

a series of publications on the impact of
corporate-led globalization on biodiversity

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World
Rainforest
Movement

fertile resistance in forests

local communities defending
forest diversity | august 2002





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the role of civil society in forest biodiversity conservation | part one

by ricardo carrere, world rainforest movement

Local communities, Indigenous Peoples and NGOs are not signatories to any legally binding instruments to protect forest biodiversity.

Governments, on the other hand, have formally committed themselves to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Ironically, however, it is civil-society organizations which are complying with the CBD's aims by actively resisting forest destruction, while governments shirk their obligations by destroying forests.

That said, it would be wrong to put the blame exclusively on governments, particularly those in the South, without mentioning other major actors at the root of the problem. Perhaps the more visible culprits are the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (together with regional multilateral banks) and the World Trade Organization. These institutions are responsible for imposing an economic model which necessarily results in forest biodiversity loss. The role of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Northern export-credit agencies and some national "cooperation" and "aid" agencies also needs to be highlighted.

Integrating local economies into the global market is a major goal of these and many other organizations. As economies are opened up to transnational investment in export-oriented commodity production, both biodiversity and people's well-being are threatened at the local level.

To begin with, corporate investment requires extensive road infrastructure (known to be the first step toward forest destruction), cheap energy (resulting in forest loss through dam building, oil and gas exploitation and transport, coal mining and charcoal production), industrial facilities (which destroy forest biodiversity through pollution), and dispossession of local people (which

violates human rights and pushes displaced people into opening up new forest areas).

Industrial shrimp farming, in addition, destroys mangrove forests. Mining contaminates and degrades forest areas throughout the world while eroding forest peoples' livelihoods. Large-scale commercial monocultures (such as soya beans, sugar cane, citrus, banana, oil palm and pulpwood) and large-scale cattle raising not only destroy the ecosystems on which they are superimposed (forests, grasslands and wetlands), but also have wider biodiversity-threatening effects (through ecosystem fragmentation, hydrological changes, invasive alien species and agrochemical pollution).

Yet despite being a major force behind biodiversity destruction worldwide, business and industry are increasingly promoted as mayor players in biodiversity conservation. At a time when Northern governments are still dramatically failing to meet their 1992 commitment of dedicating 0.1 percent of overseas domestic aid (ODA) to new and additional financial resources for sustainable development, business and industry are looked upon as potential sources of "biodiversity investment". At a time when practically all the direct and underlying causes of forest biodiversity loss have been clearly identified and agreed upon, the relevant national and international actors, instead of addressing them, continue to promote the economic model which lies at the root of the problem.

Meanwhile, local communities and Indigenous Peoples are blamed for biodiversity loss. Poverty is said to be a greater cause of forest biodiversity loss than wealth. And here lies another irony, since it is generally local communities, Indigenous Peoples, peasant organizations and NGOs who play the key role in forest conservation. It is their resistance which often conserves the forests that would otherwise be

destroyed by the actors legally committed to protect them.

The eight cases presented in this publication detail some of the different ways in which such civil society organizations constructively resist damaging policies and projects promoted by governments, multilateral and bilateral institutions, and transnational corporations.

To begin with the case of Costa Rica may seem unfair, since its government is more committed to forest conservation than many others. However, the Costa Rican case reveals that compliance with biodiversity commitments in fact largely results from internal opposition to destructive investments of transnational corporations and other industries. If this opposition is insufficient, these commitments cannot be easily met. A recent example not mentioned in this study is the successful civil campaign to oppose oil exploitation that would have resulted in widespread biodiversity loss especially in Costa Rica's Atlantic coastal and marine ecosystems.

The Costa Rican case also shows the negative role played by multilateral institutions such as the IMF and World Bank. These institutions impose structural adjustment programmes already proven in most countries to have major negative social and environmental impacts, including forest destruction. The Costa Rica case also reveals the negative impact on biodiversity of export markets in commodities such as meat and pulpwood products, which are shipped to the US and have drawn much US corporate investment.

The chapter on Argentina demonstrates the results of deregulation, privatisation and transnational investment on people and forests. Oil, mining and logging companies — both "national" and foreign — are destroying local peoples' environments to feed export markets — and fill their own shareholder's pockets

— while the country as a whole moves deeper into its current economic crisis.

Much of the burden of opposing forest destruction at the hands of such companies is being borne by Indigenous Peoples, who wage an unequal yet persistent struggle against powerful government-TNC alliances intent on extracting local resources at all costs.

The Colombia case focuses on the country's Amazon region and describes in detail the ways in which modern "development" has undermined Indigenous Peoples' livelihoods and cultures, while at the same time destroying the environment. Rubber extraction, oil exploitation, mining, colonisation schemes, coca and cocaine production — as well as the chemical pollution and armed repression which accompany them — have all had extremely negative consequences on Indigenous Peoples and forests and have brought conflict and human rights abuses to the region through governmental military forces, para-military organizations, guerrillas, US-led anti-drug units, etc.

This type of regional "development" has received strong support from international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, which have helped open the doors to transnational investment, particularly in the oil sector. More recently, the region's resources are being threatened by the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas, which sees the region's wealth as a fundamental pillar for its consolidation. In this context, the ongoing resistance of Indigenous Peoples — in alliance with other local populations — constitutes one ray of hope for the region's future.

The Indonesian case is but one example of how IMF/World Bank/corporate-led "development" is a major direct cause of forest biodiversity loss. It is well documented that oil palm plantation companies were largely responsible for

the devastating Indonesian forest fires of 1997-98. It is equally well known that these companies (as well as logging and timber plantation companies) have violated the customary land rights of Indigenous and local communities. Yet the Indonesian government and the above-mentioned financial institutions continue to support the expansion of oil palm monocultures at the expense of people and biodiversity.

This case also illustrates the involvement of another actor - the British government's Department for International Development, the majority shareholder of the company CDC (formerly the Colonial Development Corporation). Local people in Indonesia are challenging the CDC's practices, and the company also faces complaints in Papua New Guinea. In the dramatic Indonesian case, local people are not even asking for the return of their forest, which has already been replaced by oil palm monocultures. They are only demanding — but have not yet received - adequate compensation.

The Paraguay study uncovers a case of forest destruction linked to another export-oriented crop: soya beans. Agro-industry has been one of the major causes of deforestation in this country, with Indigenous Peoples and local peasant communities its main victims. The Ministry of Agriculture, heavily influenced by agro-industrial corporate interests represented by the Grain and Oilseed Exporters Cartel and industries like Bayer, Monsanto and Novartis, has actively promoted the destruction of forests and their replacement by export-oriented crops such as soya beans.

Local communities in the study area — the Cordillera de Yvytyrusu — have started a movement against the further spread of these crops. Many see traditional Indigenous management systems as the key to countering the socially- and environmentally-destructive model imposed on the region by the government.

The next case, that of Cameroon, reveals how the corrupt practices of French logging companies openly violate host country forestry laws aimed at protecting forest biodiversity. These same companies receive support from the French Development Agency, ostensibly to assist them in carrying out "sustainable forest management".

It must be underscored that most legally - and illegally-extracted Cameroon timber is exported as raw logs to France. This raises two issues. On the one hand, forest destruction leaves few benefits for Cameroon's economy (no value-added exports) or people (other than a few dangerous, low-paying jobs in logging). On the other hand, it benefits France's economy and people considerably (through supplying cheap wood and highly-paid jobs in wood industries.) The French Development Agency's role in this case is unequivocally to help French and not Cameroonian development. This is also the case with bilateral agencies in other Northern countries.

One of the many issues the succeeding South African case study raises, meanwhile, is the importance of how forests are defined. The biodiversity of South Africa's forests, grasslands and wetlands is being destroyed partly by the advance of "planted forests". Indigenous Peoples, peasants and lay people can readily understand that, despite this label, large-scale monoculture tree plantations are not a boon to biodiversity, yet this fact continues to elude the "experts" on forests at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

According to the FAO, tree plantations are forests as long as they are composed of alien timber or pulpwood species such as eucalyptus. (For the FAO, a citrus plantation is not a forest, nor is a banana plantation or an oil palm plantation.) On this view, a forest is not an ecosystem that includes people, soil biodiversity, flora, wildlife and water, but

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by ricardo carrere, world rainforest movement

only a wood-producing entity. While this approach might have gone unchallenged in the 1950s, however, it is now totally outdated. The Convention on Biological Diversity needs to take the lead in eradicating this confusion once and for all.

The direct and indirect biodiversity impacts of large-scale tree monocultures in South Africa are well-documented, though not much has been done to address the issue. Eucalyptus, pines and acacias (the main genera used by the plantation industry) have become invasive, occupying more than a million hectares of land outside the plantations themselves. Despite the overwhelming evidence of some species' invasive character, neither industry nor government are taking steps to address the problem. On the other hand, South Africa is probably the only country that has carried out decades of extensive research on plantations' impacts on water. As a result, they acknowledged the clear impact on the country's hydrology. Yet the plantations continue to be promoted.

A similar type of plantations are being promoted in distant Ecuador, but for different purposes. In this case, four transnational companies — Mitsubishi Paper Mills, Sumitomo Corporation, Electric Power Development and Waltz International — are planting 10,000 hectares of eucalyptus to act as both raw material for paper pulp production and "carbon sinks" within the framework of the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism.

These plantations — which have received the support of the Ecuadorian government — will enable these firms to profit through sales of both wood and "carbon services" while at the same time gaining further rights to pollute. Local peoples will be forcibly displaced from their lands, biodiversity, soils and water will be depleted, all under the guise of the euphemism "Clean Development Mechanism", which is clearly neither "clean" nor a tool for "development." It is no doubt a "mechanism", but for making money and to avoid commitments to address climate change at the root.

Should national delegates or corporate representatives named in this report feel unfairly singled out, we can assure readers that similar cases can be found in most Southern countries. Wherever one looks, it is local peoples and NGOs who are actively protecting biodiversity against those who have been made officially "responsible" for protecting it. And the same holds for most Northern countries as well.

The causes of forest biodiversity loss can be located in a broad economic model. This model must be reformed if conditions are to be generated which make biodiversity conservation possible. National- and even local-level changes are important, but many of the underlying causes of forest loss require collaboration on a global scale.

For example, a global framework for corporate regulation is clearly needed. Transnational corporations are major actors in biodiversity destruction and their economic might often renders small, economically weak Southern governments virtually powerless to challenge them.

Addressing the underlying causes of biodiversity loss is clearly not an easy task. But nor is it easy for local communities to resist the allied forces of corporations, governments, international institutions and bilateral agencies. Yet against the odds, they do resist, and in so doing serve as an inspiration for the way forward.

resisting poverty, biodiversity loss and other impacts of neo-liberalism in costa rica | part two

by javier baltodano, coecoceiba/friends of the earth, costa rica

summary

Examples are given showing how the expansion of world markets, together with Structural Adjustment Programmes implemented by the Government of Costa Rica as a basis for its neo-liberal policy, has degraded forests and other tropical habitats, reduced biological and cultural diversity and impoverished the peasant sector.

forest clearance and forest mosaics

Encroachment on forests by agriculture in Costa Rica has been staggering. What with policies stimulating the export of cattle for the North American market, around 30 per cent of the country's territory was deforested between 1950 and 1980. Vast regions of very humid Tropical Forest, which contains some of the country's, and the planet's, greatest biological wealth, were burned to satisfy demand for cheap red meat (Baltodano, J., 1999, *El Bosque Tropical en Costa Rica*. Asociación Comunidades Ecologistas La Ceiba- Amigos de la Tierra, San José, Costa Rica).

The job of clearing the forests to make room for the cattle ranches was carried out by thousands of peasants displaced from the coffee plantations in the region of the large estates in the north of the country. In all the low-lying parts of the country, from the wide plains in the northern zone to the coastal strips on the Atlantic and Pacific to the south of the country, a mosaic of small, medium and large ranches was established in the midst of wooded areas.

Yet at the beginning of the eighties much wooded landscape remained. Groves and wooded fields where full grown native trees had been maintained in good numbers, combined with a new national parks system, helped maintain a network of biological corridors capable of protecting much of the country's enormous biodiversity.

Small- and medium-sized peasant family enterprises were the most important characteristic of this mosaic. These enterprises, in addition to producing cattle for beef, also produced basic grains, tubers and dairy products, ensuring the country's food security. Peasant families worked to consolidate the bases for economic democracy in the country and developed a special culture in the use of biodiversity.

Up until 1980, the sector's economic development seemed to have a good future, based on the domestic market for grains and timber and on complementary markets for tubers, meat and dairy products. Forests covered about 40 per cent of the country, encouraging planning for biodiversity conservation.

However, as we will see below, new economic paradigms and galloping globalisation changed all that.

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biodiversity and peasant culture

In a century of colonisation of Costa Rica's tropical lowlands, peasants have developed a rich tradition of using native biodiversity through exchange with the Maleku, Bribri, Cabecar, Guaimi and other indigenous peoples. In some communities in the northern zone, peasants have been observed to use over 200 species of medicinal plants and other organisms. (Baltodano, J., 2002. *Los Usos de las Plantas en el Cantón de Upala, Zona Norte, Costa Rica*. Coecoceiba-AT, San José Costa Rica). Peasants have also developed agro-forestry systems in which native trees are combined with crops and cattle-raising; conservation groves (patches of tropical forest integrated within ranches to conserve biodiversity, protect springs or slopes, and so on); and larger conservation forests bordering ranches.



structural adjustment programmes and the transnationalisation of agriculture

At the beginning of the 1980s, the Costa Rican government started to follow new neo-liberal models, implementing the first Structural Adjustment Programmes. Agro-exports were promoted, while supports for small and medium-sized farmers were dropped. Policies on exchange, credit, tariff and prices were changed to promote export enterprises to the detriment of basic grain production.

Between 1985 and the mid-1990s, Costa Rica went from being an exporter of maize to being an importer. By the mid-1990s, some 64 per cent of national requirements for the staple foods of rice, beans, maize and wheat were imported (AECO-AT.- Diagnóstico Socioambiental 1999-2001. AECO-AT.- Proyecto Desarrollo Institucional, Asociación Ecologista Costarricense, Amigos de la Tierra, Costa Rica). Large transnational companies established monoculture plantations of banana, citrus fruit, pineapple, gmelina and teak trees across the country, particularly in the vast humid tropical plains. Eventually, these plantations, which intensified land use and replaced peasant agro-ecological and agro-forestry landscapes, came to cover 52 per cent of the country's total cultivated area (UNDP.- Estado de la Nación, 1996. San Jose, Costa Rica).

One result was a doubling of pesticide poisonings nationwide. At the beginning of the nineties, Costa Rica ranked among the top pesticide users per capita in the world. Another was land concentration, peasant proletarianisation and a drop in the number of self-employed peasant workers and family productive units. Peasants have been displaced to remaining forests and wetlands, as well as to poor areas around cities. Pressure has increased on peasant reserves and national parks. In some cases transnational companies have actually established monoculture plantations in wetlands, primary forests and other biodiverse areas.

What follows are some concrete examples detailing how transnational agribusiness has damaged the country's biodiversity and biological wealth.

ticofrut and the apazono peasant struggle

Towards the end of the 1980s, the Ticofrut company, a Costa Rican company with significant foreign capital investment, was set up in the country's northern zone to plant citrus and establish a fruit juice processing plant. Tens of thousands of hectares were planted in less than six years. Protected and supported by structural adjustment policies, Ticofrut displaced hundreds of peasant families from their lands directly and also encouraged other large landowners and companies to invest in citrus cultivation, leading to further evictions. Wetlands were drained, rivers and other water sources contaminated by agro-chemicals, peasant communities disrupted and agro-forestry systems clear-cut, some of them rich in unique species of tropical forests.

The final straw was the destruction caused by the company's processing plant. Located in the community of La Palmera de Aguas Zarcas, the factory is able to process some 2,000 tons of fruit a day.

When it arrived, the company promised, as is usual, jobs and development for the zone. But little by little the community began to realise the truth. A bucolic community of small farmers and dairy producers — where fields were surrounded by hedges, iguanas sunbathed on the branches of trees protecting the Aguas Zarcas river (whose name comes from the crystal clarity of its waters), and a single farmer, Don Luis Marino, had been able to build up a domestic vegetable and herb garden featuring some 80 species of trees, reeds, and herbs — suddenly saw its landscape and quality of life severely contaminated. Ticofrut's fruit-skin dump could be smelled from kilometres away, causing headaches and sickness among many women and children. The Aguas Zarcas river — much of whose average

10 cubic-metre-per-second flow was used by the plant for the dumping of ammonia-containing cleaner and orange waste, some of it highly acid — turned brown and menacing. Freshwater biota were almost wiped out, the river became dangerous to bathe in and domestic animals suffered abortions and digestive problems.

For seven years, Apazono, a peasant organisation formed to protect water sources, denounced the company to the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of the Environment, the Municipality and the Office for the Defence of People's Rights, demonstrating that numerous laws had been violated. But it was not until 1995, following demonstrations, blockades and threats by communities and environmental groups to boycott Ticofrut products in the United States, that the company accepted responsibility for the contamination of the Aguas Zarcas and its surroundings.

Eventually the waste was recycled and treatment plants were built. But the wounds in the heart of La Palmera have not been healed. During the struggle, the peasant community had become divided by quarrels, as company employees were threatened with unemployment if they associated with protest organisations. Hundreds of families who were left without land still lack opportunities. And the river and its surrounding area continue to be affected by the intensive use of agro-chemicals on the vast monoculture plantations.

banana plantations, deforestation and biodiversity loss

Banana monocultures have always had very high environmental and social costs and requirements. In the mid-1980s, such monocultures expanded alarmingly. Over 40,000 hectares of banana trees were planted in just a few years. The new plantations displaced small and medium-sized farmers and swept away the last remnants of forest over a wide region.

The British firm Geest provides one example. Headquartered in the former British colony of the Bahamas, Geest was able to claim privileged access to the British market even though many its plantations were elsewhere.

To set up its Costa Rica operations, Geest bought hundreds of hectares of land from numerous small and medium-sized farmers in the Sarapiquí river basin in the country's Atlantic zone. Previously, there had been proposals to make the area a biological corridor between the highland forests of the Carrillo belt in the Central Volcanic Cordillera and the lowland forests in the Tortuguero National Park and the Barra del Colorado Reserve. And the Geest purchases included over one hundred hectares of primary forest boasting over 130 species of trees per hectare. But Geest clear-cut the tract, ignoring laws prohibiting the felling of this type of forest, and also felled other smaller patches of forest and isolated trees. The company also diverted a river, causing severe flooding affecting small and medium-sized farms.

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by javier baltodano, coecoceiba/friends of the earth, costa rica

ston forestal, gmelina
monoculture and peasant
displacement

Due to the efforts of local communities and environmental groups, the Geest company was taken to court. Despite much coercion by the company and the “accidental” burning of the case files at the local court, Geest’s general manager was eventually forced to pay US\$15,000 in compensation. Although the fine was neither significant nor commensurate with the destruction, a valuable legal precedent was established.

Shortly afterwards, Geest went bankrupt and its assets were transferred to a Panamanian company. But the primary forest it destroyed and the river it diverted cannot be restored.

Ston Forestal is a subsidiary of Stone Container Corporation, a major United States paper-producing company which arrived in Costa Rica under the protection of the neo-liberal policies of the end of the 1980s. In less than three years, Ston acquired rental contracts for over 20,000 hectares of land on which to establish gmelina (*Gmelina arborea*) monoculture plantations.

The company did not hesitate to use force to displace peasant families to achieve its end. As Helena van den Hombergh has documented in her book *Guerreros del Golfo Dulce: Industria Forestal y Conflicto en la Península de Osa, Costa Rica* (Editorial DEI, San José, 1999):

“They evicted [the peasants] and Ston brought in heavy machinery, tractors with large rollers to break up woods and destroy all agriculture. Manioc, chamo, bananas, maize, rice, all they had . . .”

Woods and wetlands were also destroyed for the plantation:

“Ston Forestal put in drainage and dried up [a lagoon] and there any number of lizards, crocodiles, frogs, shrimps and snakes died, everything that lived in the wetland, in addition to the birds.”

By 1993, at least eight complaints against Ston Forestal had been lodged with the then National Forestry Office for felling trees in a protected zone, including *Raphia taedigera* (a common palm in the wetland forests), as well as in some secondary forests.

But perhaps this company’s biggest threat was to build — in the middle of the Osa peninsula in the heart of the Dulce Gulf — an industrial duty-free zone, a dock for ships of up to 70,000 tons and a mega-factory able to chip around 60,000 tons of gmelina wood per month. All the chips would have gone to feed Stone Container paper plants in the United States.

This threat to one of Costa Rica’s best-conserved regions united peasant communities, environmental groups, local governments and tourist enterprises in a single front opposing the company’s aims. The area of the Dulce Gulf (called the “Sweet Gulf” since it is basically an estuary) is rich in primary forests with a very high tourist potential and is unique in its geographical conditions and biodiversity.

In 1994, following nearly two years of struggles, the opposition managed to halt Ston’s industrial project. But the gmelina plantations are still there, waiting to be felled, the wetlands and forests have not recovered and the displaced families have lost much of their peasant traditions. And shortly after the government revoked the company’s permits, three environmentalists who had led the struggle against Ston Forestal died mysteriously in San Jose in a case that remains unsolved.

argentina: communities resist oil and logging transnational corporations | part three

by roque pedace*, friends of the earth, argentina

summary

Deregulation, privatisation and opening up to foreign capital has facilitated the entry of major private companies into the production of hydrocarbon in the Southern Cone of South America for intra and extra-regional exportation. The mobilisation of gas and oil also requires major works for transportation and treatment, carried out on the basis of the companies' commercial interests, with scant State intervention. The process has generated redundant investment and relevant environmental and social liabilities.

Among others, the impact is resisted by the communities of the indigenous peoples who live from managing biodiversity, and who are already threatened by the lack of recognition of their rights and by other extractive industries, such as logging and mining which have also increased their activities with globalisation.

Preservation of these communities and their culture requires the immediate reversion of the process.

biodiversity and threatened communities

Management of biodiversity is an essential part of the way of life of Indigenous Communities. The irruption in these communities of new, extra-regional business activities on the basis of structural reforms has worsened pre-existing problems.

Let us analyse the impact on communities of four Indigenous Peoples. The knowledge and also the germoplasm used by the community may be lost if the valuation the local inhabitants make of the cultigenes¹ were to change.



yungas of salta and jujuy

1. finca san andrés, tinkunaku community This Kolla community basically lives on cattle-raising, practicing transhumancy between the pastures at the Finca San Andrés in the forest foothills and the high altitude pastures. They use traditional pre-Colonial techniques, for example in the construction of stone corrals (pircas) for the animals. Some of these constructions have been irreversibly damaged by the laying of the Tractebel gas pipeline. The movement of animals has also been disturbed.

They have plantations (traditional varieties of maize and potatoes) in fields in the high lands, that have been affected by the construction of the gas pipeline (for example, there were landslides in high sloping areas). The conflict is an additional pressure on making them abandon these agricultural practices.

The community uses the forest to complement their diet with fruit, nuts, animals and honey. They use herbs for medicinal and cultural purposes. The laying of the gas pipeline has facilitated entry of poachers and intruders who compete for these resources. Two severe explosions caused material damage and generated a feeling of insecurity in the population. However the pipeline route has not been essentially modified. But, the community did manage to reject an attempt at illegal logging by the United States company, Seaboard in the Yungas forest.

* | The author wishes to thank Flora Cruz, Luis Pilquiman, Eduardo Soria, Francisco Perez, Morita Carrasco and Emiliano Ezcurra for their participation in giving their testimony and providing him with the essential information for the study.

1 | plant populations they use as crops, originating from the region. The wild populations they came from may have disappeared. The in situ loss of germoplasm in the cultigenes used, is even more serious as it belongs to species that are much used as food.

argentina: communities resist oil and logging transnational corporations | part three

by roque pedace*, friends of the earth, argentina

2. chaco: fiscal plot 55, north of salta The Wichi, Komlek, Iyojwaja, Nivackle and Tapy'y indigenous peoples live in these lands in the Province of Salta in the valley of the Pilcomayo river on the frontier with Bolivia.

They have plantations of maize, pumpkin, a variety of beans, sweet potatoes, anco, water melon and cotton. They hunt animals in the woods all the year round and, in wintertime, fish in the river.

They gather nuts (particularly caob beans, mistol and chañar seeds), honey, fibres and firewood. They use plants as building materials and to make their handicrafts. They develop the knowledge of herbs for various uses.

Laying of a Compañía General de Combustibles (CGC) seismic line has affected hunting and gathering and facilitated entry of intruders and large animals (cattle). The latter have been the cause of the communities' main conflict for centuries, as they destroy their plantations and compete for drinking holes and fruit.

3. piedmont forest. western jujuy (caimancito) and tarija basin; southern bolivia (caipipendi); northern salta (acambuco) These locations are in the community territories of Guarani (Chiriguano) origin. In the refinery of Caimancito in Jujuy and Campo Durán near Salta, many of the members of this community are unemployed because of the privatisation process of the state oil company, now REPSOL. For this reason they urgently need their lands back in order to cultivate anco, manioc, maize and beans in community like the Guarani do in Southern Bolivia (Kaaguasu, Kaami and Karandaite).

This same claim is now being made by those who lose their jobs as rural workers and do not have access to official aid. Neither this aid, nor the salaries cover today the food requirements of their families.

However, their brothers and sisters having some access to land both in Bolivia and Argentina know only too well the problems arising from oil prospecting and exploitation. The fire at the Madrojos well (Pluspetrol/REPSOL) in Caipipendi altered community life for months, during which they had to defend even their drinking water. Furthermore, even the natural reserves located in the community territories of both countries are being assayed with seismic lines, as for example the Acambuco reserve, where members of a Guarani community live. In the concession zone bordering this reserve, PAE (Pan American Energy) has built gas pipelines and treatment plants, making it a priority for gas development and scantily suitable for community development. For example the Piquirenda (PAE) and Campo Durán (Refinor) treatment plants negatively affect the neighbouring Guarani communities who live off agriculture, due to the impact of flaring (burners) and the laying of pipelines that link the gas fields with the plants and the major gas pipelines.

patagonian steppe, northern neuquén

The main activity of two Mapuche (Paynemil and Kaxipayiñ) communities in this region is the grazing of small animals (residual transhumancy). They also work temporarily as rural labourers, but not for REPSOL, with which they have their main conflict. The plantations they have when conditions so allow are usually maize and potatoes. They gather herbs for medicinal uses, nuts and firewood.

Oil exploitation extracts water from low damp lands. Water is very scarce in the steppe. Soil, vegetation and subsurface and surface water contamination, and the degradation of pasture lands have led to the death of domestic and wild animals. Serious consequences on human health due to heavy metal and hydrocarbon contamination have promoted emigration. The communities consider that there is no way to recompose, within a reasonable time, the damage done by silt, salt and contaminated occurrence waters and gravel from the wells, and by mechanical soil degradation.

new neighbours brought in by globalisation

Privatisation of the energy companies, de-regulation of markets and opening up to foreign capital have caused a marked increase in the internationalisation of the exploitation of natural resources in the Southern Cone. The extension of the frontier area and the irrational multiplication of gas pipelines have increased pressure on the indigenous communities, whose ownership deeds and rights are ignored by the companies we describe here below.

repsol This is the largest energy company in South America, with investment in various countries of the region, although they are concentrated on gas and oil in Peru, Ecuador, Argentina and Bolivia. In Argentina since 1995 they have successively controlled Astra, Pluspetrol and lastly, YPF, which in turn had already absorbed Maxus. They have also participated actively in Bolivian Oil Field privatisation. It mainly comprises capital of Spanish origin.

In South America, REPSOL participated in high impact projects such as the Heavy Crude Oil pipeline (OCP) in Ecuador, the development of oilfields in the territory of the Uwa, in Colombia and the Huaorani in Ecuador, the Mega project for the separation of gas and pipelines in the north of Neuquen in Mapuche territory. It is the main partner of the consortium developed by Caipipendi (see PAE) in the Guarani territory in Bolivia. Although it already transports gas from this field to Brazil, it participates with Petrobras and Total in the construction of the GASYRG gas pipeline, the laying of which, parallel to the Transredes (Enron-Shell) pipeline was resisted by the communities. Gas can also be transported to Argentina by Pluspetrol gas pipelines and then to the Pacific (North of Chile).

In Argentina the concession of the main natural gas field in the country, Loma de la Lata in Mapuche territory has been extended until the year 2027. REPSOL controls 40% of the country's gas production. Among the company's regional priorities is the integration of its gas and oil activities with thermoelectric and petrochemical generation.

pan american energy I.I.c. This is a BP (60%) and BRIDAS Corp. (40%) company, which develops its activities in the Southern Cone. It is the second largest producer of natural gas in Argentina and one of the main producers in the region. It exports gas from Argentina to Northern and Central (Santiago) Chile, and methane to the South of the country. It also exports to Uruguay and plans to extend its exports to Brazil along the same gas pipeline it owns. It produces and exports oil and generates electricity for Buenos Aires and central Bolivia.

Its most important activity is in the Tarija basin, in the Northwest of Argentina (Acambuco) and South of Bolivia (Caipipendi). In Argentina it has a separation plant in Piquirenda that is supplied by the active development of Acambuco.

Piquirenda injects gas towards Brazil, Chile and Argentina. In the Bolivian sector, through a Consortium with REPSOL and others, it develops the mega gasfields in Margarita, which for 19 years will inject gas in the Bolivia-Brazil gas pipeline. In the medium term, in addition to increasing exports to Brazil, the Consortium is exploring the possibility of developing a multi billion dollar project for the liquefaction of natural gas aimed at the United States and Mexican markets.

In Acambuco alone, 857 km of seismic lines were opened up, crossing a Flora and Fauna Reserve. In their institutional public relations literature it may be read that: "Our objectives are ambitious but possible: zero accidents, zero damage to people, zero damage to the environment." On another page: "Our mission: to create value for our shareholders."

tractebel group This company has Belgium capital with enormous investment in electric generation (Electrabel) and the distribution and transportation of gas (Distrigas) in Europe and other regions. With the aim of selling electric energy to the large mining complexes in the North of Chile, it built the North-Andean gas pipeline together with the U.S. company Southern Electric, hiring the Techint Group for the works. This pipeline crosses the Yungas along a route that was resisted by the Kolla community. North-Andean refused to change the route in spite of the existence of less noxious options. In fact the pipeline was unnecessary as another one, Atacama, exists which is supplied from the same gas fields in Northwest Argentina and serves the same Chilean market. This pipeline is far from having saturated its transportation capacity.

In the gas area, the Tractebel Commitment states that: "Distrigas has adopted political guidelines, laying gas pipelines along already existing ones, roads or river routes." It states in its Citizen Commitment: "abroad the companies of the group respect the local cultures in the countries where they operate."

argentina: communities resist oil and logging transnational corporations | part three

by roque pedace*, friends of the earth, argentina

resistance

seaboard corporation Seaboard is “a sort of mini-conglomerate” with interests in multiple sectors... “Its operations span four continents and nearly two dozen countries...and like other profitable businesses, it collects subsidies—or, more accurately, corporate welfare—from local, state and federal governments.”

An article in “Time” magazine thus describes this “agribusiness giant” with headquarters in Merriam, Kansas in an article under the title of “The empire of the pigs.” One of the tax aids mentioned is that of OPIC, a U.S. export credit agency. In an operation of this type, Seaboard bought sugar cane plantations and a sugar mill from the Patrón Costa, an aristocratic family from Northwest Argentina, adjacent to the Kolla territory. Disregarding the legality of the indigenous community’s deeds, they launched an assault on the timber wealth in the Yungas, the forest harbouring the country’s greatest biodiversity, triggering off national indignation.

major economic groups in argentina These are local holdings that have increased their participation in energy businesses in South America since privatisation. For example, Perez Companc is the second largest owner of deposits in the North of Neuquen. The same group participates, together with Techint (the latter as a constructor) and other giants in the OCP oil pipeline in Ecuador. But it is in the North of Argentina and the South of Bolivia that nearly all of them seem to be backing gas, including the smaller stakeholders in the business, such as the Compañía General de Combustibles (CGC) or establishing strategic alliances such as those of BRIDAS with BP in PAE:

All the companies described are involved in trade practices increasing the subordination of local and national economies to them and to the world market. They extract resources that cannot be replaced (fossil fuels or ecosystems) and contribute to climatic change due to the release of greenhouse gases or to deforestation.

The indigenous peoples have defended their style of traditional life when faced by threats from the rupture of links with the land and with the ecosystems in which they live. A common axis in their resistance has always been recognition of their ancestral rights, which is granted by modern states under the form of community territorial land deeds. The action developed by the new extractive activities is facilitated by political powers not complying with these and other rights set out in the constitutions and in international agreements. It is for this reason that their claims are made both to the companies and to the governments.

- The Association of Lakha Honhat Aboriginal Communities represents various ethnic groups living on fiscal plot 55. They have lodged a legal petition —case 12,094— against the Argentine State with the Inter American Commission on Human Rights. In this petition they describe that the concession granted by the government to the CGC company has led to the launching of a 2D seismic prospecting programme “ignoring the right to consultation of the indigenous communities,” affecting the environment and with “highly damaging consequences” such as sexual abuse of minors. They also denounce pressure to dismantle their ranches where the seismic lines cross.

“For this reason it is very important to explain to you that we are not eating the earth itself, we are eating the fruits of the earth.”

Francisco Pérez, a Wichi chief.

- The Guarani Peoples' Assembly is the highest body recognised by the communities of this origin. It has rejected the construction of the GASYRG gas pipeline. It has also set up a tri-national commission (with representatives of the Bolivian, Paraguayan and Argentine communities) to follow-up on investment in the region. They are demanding that environmental impact studies on the impact of oil activities on human health and on productive activities be made, as these studies have not been done. The communities in Argentine territory (Chiriguano) who lack community deeds, have not been recognised as interlocutors either by the companies or by the governments and have not participated in the Public Audiences, such as the one that was held before the seismic exploration of Acambuco.

- The Co-ordination of Mapuche Organisations has demanded repair of environmental damage and the ceasing of environmental contamination. It has entrusted studies to epidemiologists and toxicologists to assess the way the health of the communities is affected. They have lodged a multimillion lawsuit against REPSOL, based on a study by Umweltschutz Nord.

They do not accept the construction of gas pipelines and plants on their territory and demand that their right to control and administer their natural resources be recognised. They do not accept that there can be any compensation for the material and spiritual loss of the earth and of those who inhabit it.

"The Ixofill Mogen (biodiversity) is upset. All the Mapuche lives, that in a territory administrated by Mapuche logic would be enriched in a harmonious relationship, today are exterminated by the actions of transnational companies such as YPF (today REPSOL)..."

Declaration: Paynemil and Kaxipaiñ communities on the concession of property deed to the MEGA enterprise, now part of REPSOL.

- Since 1946, the Kolla people have mobilised in caravans over 2000 km taking them to Buenos Aires, to claim the ownership of their lands. In 1997 they repeated this mobilisation, camping outside Government House. They also protested in front of the US Embassy, country of origin of Seaboard. In 1998, the Tinkunaku community demonstrated outside the Gas Regulating Body to avoid installation of the gas pipeline, which has exploded twice since then, confirming the validity of their complaints about security.

The Tinkunaku community has combined direct actions such as blockading roads with legal action. Although the gas pipeline was not laid, the community has obtained legal recognition of ownership of communal territory, has managed to evict Seabord definitively in a legal way and effectively control the portion of Yungas where they live. They have also achieved international solidarity at the time they were repressed and universal recognition as biodiversity guardians.

"What do we feel? Indignation and pain, but also the strength that our mother, the Earth, gives us."

Kolla Tinkunaku Community, August 1997.

proposals for a policy

We have seen how the communities of Indigenous Peoples, in addition to struggling for their legitimate right to existence:

- Protect the upper basins of rivers and sources of drinking water
- Avoid environmental contamination
- Maintain agricultural biodiversity and ecosystems where they live
- Prevent poaching of species in extinction and the destruction of their habitat
- Conserve a valuable cultural heritage in which management of biodiversity and associated values are inseparable parts.

It is necessary to neutralise the pressure of extractive industries and halt the current trading process that threatens their forms of life. We must demand:

- A moratorium in hydrocarbon prospecting as a necessary condition to stop increasing the ecological debt, including the impact of climatic change
- To halt the extraction of wood and mining in the territories of the indigenous peoples
- To recognise the communities' full rights and ownership of these territories
- To guarantee technical and financial assistance if required by the communities in the sustainability of their practices, such as protection against bio-piracy.

the putumayo indigenous peoples seek to recover the sustainability of their culture

[surviving the impact of the energy market in the colombian amazon] | part four

by javier marín rodríguez and alejandro pulido chaparro, *censat agua viva/friends of the earth, colombia*

"The oil zone of the Colombian-Ecuadorian frontier lies in its Amazon portion. Before exploiting it, they practised something they called "seismics" based on dynamite, of course. A forest that had been intact for centuries was shaken by the explosives. When I saw the scene a few years ago I thought it was the Apocalypse. The explosion converted the trees into splinters which took several minutes to fall. After the flash the birds and a whole stampede of animals fled for kilometres in terror, seeking refuge. Then the machines arrived, crumbling the red soil. Behind them, a horde of yellow helmets descended, opening up their way with dynamite, sweeping away the course of rivers, drying up the marshes. During the day and the night a crowd of poor people entered the forest. The picture was always the same: a man, a woman, a grandmother or grandfather, with two smoke pots, a dog and some dirty and half-naked children begging for food. The oil companies require hundreds of workers."¹

The southern frontier of the Colombian Amazon has features called by the international financial institutions "integration and development axes." Many supra-national projects converge there, such as the multi-modal, inter-oceanic highway corridors, the Andean electric inter-connection, the major oil drilling and distribution sites - and their Pacific-Amazon pipelines - the special economic exportation zone projected around Ipiales, the promotion of direct mining and agro-industrial foreign investment, and the concentration of facilities and military operations of the Colombia Plan. This geographical point is a pillar in the consolidation of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA).

This fabulous global business, this new economic order that will soon be 510 years old, is, as writer Eduardo Galeano would say, giving the last blows to Putumayo's sustainable cultures. The different periods of extractivism (gold, quinine, rubber, wood), that in the past fed the growth of the hegemonic market, had a negative impact on the life of this region, but nothing compared to the human and environmental disasters caused by the advent of the oil developments launched here forty years ago. The dimensions of the roads systems and colonisation flows are gigantic, as is the scale of exploitation of natural resources, impoverishment, social decomposition, corruption, drug trafficking, armed conflict and repression.

All these different phenomena, together within a single market, place at serious risk the physical and cultural existence of the Indigenous Peoples of the Andean-Amazon Putumayo, not as "an encounter of cultures" but as a directed strategy. Nothing is more starkly opposed to market civilisation than the "collective organisations, community ethics, uninterest in accumulation, the ancestral valuing of nature and the capacity to adapt to the forest's biological cycles"² which characterise native societies.

The FTAA process' demand for energy, and particularly that of the United States, which centres its expectations on Latin American resources, has placed dollar signs on the hydrology and oil-bearing sedimentary basin of the Putumayo and Lake Agrio region located on the Colombian-Ecuadorian border. Closely related is another major aspiration: finally to open up access to the Amazon from the Pacific. However, based on the recovery of different strategies that enabled them to survive in other times, the native communities are preparing themselves to face the new wave of the capitalist market.

1. years ago

. . . biodiversity. The Putumayo basinⁱ is in the Piedmont and gives onto the wide Amazon plains, which are laced by an infinite number of waterways springing from the Andean heights of the Colombian massif, making this zone the encounter point of important altitudinally-diverse ecosystems. The very heterogeneous Amazon forest rises to some 1,000 metres and from there on start the Andean forests, different from those of the plain and increasingly homogeneous. At the regions above 3,000 metres begin paramo ecosystems (high altitude plains), of vital importance in maintaining the flow of the nascent Amazon rivers. We may catalogue all these Cordillera slopes as the Andean-Amazon region.

Originally the Piedmont was a belt of gigantic Amazon forests and constituted a “forest refuge” when forests retreated during the last ice age and when rainfall decreased sharply approximately 25,000 years ago. This refuge, the so-called “Napo-Putumayo,”ⁱⁱ maintained a forest structure that had not undergone essential alterations over millions of years, conserving all their ecosystemic complexity. By now most of this zone has been logged and turned into oil fields, pipelines, agricultural, forestry and livestock exploitations, military bases, urban centres and overland routes.

. . . and the cultures. “Before the Spanish Conquest there were already many settlements adapted to the Amazon forest, able to successfully manage environmental and ecosystem production and reproduction systems, forms of social organisation and complex thought and knowledge structures based on a philosophy of harmonious cohabitation with nature.”³ Contrary to Peru and Mexico, our aboriginal societies did not have forms of state organisation. Only in a few cases were there more complex socio-political organisations such as those of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (Taironas) and the Cundi-Boyaca Altiplano (Muiscas). As a result of the establishment of reserves, the figure of cabildo (a form of municipal organization) became generalised, with the indigenous governor as the authority. The governors were grandfathers, respected because of their knowledge and known as taitas.

In the whole Colombian Amazon region there are 52 indigenous ethnic groups, with a population of approximately 47.000 members.ⁱⁱⁱ Fourteen linguistic families can be distinguished, the most numerous being the Tukano, Arawak, Huitoto and Tupí families. The departments possessing the greatest number of ethnic groups are Amazonas (26), Vaupés (19), Vichada (8), Caquetá (10) Putumayo (10) and Arauca (6), the first five located in the Colombian Amazon. But in these regions, the number of members is lower, an indication of the fragility of their cultures.

At the beginning of the sixties, when the oil industry, led by the Texas Petroleum Company, started operations in the valley of Guamuez, the Putumayo territory had almost 20,000 inhabitants, 13,000 of them being Indigenous. Original indigenous communities to be found in this region include the Kofan, Inga, Kamsa, Siona, Coreguaje, Huitoto and Muinane. Other Indigenous Peoples, displaced by the political violence of the 1950s, also settled in the Putumayo: Paez, Awa and Embera Chami, from the Cauca, Nariño and Valle respectively.^{iv}

The number of indigenous people in Putumayo had only risen to 23,323 personas by 1997,⁴ out of a total population of 264,291. A demographic comparison with statistics from 37 years ago shows that the proportion of indigenous peoples to the total population dropped from 65% to 8.8%, while their density of settlement increased by 300% due to oil colonisation. This gives a general idea of the surprisingly low growth of the indigenous population, and of their confinement to increasingly narrower territories, in a situation in which inequity is more and more marked and the natives occupy the lowest category in the new social stratification imposed by the capitalist appropriation of Putamayo's natural resources.



3 | La Amazonia colombiana. Camillo Domínguez et al.. National University of Colombia. Leticia, 1.999.

4 | Data base on Indigenous Territorial Systems. National Planning Department. Bogotá, 1997.

the putumayo indigenous peoples seek to recover the sustainability of their culture

[surviving the impact of the energy market in the colombian amazon] | part four
by javier marín rodríguez and alejandro pulido chaparro, *censat agua viva/friends of the earth, colombia*

We asked Clemencia Herrera⁵ why the indigenous communities had grown so slowly over the past 40 years, vis-à-vis the vast population of settlers that today occupies the Putumayo:

“Reproduction is also affected. Before, we, the Huitotos, had no limitations on having children, the group did not have any regulations on this, because the children had a place and a means to live: water to drink, forests to sow, fish to eat, land for their farms. Oil exploitation, with all it brought and all it took, restricts growth of the population because we do not have the same opportunities for our children as we had before . . . The river, the waters enter into trade, used by oil wells or for transport. This is why they have said they are going to privatise the rivers...”

. . . biodiversity and cultures. The traditional communal and shifting agricultural system is the best solution for the low fertility of the fragile Amazon soils⁶ and the preservation of the ecosystem. But the Indigenous peoples have lost the ability to move as a result, first, of missionary civilisations that obliged them to establish their communities at fixed points and, second, of the massive reduction of their territories caused by the intervention of oil exploitation.

The production system is based on the use of three spaces — the forest, the river and the agricultural areas (cropped and fallow lands) — as well as the existence of a continuous interrelationship and complementarity among the three. This indigenous production system operates around the agricultural plot, where various species are cultivated and harvested at different times, thus reducing competition for soil nutrients. Generally agricultural plots are maintained for two or three years, and then abandoned to give way to re-growth of the secondary forest. The steps are: cutting shrubs and trees, burning and sowing,^{vi} which are carried out at indeterminate times and in the middle of feasts and community rites. Cultivation is done in the winter-time and when rain is scant, people fish, hunt, gather wild forest products and prepare new agricultural plots. Seeds are obtained from fallow areas previously cultivated.

2. the arrival of civilisation

The various types of colonisation undertaken against the Amazon forest and its cultures have always been done under the banner of the market. For this reason, some researchers have identified the appropriation of resources as the key factor underlying them. (This appropriation has basically been implemented through extractivism,^{vii} although in the present period of Amazon integration to continental globalisation, it is envisaged to intensify local manufacturing through direct foreign investment).⁶

The Colombian Amazon, particularly the Piedmont, has been colonised since the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century by people from the Andean region as a result of the social, economic and political convulsions taking place in the centre of the country. The desire to incorporate the frontier in the economic sphere of the central state, or to resolve land tenure problems, lessening social pressure in other regions, or to offer human resources to oil companies, has sustained governmental colonisation policies during the second half of the twentieth century.^{viii}



The Indigenous peoples were part of commercial rubber chains, through which they occasionally received steel axes (for cutting trees) and other merchandise. At the beginning, extraction depended on the indigenous peoples, but soon the rubber-tappers took over the organisation of production, using the indigenous people as slaves.^{ix} “The indigenous people required certain merchandise, but as their traditional economic system was for finite objects, their demand for axes and other objects was not indefinite. They worked to dance and not to accumulate goods or merchandise.”⁷ The presence of rubber interfered with the native’s social activities and rituals, and did not leave them enough time to work their agricultural plots. Many of the families now lived in houses on stilts instead of malocas⁸. Finally, rubber went into crisis in the Amazon, because of Asian competition and the invention of synthetic rubber.

The colonisation which followed (1946-1962) was promoted by political violence, as a result of the confrontation between the liberal and conservative parties, with an increase in pressure on the Amazon lowlands. Displacements resulted from the first prospecting for oil by the Texas Petroleum Company, and simultaneously, exploitation of wood in the Putumayo.^x

The third period of colonisation is known as the oil fever, and can in turn be divided into various stages: the beginnings of oil exploitation as an enclave industry; state intervention as a result of nationalist movements; and economic opening up, again placing this resource totally in the hands of multinational companies. This can be seen in the serious application since 1990 of the neo-liberal model and in the history of hiring systems.⁹

At the beginning of the sixties, the Texas Petroleum Company started oil prospecting with its train of subcontracted companies in the Guamuez Valley.

“The indigenous people knew they were there because of the strange buzzing of helicopters that frightened away the macaws and made the dogs howl. Later on came the wide, long routes opening up in the forest and the explosions that frightened the tapirs and the borugas, . . . still later the building of towers which rose challengingly, replacing the fallen trees . . . and then the arrival of men getting out of the buzzers and asking about the price of the ranch, the banana plantation, the manioc plantation and the four chonta palms, because in a few days that bend in the river would belong to the company.”¹⁰

Initially, the Texas Oil Company opened up a 25 kilometre route to the river Orito and in three years bored 15 wells and built a Trans-Andean pipeline, 310 kilometres long, to Tumaco. The expectations of employment and business related to oil extraction attracted thousands of people who contributed to increase settlements, making Orito the hub of oil colonisation, and where the Texas company put up a refinery and its administrative headquarters. And behind the Texas company, other companies appeared, particularly during the 1990s.

Although some researchers point to the last colonisation period as one created by the so-called “coca boom” of the 1980s,^{xi} the economic and social effects of oil exploitation and planning for future exploitation are also important. In fact, the most relevant facts encouraging coca processing and traffic, and discouraging productive, legal work, were the high salaries paid by the oil companies in relation to traditional income in the region, the disorderly investment made by the municipality of the royalties received, the corruption this generated at different levels, the spirit of profit and lifestyle created around the new consumer habits, the breaking down of traditional economies and the temporary nature of oil employment, among other factors.^{xii}

“We have gone from sowing for our food to sowing for trade, obliging us to change from our traditional agricultural plots, and now we Indigenous Peoples have to handle money. Coca then came into trade, distorting Indigenous People’s beliefs, encouraging the use of chemical products that damage nature, and behind them, the spraying that damages food plantations too.”¹¹

Whether because the social problems experienced during this period were great, or because they were attracted by oil companies, by the movement of money from drug trafficking, or by the proximity of the frontiers for arms trafficking, or for several of these reasons together, armed groups then infiltrated the region to complete the picture^{xiii}.

⁸ | The malocas are large buildings with sloping roofs, two doors, one at front and one at the back. They are of a polyfunctional nature, providing collective housing for large families (up to 200 people) and places for rituals. At the front is a ceremonial space, called a mambeadero, where the men sit to think while they chew coca and drink ambil (semi-liquid tobacco). Each maloca is presided over by a grandfather or elder.

⁹ | See endnote (xvii).

¹⁰ | Roque Roldán. Tierra Profanada. CECOIN-ONIC. Bogotá, 1995.

¹¹ | Clemencia Herrera.

the putumayo indigenous peoples seek to recover the sustainability of their culture [surviving the impact of the energy market in the colombian amazon] | part four

by javier marín rodríguez and alejandro pulido chaparro, *censat agua viva/friends of the earth, colombia*

3. the fragmentation of nature and cultures in the putumayo

Indigenous communities managed to overcome the threats of quinine and rubber extraction, reconstructing themselves on the basis of their own cultural foundations.^{xiv} Their economic systems managed to co-exist with external economies through a dual dynamic in which they maintained their traditional systems of production systems while immersed in a capitalist structure. Traditional settlements were reordered.

Around 1960, at the time oil exploitation began, most of Indigenous groups were formed into multi-ethnic communities¹² featuring houses on stilts (like the whites' houses) as well as some malocas. This enabled them to hold onto ceremonial autonomy and maintain their own traditions. Indigenous groups were keeping up their own agricultural models and strongly depended on fishing, hunting and gathering. Equally, language was being conserved, along with other manifestations of their cultures (housing, clothing, domestic utensils, tools). With the oil economy, however, the situation changed radically.

Today, the forests that 40 years ago covered the valleys of Guamuez and Orito have disappeared or have had their biological cycles seriously altered, and the same goes for life in the waterways, where wildlife species that constituted the protein base of the Indigenous People's food have been reduced.

"Now not even the birds that on sunny days arrived fluttering around in search of a nest at the top of a tree have come back. Nor do the parakeets who filled themselves with tender maize from the plantation come here with their gibberish . . . as they have no trees in which to nest and there is so much poison sprinkled around."¹³

Before the end of the 1960s, the territory occupied by the Kofan, an area of nearly 50,000 hectares in the valley of the Orito river, had passed completely into the hands of the companies and their workers. The latter, facing an uncertain future as *veintiocheros*¹⁴ ("twenty-eight-dayers") took advantage of company offers to settle. In addition, landless peasants flowed into the area day and night along the new routes built by the oil companies. At the beginning of the 1970s, the Inga and Kofan communities from the upper Guamuez valley and Hormiga canyon saw their territory crossed from north to south and from east to west by new roads. And by 1973, colonisation had occupied between 50 and 60% of the Indigenous Peoples' ancient spaces.

The reserves given up by Incora over those years¹⁵ to the Inga and the Kofan are presently mostly occupied by settlers. For a nucleus of some 15 families from the Orito valley who survived the invasion, a reserve of 2,500 hectares was set up in 1975. But ten years later it was abolished by the government due to the fact it had been occupied by settlers drawn into the area by oil companies. According to a 1992 study carried out by the Commission to Overcome Violence appointed by President Barco, the four communities located in the Guamuez reserves had small plots that did not amount to 4,570 hectares, which means that in less than two decades, they had lost at least 84% of the areas legally awarded to them.

indigenous territories



Indigenous Reserve > 250 has.

Indigenous Reserve < 250 has.

Indigenous Community

Oil Pipeline



Territory is essential to sustain life in the social and natural community. In Indigenous people's cosmivision, earth-nature is assumed to be the source of life, the material and spiritual basis for their existence, a space and source of survival, of harmonious co-habitation and of re-living. When the territory-environment is fragmented, the fragmentation of Indigenous societies is imminent.

"We, the Kofan, as peoples, have existed long before the Spaniards in the territories near the Amazon that today are part of Colombia and Ecuador. Now it is all invaded by the oil companies and by people who, because of land problems in other regions of the country, arrive and, thinking these territories are wastelands, settle. But the fault is not there, the fault is in the government policies and the oil companies for penetrating Indigenous lands. From Yarimal here to Temblón 2, it is all invaded. Our territory no longer exists."¹⁶

As territory is reduced, sources of self-subsistence are lost, as possibilities for agriculture, fishing, hunting and gathering fruit dry up. This pushes communities towards market agricultural activity and disruption of their forms of family and political organisation. Language is fast forgotten and values based on individualism are adopted. According to the Commission on Studies on Violence, the resulting nutritional deficiencies lead to diseases such as tuberculosis, parasite-caused illnesses, and skin infections. Making the situation even worse are deplorable sanitary conditions and the consumption of contaminated water.

Young people have been most seduced by the "Occidental" economy. Oil exploitation, combined with the breaking up of Indigenous patterns of subsistence and education in municipal schools, tend to distance young people from their ethnic groups, making it easier for them to adopt the habits of the colonisers. The urbanised communities where the majority of the Indigenous people have been pushed have also contributed to this assimilation.¹⁷

"Culture starts getting lost when the mother tongue is lost. There are fewer and fewer young people who speak Kofan and more and more who speak Spanish. This has a reason and it is the path that we the Kofan are obliged to take in order to relate to trade and labour patterns . . . It even makes young people ashamed to speak Kofan."¹⁸

As if this were not enough, lately the numerous conflicting interests created in the Amazon Piedmont have also greatly increased the intervention of armed stakeholders. All those groups have arguments to explain their intervention in the territory: to eradicate plunder and poverty, to eradicate guerrillas, or to eradicate illegal plantations. But the common factor underlying the presence of guerrillas, the para-military forces and the official army continues to be the Amazon's natural resources and particularly oil. It is no coincidence that the Putumayo has been taken as a laboratory for the Colombia Plan, or that the zones set out in the Plan as specific points for the anti-drug war - understood as military operations for the eradication of coca, wiped out by spraying from the air - are the same zones as those foreseen for oil prospecting.

"The company came along and the guerrillas appeared, and behind them the army, and along came the problem. As the wells were close to our reserves, there is a large government force providing security and many military bases, patrolling with all kinds of terrestrial and airborne vehicles in the reserve areas. Often our people are hunting or gathering fruit or medicinal plants within the reserve and they come across the military and then the outrages start."¹⁹

Each phase and activity in oil exploitation has disastrous consequences for the existence of the Indigenous cultures²⁰, particularly in regions such as the Putumayo, where the social organisation has been decimated by armed conflict, exacerbated by the application of the Colombia Plan and the mega-exploitation of the Amazon.

14 | The name given to the workers who had a temporary contract lasting 28 days.

15 | In 1973 the Colombian Institute for Agrarian Reform — Incora — set up two territorial reserves (13,563 has) for the Kofan and the Inga in the Guamez Valley (Santa Rosa, for the Kofan and Yarimal, for another Kofan group and an Inga group). In 1976, another two reserves were established, Afllador and Santa Rosa de Sucumbios (for the Kofan).

16 | Presentations by the indigenous peoples at the Colombian-Ecuadorian Kofan Meeting "Mining on Indigenous Territory" ONIC-CECOIN, Bogotá D.C., 1999.

17 | In the case of the Mocoa, of the 1,103 families located in the 17 cabildos under its jurisdiction, 561 are to be found in an urban context. Laura García.

18 | Kofan meeting.

19 | Kofan meeting.

20 | Annex: table No. 1. Main impacts of the oil industry on the Indigenous communities.

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the energy market prospects and its impact on the putumayo

In the words of Clemencia Herrera, representative of the Indigenous Peoples of the Putumayo:

“From so much extraction of oil, the land is becoming porous and is losing its vitamins. And the trees are dying and cannot reproduce themselves any longer. The Putumayo is a territory that has been crossed by oil projects. For this reason we believe that we, the Indigenous people, will disappear. . . . There are many interests in things under the soil, it is not only a question of drug trafficking and coca. Coca will come to an end and the problem will persist, the threat will continue. If the land could be moved the multinational companies would take it away in a slice. There are major agreements coming from other countries where nature has already been negotiated. . . . Like the Indigenous Peoples who for years now have been forced into trade, their survival depends on the products they can offer to the settlers, and they are easily convinced to leave their lands for a few sheets of zinc, motors, etc. This is all the right to consultation comes down to. . . . Another tactic used by the State and the multinational companies is to divide communities, seeking to make agreements with the young people of the community and not with the grandparents, the wise people. The young people are more attracted by the oropel²¹ of trade. Young people get hooked up to work as another form of community survival and there they become acculturated too, the same as at school. They become detached from community life.”²²

Globalisation has fabricated an “international consensus” to the effect that improvement of the quality of life is directly proportional to the increase in the production of energy. Therefore the economy becomes dedicated to seeking hydrocarbon reserves. For this reason transnational companies and international financial institutions have dotted the Amazon map with energy exploitation projects and crossed one ocean after another with gas and oil pipelines²³.

United States interest in drug production in Colombia is well known. Less well known is how much the Colombian government contributes to the enormous profit of United States oil companies. The two are related. According to the U.S. Energy Department, the consumption of oil grew by 15% in the 1990s, from 17 to 19.5 million barrels per day. Over the same period, during which Colombia was rapidly opened up, the oil production of this country grew by 78%. Colombia is the third largest exporter of oil to the United States in Latin America (after Mexico and Venezuela). Colombia’s oil industry is in fact an enclave, as over 65% of the millions of barrels produced there are sent to the United States.

Oil exploitation in the country is undertaken under different types of contracts between private companies and the state, represented by the Colombia Oil Enterprise, Ecopetrol or ECP.^{xv} Since the 1994 National Energy Plan, the Colombian government has proposed the following: management of demand and rational use of energy, full and efficient supply of energy, and increase of energy exports, setting itself the goal of drilling 60 new wells a year.²⁴ In 1993, the country had 88.7 million hectares of sedimentary basins, of which 13.7 million were being explored: 4.2 million as ECP reserves

and 9.5 million under contracts. The national demand alone of motor gasoline and propane gas rose by 85.64% and 117.33% respectively over the period 1977-93 (Table 2).

table 2. fuel demand (thousands of barrels per day)

year	motor gasoline	propane gas
1977	65.2	7.5
1979	71.0	6.8
1981	74.0	7.7
1983	80.1	9.3
1985	88.1	10.1
1987	96.4	11.2
1989	104.7	13.0
1991	101.7	14.0
1993	121.0	16.3

The main economic and institutional reforms that opened up the oil market in the 1990s, at the expense of the biodiversity and culture of the Andean-Amazon zone of the Putumayo, accomplished the following:

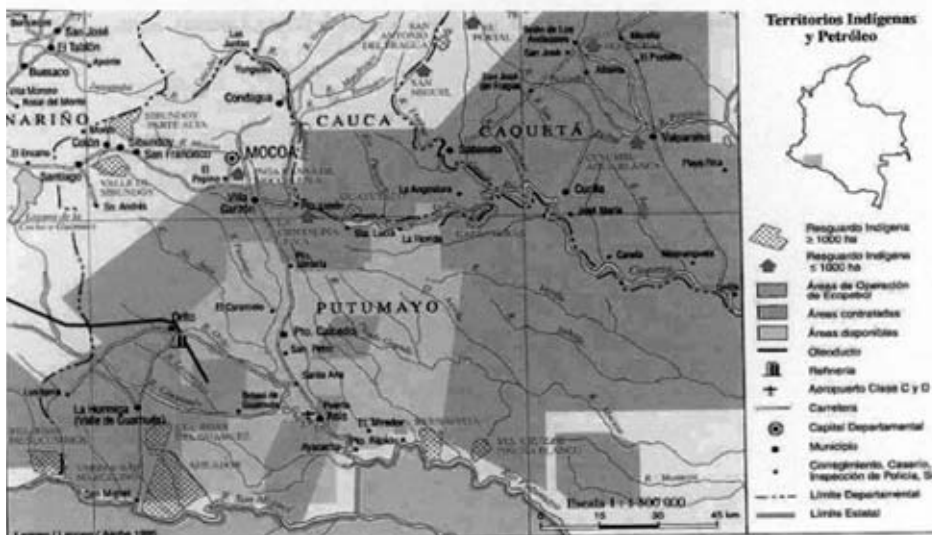
- Modified exploitation contracts (concessions, associations, 50/50, factor R, joint venture and incremental production),^{xvi}
- Limited the participation of the state oil industry in prospecting and exploitation with the intention of privatising these areas as has been done elsewhere (petro-chemicals, transport, trade);

- Redefined labour legislation, promoting temporary contracts and new environmental legislation, meanwhile also dismantling requirements for regulatory licences, and issuing a new Code (Law 685, 2001), facilitating maximum transnational investment in mining through reduced taxes;
- Eliminated subsidies for gasoline and liberalised fuel prices; and
- Placed strategic reserve oil basins on the market in the so-called “2000 Round of Negotiations.”

As the risks of international investment were shifted to the nation’s shoulders, in the year 2000 alone, 13 new companies started operations in the country and 30 new international contracts were signed. This is the context for the extreme interest in the Putumayo basin, which is one of the most productive and promising in the country with an area of close to 30,000 square kilometres and borders the equally important Agrio Lake region in Ecuador. The sedimentation area is 299,000 ha, of which ECP manages 103,000 ha and partnerships 537,000 ha, while another 227,000 are up for bids and the area being prospected is 2,214,000 has.

Important multinational companies now in the Putumayo include the Texas Petroleum Company, Canadian Petroleum (now known as Nexen Inc.), Alberta Energy Colombia, City Investing Colombia of the Pacalta Group (recently acquired by Alberta Energy), Argosy Energy International, Ecopetrol, Hocol and Ram Petroleum Ltd (see Table 3). Most of the companies are Canadian-registered, but with international capital. Nexen, for instance, is a Canadian subsidiary of the Occidental Petroleum Corporation.²⁵

table 3. oil activities in the putumayo basin



company	contract	activity
aec-colombia	pacayaco	prospecting
aec-colombia	río juanabú	prospecting
aec-colombia	Tirimaní	prospecting
aec-colombia	cpi orito	production
ram petroleum ltd.	cpi río putumayo	production
argosy	guayuyaco	prospecting
argosy	santana	production
colombia energy		
consortia	cpi sur oriente	production
ecopetrol	nor oriente	production
ecopetrol	occidente	production
hocol	norte	prospecting

source: ecopetrol (cpi: incremental well contract)

the putumayo indigenous peoples seek to recover the sustainability of their culture

[surviving the impact of the energy market in the colombian amazon] | part four
by javier marín rodríguez and alejandro pulido chaparro, censat agua viva/friends of the earth, colombia

weaving the threads together

The president of Ecopetrol, Alberto Calderón Zuleta, has prepared a report setting out the main prospects for the oil industry in the country, showing a considerable increase in prospecting activities to sustain productive capacity for the benefit of growing national and international markets. In the triennium 1999-2001, the effort was concentrated on attracting partners with sufficient joint venture capital willing to back Colombian crude oil. The dissemination of geological knowledge on the country and in general the open door shown to interested companies through partnership schemes, segmentation of high and medium impact areas, offers of prospecting offshore waters and recovery of crude oil in fields already discovered, are all part of a strategy focalising on the reactivation of oil prospecting and the finding of new sources of crude oil and gas.

Some 60 contracts will become effective in 2001, setting in motion seismic and drilling work which have enabled the state to affirm that the oil future of the country has been defined for the next 10 years. "In the regions sheltering them, oil and gas dormant since the Cretaceous are destined to be discovered and extracted so that Colombia may maintain its condition as a country self-sufficient in oil, and as an exporter." (Calderón).

Calderon Zuleta's calculations are as follows: with the drilling of over 40 new exploratory oil wells over the next two years, together with the implementation of over 15 other gigantic and high impact projects together slated to yield over 600 million barrels, it is reasonable to suppose that new oil fields will be found. If the experience and statistics gathered over the 50 years of existence of Ecopetrol are any indication, oil will be found in 15 percent of the wells drilled and the country's production will reach a million barrels a day at the end of the decade.

Since the end of the seventies, the Colombian state policy has been increasingly open to recognition of the rights of ethnic groups as a consequence of the struggles of the Indigenous and Afro-Colombian peoples and of certain other political, social and intellectual sectors. This process can be seen first of all in the creation of reserves, the purchase of land for Indigenous communities, and the recognition of their autonomy in a way which guarantees the collective ownership of land. The 1991 National Constitution marked a fundamental milestone in the recognition of the pluri-ethnic and cultural nature of Colombia.

These legal and political changes are one basis for crafting responses to the new threats to the Indigenous cultures. ONIC, representing the country's Indigenous peoples, has developed a legal and public struggle to dismantle the Mining Code, promulgated through Law 685 of 2001, for violating through its very approach the rights of the Indigenous peoples, denying the unprescriptible, non-seizable, and untransferable nature of their territories.²⁶

Yet this regressive legislation, the transnational ransacking of their lands, the "rural development" projects promoted by the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank, which crush their traditional economy, the armed conflict crossing their ranches and the spraying destroying their food security, have made the Indigenous peoples of Colombia aware of the need to design new strategies for resistance.

“Knowledge of our rights and organisation around our autonomy, under the common banners of unity, land and culture: this is the basis for our resistance . . . Before 1991 we lived better. The 1991 Constitution opened up the door to multinational logging, oil and mining companies. They see the reserves as a heritage of the nation and us as simple caretakers.^{xvii} ONIC has designed a plan for strengthening Indigenous cultures as a form of resistance and recovery of our autonomy and customs. This plan has four axes: organisational, jurisdictional, Human Rights and International Humanitarian Rights . . . We are willing to implement a plan for the rehabilitation of biodiversity based on traditional community management and we hope to be helped in assessing impacts. We have had some experience in rehabilitating forests in the Anacayacu (Nariño) natural park, reforestation with cedar trees. Still, this resistance has caused us to be pointed at, threats and attacks . . . How do you reach the Indians’ hearts so that they do not let themselves become involved in the destruction of nature and at the same time, their own destruction? This is our main task.”²⁷

“Strengthening of Indigenous cultures” in the process of recovering sustainability implies the adoption of general tactics which made it possible for these peoples to survive the first advances of extractivism, recovering their rituals and traditional festivities as a form of cohesion, generating multi-ethnic resettlements, creating alternatives for sovereign subsistence, etc. The cultural symbiosis of the Putumayo Indigenous Peoples is fostered by the way they were forced together by colonisation, standardising habits and language. But they also have a history of structuring in which are joined the communities of the Amazon plain and those coming from the Andes. For example, there exists a lot of experience of cultivation at diverse altitudes.^{xviii}

But at the same time the need is foreseen to join in solidarity with settlers who arrived later in the Andean-Amazon region. The migrant population had not taken up an identity with the territory as it was not native and their interest has always been extraction. For this reason, social relationships have been distant, not to say conflictive, particularly with Indigenous peoples. But today there is a possibility of a new socio-cultural reconstruction, shown through the weaving of identity expressed in the “coca grower movements,” conjugating the common interests of the inhabitants of this region, and going beyond the problem of illegal plantations. The recent study by María Clemencia Ramírez is aimed at sustaining this thesis.²⁸

From our perspective, it is urgent to involve the Amazon, and particularly the Piedmont at the Colombian-Ecuadorian border as a specific aspect of the movement resisting FTAA. But in general, the Amazon should become a Latin American and a world banner, around which the various campaigns carried out should be articulated (international financial institutions, forests, climate change, trade, etc.) together with the scenario of alliances in which we have an active presence (World Social Forum, Social Alliance Against FTAA, etc.). For this purpose we must base ourselves on the recognition of experience in sustainability inherent in the original peoples, who constitute in our reality, the inspiration and the social force that are basic to our environmentalist ideology.

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table 1. some frequent impacts of oil activities on indigenous territories

Components and Activities	Possible impacts
Prospecting	
Opening up of paths and roads	Fragmentation and alteration of ecosystems Profanation of sacred sites Promotion of immigration and colonization processes Health problems in populations having scant contact
Explosions for seismic studies	Noise, with an impact on wildlife Frightening of the Indigenous population Damage to soil and subsoil structure
Test drilling	Contamination due to waste, silt and spills Conflictual relationships between the working population and the Indigenous communities.
Exploitation	
Construction of ways of access	Soil erosion Fragmentation of ecosystems Alteration of drainage structure Decrease in wildlife habitats Acceleration of colonisation processes
Installation of drilling platforms	Contamination due to waste, silt and escapes Water contamination from drilling waste Atmospheric contamination from burning gas Soil erosion Catastrophic events
Installation of service facilities (heliports, camps, electric generators, etc.) Vehicle traffic	Soil alterations Contamination by sanitary and domestic waste Contamination inherent to the operation of equipment and vehicles
Fuel transportation	
Construction of oil pipelines and gas pipelines	Contamination due to fuel escapes Fragmentation of ecosystems Fires and explosions Effects on sacred sites Soil instability, landfalls
Additional processes	
Generation of economic activities a) Direct b) Complementary or indirectly related to oil extraction activities	Immigration of the non-Indigenous population <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cultural clashes ▪ Pressure on natural resources of the Indigenous territories ▪ Social disintegration processes Alteration of traditional productive systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monetisation of traditional economy ▪ Loss of food security ▪ Economic dependence.
Administrative and Political Changes	
Adaptation of the regional political and administrative structure to the demands of oil and extractive activities	Social disintegration processes (Cooptation of municipal government, internal divisions, depreciation of traditional power) Administrative corruption (royalties are corruptly managed by local bureaucracies) Militarization and action of insurgent and para-military groups affecting Indigenous territories Military controls become a threat to the Indigenous population.

sources: minería en territorios indígenas, onic - cecoin., bogotá 1999.
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end notes

i The Putumayo is the longest navigable river in the Colombian Amazon. It stretches 2,500 km between its source in the Andean massif and its mouth into the Amazon River in San Antonio, Brazil. Of these, 1,950 km are navigable. Some 1,586 km of the river lies between Puerto Asis and Tarapacá, where it enters Brazil, where it takes the name of the Iça river, covering 360 km between Tarapaca and the Amazon.

ii In most cases, these reserves are localised in the foothills of the Andes, the equatorial strip under pressure on the Colombian-Ecuadorian frontier and the mouth of the Amazon river in Belén. Camilo Domínguez.

iii The current Indigenous population has been estimated at 603,000 people, approximately 2% of the total Colombian population. There are 82 ethnic groups with 64 different tongues, in addition to Spanish.

iv The Pastos arrived in Putumayo following dissolution of the reserves of colonial origin in Nariño by the state at the beginning of the 1970s. Today they are mainly located in Mocoa and Puerto Guzmán. The Nasa or Paez came from Cauca at the beginning of the 1960s, and occupied a craggy territory between 1600 and 3000 msl, settling in Mocoa, Puerto Guzmán, Puerto Caicedo and Villagarzón. The Yanacóna arrived from the Colombian massif, and are now to be found both in the rural and urban municipality of Mocoa. The Awa came from Nariño (on the Ecuadorian frontier) at the beginning of the 1960s and are now settled in Villagarzón. The Kamsá settled in the valley of the Sibundoy, particularly the urban centre of Mocoa.

The Embera arrived from Valle, banished by the Antiochan colonisation and bi-party political violence. During this time of dispossession, the major sugar cane plantations were installed. The Inga are to be found in the

Sibundoy Valley, and come from the Peruvian forests along the San Miguel river. Their lands were invaded during the exploitation of quinine between the Orteguzá and Putumayo rivers by the Reyes brothers (one of them, Rafael Reyes, was then President). Laura García.

v Generally, Amazon soils are poor due to high acidity and lack of essential nutrients. Constant high temperatures and abundance of rainfall, and the astonishing profusion of edaphic fauna explain the speed with which the cycles of decomposition of organic matter take place, leading to accelerated growth of the forest while it conserves its ecological systems.

vi During the clearing (roza), the small trees and stubble are cut, leaving the fruit trees for gathering and the arrival of animals to be hunted. The felling stage (tumba) requires a more collective effort - minga - to fell the bigger trees. The burning (quema) consists of all the cuttings being burnt and the ashes being used as fertiliser. Planting (siembra) is characterized by polycultivations, mixing species, the most outstanding ones being the different types of manioc, banana and yam. The first plantations are of wild manioc that repels noxious animals such as the tapir from the plantations. Roberto Pineda.

vii Extractivism consists of ransacking a natural resource found in relative abundance in an environment. It is an outward flow, generally managed by external agents and directed at a location determined by demand, destined to be used as raw material in large factories or as luxury objects. The wealth produced by the exploitation of this resource is accumulated in the destination countries. The place of extraction remains poor and the abundance of the resource is depleted or considerably reduced.

The investment made by the exploiters in the region is low compared to the profits obtained. Exploiters do not generally need to obtain legal ownership, giving production a restricted and transitory nature, that does not create stable prospects in the region. Extractivism with respect to quinine, wood and rubber was generally linked to a system by which local inhabitants became indebted to exploiters through exchanging the resource for high-priced commodities from outside. Indigenous Peoples and settlers had to submit to the will of banking or trading house owners.

viii In 1964 the government promoted directed colonisation in the Putumayo Project I. The government characterised the area as "wasteland," denying the existence of Indigenous groups and assigning it the function of receiving displaced populations. The Amazon region was seen as a solution to the pressure for land in other parts of the country, particularly by the peasant movement, which by occupying land developed a de facto agrarian reform. The Western Amazon, covering the departments of Putumayo, Caquetá and Guaviare and the Southwest of the target area, have received the greater part of this population. Eighty-six point three percent of the Amazon population are concentrated in the Piedmont, with a density of 2.5 inhabitants per square kilometre. The rest of the Amazon has a density of 0.1 inhabitants per square kilometre.

ix Rubber tapping changed the character of the large maloca huts where exchange took place, transforming them into concentration camps for the indigenous peoples, who were subjected to force. The women were obliged to cultivate the land to feed the huts. If rubber was not handed over in a timely way, or if someone ran away from the huts, they were punished by

whipping at the stake, individual death or mass assassination. It is estimated that during the first decade of the twentieth century, at least 40,000 indigenous people died in the genocide and from the many plagues and epidemics brought in by the rubber ships. Roberto Pineda.

xAt the same time there was another bonanza, that of the trade in furs in the market centres at Puerto Asis and Puerto Leguizamo. This was prohibited only in 1973.

xiDuring the eighties came the coca slump, caused by super-production and the high costs of inputs produced by repression. In the nineties, the coca trade was reactivated on the introduction of new varieties. The caucana was replaced by the Peruvian Tingo Maria - and later by the Bolivian variety - with 8 harvests a year. This attracted immigrants, who were accompanied by oil exploitation connected with the opening up of markets promoted by the government of Cesar Gaviria. Clemencia Ramirez.

xiiIt is worth noting, however, that the same state of affairs generated by the Texas Company in Puerto Boyacá, Magdalena Medio, where it enjoys another oil exploitation concession, has been repeated in the region of El Azul, between the San Miguel and Guamuez rivers, an area of great processed coca production promoted by Rodriguez Gacha - who together with Pablo Escobar were the Medellin Cartel leaders. This region that soon became the epicentre of para-military activities, generating unprecedented violence in the region. The first appearance of the para-military in Colombia was in Puerto Boyacá at the end of the 1970s, a territory where Gacha had a coca empire and from where he went to Putumayo when his activities started being repressed.

xiiiIn some areas, guerrilla groups have filled a power vacuum to ensure a minimum level of order in situations in which the absence of the State and the growth of drug trafficking has favoured small local powers. But rebel commanders local power has also replaced that of traditional indigenous authorities.

xivIn this respect, some rituals were probably reinvented and adapted to the new demographic conditions. One of the strategies to maintain cohesion in the new settlements was to solve internal conflicts (cultural differences) by means of dances and traditional feasts. "These are part of the iconic means of communication, and their discourse deals with matters of relationships - hate, love, respect and fear - between a person and the person opposite, as between a person and the environment." Espinosa, quoted by Roberto Pineda C.

xvEcopetrol arose from the worker struggles, mainly those of the Tropical Petroleum Company in 1948, when the De Mares and Barco concessions in the Magdalena Medio and Catatumbo oilfields were coming to an end. This movement was aimed at preventing an extension of the contract and on the contrary, demanded reversion of the wells to the nation. At that time Ecopetrol was established as a State enterprise for the management of the oil industry in 1951.

xviThe Concession (1905-1974) was the period when the state assigned a portion of territory to a company for a time (25-50 years) for mining, during which the State merely received some royalties. The Partnership contract (1974-1987) gave equal participation to the state and the partner in the profits, once 20% had been deducted for royalties. The Staggered Partnership (1987-1994) was a further improvement, in which EPC increased its participation

in accordance with increases in the volume of production.

Factor R was introduced in 1994 to increase state participation to the point when the partner company could recover the whole of its investment, including that in non-productive wells. It also reduced transportation tariffs for the ECP oil pipelines. In 1995, the Joint Venture Contract was created, in which ECP started taking on 50% of the prospecting costs. In 2000 the Incremental Production Contract was established, which consists of the partner company optimising exploitation in an already-known area, in which case there is no reversion. And in 2001, an arrangement was introduced whereby the private company kept 70% of the profits.

xviiThe title of Reserve, awarded by the Government to Indigenous communities, guarantees the use of the soil but not its ownership, which as the word itself implies, is reserved to the state, the same as the subsoil.

xviiiIndigenous peoples coming from the Andes had to adapt to new social and territorial realities using long-term structures that have been described in ethno-historic studies. Following the definition of the Amazon space as an integral aspect of the mountain-forest-coast unit, the Amazon region played an important role in the reproduction of many of the Andean human nuclei. The importance of the trade circuits and the strong socio-cultural networks established among the peoples living in the high- and lowlands is indisputable. Roberto Pineda Camacho.

resisting large-scale tree plantations: the manismata dispute¹ | part five

by farah sofa, walhi/friends of the earth indonesia

The oil palm plantation company PT Harapan Sawit Lestari (HSL) has plantation concessions over approximately 25,000 hectares in the southeast corner of West Kalimantan province, Indonesia. The concessions affect the traditional lands of 15 indigenous communities under the administration of Manismata sub-district.

The Indigenous People, Dayak Jelai and Melayu, made a reasonable living following a largely traditional way of life which depended on their agro-forestry system. Their rational use of forest included rubber and fruit plantations and the cultivation of rice and vegetables. However, the area became the target of large scale logging operations in the 1980s and large-scale oil palm plantations during the 1990s. PT HSL began operations there in 1993.

Land rights violations and the destruction of the indigenous community's sustainable livelihoods were the main problems caused by this oil palm development. Evidence shows that burning and bulldozing were used to clear land. Graves were desecrated and devious and corrupt practices were used to acquire land for which unfair compensation payments were made. There are also indications of a serious debt problem in the making. The company's palm fruit processing factory, started in 1998, has caused air and water pollution.

These violations have led to a complex dispute between the local government and the company. The company made full use of the village administration's close relationship with local police and military during the Suharto era to force the indigenous community to hand over their private and communally held fields, agro-forestry gardens and forest lands.

The result for many local people has been years of resentment about their mistreatment plus increased hardship, as they can no longer produce their own food. The advent of a new pro-reform government in Jakarta has brought no change to Manismata. PT HSL continues to refuse to recognize the local community's land rights.

The community is divided: some now support the company while others are opposed. Much of the current opposition is focused on the so-called partnership between the company and community whereby part of the oil palm plantation is run by a local co-operative. The KKPA² scheme established by PT HSL and village officials in Manismata is fraught with problems, including unfair land allocation, corruption and lack of transparency over operations. Many local supporters of the company have benefited directly or indirectly from the plantation either through employment or by gaining land through the co-operative scheme. The manner in which the scheme was imposed on the community and inequities in its implementation are increasing social tensions, especially between different ethnic groups.

The community's grievances have not been properly addressed. There have been several "investigations" by various teams of officials with recommendations for action, but these have not been implemented by the local administration or the company. Most of these centre on expanding the KKPA plantation co-operative system and using the courts to determine a fair level of compensation. These measures do not address the Indigenous Peoples' demands for recognition of their land rights and sustainable livelihoods. Local people are

becoming more and more frustrated. With their pleas to district, provincial and national level government officials ignored, some community groups are taking action into their own hands,

This plantation has led to suffering on the part of the indigenous community and the very real danger of open conflict in Manismata. Local government and PT HSL senior management have ducked these issues. So has CDC, which recently became the majority shareholders and managers of the plantation and oil palm processing operation, along with the British government's Department for International Development, which holds all CDC's shares. It must be stressed that local people do not want CDC/HSL to pull out. Their former way of life is now impossible since their land is converted into an oil palm plantation. They want proper compensation for their losses and some guarantee of a sustainable livelihood for their families and future generations. WALHI/FoE Indonesia has urged CDC to address these community demands quickly and fairly.

The unresolved problems caused to the local community beg the question as to whether CDC should proceed with a second major phase of investment in this company. It also raises the broader issue of whether CDC should be investing at all in Indonesia's palm oil sector, in view of its statutory obligation to attend to environmental and social factors and the conflict under the British Department of International Development's new Country Strategy Policy.

traditional knowledge versus agro-industrial deforestation. the case of cordillera de yvytyrusu, paraguay | part six

by sobrevivencia/friends of the earth paraguay

1. summary

Agro-industry has a tremendous influence on Paraguayan agricultural policy. Associations like CAPECO, the main soya bean producers' association, and industries like Bayer, which have a strong commercial interest in the sale of the pesticides used in large-scale agriculture, have been the main forces behind the deliberate policy of the Paraguayan Ministry of Agriculture to expand large-scale, export-oriented agriculture. Paraguay's rich forests, and the Indigenous Peoples and peasant communities inhabiting these forests, have been the main victims of the expansion of export-oriented agriculture, and the subsequent expansion of the agricultural frontier. However, in areas like the Cordillera de Yvytyrusu, communities have started to mobilize and resist the further destruction of their lands and livelihoods by endless oceans of soya and other export crops. The traditional management systems of the Indigenous Peoples that originally inhabited these areas, that were systematically evicted or even exterminated during the nineteen sixties and seventies, might form the key to halting the further deterioration of their livelihoods.



2. the history of the yvytyrusu cordillera

The Yvytyrusu Cordillera is an orographic system located in the Eastern Region of Paraguay, in the Departments of Guaira and Caazapa, approximately 25 degrees, 30 minutes latitude South and 56 degrees 15 minutes longitude West. This system contains the highest part of Paraguayan territory (some 840 metres above sea level)

The interaction of soils deriving from the Yvytyrusu rocks in addition to the climate and isolated nature of the formation, have favoured the development of a particular forest vegetation with autochthonous characteristics and unique species of flora and fauna.

2.1. characteristics of the population The forests of the zone of the Yvytyrusu cordillera were inhabited until only three decades ago by two Aboriginal Peoples, the MBYA-GUARANI, a semi-sedentary Agricultural People whose dispersion in the zone of forests and natural fields surrounding the cordillera is relatively recent (approximately 800 years ago) and the ACHE, a predominantly forest-dependent, hunting and gathering People (prior to the Mbya Guarani), who lived nomadically in the impenetrable forests of the cordillera's interior hills and valleys. Both Peoples have been systematically exterminated or displaced from their last traditional territories, mainly during the sixties and seventies.

Presently there are only 6 MBYA-GUARANI communities, with approximately 20 to 30 families each, inhabiting small woody fractions around the cordillera.

The ACHE indigenous communities, who have inhabited these forest-covered hills for thousands of years, have been persecuted, decimated and evicted from their territory. In 1978 the last original inhabitants of the cordillera were evacuated, and transferred to reserves, generally managed by religious Christian missions, where they cohabit in small plots of land that are insufficient for the conservation of their traditional way of life.

These native communities were replaced in the cordillera by immigration of peasant families of mestizo origin and farmers of European origin. Peasant immigration to the hills started in the forties and was intensified during the sixties. The Europeans, mainly of German origin, settled in the forests and natural fields of the MBYA to the east and north of the hills, from the beginning of the last century onwards.

Under the present situation, most of the area (approximately 80% of the hilly area) is today occupied by establishments belonging to absentee landlords who exploit farms extending for various hundreds to thousands of hectares, including nearly all the area still covered by remnant forests. The small peasant farmers, who are basically the stable population, occupy the other 20%.

2.2. the impact of different forms of agriculture on the yvytyrusu forest Between 1945 and 1985, the area covered by forest in the Yvytyrusu was reduced to less than 50% of its original area. In the North massif it only covers the tops and steep hilly slopes; in the Southern massif larger portions of forest have been maintained. As from 1985, deforestation was intensified and large portions of the slopes and small interior valleys of the cordillera were striped.

traditional knowledge versus agro-industrial deforestation. the case of cordillera de yvytyrusu, paraguay | part six

by *sobrevivencia/friends of the earth paraguay*

The mestizo peasant communities, for various decades have occupied the valleys surrounding the hills and the interior valleys, cultivating the soils made fertile from meteorisation of rocks. These activities were not particularly noxious to the system while the population was scant. This situation is rapidly changing today because of increasing demographic pressure. Some 2,500 peasant families live in the Yvytyrusu hilly area, covering some 30,000 hectares, occupying around 20% of the total hilly area.

However, the main cause of deforestation in the region were the large agro-industries. Large extensions of forest belonging to the State have been sold to absentee landlords who for years have only exploited the valuable wood they contain. Over the past few years these landlords have launched a massive deforestation process for the implantation of pastures and cattle-raising. The big landowners probably obtained their large stretches of lands from the State, through legally doubtful operations from the Institute of Rural Welfare, in charge and responsible for the Agrarian Reform in Paraguay. However, although most of the small farmers do not have deeds of ownership, they do have legal rights. That is to say, if they have been settled there for over ten years, they legally have first priority to purchase the lands they occupy from the Paraguayan State, through the Institute for Rural Welfare.

The Ministry of Agriculture, which was also responsible for Biodiversity Conservation until very recently, has not done anything to prevent this rapid deforestation process. Instead, heavily influenced by agro-industrial corporate concerns represented by associations like the Grain and Oilseed Exporters Cartel (CAPECO) and industries like Bayer, Monsanto and Novartis, the Paraguayan Government has actively promoted the expansion of the agricultural frontier for large-scale export-oriented agricultural crops such as soya beans.

2.3. Repercussions of the Declaration of Protected Area on the communities. Declaration of the zone as National Park has caused diverse reactions in both sectors. The landowners have accelerated deforestation to implant pastures, in order to justify rational and extensive land exploitation, thus preventing a possible expropriation of their lands. In 1991, concerned over the declaration of the Yvytyrusu cordillera as a national park, without having participated in the decisions and with the uncertainty that they might be evicted from their lands, the peasants in the northern zone of Yvytyrusu launched a process of organisation for the defence of their rights, setting up the Association of Cerro Yvytyrusu Inhabitants, with the aim of co-ordinating action.

3. effects on the quality of life

3.1. biodiversity The systematic disappearance of forests in the cordillera zone, where presently there are only some relict forest areas serving as a refuge for an important diversity of fauna and flora, place their survival at a risk. In the case of insects, at the beginning of the nineties, SOBREVIVENCIA carried out a study on some endemic families in the zone, whose survival shows that there is still a major diversity of life in the remnants of the forest. The disappearance of fauna and flora affects the lifestyle of the peasant families and the MBYA-GUARANI people, who obtain many products from the forest, such as medicinal plants and food. The disappearance of fauna affects their food supply, particularly that of the Guarani people, who obtained their major source of protein from hunting. The disappearance of the forest ecosystem not only implies a loss of biodiversity, but also a loss of food security and of water for the communities.

3.2. water One of the main problems deriving from the recent deterioration in the way land is used is the degradation of fresh-water sources in all the northern zone of the Yvytyrusu Cordillera. Deforestation has caused drastic changes in the water regimes of the numerous streams, increasing torrents in rainy periods and accentuating the effects of drought. Springs, the main source of drinking water for the peasant families suffer particularly from the drop or extinction of their flow during dry periods. Both the streams and the springs in all the area have already been contaminated to varying degrees by agro-toxic products, effluents from latrines, soap from washing clothes and from bathrooms, both human and domestic animal faecal matter, and waste of all kinds. This contamination is



4. rehabilitation and conservation proposals.

critical in some communities, such as the Calle Florida community, where at present there is no non-contaminated natural source of water and the stream has already lost all its original forms of aquatic life.

These effects have a direct repercussion on women and their habits in relation to water use, as they are more involved in gathering activities and use of water for domestic chores, the provision of water for animals and vegetable gardens.

The strong impact of water-related diseases makes it essential to optimise the use of sources. For this purpose it is indispensable to disseminate information on ways of maintaining and improving the quantity and quality of water and adequate waste elimination, making the most of local knowledge and resources and ensuring full participation of the inhabitants in the planning of use and management of water resources.

3.3. soils. The present model of intensive production promoted by the government and even by some non-governmental organisations - which have resorted to organic certification of sugar produced in the zone, without considering that most of the extensive sugar cane plantations are carried out without soil conservation practices - cause erosion. This erosion is made twice as bad by the topographic conditions of the steeply sloping zone. Impoverishment of soils, like any other ecosystem element, has an effect on the other components: in this case erosion causes degradation of water sources due to silting of the stream-bed and due to a drop in infiltration of the underground water table which, in the long run, will end in migration to other zones of the cordillera, making the phenomenon continuously worse.

Traditional practices of peasant production exist that should be strengthened and recovered in those cases where they have been lost. Examples of these practices are family scale cultivation on farms where various species are planted for consumption, the breeding of small domestic animals, the maintenance of the numerous fruit-trees of various species in the patios of the houses, the sustainable cultivation and gathering of medicinal plants.

In the case of the peasant communities, many of these practices have been lost due to promotion of monocrop agriculture, where diversification of products has been abandoned. This is the type of agriculture promoted by the government and agro-industry — the plantation of cotton or sugar cane, the plantation of soya beans and disproportionate production— in which production for consumption is not taken into account and, above all, in which most of the inputs are not produced on the farm itself, creating dependency on external production inputs. Traditional practices and knowledge must be revitalised, above all those contributing to food security, autonomy and local sovereignty and community ecosystem management in the communities.

On the other hand, the indigenous communities have millenary knowledge on the sustainable management of these ecosystems, a knowledge that in a very short time could be lost due to the alienation of the communities from their traditional lands and ecosystems. The return of displaced indigenous communities to their native territories would generate an inter-acculturation process (salvaging and restoring traditional knowledge) which would greatly contribute to ensure the sustainable management of the whole zone.

Another clear recommendation from this study is that the real participation of communities in the processes involving their lands should be one of the main factors considered when declaring a Protected Area. No plan can be successful without the participation and consent of the communities. Only the participation of all the actors involved will ensure ecosystem continuity and rehabilitation.

resisting french companies' illegal forest practices in cameroon | part seven

by *frédéric castell, friends of the earth france*

European officials often seem to divide governments into two different kinds. Their governments are said to have taken on board environmental and even social concerns. "Corrupt" Southern governments, meanwhile, are accused of continuing to destroy the environment.

Missing from this simplistic picture is the fact that environmental destruction in the South is very frequently rooted in the North. The following example helps clarify the issue.

The Cameroonian Ministry of Forest and Environment recently published names of forestry corporations guilty of infractions against Cameroonian forestry regulations during 2001 and 2002. Among the biggest offenders were French forestry conglomerates.



One example is the Rougier Group. Rougier's Doumé Affiliated Forestry Company (SFID) was convicted three counts. First, SFID exported assamela (*Pericopsis elata*) timber, protected under Cameroonian forestry rules, without having either requested or obtained a permit. Second, it falsified documentation required under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species' (CITES) Wild Fauna and Flora treaty, resulting in a two-million CFA-franc fine. Evidently, this trivial penalty (amounting to only 3,049 Euros) had little effect, since the company was subsequently fined again for another infraction of the same regulation. Third, SFID exceeded its 2001 export quotas by 33 per cent, or 17,653 cubic meters of wood.

Seven Cameroonian farmers have meanwhile decided to confront Rougier and its Cameroonian affiliate SFID before a French tribunal. Civil charges of criminal destruction of property, forgery and the utilisation of forgery, fraud, possession of stolen goods, and corruption of officials have been filed, in the name of the villagers, with the Investigating Magistrates of Paris. The defendants comprise the directors not only of SFID and its mother corporation Rougier SA, but also of the Cameroonian Legal Society.

Unable to assert their rights in a local area whose politics have been corrupted by forestry companies, the villagers hope that in France an independent and impartial judge will be appointed who can ensure not only that those responsible for their losses are brought to justice but also that proper compensation is assigned. The charges against Rougier, the first to be brought before a French Tribunal for extraterritorial actions by private entities, signals that French corporations should no longer regard themselves as outside the law when they commit offenses abroad. The case argues for the need for global rules for transnational

corporations, and for negotiations in Johannesburg toward a binding agreement on corporate accountability.

The French group Bolloré has been also found guilty of illegal activities by Cameroonian authorities over the last three years. The SIBAF affiliate of Bolloré was fined four million CFA Francs (6,098 Euros) and had its rights to export assamela wood suspended for falsifying CITES declarations. SIBAF had already received a fine in the year 2000 to the tune of 9,147 Euros for failing to delineate cutting boundaries. Another Bolloré affiliate, Campo Forestry Company (HFC), has been fined 350,632 Euros for cutting outside allowed boundaries.

Incredibly, while French conglomerates are regularly fined for infractions of Cameroonian forestry legislation, the French Development Agency goes on providing them with subsidies for the "sustainable forest management plans" they are required to submit under Cameroonian law. French financial aid in the Congo Basin must be reoriented away from such commercial interests and toward local peoples' attempts to protect dense humid tropical forest ecosystems and their extraordinarily rich biodiversity.

alien trees, and forest definitions as a threat to biodiversity | part eight

by wally menne, timberwatch coalition member, south africa

South African forests are amongst the most complex and diverse in the world —this in spite of their historical abuse at the hands of human settlers. The forests that have survived are those in more remote areas, where human pressure has been in balance with their capacity to regenerate. But this is changing fast as local population pressure combined with demand for resources from first world nations starts to mount.

Paradoxically, the timber plantations that were expected to be the saviour of South Africa's forests (by providing alternative sources of timber to local consumers and taking pressure off indigenous species) have become the greatest threat to biodiversity in this country. This is not to say that timber plantations do not play an important role in the local economy. There is legitimate cause for the cultivation of alien tree species in South Africa, and it can be argued that they have played a role in preventing the further exploitation of our forest resources. This is all very well in the context of meeting local demand for timber products, but what has happened is that production has expanded to a level far above local demand. Recent figures show that exports of timber plantation products (mostly raw logs, chips and pulp) are now more or less on a par with local consumption (mostly end products such as construction timber, furniture, paper and board).

The ways in which plantations have contributed to the degeneration of the natural environment are many and complex. Some negative impacts on biodiversity are only felt much later, and then quite far away from the event that caused the impact. So-called downstream impacts are usually ignored when assessing environmental costs, yet they can accumulatively cause major devastation in natural ecosystems.

The Dukuduku Forest, which is part of the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park World Heritage Site, is a case in point. An estimated 30,000 people settled in the forest between 1990 and 2000, at the same time as timber companies were aggressively expanding their interests in the area. Not only were they buying up farms that previously engaged in varied agricultural activities, and combining them into large timber estates, but there was a concerted drive to establish 'woodlots' in communally owned tribal lands nearby. Both of these ways of increasing the supplies of timber for their hungry pulp and paper mills, led to the displacement of thousands of farm workers and rural poor.

To make matters worse, the timber companies embarked on 'rationalisation' programmes that resulted in the retrenchment of thousands of plantation workers. In a single day, SAPPI (one of the two main plantation and pulp production companies) retrenched more than 600 workers at their Kwa-mbonambi operation. Permanent workers were replaced with contractors, who could employ people on a temporary basis without having to provide normal employment benefits. Many illegal immigrants from countries such as Mozambique were attracted to this kind of employment, as it was possible to get money to take back to their families without questions being asked. A combination of all of the above actions created a situation where poor contract workers (paid about 1 US dollar a day), were left with little choice but to make their homes inside the forest, and to supplement their meagre income by cutting down or burning the forest to open up areas where they could grow food.

The more easily measured direct impacts of timber plantations are also often disregarded, especially in the case of community land, where the companies are effectively obtaining the free use of land, without any of the responsibilities associated with ownership. Loss of grassland and wetland vegetation to plantations leads to the loss of grazing for cattle and sheep. Associated with this loss is the negative effect of fast growing plantations on the water table. Sources of water such as streams, springs and seasonal pans often disappear after plantations are established. Not only does this affect people and their livestock, but it also has serious implications for the natural species diversity of the area.

As wetland areas dry out, wetland species become locally extinct. There are many areas that have not been thoroughly surveyed, yet are being transformed before this can happen. It is quite possible that species that have not been recorded are being lost without our knowledge.

Displacement of people from their land creates a situation where alternatives must be found. In the same period that plantations have spread through rural areas, there has been a marked increase in the number of people leaving their rural homes to try to find work in the cities, and living wherever they can find vacant land to erect a temporary home. For many who were not prepared to give up their traditional lifestyle, it has meant having to take their livestock into areas where they can browse rather than graze, and this usually means sensitive riparian zones along rivers and streams. To get to water to drink, cattle open up paths on steep banks, which in turn lead to soil erosion problems.

alien trees, and forest definitions as a threat to biodiversity | part eight

by wally menne, timberwatch coalition member, south africa

Direct impacts of timber plantations on biodiversity could fill several volumes, but available space and time mean that only the major ones can be included here.

The most obvious and possibly the worst effect of plantations has been their tendency to spread beyond the area where they were originally planted, or to re-appear in areas where plantations were discontinued. The invasive tendency of alien tree plantation species has had devastating effects on vast areas of this country. The worst is the Australian Black Wattle (*Acacia mearnsii*), but *Eucalyptus* species and hybrids as well as pines have also made a major contribution to the problem. Although there are government-coordinated programs to eradicate alien trees, especially in sensitive catchments, the damage to biodiversity has already been done. However, herbicide sprays and other applications form a substantial part of the process used, and it is not properly understood what the effects of the use of these chemicals will be on native species. Additionally, it has been reported that these efforts have failed in some areas due to poor methods or management as well as inadequate follow-up.

Emerging from the above is a picture of timber plantations causing both direct and indirect damage to the natural environment. By extension, this damage must translate into a substantial loss of biodiversity.

Managed plantations in this country cover an area greater than 1,7 million hectares, and most of these have been established on species diverse grasslands and wetlands. It has been estimated that land that has been invaded by alien tree species, or left unmanaged after being used for plantations, amounts to more than 1,5 million hectares, mainly in grassland areas, but also significantly in wetlands and riverine areas.

Is it right to call these artificial impositions —both plantations and invasions of plantation species— on the landscape ‘forests’? In spite of them clearly having none of the attributes of forests, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) —allegedly the UN expert body on forests— insists on calling them “planted forests.” In this respect, the following message was recently sent to Magnus Grylle of the FAO:

“The information given [by the FAO] in respect of the total area covered by forest in South Africa is misleading as there are probably more than 3 million hectares of alien monoculture industrial timber plantations and thickets included in your total of 8.9 million ha. In fact, a more accurate figure for actual forest would be 4.5 million ha. Industrial timber plantations are a temporary crop with rotations of 7-20 years and an average of about 10. They destroy indigenous culture and biodiversity, displace communities, and irreversibly degrade the land. It is dishonest to pretend that they are forests.”

The FAO responded: “Thank you for your input. We are of course much aware of the plantations in South Africa. For the global accounting, we include them in the term “Forest” which has, given the context, a precise definition. See: www.fao.org/forestry/fo/fra/defin.jsp and www.fao.org/forestry/fo/fra/index.jsp

This definition does not take into account the quality (which can be perceived very differently depending on the point of view). It is simply a gross value for “areas with trees”, if using a very loose explanation. This gross value can be used as is, for instance for carbon balance calculations, or be broken down for more specialised analysis. Themes for these more specialized analyses can be “naturalness”, “wood supply capacity”, or any other. For each purpose, the overall Forest could be broken down into more precise categories. What to call the categories is up to the analyst.

I hope this clarifies our position. Forest plantations are areas with trees, and therefore a (kind of) forest.

Best regards, Magnus Grylle “

It seems that according to the FAO, even when every last patch of forest has been destroyed, there would be nothing to worry about, as long as there were timber plantations to take their place.

It does not even appear to matter that the areas previously covered by forest are left to degrade into wastelands of alien tree weeds. It also does not matter that vast areas of land that were formerly grasslands, wetlands, pastures and food farms are converted into industrial timber plantations.

After all, what is important is that there should be sufficient trees on the earth, to be able to pretend that nothing has changed; that there are still the same areas of ‘forest’ — ‘Deforestation’ has slowed right down’ (don’t tell people that there is very little left to de-forest). In fact, by using this definition, many governments —where forest have been or are still being destroyed— can claim that ‘forest cover has increased’, thus hiding forest loss by including plantation areas as ‘forests.’

In South Africa there is a growing uneasiness with this simplistic view of forests taken by the FAO. No matter what arguments are presented by the FAO, it is clearly a problem to make the inference that tree plantations are a “kind of forest”. By the same token it could be claimed that locusts are a ‘kind of bird’ or that cornfields are a ‘kind of prairie’. Clearly this is ludicrous to say the least, but the FAO still seems determined to obfuscate the true nature of industrial timber plantations.

However, the fact remains that these “kinds of forests” have clearly nothing in common with forests, except for the fact that they contain trees ... which are not even native to the country. They destroy biodiversity by occupying large areas of grasslands and wetlands—which shelter most of South Africa’s unique wildlife and plants—, as a result of the invasive nature of some of the plantation species, through the dessication and modification of soils, by the depletion of surface and groundwater resources. They do not even help—as exemplified in the Dukuduku case—to alleviate pressure on the last remnants of local forests. From a biodiversity perspective, industrial timber plantations constitute a serious problem and must be treated as such. These are by no means “sustainably managed forests”—as their proponents and beneficiaries like to portray them— but monocrops having enormous impacts on local ecosystems. In a nutshell: plantations are not forests!



eucalyptus plantations as carbon sinks in ecuador. the business of four transnational companies | part nine

by ivonne ramos, acción ecológica/friends of the earth, ecuador

summary

In September 2000, EUCAPACIFIC (Eucalyptus Pacifico S.A.) was set up as a consortium of four transnational companies (Mitsubishi Paper Mills, Sumitomo Corporation, Electric Power Development and Waltz International), to carry out a project of eucalyptus plantation for paper pulp in an area of 10,500 hectares in the Province of Esmeraldas on the Ecuadorian coast. This zone is part of the Choco bio-region, considered as one of the world's ten "hotspots". The last remnants of tropical forest on the Ecuadorian coast are to be found in this Province. The project is framed in the proposals of the so-called "Clean Development Mechanism" (CDM), of the Kyoto Protocol of the Convention on Climate Change.

the falacies of carbon sinks

In the framework of the Kyoto Protocol commitments, which includes the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), it is proposed to capture CO_2 through the "restoration of forests" and the implementation of plantations, as a profit-generating service. Faced with this situation, it is worthwhile analysing the impacts involved in this policy at local level.

Industrialised countries have the highest rates of greenhouse gas emissions. The solution to climatic change problems involves lowering the levels of consumption in the countries of the North, to contribute to lowering the levels of CO_2 . But on the contrary, with the CDM, the production of CO_2 is increased. Not ignoring the criticism of the political approach and inequity imposed by the CDM, forestry plantations are also inefficient as a means of capturing CO_2 for the following basic reasons:

1. For a plantation to contribute to lessening the effects of CO_2 , it should be permanent in time. If a tree plantation project burns, all the carbon is released again, with a doubly noxious effect in time. The same happens when the wood from the plantations is used to manufacture paper (as is the case of this project), that on being discarded rapidly decomposes and the carbon stored is released in the atmosphere as CO_2 .
2. Tree plantation projects in many cases involve the substitution of forests by plantations. This implies that the levels of deforestation, far from decreasing, increase, with the consequent increase in the release of CO_2 .

3. If a forest containing a metric tonne of CO_2 is protected and a "carbon credit" sold to the North, they can use this credit to release another metric tonne of carbon of fossil origin.

To this proposal is added the perversity of occupying the land of peasants and Afro-descendants for the implementation of tree plantations. In this way, local populations are excluded from their use and management, violating pre-existing rights. The case is then that, for example, a North American citizen, who consumes 20 times more, uses 20 times more resources and, to "compensate" that release of CO_2 , now occupies 20 times more land under the form of "carbon sink" plantations.

In spite of this, in Ecuador the government is supporting the EUCAPACIFIC project for eucalyptus plantation, whose partners are the following companies:

- MITSUBISHI PAPER, part of MITSUBISHI, one of the world's largest consortia.
- ELECTRIC POWER DEVELOPMENT, an electric generation plant, whose major shareholder is the government of Japan (66.69%)
- SUMITOMO CORPORATION, a consortium involving 43 companies, also Japanese.
- WALTZ INTERNATIONAL, Chilean and United States capital

a big deal...for the transnational companies

The application of the project enables these companies to close a deal which operates the following way:

- 1.- By means of the Clean Development Mechanism established in the Kyoto Protocol, contaminating companies acquire contamination credits or rights (for their carbon releases), on paying services to third parties for capturing CO₂.
- 2.- These "environmental services" are provided by companies that have purchased or developed tree plantation projects, capable of capturing CO₂.
- 3.- The size of the interest obtained for these services is in direct proportion with the extension of the plantations.
- 4.- With these plantations, corporations such as MITSUBISHI and Electric Power, not only cover their right to contaminate, but also can sell the CO₂ capturing service to third parties.
- 5.- This shows a profitable deal: the company not only generates profit on the sale of wood for cellulose, but also for this supposed environmental service.

The project will be applied over an extension of 10,500 hectares that, on being the first project of such a magnitude granted to a transnational company, opens up a new stage of territorial concessions to foreign capital for large scale plantations and sale of environmental services. The government of Ecuador participates actively in this process through its Ministry of the Environment.

The implementation of this project involves, for the local peasants and Afro-descendant communities (located on the Ecuadorian coast, in the Province of Esmeraldas, in the areas of Quininde, la Concordia and Muisne), displacement from their lands and the loss of agricultural knowledge and practices regarding forest conservation. On the level of the ecosystem, eucalyptus monoculture plantation involves the destruction of a major part of the local biodiversity, both for agricultural activities and for the tropical forest.

diversity as a source of life for the local population

Various ecosystems of great biological diversity are to be identified in the province of Esmeraldas. The forests of Esmeraldas form part of the last remnants of tropical forests in the Pacific Coast of Ecuador. These forests are part of the Choco Bio-region, extending from the south of Panama to the north of Esmeraldas. There are some 10,000 species of plants in this zone, of which 2,500 are endemic. It is the home of the Awa, Chachi and Tsachila people, and of Afro-Ecuadorian communities which maintain traditional forms of managing the forest.

Along the coast, very complex and diverse mangrove ecosystems may be also found.

Furthermore, in the zones where there is no primary forest, the communities have devoted themselves to agricultural activities and have lost ground to agro-industrial projects, such as the large territorial extensions today occupied by monoculture plantations of oil palm and shrimp-farming (the latter in detriment to the mangroves).

eucalyptus plantations as carbon sinks in ecuador. the business of four transnational companies | part nine

by ivonne ramos, acción ecológica/friends of the earth, ecuador

expected social and environmental impacts

For the forest populations that still conserve the forest, the protein base of their food is to be found in hunting, fishing and collecting shellfish, breeding small animals; in the farms a great variety of fruit, tubers and vegetables are grown. In the forest they manage a variety of species of plants and animals for food, medicine, for building and as a source of energy.

For the populations that do not live in the forest but that undertake agricultural activities, achieving variety in their plantations, with access to a mega-diverse source of wild relatives of plants is their only guarantee for food sovereignty. The population's health depends to a great extent on the traditional knowledge of the use and management of plants for food, medicine and other purposes.

The eucalyptus plantation project is at an initial stage, so the conflicts are foreseen in the future. However, given the experience existing in many countries of the South in this type of monocultures, the following social and environmental impacts may be expected:

social impacts

The implementation of this project will involve the massive displacement of hundreds of families from their lands.

The few who maintain labour dependency with the company will lose any possibility of conserving their traditional economic self subsistence activities in the cultivation of land.

A massive displacement of the population to the remaining primary forest will occur, with the consequent deforestation that this will involve and the loss of biological diversity.

There will be an impulse towards violence due to the presence of security systems and intervention of public forces or the army to safeguard the companies' interests.

An accumulation of resources and land in the hands of the transnational sector will take place.

The local communities will lose their ancestral knowledge of forest and agricultural management.

The large-scale projection of plantations involves an even greater intervention of the territory of the Province.

environmental impacts

World experience shows that large-scale plantations of eucalyptus damage the environment and result in:

impoverishment of soils, because nutrient extraction is considerable when dealing with intensive exploitation such as this.

depletion of water resources. On considering tree plantations as native forests, this supposes that they will enable the hydrological cycle to be maintained but, on the contrary, eucalyptus consume a lot of water due to their rapid growth and their deep roots. This reduces the levels of water in the soil and the flow of water courses. As we are dealing with a very fast-growing species, an enormous impact on the local water resources may be foreseen, which will affect neighbouring crops.

impoverishment of flora. Two main factors explain this. First of all, the care needed by the plantations (preparation of soils before plantation and later, mechanical weeding or the application of weed-killers), contributes to the elimination of local species. Secondly, the fact that eucalyptus prevents the development of most plant species as it is very aggressive in the undergrowth (exploitation of water, monopolisation of light, direct elimination of some undergrowth species due to the generation of chemicals that are toxic for other species).

impoverishment of fauna. This is a consequence of the preceding item. As the flora is very poor in the plantations, they become real deserts for the local fauna, which cannot find food, or refuge, or opportunities for reproduction. Thus the fauna disappears from the plantations.

In general, the implantation of large-scale monoculture tree plantations of alien species is accompanied by a disappearance of biodiversity which, in addition to affecting the environment, has serious social consequences. The decrease in flora and fauna have important impacts regarding food, health, housing and income. Thus both in the short and the long term, commercial plantations represent a danger to the country and to the populations who live near them.

the commercialisation of nature

Any attempt aimed at understanding the issues set by development and modernisation, should be centred on the influence of the globalisation process on cultural values imposed from the concept of sustainable development. Environmental services propose conceiving nature as an ecological capital and are a new instance of the commercialisation of nature.

The term "sustainable development" was launched in 1987 with the famous Bruntland Report, representing the essence of western modernity and intending to reconcile economic growth with the environment. According to Joan Martinez Alier "the idea that economic growth is 'good' for the environment cannot be accepted...A generalised economic growth may make environmental degradation more serious instead of lessening it, although the same wealth will make it possible to devote more resources to protect the environment against the effects caused by this same wealth." ¹

For its part, the Convention on Biological Diversity, opens up the possibility of commercialising nature, although establishing the fair and equitable participation in the benefits. The commercial sense of some parts of the text of the Convention has promoted the execution of bio-trade proposals. Bio-trade proposes producing and marketing goods and services with greater added value, both for national and international markets. Environmental services are considered as an opportunity within the bio-trade rationale. It is thus that the regulation of CO₂, the regulation of the climate, of global temperature, of greenhouse effect gases, are some of the priorities within the environmental service project.

eucalyptus plantations as carbon sinks in ecuador. the business of four transnational companies | part nine

by ivonne ramos, acción ecológica/friends of the earth, ecuador

the advantages of ecuador for the companies involved

These macro-policies induce privatisation of nature on a national level, opening up the way to transnationalisation of environmental management and the consolidation of foreign capital.

In Ecuador, it is proposed to undertake environmental management by making it corporate, in which companies directly linked to the above-mentioned activities participate as members of their board of directors. In this way, pharmaceutical, agrochemical, biotechnological and forestry companies participate in CORDELIM (Corporation for the Promotion of the Clean Development Mechanism), CORFORE (Corporation for Forestry Promotion), and CORPROBIO (Corporation for the Promotion of Biodiversity). Thus an illegal and illegitimate appropriation of nature and the values it conserves for future generations is promoted.

Over the last decade, a process has been launched from government spheres financed by multilateral organisations such as the World Bank, to create a legal framework and policies making it possible to generate a process for fostering and promoting the carbon market.

In January 2001, the Corporation for the Promotion of the Clean Development Mechanism (CORDELIM) was adopted, a body responsible for promoting the carbon market and “clean development” projects and the negotiation of emission reduction certificates.

To justify this initiative, a proposal for a technical-legal system of valuing and paying for environmental services in Ecuador is being imposed, considering, among other environmental services, the capture of CO_2 .

“Through the clean development mechanism established in the Kyoto Protocol, landowners who are interested in investing in the establishment of new forests (sic) can benefit from an economic compensation which assesses the capacity of the forests to capture CO_2 .” Mitsubishi.

Since 1995, Mitsubishi Paper Mills has imported to Japan Eucalyptus globulus wood chips (produced in the Ecuadorian Sierra by the Expoforestal company) through the Sumitomo Corporation. At the same time, the Japanese companies Mitsubishi Paper Mills and Sumitomo Corporation planned investing in large-scale plantation projects directly in the country.

In this respect, Ecuador presents various advantages:

1. Access to the potential benefits of economic compensation for capturing CO_2 .
2. Climatic conditions (rather the importance of sunshine, rainfall and adequate soil) favouring rapid growth of eucalyptus.
3. The low cost of land and labour.
4. The existence of trade agreements between Japan and Ecuador.

four very powerful companies

The project involves two Japanese companies, in addition to Electric Power Development and Waltz International, that amalgamated to form Eucalyptus Pacifico S.A. (EUCAPACIFIC) organized on 5th September, 2000.

Mitsubishi Paper Mills is part of the Mitsubishi corporation, formally born in Japan in 1870 as a shipping company. The company soon diversified its activities to sectors with investment in mining, paper, steel, glass, electric equipment, aeronautics, oil. Mitsubishi became various independent companies in 1946 and in this way the Mitsubishi group was formed, representing at this time various leading Japanese industries in shipping, aeronautical manufacturing, nuclear energy engineering, treatment of power plant waste, satellites, defence contracts, glass, the petrochemical industry, oil by-products, among others. The "Mitsubishi Group" represents 28 Mitsubishi companies, which in turn have representation in 140 countries and 5,500 registered trade marks, and is presently one of the most powerful transnational companies. Obviously, technological demands have made Mitsubishi stand out as a leader in research on "life industry," technological information, energy, environmental management, new materials, trade, banking, financial services.

For its part, Sumitomo is another powerful Japanese corporation with 5 chemical industry companies, 4 machinery companies, 9 financial and insurance companies, one steel company, 3 non-ferrous metal companies, 2 trade companies, 1 mining company, 1 storage and transport company, 3 ceramic factories, 3 construction companies, 2 rubber products companies, 1 electronic company, 4 electronic equipment companies, 2 service companies and 2 real-estate companies.

a tradition in resistance

The proposals arising under the umbrella of sustainable development, contrary to what was expected, have affected the survival of Indigenous Peoples and peasant communities, today threatened by the expansion of the market and commercialisation of life. There is no doubt that these policies, based on the paradigm of individual welfare, are incorporated as national and regional priorities, without the knowledge and still less, the consent of the local inhabitants. Furthermore, the struggles of the Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendants and peasants for the conservation of their forests, endeavour to bring to light the social nature of production and of life, of nature, and therefore constitute an obstacle to capital. It is sure that when the various social and environmental impacts that this project will generate become visible, they will give rise to increasing levels of awareness and organisation to face them.

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This document has presented no more than a few sample cases of forest destruction and people's efforts to counter it. The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) can join in these efforts and help reverse current trends of forest loss in the following ways:

1. the wssd must address the major direct causes of deforestation and forest degradation. that implies action at both national and international levels.

at the national level, the wssd must

- Identify activities with a direct negative impact on forests (e.g. logging, mining, oil exploitation, shrimp farming, large-scale agriculture and cattle raising and monoculture tree plantations).
- Call attention to viable alternatives to ensure sustainable use and equitable sharing of resources, including existing agro-forestry and community forest management practices that conserve and sustainably manage forest biodiversity.

at the international level the wssd must

- Promote a global framework for legally-binding corporate regulation to ensure that the activities of transnational corporations do not impact negatively on biodiversity, indigenous peoples and local communities.
- Elaborate a definition of forests that clearly distinguishes them from monoculture tree plantations.
- Support incentives for marketing socially and environmentally sustainable products and create disincentives for those extracted in a socially-unfair and environmentally-negative manner.



2. the wssd must promote positive solutions to deforestation and forest degradation. that implies securing commitments at both national and international levels.

at the national level, the wssd must

- Promote recognition of Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' land rights.
- Support environmentally-sound small and medium-scale agricultural and forest management.
- Promote land reforms that ensure equitable distribution of existing agricultural lands.
- Foster development and livelihood patterns that incorporate forest biodiversity conservation in all productive activities.

at the international level, the wssd must

- Promote positive changes within multilateral financial institutions (particularly the IMF and World Bank) to ensure that all their programmes and projects avoid negative impacts on forests, local communities and indigenous peoples, and include where appropriate a strong component of forest biodiversity conservation.
- Push for similar changes in bilateral development and export-credit agencies.
- Inform the relevant fora (e.g. WTO, IMF, World Bank) about the impacts of increased international trade on forests and ensure that those concerns are taken on board.
- Ensure close collaboration between the Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity regarding the impacts of global warming on biodiversity and of deforestation on climate change.
- Generate awareness about the impacts of increased consumption in the North on forests in the South as a first step to change current unsustainable consumption patterns.

Certainly countless more recommendations could be put forward regarding forest loss. However, it is crucial for the WSSD to focus on the main issues outlined above. If the major underlying and direct causes of forest loss are not urgently addressed, then all the other activities aimed at forest conservation — however important - will be of little use.



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