least 6,000 km². In the new project, this area is reduced to 400 km², according to information disseminated by the project planner, Eletronorte, in 2000. But the majority of local actors doubts that Belo Monte will be restricted to just one dam, for the following reasons:

- Due to the high annual variations in the water volume of the Xingu river, the hydroelectric plant could operate fully only during the six months rainy period, and therefore its capacity would be of only 6,000 MW annually instead of 11,000 MW. In order to increase annual production capacity, it would be necessary to build more dams which would increase the flooded area and the number of affected persons, especially in the indigenous lands of the Xingu basin.
- Eletronorte affirms that the quantity of electricity produced by Belo Monte would be sufficient for the expected demand in the coming years. But people do not believe in Eletronorte: demand could grow, and the first dam opens the way for the next.

The environmental impacts of the dam would be massive: The Xingu river basin is the largest continuous forest area remaining in Southern Pará. With the dam, the river basin would be fundamentally disturbed and some parts of it, for example the Volta Grande, would dry up and thus be definitely destroyed, preventing the reproduction of several endemic species. Several indigenous peoples would be affected. The construction would stimulate spontaneous migration to the region and reinforce the rural exodus of peasants in search of urban labour. After the conclusion of the works, a large share of the urban population is likely to turn to the countryside in order to survive from agriculture, and thus exacerbate land conflicts.

The research results were presented to a broad public in Belém and Brasília in April 2003. All actors interviewed were invited to participate and many attended the presentation. The debate during these presentations provided additional information which we used when evaluating and weighing research data. In the following sections, we will present the findings of our study, first, with regard to national development planning and the environmental policy dialogue; second, in relation to the specific characteristics of environmental capacity identified in the study area; and, third, in relation to the role of international partnerships and alliances.

National development planning and environmental policy dialogue

Since the late 1990s, the federal government has resurrected large investment projects in the Amazon which serve mostly national economic interests and have at least dubious social and environmental impacts on local level. The new multi-annual investment plan for 2004-2007 (PPA – *Plano Plurianual*), recently adopted by the government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva from the political party *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT), continues with this policy. The PPA thus includes funding for most of these large projects, especially for the dam and hydroelectric power plant in Belo Monte and the pavement of the BR-163, as they are essential for ensuring energy supply and domestic growth and for making commodity exports more competitive and increase foreign exchange earnings.⁵

During the first three months of the new government, local stakeholders had developed intense lobbying activities on federal level in order to achieve a decision on Belo Monte and the BR-163. Local social movements and NGOs approached the Ministry of Energy for dialogue, which is led by an influential leftist PT-politician, and were impressed by the openness of the new leadership. The minister of the environment, Marina Silva, a famous environmental activist from Acre who had joined the rubber tapper Chico Mendes in his struggle, announced a joint commission with the Ministry of Energy where large infrastructure projects should be discussed in order to devise sustainable solutions.

Box 2 – Indirect impacts of the expected paving of the BR-163

The BR links Cuiabá, the capital of Mato Grosso, with Santarém in Pará. It was opened up already in the 1970s, but it has only been paved in the state of Mato Grosso.

Maintenance is extremely precarious. The road has gained strategic importance for soybean farmers as it links Mato Grosso, the largest soy-producing region in Brazil and world-wide, to the port of Santarém which has been equipped by Cargill with a modern loading system for grains in 2003. Export through Santarém lowers transport costs considerably and enhances international competitiveness of Brazilian soybeans. The road also facilitates the supply of logs from Pará to sawmills in Mato Grosso where timber resources are scarce. Already the expectation of road paving has stimulated the expansion of large *fazendas* in the region, mainly for cattle-ranching and the exploitation of timber resources, and for growing soybeans. Due to the absence of public land distribution measures and the weakness or absence of the judiciary, violent conflicts about land rights have increased considerably in the region, resulting in the death of several leaders of the rural workers' and peasants unions.

One and a half year later, it is clear that the dialogue between both Ministries has not led to any fundamental change in the federal Amazon policies. The Ministry of Environment has become very involved in participatory planning of the BR-163 and supports the NGO initiative there, but regarding energy policy, two additional dams and hydroelectric power plants at the Rio Madeira were included in the PPA.

In reaction to the PPA, the Ministry of the Environment has prepared a new programme for a sustainable Amazon, together with the Ministry of National Integration. The programme states:

it is not the economic activities or infrastructure investment as such that contribute to environmental degradation and social conflicts in the region, but the fact that they were (...) executed without careful analysis, without debate with local society and without attempts to prevent, mitigate or solve their perverse effects (Ministério do Meio Ambiente 2003, 7).

The document goes on stating that all public investment should be preceded by preventive measures in order to minimise adverse social and environmental impacts. There is a danger, however, that the Ministry of the Environment could use participatory procedures for social engineering of acceptance for political decisions instead of fostering a thorough analysis of all benefits and costs entailed by a project. In the Amazon region, the local constituency of the now ruling PT is constituted by those social movements and NGOs which generally oppose large public investment projects because local development does not benefit from them. Loyalty to the PT and the federal government may now come to influence the judgement and actions of some members of social movements and NGOs more strongly and lead to a change of their positions. This in turn may put existing partnerships and alliances under stress and thus weaken their assertiveness.

Environmental capacity in the Eastern Amazon: empirical results

In the following section, we will present the four main results in relation to environmental capacity in the Eastern Amazon, each one followed by more detailed explanations. These results refer to (1) the capacity of local civil and public actors to engage in dialogue and negotiations; (2) environmental awareness of the actors involved; (3) the participation of the actors involved; and (4) the strength (or better: the weakness) of legal institutions.

Civil society's capacity to engage in dialogue and negotiations

The capacity of local civil and public actors to engage in dialogue and negotiations depends very much on their ability to establish local coalitions around clearly defined objectives and strategies, as well as on their ability to correctly understand the interrelated nature of the local

social, economic and environmental impacts of the planned investment projects. When these abilities are well developed, local actors can cope effectively even with highly complex conflicts and establish effective alliances with external actors (Ministry of the Environment, international NGOs).

In Altamira, civil society is organised in the *Movimento pelo Desenvolvimento da Transamazônica e do Xingu* (MDTX – Movement for the Development of the Transamazônica and the Xingu). This movement can be described as an alliance of more than 100 grassroots organisations from all municipalities along the Transamazônica – mainly rural workers’ and peasants’ unions and associations but also women’s groups and church-related groups. The strength of the MDTX is very much related to the history of colonisation along the Transamazônica. Settlers came to this region with the support of official government programmes when the road was opened up in the 1970s. Many of them came from the south of Brazil where they had been expelled by the soy boom. They were much better equipped with physical and financial capital and had a better education than the native population or the average settler from Northeast Brazil. Until the debt crisis broke out in the 1980s, their family farms received public support through credit and rural extension services. When public support vanished, peasants began to organise themselves and build up considerable social capital.⁶ In this process, they established alliances with researchers and NGOs in order to improve their production systems, and engaged in political and environmental learning processes.

When the peasants movement along the Transamazônica established itself in the end of the 1980s, it soon requested scientific support from researchers from the Federal University of Pará who were known for their solidarity with the peasants’ struggle for land. This request was answered positively and furthermore combined with the interest of French researchers to engage in ‘action research’ in this region. As a consequence, the *Laboratório Agro-Ecológico da Transamazônica* (LAET – Agro-Ecological Laboratory of the Transamazônica) was founded in Altamira, based on a successful model in the South of Pará. Several research projects were conducted together with the peasants. Later on, however, this partnership flawed due to power struggles between both organisations and conflicting conceptions of each others role.

Another basis for cooperation with researchers was the *Projetos Demonstrativos-A* (PDA – Pilot Projects), a PPG7-sponsored programme for testing innovative sustainable production methods. The MDTX uses PDA resources to systematically test and evaluate several innovations developed on-farm.

More recently, the MDTX has extended cooperation links with the *Instituto de Pesquisa Ambiental da Amazônia* (IPAM – Institute for Environmental Research in the Amazon), an internationally renowned research NGO which is studying the impact of road building on deforestation. IPAM is engaged in creating alliances with the aim of achieving land-use planning as a mitigating measure.

Their critical position towards the Belo Monte project dates back to the experiences with the Kararaô project and the dam built in 1986 in Tucuruí. In both cases, the Eletronorte (which is responsible for electricity supply in the whole North of Brazil) did not release full information in time, neither anticipated all impacts of the flooding nor dealt adequately with resettlement and indemnification of peasants. Moreover, forecasts of a boom for local economic development had not become reality in Tucuruí. As a consequence, any action by Eletronorte is met with a lot of mistrust by local actors, be they in favour or against the Belo Monte project.

Two main factors form the base of civil society engagement in Altamira: (i) solid knowledge of the economic, environmental and social impacts of a dam; and (ii) the formulation of an alternative ‘bottom-up’ strategy for economic and social development in the region, based on the promotion of family agriculture, resource management and the demarcation of protected areas. The main objective of the MDTX is to channel funds for development into the region. A large public construction project of course also represents an opportunity for negotiating additional investment into the region, especially when there is local resistance to the construction. Part of the MDTX represents this type of strategic

thinking; others consider the social and environmental impacts of the dam so disastrous that a construction cannot be justified at all. Despite these differences, the MDTX has been able to define a common objective (stop the construction), form alliances with non-local actors with this purpose and effectively use existing legal instruments (see below).

By contrast, the situation in Santarém is quite different. Here, a large number of civil society organisations exist, but they are much more heterogeneous and autonomous. Cooperation among them is loosely organised and occurs on a selective basis, not as part of a specific strategy for local development.⁷ This weakens local capacity to deal with the expected impacts of the paving of the BR-163. In fact, the network of the economic and public agents in favour of the paving is much better organised and effective than civil society, in sharp contrast with Altamira. In both cases, civil society has lost the battle in so far as the government has decided to implement the projects. But civil society in Altamira has better chances to negotiate some benefits.

Table 1 – Main characteristics of civil society organisations in Altamira and Santarém

Altamira	Santarém
Permanent forum of more than 100 organisations (MDTX)	Large number of independent and unrelated local NGOs
Alternative regional development strategy	No specific alternative development strategy
High environmental awareness	Rather ideological analysis of problems and conflicts (that is, in terms of class struggle or friend/enemy thinking)
Alliances with external NGOs	Dispersed alliances with external actors
Alliances with federal and state-level politicians	Lack of local political leaders with leverage on state and federal levels
Alliance with the <i>Ministério Público Federal</i> (MPF – federal prosecutor)	

Environmental awareness of the actors involved

Environmental awareness is much more developed among social movements than among public actors at the local and regional level (mayors, members of municipal administrations and state government representatives). Public actors appeared to be rather unaware of the environmental impacts of the projects in question or dismissed them as irrelevant.

The vast majority of civil society representatives interviewed had a clear understanding of the environmental impacts of the projects and how they would affect human well-being. This is due, on the one hand, to the lessons learned by local social movements from the large investment projects of the past, as mentioned above. Interviewees usually mentioned previous experiences with other dams in the Amazon. On the other hand, local social movements also draw political benefits from their international relations (see next section) and from the PPG7 subprojects which aimed at promoting sustainable production methods by financing local experiments. These projects enabled them to strengthen their infrastructure and to engage in economic-ecological learning processes, for example through experiments with fallow agriculture without burning and diversified perennial cultures.

Regarding civil society actors, the contrast between Altamira and Santarém was again very strong. The MDTX has among its leaders persons with strong environmental convictions and a clear view of the strategic importance of environmental sustainability for human welfare, which influences both their evaluation of the Belo Monte project and their strategy for local development. By contrast, ideological orientation of civil society actors interviewed in Santarém was more conventional in the sense that political thinking in categories of class struggle and friend/enemy dominated the analysis. The environmental dimension appeared in the statements, but it was given less importance than in Altamira. This may also be related to the differences in impacts: flooding is the main impact of the dam and it simply makes the land inaccessible for other uses. Deforestation, by contrast, as the main indirect impact of road paving, does not make land inaccessible, and it is still seen by many as an important prerequisite for economic development.

Participation of the actors involved

Negotiations are not effective when important actors do not participate. The differing capacity of local public and civil society actors to adequately evaluate the impacts of large investment projects means that civil society lacks an adequate partner for the description of problems and the definition of solutions. The government of Pará state supports these large investment projects and restricts the activities of its environmental body. Thus, civil society is forced to turn to the federal level. Due to the particularities of the Brazilian federal system, federal environmental authorities exist on local level, but they do not have the necessary human and financial resources to fill the gap left by state and local authorities. Civil society alone cannot fill this gap because they have no instruments and no legitimacy to act. As a result, there is a vacuum where there should be public authorities deciding on issues of public interests, which in turn strengthens private economic interests.

Powerful local economic actors often prefer to achieve their objectives by the use of violence, and do not participate in negotiations. This is particularly clear in the rural areas of Altamira municipality, which has about half the size of Germany. In the remote areas of this municipality, close to the BR-163 and the border with Mato Grosso, impunity reigns and large landholders are able to impose their will on peasants without having to fear legal prosecution. Violent land grabbing (*grilagem*) is thus a widespread practice, often covered up by judges and *cartórios* (notaries which act as land registry offices).

Land grabbing leads to unclear land titles because several landholders claim to be the legal owner. Another reason for unclear land titles are disputes between the federal and state governments over territorial jurisdiction, which date back to the decrees issued in the 1960s and 1970s and transferred jurisdiction on enormous areas to the federal government. Unclear land titles are one of the main obstacles for land-use planning and the application of environmental regulations for sustainable resource use.

The weakness of legal institutions

The weakness or even absence of legal institutions is a severe obstacle for civil society action and the implementation of environmental law prescriptions. The judiciary is a responsibility of state authorities, and in the interior of Pará it is very badly equipped so that judges, prosecutors and police scarcely have the possibility to work in a professional manner. Federal judicial bodies enjoy more autonomy and dispose of more resources, but they are mainly present in the capital cities of the federal states.

An exception is the *Ministério Público* (MP – Prosecutor) which has the constitutional obligation to defend both social and individual constitutional rights as well as public interests. The MP has parallel structures on federal and state level; the federal MP has several representatives in each state. The Constitution grants the MP an autonomous status and ample rights to sue public bodies in case they do not obey the law. Moreover, the MP can force other public bodies to take specific measures. These competencies are especially relevant when it comes to ensure that environmental laws and procedures are respected (see also Rosendo, this volume).

The close partnership between local social movements and the federal MP (MPF) has often been crucial for preventing the complete undermining of environmental law. This became especially clear when analysing the judicial dimension of the Belo Monte project. Representatives of the indigenous people to be affected by the dam informed the MPF on the activities of the Eletronorte, and the MDTX later engaged in a close alliance with the MPF in order to stop the ongoing environmental impact assessment. The instrument used was the *ação civil pública por dano ambiental* (public civic action in case of environmental damage) which is the right of the MP, government bodies and civil society organisations, to sue in case of offences to environmental law. The aim is to achieve either compensation payments (not for individuals, but for the National Environmental Fund) or to force the perpetrators to change their action.

This was a successful strategy because the Eletronorte had not obeyed legal prescriptions. It would have needed a permission issued by the National Congress *before* carrying out environmental impact assessment studies on indigenous land. It also should have

applied for the environmental license with IBAMA, the federal environmental authority, and not with the Pará state environmental authority, as the project is financed by the federal government and has environmental impacts which go beyond state borders. The federal court accepted the arguments of the MPF and stopped the environmental impact assessment. Eletronorte appealed to the Supreme Court of Justice and is awaiting its decision.

In the case of the BR-163, in the absence of an explicit strategy for dealing with its impacts, no legal instrument was used by civil society. What is worse, the ongoing environmental impact assessment process was unknown to the vast majority of the governmental and non-governmental actors interviewed. This means that even the information rights included in environmental impact assessment procedures are unlikely to be used. This passive attitude of civil society has another effect: The MPF is only vaguely informed about the process, and does not know the mixed feelings of local civil society.

The supportive role of global and local partnerships and alliances for an increased local environmental capacity

From what has been said until now it is clear that local environmental capacity depends strongly on civil society organisations. The increased local capacity to critically evaluate federal investment projects is mainly the result of relatively strong and old international relations between NGOs and social movements from Brazil and industrialised countries. International cooperation among governments has not been very successful yet in strengthening environmental capacities of public bodies on local and state level, as such processes of institutional learning need more time. This leads to an imbalance of forces which in itself may constitute an obstacle for dialogue and cooperative policy styles, due to the obvious weakness of public actors in relation to civil society and the weakness of local and state authorities in comparison with federal bodies.

Global partnerships and alliances between NGOs and social movements from Brazil and abroad

In the 1980s, international public attention was drawn to the social and ecological costs of the Brazilian development strategy for the Amazon, especially after the murder of the rubber tapper Chico Mendes in 1988. This led to the engagement of numerous NGOs, foundations and other organisations from the industrialised world in the Amazon, who wanted to support local social movements and NGOs in their struggle for local development. Research on this issue is still incipient but the few data available suggests the following (Buclet 2002 and Oshai and Rogge n.d.). NGOs in the Amazon are very heterogeneous regarding size, structure and ideological background. Most of them were formally registered in the 1990s, after democratisation, but some were created already in the 1960s. All NGOs have direct relationships with institutions abroad, many through their foreign founders (often former priests from Europe), with other NGOs, universities or influential individuals who committed themselves to the Amazon; and these relations are fundamental for assuring financial resources.⁸ Research-oriented NGOs have the largest annual budgets, but church-related NGOs, especially from Germany, finance the largest number of individual NGOs in Pará. Despite their donor dependency, NGOs state that they succeed in maintaining autonomy in defining their actions. Projects are the result of negotiations, where foreign NGOs restrict their interference in the internal affairs of Brazilian NGOs and the latter adapt their projects to those ideas from abroad which seem plausible.

Many NGOs working in the area of natural resource protection and sustainable development maintain close relationships (alliances and partnerships) with social movements, especially with peasants and rural workers. These social groups suffer the most under the social, economic and environmental impacts of large investment projects in infrastructure, mining and cattle ranching. And their movements are not only the protagonists of local resistance against these projects, but also the proponents of an alternative 'bottom-up' development model which emphasises natural resource management and protection. On the local level, it is the alliance between social movements and NGOs which creates the critical

mass for demanding local participation in national development planning and the inclusion of the environmental variable in cost-benefit-analysis (see below).

International cooperation between governments

In the 1990s, with democratisation, this first type of international cooperation among civil society organisations was succeeded by the establishment of an official cooperation among the Brazilian government and the G7 countries for the protection and sustainable use of the Brazilian tropical forests. After long and complicated negotiations,⁹ a programme setting was defined which channelled considerable funds into the development of environmental capacities on federal and regional level, including both environmental authorities and civil society organisations (the Pilot Programme to Protect the Brazilian Tropical Forests – PPG7), with the aim of reducing deforestation rates and CO₂-emissions as well as promoting alternative sustainable production patterns.¹⁰ The mid-term evaluation of the PPG7 carried out in 2000 concluded that its main contribution was (i) the introduction of new principles for cooperation and participation in Brazilian public administration; and (ii) the creation of a critical mass of individuals in civil society and public administration which can guarantee the continuity of the lessons learnt within the various sub-programmes under PPG7.

This second type of international relationship enabled the Federal Ministry of the Environment to redefine its role and to establish itself as a strategic ally for local social movements in the Amazon. Since 1994, especially the Ministry's Secretariat for the Amazon Region has strongly promoted alliances with social movements and NGOs, in order to increase its bargaining power on federal level with regard to other ministries and also with regard to state governments. This was a sensible strategy because of the relative strength of the environmental movement in the Amazon (a new factor), the increasing environmental awareness of social movements, including peasants, and the population in general.¹¹

This strategy, however, increased the perception of Pará state government and its environmental authority that they were encircled by the federal Ministry of the Environment and local civil society, who both had very eloquent representatives and access to the media. This perceived relative weakness reduced their openness to engage in cooperative relations.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of the Environment increasingly is in danger of seeing itself in a somehow marginalized position as it has not been able to fundamentally influence the multi-annual investment plan of the government (PPA). This reduces its credibility both in Brazil and on international level.

Conclusions

Six conclusions can be drawn from these results:

1. Strong local networks of social movements and NGOs are important to make public actors aware of social and environmental risks associated with large public investments. Another important function is to develop alternative development scenarios and to construct public consensus around these alternatives.
2. These networks, however, are ineffective in inducing change when the public sector does not have the technical, financial and organisational capacities for engaging itself in this process. Weak environmental capacity of the public sector turns into an obstacle for dialogue and learning, both between different government layers and departments (horizontal and vertical policy coordination) and between the government and the public.
3. Support by NGOs from abroad has been important for strengthening the environmental capacities of these local networks. Foreign funding continues to be an important, many times the only source for financing of local civil society organisations.
4. Public actors on local level (mayors and members of the municipal administration) and state level (members of state government and administration), have not been exposed as much to international contacts as civil society organisations, at least in the interior of Pará. This has led to imbalances which add to the difficulties already existing in environmental learning. Therefore, international official support for environmental capacity building among public actors in order to increase their problem-solving capabilities remains crucial.

5. The weakness of the judiciary is a central bottleneck for environmental and forest protection. Violence and impunity are two of the main obstacles for participation of local stakeholders in natural resource management planning. The judiciary needs to be strengthened in its autonomy and its specific environmental capacity in order to fulfil its role.
6. As deforestation dynamics have become partially independent from public investment, initiatives which stimulate the self-interest of the private sector, especially cattle farmers and sawmill owners, in obeying environmental law are necessary. Economic incentives and certification schemes may act in this direction; a strengthening of environmental control systems, however, is equally necessary. Alliances between national and international organised civil society and environmental authorities are instrumental for influencing public opinion and exerting indirect pressure on the private sector.

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Endnotes

- ¹ Deforestation data are provided by INPE, the Brazilian spatial research agency, see <http://www.obt.inpe.br/prodes/> for 2000-2002 figures and the INPE databank for earlier data. The deforestation percentage is calculated against the area of original primary forest cover, not against total area of the Amazon region (Scholz 2002). In 2002, INPE estimates total deforestation to reach 15,4 per cent.
- ² According to Falconer (1999), there are between 100 and 500 thousand NGOs, associations, philanthropic organisations, foundations and clubs in Brazil. Landim and Beres (1999) estimated that, in 1995, 1,3 million persons worked in this sector as professionals, plus an additional 300,000 as volunteers.
- ³ See Hochstetler (2002) and Scholz *et al.* (2003), Chapter 3 for a detailed analysis.
- ⁴ The PPG7 was created in 1990 with a budget of US\$ 350 million. Its objectives include the reduction of deforestation rates and CO₂-emissions as well as the promotion of alternative sustainable production patterns. For more details, see www.worldbank.org/rfpp, Kolk (1998) and Scholz (2002).
- ⁵ See www.planobrasil.gov.br for the strategic principles which oriented the elaboration of the plan. The Association of Brazilian NGOs, ABONG (www.abong.org), has published a series of critical comments as an input for public debate. For the Amazon region, see Costa (2003).
- ⁶ The peasants' union in Pará has achieved several innovations in the 1990s which benefited peasants in the Amazon region as a whole. Leaders from the Transamazônica played an important role in this process. Innovations include access to rural credit and a programme (Proambiente), financed by the BASA (Amazon Development Bank) and coordinated by the Ministry of the Environment, which would pay the environmental services delivered by sustainable production systems (Tura and Costa 2000).
- ⁷ Santarém is one of the oldest towns of the Amazon, its existence going back to pre-colonial times. The town has no recent unifying experience comparable to that of the Transamazônica peasants; a generally unifying topic today is the separation of the region from Pará state in order to have direct access to federal transfers.
- ⁸ A survey carried out in 2001 with 61 NGOs from Pará showed that 75 per cent of the most important financial sources for NGOs are located abroad, 21 per cent are from Germany and most of them have a church background. See Oshai and Rogge (n.d.).
- ⁹ In Brazil, mistrust against foreign activities in the Amazon region is traditionally very high, due to the ongoing difficulties in controlling the borders and the territory of this very large region. NGOs, indigenous peoples and social movements are periodically accused by the military, large landowners and others of acting in the interest of industrialised nations willing to get hold of the natural resources of the Amazon (minerals, biodiversity, water). See Kolk (1998).
- ¹⁰ For documents and the present situation of the PPG7 see <http://www.worldbank.org/rfpp> and <http://www.mma.gov.br>.
- ¹¹ Several opinion polls conducted since the early 1990s show that the Brazilian population in general and rural and urban population in the Amazon consider forest protection as a priority. See WWF (2001) as an example.