

Living in territorial Solidarity

Inspiration from Indigenous Peoples

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- Die Debatte über *Entwicklungsperspektiven* steht überall auf der Tagesordnung. Einseitig an wirtschaftlichem Wachstum orientierte Vorstellungen haben verheerende materielle, soziale und psychische Auswirkungen in Lateinamerika, Afrika und Asien, aber auch in Europa und den USA. Obwohl das am Wirtschaftswachstum orientierte Konzept längst kritisiert wurde, ist es nach wie vor für die Richtung unserer wirtschaftlichen und gesellschaftlichen Veränderungen nach innen und außen maßgeblich.
- Die Kritik muss mit konkreten *Entwicklungsperspektiven* für eine humanitäre Entwicklung verbunden werden. Technokratische Politik zur Entwicklung reicht ebenso wenig aus wie politische Utopien. Die Erarbeitung der Perspektiven ist in Wirklichkeit ein umfassender Lernprozess, der ein neues Verständnis von Politik und nicht zuletzt auch ein neues Rollenverständnis von Technikern und Sozialwissenschaftlern erfordert.
- So geht es in dieser Reihe *Entwicklungsperspektiven* darum, emanzipatorische Prozesse im Produktions- und Reproduktionsbereich (bzw. Ursachen für ihre Verhinderung) aufzuzeigen. In ihnen wird an die eigene Geschichte angeknüpft und die eigene Identität erneut gefunden. Die Analyse emanzipatorischer Erfahrungen in verschiedenen Bereichen (Gesundheit, Wohnungsbau, Bildung, Produktionsorganisation) können hier wie dort Schritte auf dem Weg der Lösung von Abhängigkeiten hin zur Selbstbestimmung klären helfen.

Entwicklungsperspektiven sind heute schwer zu erkennen, daher suchen wir

- Berichte aus der Erfahrung demokratischer Organisationen, Analysen anderer Gesellschaften und Kulturen sowie ihrer Wirtschafts- und Lebensweisen.
- Auswertungen von Erfahrungen in Entwicklungsprojekten.
- Dokumente mit Hilfe derer die Lernprozesse aus diesen Erfahrungen von Europa nach Lateinamerika und vice versa vermittelt werden können.

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We look for vaccination and do not perceive the long-term solution against pandemics that threaten to come up more frequently. Looking at this phenomenon in a comprehensive in-depth way would teach us to maintain equilibrium in our relation to nature. However as long as destruction of natural ecosystems is promoted by interests to maximize profits in the mining sector, by planting monocultures, or by the construction of large hydroelectric dams to process bauxite, iron ore, etc. pandemics will continue to pop up, draughts, floods and global warming will endanger lives. Uprooting cultures will provoke conflicts and a loss of relations to nature. Lessening biodiversity will reduce resilience.¹

The life of our family, working group, community must be understood by all of us in order to know if the management of fires, land, water and atmosphere are sound and responsible not only for our well-being but also for all those who live in our region, country, continent planet. We are interconnected as parts of the wholistic ecosystem.

Already now we sense that explication for climate change is different in north and south. However, we can no longer maintain to be the only ones who know the truth – this is a colonial inheritance. That is why for our own sake and for that of others we have to widen our view, combine forms of knowledge, think in planetary dimensions while caring for our territories.

This is why we publish the talks we gave to Berlin university students in the summer of 2019 hoping that the inspiration will go on and we will feel strong to listen and get allies with those who have cared for their forests and territories, who have defended them against external threats for centuries and thus have protected us.

*Eliane Fernandes Ferreira
Clarita Müller-Plantenberg*

¹ The following articles are a preprint of the anthology "*In the Grip of Change. Survival of Indigenous People in the 21st Century*", which will be edited by Brigitte Fahrenhorst with Peter Lang Publishing.

It is time to change: things I did not know about nature and what we can learn from Indigenous Peoples

Eliane Fernandes Ferreira

Since last year, 2019, it becomes much more challenging to write about nature conservation, as I observe what is happening in the Amazon forest, mainly in Brazil, and as I listen to the news and see vast areas of forests being devastated through deliberate human action because of those who do not see any importance or meaning in nature conservation or protection.

As a social and cultural anthropologist, I have been working on the situation of Indigenous Peoples in Brazil since 1998, when I first met two Waiãpi indigenous representatives in Hamburg who were presenting their film “*Placa não fala*”² about the demarcation and protection strategies of their territory in a local cinema. Their territory conservation project and their words impressed me to such an extent that I decided to start engaging myself as an anthropologist for the Indigenous Peoples rights of Brazil.

Being born in Brazil and having grown up there, I did not notice the situation of the Brazilian Indigenous Peoples until the moment I arrived in Germany and met the two Waiãpi back in 1998. In Brazil, we learn practically nothing in school about the Brazilian Indigenous Peoples and we have nearly no contact with them within the Brazilian Society. Therefore, this encounter with the Waiãpi representatives in Hamburg changed my life and gave another direction to it. Thanks to this encounter, I realized that something had to be done through my work as an anthropologist. It was not enough only to write about them. Much more, it was necessary to make public their issues and struggles for their rights that are anchored in the 1988 Brazilian constitution (Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil 2010).

After finishing my master’s thesis on the situation of the Brazilian Indigenous Peoples in 2002 (Fernandes Ferreira 2002), at a time when the Internet was ascending as a worldwide communication system, I decided to write my PhD thesis on the meaning of the Internet for the Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (Fernandes Ferreira 2009). It was this research project that brought me for the first time into the Amazon forest to the State of Acre in Brazil in 2004. It was also the moment when I entered a new world and a place that I had wished to know since my childhood, especially for being the State where my grandfather was born. Coincidentally, my great grandfather had migrated to the region at the end of the 1880s because of the rubber economy.

On account of this, I have a personal relationship to the region and grew up hearing stories about mysteries of the forest and its Peoples. Finally, at thirty, I

² The Waiãpi documentary “*Placa não fala*” (“Signboard does not speak”) was produced in 1996 with the support of the organization “Video nas Aldeias”, Vincent Carelli and Dominique Gallois.

travelled to Acre that I always dreamed to know because of my family background. From that time on, I am linked to it through my relationship and friendship to many indigenous representatives of Acre, especially to the Ashaninka People of the Amônia River, who live near the Peruvian border, and to whom I have a deep bond and who became practically my second family due to my work among them since 2004.

The Ashaninka of the Amônia River: a lesson about resilience

The Ashaninka of the Amônia River live in their territory that was demarcated and legalized by the Brazilian government in 1992. While the majority of the Ashaninka live in Peru, approximately 2500 Ashaninka live in Brazilian territory. In the Ashaninka Territory of the Amônia River live approximately 1000 Ashaninka spread throughout their land.

Thanks to the legalization of their land and their well-organized community, the Ashaninka of the Amônia River manage to live traditionally, protecting their language and customs despite their intense contact with non-indigenous peasants. They always kept transferring to the younger generations their cultural values and tradition that were threatened by the presence of rubber tappers and farmers in the region of the Upper Juruá river since the end of the 19th century, managing to resist all phases of outside cultural influences.

For the Ashaninka and other indigenous groups of the Upper Juruá region, the first more intensive encounter with non-indigenous Brazilian migrants happened at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, due to the development of the rubber economy. At first, the rubber tappers, mostly from the Northeast region of Brazil, migrated to this region. Among them, were my great grandfather and my great grandmother, each coming respectively from the States of Rio Grande do Norte and Maranhão. The second phase of migrants to the region of the Upper Juruá happened in the 1970s and 1980s, when farmers from the south of Brazil started buying old rubber farms that were no longer economically viable to exploit timber. The logging practiced by these farmers in the 1970s and 1980s was intensive and happened throughout the region when the rubber economy was not financially profitable anymore. The Ashaninka from the Amônia River report that in this period, they worked for little money, hunting and logging for the farmers. The farmers used to pay them with alcohol and other products, contributing to the weakening and the destruction of their culture. The farmer Orleir Cameli (uncle of the current governor of the State of Acre, Gladson Cameli), who was mainly active in their territory before its demarcation, deforested a vast area of the Ashaninka territory due to timber exploitation (see Pimenta 2006).

Old and new strategies to live in a delimited territory

Before the arrival of the non-indigenous peasants in the region of the Upper Juruá River, the indigenous communities could freely use the territories in which they

chose to live. They were free to decide where to move according to the availability of the natural resources. There were also some conflicts with neighboring communities, but there were no boundaries, and land was abundant to live and move on. After the arrival of the non-indigenous peasants in the region, at the end of the 19th century, indigenous communities were confronted with the necessity of living in a limited space. They were hunted and assassinated by the new non-indigenous peasants or were forced to share their spaces and repeatedly expelled from their original lands. In Acre, the brutal hunting of indigenous communities, known as “*correrias*”, occurred at the end of the 19th century to enslave or even kill the indigenous peoples of the region.

Mainly after the legal demarcation of their territory in 1992, after several years of struggle for its recognition, the Ashaninka from the Amônia River were confronted with the fact that they now had only that limited space in which to live, that is to say, exactly 87.200 hectares of land. As a consequence, they took decisions about many things, as for instance, to expel all non-indigenous peasants out of their territory in order to live without the interference of the non-indigenous culture and according to their own values and rules. They also decided to unite their community, bringing closer the different Ashaninka families of their territory to fight foreign invasions in the border regions of their land. Therefore, they call their community “*Apiwtxa*”, what in the Ashaninka language means “union”. It was also a strategy to recover all threatened natural resources and areas deforested due to the logging activities of the farmers working in that region.

The delimitation of their space drove the Ashaninka from the Amônia River to a systemized environmentally sustainable way of life (cf. Pimenta 2007). With the support of the NGO “*Comissao Pró-Índio do Acre*” (CPI - Pro-Indigenous Commission of the State of Acre), the Ashaninka established a forestry management plan to recover the degraded areas and to protect lakes and hunting zones, so that game and fish stock could recover from the former unsustainable way of living that was practiced by non-indigenous and also indigenous dwellers. For instance, the Ashaninka from the Amônia River decided to recover the yellow-spotted Amazon river turtles’ population (the so-called “*tracajá*”) within their territory. In the 1970s and 1980s indigenous and non-indigenous Peoples considered this river turtle as a delicacy and therefore all peasants used to consume it without thinking about the consequences of their predatory consumption pattern. At the end of the 1980s, the Ashaninka then built an artificial pond in which to raise the river turtles that they collect in a protected riverbank within their territory, where the turtles spawn their eggs, to protect the species. By doing so, the Ashaninka have again increased the number of *tracajás* in the rivers and lakes of the region and have protected the species up to the present, turning it into a model sustainable environmental project for the whole region and state.

The Ashaninka territory management plan became their strategy to keep the resources they need to survive and protect their community and their culture.

Their land means their culture and their life. Therefore, it became essential to create alliances and also work with the surrounding indigenous and non-indigenous communities to better protect their territory and the resources in their region, stemming invasions caused by illegal hunting, fishing or logging. They use their traditional knowledge mixed with other adopted techniques and apply the wisdom and strategies of their former leader, Samuel Piyāko, who first arrived in the region coming from the lower Ucayali River and who was also the father of the current leader. According to Samuel Piyāko's vision, it would be good for the Ashaninka to cultivate partnerships and alliances with the surrounding communities in order to live in peace and protect the resources that they depend on to survive and keep their culture alive. In the Ashaninka language, this traditional exchange and trade system is called "*ayōpari*", and it can be seen as a strategy to keep the partnerships between the surrounding communities alive (see Pimenta 2007: 644).

Despite all efforts, the Ashaninka had to continue fighting the invasions of Brazilian and Peruvian peasants caused by illegal logging, hunting and fishing. However, their biggest struggle at the end of the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s was against the Peruvian logging companies, as will be described below.

How to protect the land from intruders

The Ashaninka People of the Amônia River were the ones who taught me to experience intensively, read, respect and understand the forest and nature as it is. Through them I learned to relate to it with all its difficulties and beauty, its magic and tragic reality.

When I started my field research in 2004, in a hurry because of the received research grants, I wanted to travel immediately to their territory at the Amônia River in order not to lose time – shaped by the understanding of a non-indigenous person, used to the efficiency of clocks and time schedules. However, the Ashaninka leader Isaac Piyāko, my first contact person of the Ashaninka community, warned me in Rio Branco, the capital of Acre, very strictly, that it was not possible at that moment for me to enter their territory due to assaults of Peruvian logging companies, which were threatening their community and their life. The Peruvian loggers were invading their land and used to threaten the community, menacing it with words and intimidating the Ashaninka with physical presence. With a very serious countenance he said: "It is impossible now for you to enter our territory to start your research! We are practically in a war, Eliane!". Comprehending the earnestness of the situation, I was confronted for the first time with my naivete as a scientist who believed I could handle everything the way I planned it to happen. Shocked, I then accepted the fact, and felt the necessity to find a way to help them to fight against the Peruvian logging companies that were threatening their territory and the resources they depend on to survive and help them to force the Brazilian Federal Government to combat the invasions.

Thanks to their international network and Internet communication, the Ashaninka were able to attract the attention of the public worldwide in 2004 and finally convince the Brazilian government to fight the invasions and illegal logging alongside the Peruvian government. It took almost two years until the Brazilian government took seriously their complaints about the intrusions. International support and pressure on the Brazilian and Peruvian governments were necessary to transform the case into a political uproar. Only with this pressure did the Brazilian government recognize it as a threat to Brazilian sovereignty and subsequently, the Peruvian government made public the names of the companies responsible for illegal logging. Since then, the invasions of Peruvian logging companies do not happen anymore, but the Ashaninka continue to experience other kinds of problems along the Brazilian-Peruvian border, such as the presence of drug trafficking and illegal hunting and fishing activities. However, they are very well prepared to defend their territory, their community and their culture, by means of their networks, different technologies and traditional knowledge to protect their people.

Knowledge exchange as a strategy: the creation of the Center Yorenka Ñtame

With the achievement of the protection and recuperation of the degraded areas within their own territory, the Ashaninka of the Amônia River decided to transmit their forestry and natural resource management knowledge to the surrounding communities. It was the first step to teach indigenous and non-indigenous communities outside of their territory how-to live-in balance with nature, respecting the processes of environmental sustainability.

Trying to build alliances with the neighbouring groups of inhabitants, to maintain their environment, on which they profoundly depend to survive within their traditional way of life, the Ashaninka decided to create a training center called Yorenka Ñtame (Wisdom of the Forest). It was inaugurated on 7 July 2007 outside the border of their territory, in front of the town of Marechal Thaumaturgo, to protect their traditional way of life, by keeping out of their land too many influences from the outside world.

The main purpose of the center is to teach, discuss and exchange with the different groups of interested inhabitants alternative ecological, economic agroforestry techniques to fight deforestation processes, such as logging and cattle raising, and to protect natural resources while allowing for sustainable economic development.

It took many years for the local non-indigenous inhabitants to accept this proposal. The project of the training center was not even understood in the beginning. Many inhabitants from Marechal Thaumaturgo thought at first that they were even not allowed to visit it, but the Ashaninka worked hard to deconstruct certain existing prejudices and segregationist behaviour. They chose as a strategy to start working with the local schools in order to reach the parents of the school pupils and to be able to spread their values and projects and discuss

different strategies of environmental protection and sustainable development for the region.

Thanks to the perseverance and efforts of the Ashaninka within several environmental projects such as the Yorenka Ætame Center or the “Alto Juruá Project”, that was funded by the Amazon Fund through the Brazilian Development Bank BNDES from 2015 to 2017, the local population started to perceive their environmental, economic, and ecological strategies as an alternative to cattle raising, illegal logging, and even drug trafficking, that represent the biggest problems in the region. Due to this social and political recognition of the work of the Ashaninka people by the local population, the municipality of Marechal Thaumaturgo even has an Ashaninka mayor since 2016, namely Isaac Piyãko, son of the current Ashaninka leader, Antônio Piyãko. Before, the Ashaninka fought much against racial discrimination. In the 1980s and early 1990s, for instance, they received many death threats because of their fight for the recognition of their territory. They could not even circulate or enter the town of Marechal Thaumaturgo. As we can see, the Ashaninka were able to deconstruct many prejudices, fight much of the discrimination that unfortunately still exists in the region, and find partners that they thought they would never reach due to the historical events that threatened their coexistence and cooperation.

Conceptions of nature and ecology among the Ashaninka of the Amônia River and other settlers of the region and beyond

When we talk about environmental protection, it is essential to mention all the different perceptions of nature and culture within Brazilian society and beyond. The different perceptions also depend on the context of the life and cultural experiences of each group. We cannot forget that the Amazon region is highly complex in its cultural and ecological formation.

In my case, working on the different perceptions and perspectives about the environment in the Upper Juruá River, near the Peruvian border, I found four groups of inhabitants that differed in their ways of perceiving nature and ecology. The first group is made up of the indigenous inhabitants, who first inhabited the Amazon region. The second group is built up of rubber tappers who came into this region to work with the rubber economy at the end of the 19th century. The third group is built up of the farmers, who came from the southern states of Brazil in the 1970s to buy land for a low price from the rubber tappers to work with logging and cattle raising. After this in the 1980s we have yet a fourth group of migrants, who came mainly from other places of the State of Acre or other regions of Brazil to work specially with trade.

Mainly the indigenous and former rubber tappers lived and partially still live from and with nature. Because of this, their perception and perspective are different from the later migrants who arrived in the region.

Due to their history and experience living with the forest, the indigenous groups of the State of Acre still have a deep and very close relationship to their

environment – also because of the distance of the most part of the territories to the big cities. This helped them to protect their territories and their culture, although many communities suffered and still suffer under the consequences of land robbery, destruction of their natural resources, the intensive contact with the non-indigenous society.

In their indigenous cosmology, everything is related to nature. Their daily life, actions, and decisions are linked to their connection to nature as are all the principles they learned to respect within their culture – rules, knowledge and teachings which were passed from generation to generation from the elders to the youngest. Seeing the forest as their mother, they try to keep the balance in their relationship to the surrounding environment to avoid the consequences caused by any possible misbehaviour.

When we talk about indigenous and non-indigenous concepts of nature and ecology, what I can observe from the Ashaninka people from the Amônia River, is that nature is their codex, where all knowledge and guidelines are saved. They follow and read nature as a handbook that they need to respect within their culture. Within the Ashaninka tradition, for instance, despite their counting days with numbers, the moon is their calendar, and it would indicate when somebody should come back to the village from a trip or from hunting. Certain changes in nature say when it is time to start hunting, and the stars when it is time to plant or to harvest. The wind, the clouds and the sky colour predict a lot about seasons, temperature change and the birds communicate to them when danger is coming near, or they communicate to them and are part of their totems. Unfortunately, thanks to the consequences of climate change, they are starting having difficulties to read this so precious manual and comment on all the changes they are observing in the last two decades, such as trees flourishing in different seasons, the changes in atmospheric conditions, different behaviour of game and fishes, and so on.

Again, if we talk about concepts of nature and ecology, we already can notice the different existing perspectives. The Brazilian anthropologist, Viveiro de Castro calls it an “asymmetry of perspectives” (2005: 47). We, the “western” or “westernized” cultures, have mostly lost our relationship to nature. We deal with ecology in different ways, primarily targeting the material and financial aspect of life. We are then confronted with the indigenous way of handling concepts of environment and ecology, mostly linked to cosmological concepts passed throughout the generations and respected as natural parameters.

We need to take into account, that if we talk about Brazil, we have different groups of inhabitants all over the different states with many different concepts according to their specific experiences and cultural affiliation. A community of the outback of Minas Gerais, for instance, has another relationship to nature and ecology than a town from the State of Bahia, or the big cities São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro or Brasília.

To illustrate this, let us take as an example the first rubber tappers who came from the northeast of Brazil at the end of the 19th century to the Amazon region

to work in the rubber economy, and who grew up in a different environment and then experienced another one in the Amazon. They had to learn very fast, in order to survive, the arduous “handbook” of the Amazon forest, often by trial and error. The setting was new, and many of them learned from the indigenous neighbours how to survive in this harsh region. Many beliefs of the indigenous neighbours became theirs too or were syncretized with other cultural beliefs and traditions that they brought from the northeast of Brazil. The Amazon forest was as a new manual for them to read and to be understood and respected by them.

Whereas the rubber tappers, working with the forest and extracting from it without needing to destroy it, learned to live with it, the other group of settlers who came into this region in the 1970s and 1980s was made up of migrants from the southern states of Brazil with a different background. They came to buy land very cheaply from the former rubber barons, due to the final decline of the Brazilian rubber economy. The new economy in the State of Acre became logging and cattle raising. This group of settlers, also coming from a different environment such as the pampas, had a particular relationship to the new environment they were arriving into, distinct from the rubber tappers and indigenous peoples. Most of them, descendants of European migrants who came to the South of Brazil since the 17th century, arrived into the Brazilian Amazon forest region looking for a fast profit through the logging and the cattle economy. Having absolutely no close emotional or cosmological relationship to the land they had just bought, they rapidly deforested vast areas of forests and, with this, caused environmental and cultural destruction.

Moisés Piyãko and Benki Piyãko, for instance, sons of the current Ashaninka leader of the Amônia River, Antonio Piyãko, told me many times, that in their childhood they used to accompany to the forest their father, who used to work in the 1970s for the non-indigenous farmers, cutting timber. When his sons were accompanying him, Antonio Piyãko always told them to plant new seeds right in the place of the felled trees. Like this, the young Ashaninka leaders learned very early that nature conservancy and respect for it is a primordial law and a rule in life. The notion about nature and ecology was already there and was being planted and passed on as a seed to the future generation. This interaction between father and sons marked their past, present and future as well. Today, they are messengers and considered guardians of the Amazon forest within Brazil and abroad. We see that the Ashaninka concept of nature and ecology is intrinsic to their culture, their history, and their survival.

We can observe how differently indigenous and non-indigenous groups handle and perceive the available resources. Whereas indigenous communities are used to managing small places, practicing slash and burn at a small scale and according to the size and needs of their families, the non-indigenous peasants devastate large areas, destroying all at once the biodiversity of the region, with no interest or even knowledge of how to recover it. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, for instance, mentions William Baleé’s work, in which he states, that the Amazon region is rich in its ecological biodiversity due to the intervention of indigenous

peoples and their system of managing these spaces to live. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro writes:

“Balée, who has drawn the most insightful conclusions from these findings, observed that Amazonian ‘nature’ is therefore a part of and a result of a long cultural history, and that indigenous economies previously seen as instances of ‘adaptive responses’ (58) to a pristine and transcendent environment are actually meta-adaptations to culture, or to the historical result of a cultural transformation of nature (5a–11). Incidentally, contrary to what one might imagine, Balée has found that anthropogenic forests have more biodiversity than undisturbed forests (12, 13).” (Viveiros de Castro 1996: 184)

Maybe the difference is the correlation with the environment. We, non-indigenous peoples, are used to live in cities, far away from nature, losing connection to it and being able to buy everything we need without thinking about the origin of the products we buy. Despite growing up in the forest, needing to raise crops, to harvest, hunt and fish, and to survive in a harsh environment in all seasons, which can be seen as a green hell because of all the difficulties one experiences, it keeps you connected to nature. Lévis-Strauss related wonderfully through “*Tristes Tropiques*” (original 1955, 2012) the interwovenness and interconnections between indigenous communities and nature. As an anthropologist, I also experienced the cultural differences and how the environment plays a central role in our lives when we live near to it. I myself faced how hard it is to stay alive, struggling for everyday nourishment and health for oneself, our family and our relatives. It is a constant fight for food, for health, for balance, for peace.

I believe that due to the spatial limitation of their territories, many indigenous communities in Brazil were forced to find a way and develop a management plan for their legalized territories to live in balance with nature, living sustainably with its resources, in order to survive. What we, non-indigenous persons, consider wealth, indigenous communities may consider fatal or instability due to the interruption of the relationship with nature, their biggest commandment. Therefore, when we talk about nature and cultural perception, we need to take into account which processes the groups being analysed have undertaken or have experienced or are undertaking or experiencing. Perceptions can also change according to the socio-political and economic processes groups are suffering. We need to pay attention to the “culturally created aspects of ecology” (see Viveiro de Castro 1996: 184).

Learning with the Ashaninka – Lessons from the forest

Living so far away from the Amazon region and rarely hearing about anything that is happening in that region, what can we learn from all of this? Being located thousands of miles away from our homes in Europe or elsewhere, indigenous territories contain a treasure that implies cultural- and biodiversity that they and we are about to lose at present. Many times, only after being directly confronted personally with this rich diversity, in the middle of the forest, you are thrown into

a place of the world where life springs dramatically in all colors, shapes, smells, tastes, in both a natural and a supernatural sense.

What I could observe among the Ashaninka was that they see nature and themselves as one, where everything is interrelated. They belong together and depend on each other to exist. If this interdependency comes out of equilibrium, all parts will suffer the consequences. I see this as a juxtaposition of nature, ecology and culture, where all elements flow into each other. There is no separation. We, in our westernized way of viewing things, are used to separate nature from ourselves, thinking mostly about the ecology. We, non-indigenous peoples, usually live apart from nature, others not. Will this “asymmetry of perspectives” persist for ever or will we non-indigenous peoples very soon be forced to change our view and understanding about nature?

The Ashaninka concept of environmental protection is being passed to all generations within their community and since the early 2000s to the neighbouring communities. School pupils, the youth and even foreigners like me, learn from the Ashaninka why it is essential to protect nature and how we are all interconnected through it.

When we, non-indigenous peoples from the big cities, enter the indigenous world in the middle of the Amazon forest, for instance, we perceive that in order to survive, it is important to take care of all natural resources, food needs to be planted, that all things take time to grow, and when they are harvested, we need to recover it, in order to keep its sustainability. Once, my Ashaninka friend, Benki Piyãko, said to me: “It is easy to destroy, but it is challenging to recover all damages”.

When I first arrived there, I was thrown into a new environment. I had to learn the first principles of how to behave, where to step, look for food, what to respect, or how to simply sit in a small boat. Just like a child, I started taking the first steps in the forest, in the Ashaninka village called Apiwtxa.

To respect and to understand nature became the first rule for me during my first field research back in 2004. Very soon, I began to understand how valuable the resources are for the Ashaninka and for us all. We, non-indigenous peoples from the cities, do not even stop to think about the origin of all products we consume easily in supermarkets and drugstores. In the forest, food safety becomes the primordial challenge of survival. When money cannot buy what you need, you start understanding the importance of the forest wisdom, traditional knowledge and what it means to live in balance with the environment.

What we should learn from indigenous peoples is that we all have a limited space to live, our planet is limited, and the resources are ending very fast. Either we live conscious of all this, or we will drive fast forward against a wall without even wishing to do so. While we believed that we could continue consuming everything to make our lives easier, we caused trouble to many groups that depend directly on these resources. The process of annexing spaces, driven without any respect, since the era of colonization made us non-indigenous peoples believe that we owned the world, without realizing that we were taking

many things away from others. Today we suffer from stress, panic, violence, and cancer, diseases that we ourselves created.

I am not sure anymore whether we can still change the situation, because of the interests of the diverse groups of society. When I told a friend, who works with several indigenous communities of the Brazilian Amazon forest about Benki Piyãko's project of a health and spiritual Center in Marechal Thaumaturgo called Yorenka Tasorentsi (The Wisdom of the Creator), she mentioned that the actual situation in Brazil seems so complicated and abysmal that she believes that only the indigenous spirituality would be able to rectify the course of things. By doing so, we would connect humanity again with nature. Yes, maybe it would be necessary.

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Indigenous Peoples in the Amazon Basin answer global challenges with youth, scientists and others they urge to join sustainable paths

Clarita Müller-Plantenberg

Indigenous people in the Amazon basin are threatened by open racism. Fifty years ago, the Barbados Conferences of anthropologists started accusing ethnocide in the Amazon lowlands and insisted on necessary guarantees for indigenous people's rights (Georg Grünberg 1971 ff.). We have now experienced a period of democratization and legal recognition. However, at this stage of capitalism companies' interests are entering the last resorts of the Amazon biome – that has been an important guaranty for life on the planet - ignoring the rights of minorities in spite of their legal advances. By preserving the forest as well as its rivers, by caring and even improving biodiversity indigenous people are decisive for mankind as they have respect for life on this planet. That is why those 'guardians of the forest' persecuted are the ones, who can show the way - if the rest of the world cares - to protect and support life.

At first, I will explain the actual challenges (1). How did indigenous peoples manage to organize and build up political pressure by marching for their rights to territory and culture and by forming alliances on all levels (2)? How indigenous peoples continue to fight against gigantic threats continuing their resistance during centuries? What is the cause for their determination to defend the mode of production, that is deeply rooted in cultural traditions of integral ecology and ecological knowledge systems (3)? And last but not least: how did they succeed to influence other important global actors by their wholistic concept to relate to nature and maintain the global commons? This is a vital orientation for mankind (4)? In the following text I will refer to the expressions of indigenous peoples, cite their publications and audio-visual testimonies in order to transmit their perspective.

Actual challenges

...before, during and after the fires – the gold miners – the illegal loggers...some examples...

The Krahô-Kanela in the state of Tocantins/ Brazil

They deplore the extermination of nearly 95 % of their territory by the fires. The indigenous leader Wagner Krahô-Kanela explains, that the firefighting operations are carried out with the help of neighbouring local indigenous brigades (see picture)¹:

¹ Brazil de Fato 11.9.2019 <https://www.brasildefato.com.br/2019/09/11/quemadas-em-terras-indigenas-aumentam-88-em-2019/>

“Since the 26th of august our territory is burning. Up till today the people are trying to fight the fire. Brigades of Javaé, Karajá and Xerente have helped a lot. It is very sad; the people even saw a crocodile burning. There is a total destruction of nature.”

A leader of the Wajãpi indigenous people in the state of Amapá/ Brazil

Emyra Wajãpi, is murdered by gold miners, who afterwards invade the community in July 2019. Gold mining in the north of Amapá/ Brazil has poisoned the rivers and caused grave health problems. A community member sends a video message: *“We want no more murders of our indigenous leaders. We ask the respective authorities in the State of Amapá for help!”*² Jawaruwa Wajãpi, communicator of his village explains: *“Emyra led the historical fight for delimitation and protection of the indigenous territory. Our people have lost with him a lot of knowledge and experience.”*³

The Guajajara people of the indigenous territory Arariboia in the state of Maranhão/ Brazil

These guardians of the forest very often receive death threats. They also protect another group of uncontacted hunter gatherer in their territory, the Awa-Guajá. Paulo Paulino, one of these guardians of the forest states in January 2019: *“We feel very alone here. With no help. We need support here in this land. So that the land stays ours.”*⁴ In June 2019 they sent a video to the state and federal authorities in which Paulo Paulino and Tainaky Tenetehar appear together with the coordinator of the guardians, Olímpio Guajajara, in order to announce that their lives are at risk. However, the government did not take the necessary precautions to protect the indigenous territory. Paulo Paulino was murdered on the 1st of November 2019. His colleague Laércio Guajajara, also a member of the indigenous community, was injured. Three days after the murder of Paulo Paulino, the governor of Maranhão, Flavio Dino, reacted. This was just after the Popes Amazon-Synod in Rome and at the same time, in which seven Brazilian indigenous leaders were visiting twelve European countries.⁵ Flavio Dino signed a decree for the protection of indigenous peoples in Maranhão.⁶

² 29.7.19 El País; “Dirty paradise” and “Trading paradise” documentaries by the swiss film-maker Daniel Schweizer witness the historic impact of “goldrush” experience at the border of Amapá and French Guyana and point out the chronic of an announced global scandal.

³ Deutsche Welle 31.7.2019.

⁴ <https://news.mongabay.com/2019/11/guardian-of-the-forest-ambushed-and-murdered-in-brazilian-amazon/>

⁵ Their campaign “Indigenous Blood: Not a Single Drop more” aims to pressure Brazilian government and agribusiness companies to fulfil international agreements on climate change and human rights signed by Brazil – such as the Paris Agreement, the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169, which guarantees free, prior and informed consultation, the United Nations Declaration on the rights of indigenous people, the New York Declaration, among others.

⁶ Blog of Jorge Aragão 12.11.19



Photo 1: Indigenous Territory Krahô-Kanela/ Help by firefighting brigade of the Xerente people 11. 9. 2019 ©Povo Krahô-Kanela (CIMI 11.9.19)



Photo 2: School of the village Takaywrá 27.5.15(Krahô-Kanela) ©Victor Ferri Mauro



Photo 3: Indios Krahô-Kanela in bow and arrow contest with indios Xambioá village Lankrare, Dec.2013 ©Victor. Ferri Mauro 2016



Photo 4: Residence of the village Akaywrá 11.9.15 (Krahô-Kanela) ©Maria Candido Marcos

These murders reflect the interests of economic groups in agrarian-, mineral- and logging exploitation of the indigenous territories. Meanwhile since the 1st of January 2019 when Jair Bolsonaro became president of Brazil there is a cutback of environmental state policy and of indigenous territories protection. This promotes foreign and national interests to invade indigenous territories, as well as territories of *quilombolas* (members of black communities with descendants of former slaves), small farmers and traditional fishers' communities in order to realize short term economic profit. Bolsonaro encourages illegal procedures. He did not follow the ruling constitution but violated indigenous and *quilombola* rights. The number of fires nearly doubled from 2018 to 2019 and the number of affected indigenous territories also increased from 231 to 274. Access for agrobusiness to land by fires, by eviction of communities, by more and more murders of social leaders and their defenders is forced upon communities in all neighbouring countries of the Amazon basin.⁷

Indigenous and afro-descendant leaders in Colombia

They headed the list of victims of violations as the Office of the High Commissioner of the United Nations for Human Rights (UNHCR) informed:⁸ Since January 2016 till May 2019 702 out of 837 murders - that were considered political - were leaders of communities or social movements.⁹ In August 2019 the National Indigenous Organisation of Colombia (ONIC) proclaimed humanitarian, social and economic state of emergency of indigenous peoples and declared that “70 of 102 indigenous peoples in Colombia are in danger of physical and cultural extinction.”¹⁰ In the Colombian department of Antioquia six indigenous leaders were killed, that is why the indigenous peoples organized a march on the 18th of November 2019 and the governor of the Indigenous Council of Chiropody, Samuel Borja Domicó, asked the state and the controlling institutions, “that they should take into account the difficult situation in which their territories actually are, as there are illegal armed groups in their territories.”¹¹

⁷ “São alarmantes os números crescentes de mortes de defensores do meio ambiente, afrodescendentes e indígenas no contexto da violência rural no Brasil, assim como as deficiências estatais para combater as ações dos agentes econômicos e do crime organizado que afetam essas comunidades”, afirmou Margarette Macaulay, relatora sobre os Direitos das Pessoas Afrodescendentes e contra a Discriminação Racial, e sobre os Direitos das Mulheres da CIDH. “A situação de vulnerabilidade dos defensores do meio ambiente, povos indígenas e quilombolas é grave no Brasil, principalmente pela redução da estrutura e orçamentos estatais para garantir o gozo e controle de seus territórios e de viver livre de todas as formas de violência e discriminação”, acrescentou Antonia Urrejola, Relatora sobre os Direitos dos Povos Indígenas. Rede Brazil atual 1.8.2018.

⁸ Mundo 12.6.19

⁹ Indepaz (Instituto de Estudos para o Desenvolvimento e a Paz, da Colômbia); See also 11 of 15 indigenous peoples affected by interests in mining, by construction of harbors, oil drilling, construction of roads, hydroelectric dams, drug traffic and illegal commerce with wood run the risk of extinction in Colombia, Terra de Resistentes 23.4.19.

¹⁰ Georg Sturm: Kolumbien: Indigene Völker erklären humanitären Notstand, in: amerika21, 16.8.2019; Fabian Trujillo Beltran: Onic declara emergencia humanitaria por asesinato de indígenas en Colombia, RCN Radio 10.8.19.

¹¹ Johanna Ramirez Gil: Indígenas de Antioquia preparan gran marcha contra los asesinatos, RCN Radio 9.11.19.

Indigenous people in Ecuador

They fight for their rights against oil- and mining companies, oil palm plantations and neoliberal policies. Representatives of indigenous peoples from the Amazon went to Quito, the capital, on the 11th of September 2019 with the following message to their government:

“If indigenous lands and rights are not respected, the Ecuadorian rainforest will share the same tragic fate as Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay. Indigenous peoples’ hold rights over 70% of the Ecuadorian Amazon, but government-imposed projects for mining, oil, hydroelectric dams, and agroindustry. These led to the highest deforestation rates in the entire basin.”¹²

It was a cultural and political act: the Ecuadorean indigenous peoples were singing, dancing and raising their spears in the air, the indigenous nations of Ecuador’s Amazon sent a powerful message of solidarity with the neighboring peoples of Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay and assured that they would take action to avoid a similar fate.

“Indigenous nations and federations joined forces with the Waorani and Kofan people to demand immediate action from congress, the Supreme Court and the Ministry of the Environment to respect indigenous rights to free, prior and informed consent and self-determination, and to enforce historic indigenous rights verdicts protecting hundreds of thousands of acres against gold mining and oil drilling.”¹³

Indigenous peoples in Bolivia

“...Bolivian authorities warned (on the 23rd of August 2019), that 70% of the department of Santa Cruz — where more than a quarter of the country’s population lives — is under ‘extreme risk’ from forest fires...”¹⁴ The Ministry of Environment and Water (MMAyA), stated at the end of August, that the ongoing forest fires in the eastern Bolivian department of Santa Cruz have affected 521,000 hectares of forest and 726,000 hectares of grassland. 73 communities across 15 municipalities and 1,917 families were affected.¹⁵ Initial estimates indicate 600 hectares of rainforest have been destroyed in the north-eastern region of Beni, where the fires now threaten indigenous populations. *“This is the biggest ever catastrophe for biodiversity in Bolivia”* said Fernando Vargas, an indigenous leader in the Isiboro Sécure Indigenous territory and national park, known as Tipnis by its Spanish acronym. *“But this is not a natural disaster but a manmade one”* he told the Guardian. More than 2,700 fires had been registered by Bolivia’s early warning fire detection agency on Monday, in a swath of flames across the country, from the Amazon north-east to the south-eastern Chaco biome *“It’s very sad because we indigenous peoples have lost our means of survival,”* said Adolfo Chávez, the former president of the Bolivian indigenous confederation CIDOB. In August 2019 he said President Morales had turned his

¹² Amazon Frontline 11.9.19.

¹³ See above.

¹⁴ Mercopress 23.8.2019.

¹⁵ Relief Web August 2019, (OCHA, 2. Sept. 2019).

back on indigenous peoples by allowing the destruction of their habitat for the advance of agrobusiness. The Coordination of Indigenous Organisations in the Amazon basin, COICA, accused Bolsonaro and Morales in August 2019 of *“gutting every environmental and social strategy to strengthen environmental governance of the Amazon.”*¹⁶

David against Goliath - how is it possible to meet the challenges of large agrobusiness-, infrastructure-, energy- ad mining projects?

Indigenous peoples get more and more organized to meet the challenges for instance: In Brazil, their leaders organize since 2005 the Free Land Camp (Acampamento Terra Livre) which took place for the 15th time in Brasilia from the 24.-28. April 2019 with 4000 participants. How did they mobilise? By communicating on all media, radio, smartphone, with videos etc.: Xavante from the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso invite all indigenous peoples: *“This struggle is ours, for us, for our ancestors for the future generations.”* Célia Xakriabá from the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais calls on her relatives (that is the indigenous peoples) *“to fight together, come to the Free Land Camp 2019 in order to fight together against the genocide of indigenous peoples.”* Evanilda Terena from the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso do Sul calls for the whole family *“to come with power to the Camp, to show our resistance. Not a single right less!”*

Why did indigenous people start to organize?

In the post war period capital looked for opportunities to invest. This provoked conflicts with territories of the guardians of the forest: indigenous peoples, small fisher communities and *quilombos*. A series of dictatorships were backing up the interest of transnational and national companies to acquire short term profits. Indigenous territories were invaded by those who looked for cheap raw materials, rubber or mining and the peoples were used as cheap manpower. Later on, energy- or space intensive production was transferred from Japan, USA and Europe near the raw materials that were found in the Amazon, for instance the energy intensive processing of bauxite to aluminum.¹⁷ Colonial asymmetric relations were renewed. Therefore, the pressure on indigenous land was felt and the indigenous peoples organized in all nine neighboring Amazon states to fight for their right to land, culture and respect.

In northern Peru Evaristo Nugkuag Ikanan became a leader of the Aguaruna people. In 1977 he was among the founders of the Aguaruna and Huambisa

¹⁶ ‘This month’s devastating fires are the all-too-predictable consequence of the Morales government’s decree authorizing new land claims on cleared land’, said Carwil Bjork-James, an anthropology professor at Vanderbilt University. The Guardian 27. August 2019.

¹⁷ For instance, Japanese aluminium production was transferred to Brazil, where the construction of hydroelectric dams was negotiated to more favorable conditions. Large monocultures for instance of soy were and are being implanted serving as export for cattle breeding overseas. Other countries followed with respective transfers. See also Interview mit Nicholas Hildyard: Wer privat in die Infrastruktur investiert, will Gewinne machen, in: Heinrich Böll Stiftung (Hrsg.): Weichenstellungen, Infrastrukturen gestalten unsere Zukunft, Berlin 2020 - 1, S. 14-17.

Council (CAH)¹⁸ which in order to defend their rights set up methods of protection of their territories, health care, education. In 1981 the Inter-Ethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest (AIDSESP) was founded, of which he became president. AIDSESP's national status enabled indigenous communities to insist with their government on respect for and protection of their territorial rights, when threatened by the increasing pressures of capitalist exploitation. Nugkuag then went on to organize the indigenous people of the Amazon basin in the "Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin", COICA, with the common objective to gain respect for their rights and develop alternative strategies. Their first gathering took place in 1984 with representatives of indigenous organizations of five neighbouring Amazon countries, where he became president. Two years later in 1986 Evaristo Nugkuag received the Alternative Nobel Prize from the Right Livelihood Foundation for the CAH and states on that occasion: *"To us, the earth is the basis of our existence and we need to retain her whole with all the variety of nature and we cannot negotiate her price or forget about her."*¹⁹

In 1989 when the COICA was invited to the foundation of the "Climate Alliance of European Cities with the Indigenous Peoples of the Tropical Forests" representatives of these five indigenous organizations from neighboring Amazon States were present in Berlin. Later on, four organizations of the remaining four countries joined the COICA.²⁰

Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of Amazon Watershed (COICA)

COIAB Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Amazonía Brasileña

OPIAC Organización Nacional de los pueblos indígenas de la Amazonía Colombiana

CONFENIAE Confederación de las Nacionalidades de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana

ORPIA Organización Regional de Pueblos Indígenas del Amazonas (Venezuela)

AIDSESP Asociación Interétnica de desarrollo de la Selva Peruana

CIDOB Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia

FOAG Federación de Organizaciones Autóctonas de Guayana Francesa

APA Asociación de Pueblos Amerindios de Guayana

OIS Organizaciones Indígenas de Surinam

¹⁸ At that time 45,000 inhabitants of 140 communities in the tropical forest region.

¹⁹ The Right Livelihood Foundation on Evaristo Nugkuag: "Among other initiatives is one of indigenous bioprospection, which makes use of the Amazonian forest (without felling it) to improve the human quality of life through natural, organic and spiritual approaches to health, medicine, agriculture, nutrition and industrial uses. This would require changes of national policy in respect of education, the law and government structures. The initiative is one aspect of the struggle Nugkuag has undertaken to find concrete expression for indigenous ideas of self-determination and alternative development." See: <https://www.rightlivelihoodaward.org/laureates/evaristo-nugkuag-ikanan/>

<https://www.rightlivelihoodaward.org/speech/acceptance-speech-evaristo-nugkuag-ikanan/> His acceptance speech.

²⁰ coica.org.ec The organization resided in Lima was later transferred to Quito/Ecuador.

In the 90ies up to now indigenous peoples gather for national indigenous marches from the lowlands to the capitals in the highlands (altiplano, sierra), that strengthen internal communication and show their determination to obtain their territorial rights and be respected with their own culture. These marches require extreme exertion from the indigenous families: for example, in Bolivia they had to overcome 4 000 meters difference in altitude.

Examples of Marches of Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon

- 1990 first march of Bolivian indigenous peoples for their **rights to self-determination and territory** from the lowlands to the capital La Paz (4000 m). (7 marches in Bolivia, 2006: 900 km different ecosystems and temperatures, 2011 last march against the Tipnis-Road).
- 1992 Eleven Ecuadorian indigenous peoples **marched for their right to territory** from the lowlands (Pastaza) to the Altiplano (Quito) demanding the right to their territories. Unified indigenous resistance against the exploitation of resources (Oil and mining) in their territories.
- November 2008 20 thousand members of Colombian indigenous peoples marched from the Cauca in the South of Colombia to Bogota with students and trade unions **Minga (traditional cooperation) of social and community resistance of Colombian Southeast.**
- From 2005 till 2019 Brazilian indigenous peoples mobilize every year to gather in the **Free Land Camp** – occasion, on which they inform in many events about their situation and demands as well as insist on their rights for which they organize marches in the capital. Etc.

These movements have led to more visibility and to some advances in demarcation of indigenous territories in the democratic periods of the countries. But still the governments followed economic neoliberal economic policies looking for short term profit by giving concessions to mining companies, by building large hydroelectric dams in order to process aluminum, by building roads without consultation and openly disrespecting indigenous cultures and the amazon ecological systems. (C. Müller-Plantenberg 1996)

How did indigenous peoples extend their organizations – how are their alliances working?

In the 1980ies indigenous people founded an alliance of the peoples of the forest, for instance with *seringueiros* (rubber tappers), whose organization fought against wood merchants and cattle ranchers in Acre/ Brazil in order to fight against the road that was planned through this state. (A. Wagner Berno de Almeida 1998)

In 1989 the COICA entered in contact with European Cities, which looked for an atmospheric alliance for the maintenance of earth atmosphere: they would start the ecological reconstruction in their cities and enter in a reciprocal alliance with the indigenous peoples to promote their plans for maintaining their

territories.²¹ This is an example of their strategy to look for allies outside their countries amongst those, that then already realized that the long term good life depended on the maintenance of earth atmosphere and ecological reconstruction in the western world. The European Cities have several activities for supporting indigenous rainforest peoples in their endeavors to exercise their basic rights. These include the right to be recognized as peoples with traditional territories, the right to self-determination and the right to live in their natural environment:

- Supporting the interests and rights of the indigenous rainforest peoples in national and international strategies and legal instruments such as ILO Convention No. 169 as well as in international agreements that affect their interests, e.g., the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity.
- Support of dialogue processes between the indigenous peoples, governments, the private sector and international institutions concerning an ecologically and socially sustainable use of tropical forests that safeguards the rights of the people concerned.
- Support of projects initiated by the indigenous peoples in situ and the promotion of partnerships between European municipalities and indigenous communities.”²²

In yearly conferences delegates of indigenous organizations of the COICA meet with delegates from the towns. European mayors have been travelling together to the Amazon in order to get to know the reality of the indigenous peoples.

In May 1990 COICA organized a meeting in Iquitos/ Peru to form an alliance with seventeen environmental organisations. Amongst them were the World Wildlife Federation, Greenpeace, and the Rainforest Action Network and others. They published the “Iquitos Declaration” which recognizes the claims of indigenous peoples to own and manage their own territories. *“This alliance is without precedent and encourages us,”* says COICA president Evaristo Nugkuag, *“We simply have to come together to defend the Amazon or we will lose it.”*²³

In 1993 indigenous peoples entered in contact with small farmers in “La Via Campesina” which was founded in that year by farmers organizations and coordinates small and middle-scale producers, agricultural workers, rural women and indigenous peoples from Asia, Africa, Europe and America from 181 organizations and 81 countries. They advocate family-farm-based sustainable agriculture as well as food sovereignty and stand up against land grabbing.

In 2017 after the Conference of the Parties of the 23rd Climate Convention in Bonn the Guardians of the Forest entered the public saying, *“If Not Us Then Who”*.²⁴ As indigenous and local communities from Mesoamerica, Amazonia,

²¹ Climate Alliance or European Cities with the Indigenous Peoples of the Rainforests www.klimabuendnis.org

²² Declaration of Bozano 2000.

²³ Mark R. Day: Indians, Environmentalists Meet Peru: Rain Forest Conservation, in: *The Christian Science Monitor* 21st May 1990.

²⁴ <https://ifnotusthenwho.me/#skip-intro>

Congo Basin and South East Asia they decided to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement.²⁵ and called for:

*“An end to the violence, criminalization and murder of forest guardians,
Recognition and enforcement of legitimate territorial rights,
Direct access to climate finance,
Full respect of the right to free, prior and informed consent,
Evaluation and incorporation of indigenous knowledge in climate change
strategies.”*

In order to spread their message *“If Not Us Then Who”* they explained:

*“We travel on a bus to the main cities of central Europe to tell our stories of struggle in defense of our territories against threats such as illegal mining, fuel extraction, construction of hydroelectric dams, roads and other mega-infrastructure projects, illegal logging, excessive exploitation to obtain raw material for consumer goods, corruption and state inaction.”*²⁶

From the 12-14th of September 2018 they met from Indonesia, North- and South America and Canada in San Francisco/ U.S.A. They organized a march and pointed out, that the Paris Agreement goals are to be met, deforestation had to be slowed down and land management improved. In order to achieve that indigenous peoples, need legal ownership in order to be able to protect the lands on which they live. The representative of Indonesian indigenous people, Rukka Sombolinggi, general secretary of The Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago of Indonesia, explained on that occasion: *“Central governments still believe that the development of a country can only be done when you involve big companies. This is a paradigm we have to change.”*²⁷ In this event the guardians of the forest acted in alliance with the Governors Climate and Forest Task Force, a group of 38 governors from Brazil, Colombia, Côte d’Ivoire, Ecuador, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru and Indonesia which was founded in 2009 and 2014 with the Rio Branco Declaration to reduce deforestation by 80% by 2020 through partnerships with private sector initiatives that leverage the opportunities available through jurisdictional programs, and to rapidly and effectively channel performance-based funds for the promotion of forest-based and forest-friendly economic development to producers, foresters, farmers, ranchers, indigenous peoples, local communities, and other forest stakeholders. These commitments were further reinforced by the Balikpapan Statement in 2017.²⁸

²⁵ from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Venezuela, Brazil, Congo and Indonesia:

Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago of Indonesia (AMAN)
Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA)
National Articulation of the Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB)
Mesoamerican Alliance of People’s and Forests (AMPB).

The Guardians of the Forest’s partner organizations are the Ford Foundation, Global Witness and the Guardian.

²⁶ 16.October-12. November 2017 COP 23, Paris agreement.

²⁷ Mongabay 2.10.18.

²⁸ GCF Task Force <https://www.climateandforests-undp.org/gcf-task-force> .

Representatives of indigenous peoples express their preoccupation with already changing climatic conditions, for instance Adriano Karipuna from the state of Rondônia/ Brazil states:²⁹

"We want to keep the forest alive. Our rivers are drying, our fish is disappearing. But everyone needs nature," Adriano tells Al Jazeera. "We, indigenous, are the great guardians of the forest, water and biodiversity. And everyone needs that. We just want to live freely."

Indigenous peoples proved in their territories to preserve life in and with the forest looking for harmony with nature. It is visible on satellite photos. However, the growing violence and destruction from outside promoted a worldwide process of alliances to meet the challenges to the present and all future generations.

Alliances on regional level for instance with

- Rubber tappers 1980ies and 2017/8/9, (H. Seul 1989)
- Guardians of the forest³⁰
- Cooperatives of indigenous peoples with small farmers³¹

Alliances on regional, national and (trans)continental level with public bodies and NROs such as

- Climate Alliance of European Towns with Indigenous Organization of the tropical forests
- Alliance with Environmentalists 1990 Iquitos, climate justice movement, youth and scientists for future
- Governors Global Climate and Forest Task force

Where does this power of resistance originate?

Indigenous peoples resist because they care for Mother Earth and want to protect her against destruction as they have a feeling of gratitude for having been cared for by her. To them the assumed "progress" has turned out to mean "contamination, eviction, death". Moreover, living in their "integral ecology" includes consciousness about the relatedness of all-natural phenomena. While fighting for their right for an indigenous territory they follow their cosmology looking at the interrelatedness of forest, rain, winds and quality of soils. In their economic calendar they adapt in time and in their planning of the territory, they look for resource islands (bees, termites' nests, medicinal herbs, etc.), for the levels of the river, for lianas to weave their hammocks, for special wood to construct their houses thus adapting to their ecosystem.

²⁹ Al Jazeera 28. Aug. 2019 Mia Alberti: 'Surrounded, afraid': The indigenous guardians of Brazil's Amazon, Indigenous people crucial to the Amazon's protection fear 'genocide' and their land's destruction under Bolsonaro.

³⁰ Georgino and Paulo Paulino of the Guajajara people in Maranhão murdered by illegal wood merchants in 2018 and 1.11.19.

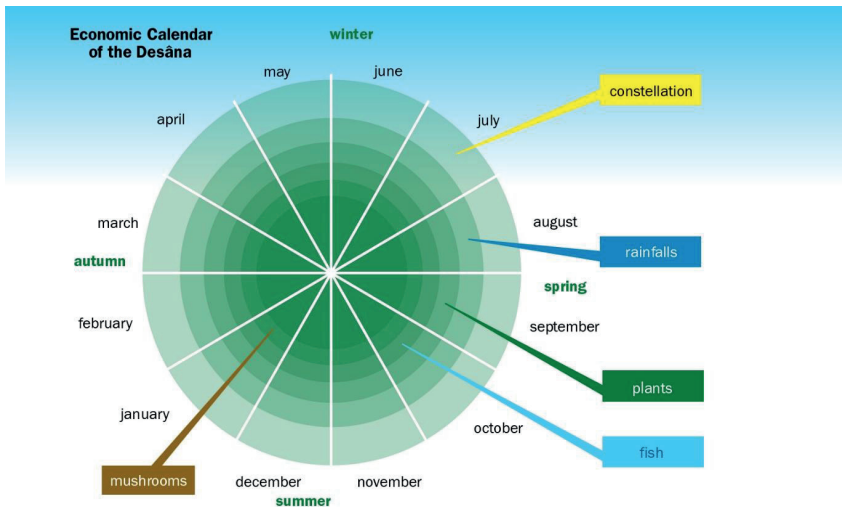
³¹ MOCAF/ México and ACOFOB/Guatemala, etc.

They see natural processes to be in relation with one another. Mother Earth generates life and possesses rights. These have to be respected as her life produces life - as well as our life can protect her life. This reciprocity is at the centre of indigenous beliefs in more than 400 different peoples in the Amazon lowlands. It determines their social organization, actions and struggles to keep up their economy, their striving for respect and rights as well as the care for their natural ecosystems.

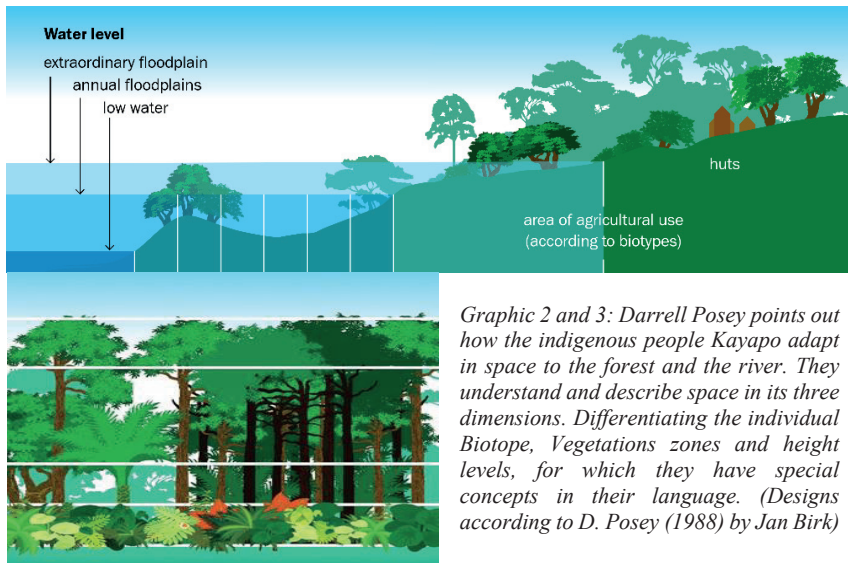
Indigenous mode of production – what are the sustainable answers in Amazon lowlands?

For indigenous peoples impacts on mother earth are challenges in a wholistic way: they affect their relation to mother earth as well as their relation to other human beings. They therefore confront the challenges by trying to strengthen the relation to their territories by adapting in time and space to the nature in their territories.

Tolamã Kenhiri, a wise person from the Desãna people in the northwest of the Brazilian Amazon near the border to Colombia and Venezuela, has explained how his people are adapting in time to yearly natural cycles by observing stellar constellations. They know when to expect rainfalls, when plants will grow and when fish are swimming downriver after the spawning season. During times with less resources, they will go to collect mushrooms. (T. Kenhiri, B. Ribeiro 1986; G. Reichel Dolmatoff 1976; M. Brose 1989) Indigenous people all over the Amazon follow such an economic calendar according to their respective ecosystem (see economic calendar below).



Graphic 1: Economic Calendar of the Desãna



Graphic 2 and 3: Darrell Posey points out how the indigenous people Kayapo adapt in space to the forest and the river. They understand and describe space in its three dimensions. Differentiating the individual Biotope, Vegetations zones and height levels, for which they have special concepts in their language. (Designs according to D. Posey (1988) by Jan Birk)

Indigenous adaptation in space is the result of permanent evaluation of experimentation by indigenous peoples. It has been investigated by ethnobiologist. The knowledge of types of soil, of resource islands, distribution of medicinal herbs, water levels, etc. is part of accumulated indigenous scientific knowledge and of their continuous research. (W. Kerr et al. 1984; D. Posey 1988) Indigenous people pass on the knowledge, which their people have acquired and transmitted from generation to generation.

As the territory is in common ownership of the indigenous people, division of labour is occurring according to gender and age groups, there is no class dependency (M. Santa Cruz et al. 1986; C. Müller-Plantenberg 1985 and 1989).³² Communities enjoy reciprocal relationships. In other words, nowadays peoples of the lowlands generally do not have a designed hierarchical structure. On the contrary their leaders often stand out for their serving functions, for instance by being very experienced in fishing and hunting, being generous and having a high competence in communication (P. Clastres 1990). Gersém José dos Santos from the Baniwa people in the Upper Rio Negro territory explains that indigenous territories are:

“An integral holy space where all living beings exist and where all small beings have a spirit: people, animals, plants, stones. It is the place where the spirits of the ancestors live. All live in equilibrium, source of life, not only material (soil, water, biodiversity) but all spirits, place of coexistence of all living beings, human and not human, it is holy because life is holy and does not belong to anyone but to those who created it. So, a spiritual relationship exists of the individuals, the families, the

³² Manifiesto de los indígenas amazónicos del Perú ante la Primera Reunión Amazónica de Asuntos Indígenas 1981, in: Shupihue, Vol. VI, No. 20.

groups with the territory. There is an organic spiritual relation in the past, present and future. This is a very strong power which cannot be broken. The roots of spiritual life are there. It is the place where political, economic power is being carried out."³³

For indigenous peoples the source of their knowledge is "Nature, Cosmos, a different world view: relation man-nature."³⁴ Gersem José dos Santos explains "All beings and things of the world possess a will, can connect, have intentions, sensibility – as distinguished from occidental philosophy and cosmology the world is always being constructed."³⁵

The knowledge about flora and fauna is imparted permanently, seeds and plants are exchanged, there is a permanent interest in breeding and increasing biodiversity. Soil enrichment practices are carried out. Nowadays there is a trend to forming cooperatives thus comparting the surplus created according to cultural traditions.

In this same sense Abadio Green from the Kuna people names the Curriculum, which the indigenous organization in Antioquia/ Colombia ("Organización Indígena de Antioquia", OIA) is carrying out together with the University of Antioquia ("Universidad de Antioquia", Uda) in Medellín "Pedagogía de la Madre Tierra". Abadio Green, former leader of the National Organization of Indigenous Peoples of Colombia, pedagogue and linguist postulates on this background the necessity of the "dialogue of knowledges". (Abadio Green 2009)

Indigenous Peoples analyze changes of rainfalls and temperatures that are occurring – on the background of cosmological visions of interdependence of natural phenomena. There are many examples of this in different indigenous peoples:

For instance, Davi Yanomami, a wise representative of the Yanomami people wondered:

"Is it possible that the white man does not know, that if he destroys the forest there will be no more rain? And that if there is no more rain there will be nothing to drink or to eat?"

Antonio Nobre, scientist from the National Institute for Space Research in São José dos Campos (INPE/Brazil) refers to this statement of Davi Kopenawa of the Yanomami in his TED Conference³⁶ and consequently asks himself:

"I have been studying this with a supercomputer, tens of thousands of scientists were starting to reach this conclusion and he already knows? A critical point is the Yanomami have never deforested. How could they know the rain would end?"

³³ Gersem José dos Santos from the indigenous people Baniwa: Professor for Anthropology in the Education Department and Coordinator of the Forum for Indigenous Education of the Universidade Federal do Amazonas (UFAM) Lecture 17.7.16.

³⁴ Universidade Fundação do Amazonas (UFAM): o valor da ciência indígena, 20.7.17. In this same sense.

³⁵ Gersem José dos Santos in his lecture 22.2.16.

³⁶ 15. March 2011.

Therefore, when he again met Davi in another conference he asked him: “Davi, how could you know, that if the forest was destroyed, there would be no more rain?” Davi replied: “The spirit of the forest told us.” Nobre:

“For me this was a game changer, a radical change, then something absolutely critical hit me, it is that seeing is believing. Out of sight out of heart. This is a need that who came before me pointed out, that we need to see things. Davi Kopenawa does not need this. He already has something that I think I missed, a register of the ancestors a value that I do not know, which I have not seen. He is not doubting he believes with veneration and reverence in that which the ancestors and the spirits taught them.”

Without doubt this is an example not only of interdisciplinarity but of different knowledge systems, which are involved in the challenge to maintain the Amazon biome. (DAAD/University of Kassel 2003, p.79)

Legal defense an answer to challenges - Looking for a postcolonial symmetric relationship

Indigenous striking capacity to deal with the fragile tropical rain forests ecosystem has in the past been described by anthropologists (G. Reichel Dolmatoff 1976; P. Clastres 1974), ethnobiologists (D. Posey; W. Kerr), and by themselves (T. Kenhiri, B. Ribeiro). UN organizations name indigenous peoples as those who are teachers in the care for ecosystems like wetlands (Ramsar Convention 1971) and who are knowledgeable to fight desertification (UN Convention to Combat Desertification 1996). Later on, the international Agenda 21 declares indigenous peoples to be the path to sustainability. (Agenda 21 1992)

Striving for new legal instruments to safeguard indigenous mode of production:

Their fight for their rights has produced legal instruments even on international level.

History of legal achievements

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948.
- ILO Convention 107 of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples 1957.
- International Pact on civil and political rights 1966.
- International Pact on economic, social and cultural rights 1966.
- ILO convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples 1989.
- UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2007.
- UN Permanent Forum of the Economic and Social Council since 2002 in New York with indigenous participation, recommendations to member countries, how to improve the situation of the indigenous peoples.
- Yearly consultations by the UN Human Rights Council, Expert Mechanism by studies and recommendations for the rights of indigenous peoples.
- Recognition of rights to free, prior and informed consent.
- UN treaty on transnational corporations and Human Rights 2014³⁷.

³⁷ The Human Rights Council adopted resolution 26/9 on the elaboration of an international legally binding instrument on transnational corporations (TNCs) and other business enterprises with respect to human rights in 2014.

Table 1: Indigenous Rights framed by their Countries Political

Country	Dictatorship(s)
Brazil	1964 Marshal Humberto de Alencar Castelo Branco Marshal Artur da Costa e Silva General Emilio Garrastazu Medici General Ernesto Geisel General João Figueiredo till 1985
Colombia	Junta Militar Rojas Pinilla 1957-1958
Ecuador	Military Junta 1963-1966
Peru	Military Coup: 1968 till 1975 General Juan Velasco Alvarado
Bolivia	Hugo Banzer military general and President of Bolivia. He held the Bolivian presidency twice: from 1971 to 1978, as a dictator; and then again from 1997 to 2001, as constitutional President
Venezuela	
French Guyana, Department of France	
Suriname 1975 independence from Netherlands	Military rule of 16 sergeants under Dési Bouterse 1980-1988
British Guyana 1966 Independence from Great Britain	

Systems and Constitutions as well as by international Standards

New Constitution/ Indigenous Rights	ILO C.169*
1988 According to the new Constitution Federal policy in Brazil called for the full demarcation of traditional indigenous lands ³⁸ by October 5, 1993. The assimilationist point of view was abandoned, which considered the indigenous peoples as a transitory social category, destined to disappear. The second innovation is that the rights of the indigenous peoples over their lands are defined in the concept of original rights that are prior to the creation of the State itself.	2002
1991 The new constitution recognizes the multi-ethnic and multicultural composition of Colombia and allows minorities to gain political, legal and cultural visibility and recognition ³⁹	1991
2008 According to the constitution Ecuador is an intercultural, multinational and secular State – good life (sumac kawsay) article 14 und 71 ⁴⁰	1998
1993 According to the new constitution Peru is a multi-ethnic and multicultural state ⁴¹	1994
2009 The new constitution defines Bolivia as a multi-ethnic intercultural state It recognizes the linguistic and cultural diversity of the country as a characteristic which enriches it as a nation – harmony with nature (suma qamaña) article 8. ⁴²	1991
1999 The constitution was drafted by a constituent assembly: human rights are enshrined in the document as guaranteed to all Venezuelans – including free education up to tertiary level, free health care, access to a clean environment, right of minorities (especially indigenous peoples) to uphold their own traditional cultures, religions, and languages, among others. ⁴³	2002
1987 The constitution was written by military government and modified with return to democracy, Forest Management Act 1992 fundamentally changed Indigenous and Maroon rights to land: Communal Forests are areas that surround communal lands.	
1980 According to the constitution the Guyanese People value the special place in our nation of the indigenous peoples and recognize their right as citizens to land and security and to their promulgation of policies for their communities. Article 149G provides that “Indigenous peoples shall have the right to the protection, preservation and promulgation of their languages, cultural heritage and way of life.”	

*Ratification of the ILO Convention 169 Rights of indigenous and tribal peoples in independent states by the states. https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0:NO:P12100_ILO_CODE:C169

³⁸ <http://www.funai.gov.br/index.php/2014-02-07-13-26-43>

³⁹ <http://www.cidh.org/countryrep/colombia93sp/cap.11.htm>

⁴⁰ <http://www.ecuanex.net.ec/constitucion/titulo03c.html>

⁴¹ <https://www.servindi.org/actualidad/128507>

⁴² <https://bolivia.infoleyes.com/norma/469/constituci%C3%B3n-pol%C3%ADtica-del-estado-cpe>

⁴³ Cap. VIII https://www.oas.org/juridico/mla/sp/ven/sp_ven-int-const.html

However indigenous rights have also been framed in the constitutions of their countries and in the respective economic models they are following.

In between 1988 and 2009 six of nine neighboring amazon countries voted a new constitution. However, the fall of the Berlin Wall pushed on globalization in many neighboring Amazonian countries. Demarcation of indigenous territories was not completed in the 1990ies. On the contrary even demarcated indigenous territories were invaded by national and international investors large projects causing impact chains that affected guardians of the forests and global commons (A. Ab Saber 2002; CIMI, CEDI, IBASE, GhK 1988; ONIC, CECOIN, GhK 1998).

Revising instruments of environmental law

The instruments chosen to control environmental and social impacts starting off with the Environmental Impact Analysis (EIA) – applied sooner or later worldwide – were used in the Amazon basin, in Brazil from 1986 onwards. (C. Müller-Plantenberg 2002) Looking at the efficiency of the instrument after more than 30 years we recognize that projects were becoming larger.⁴⁴ Combined impacts of different large projects endangered the amazon biome and surpassed local impacts but rather acquired impacts on a regional scale. (C. Müller-Plantenberg 2006) Moreover, large projects and their impacts on indigenous territories and the environment were increasingly devastating the Amazon Biome, that had not been considered as a wholistic body, interrelated with global commons with rainfalls, winds and ocean currents. Scientists demanded more concise conceptualization and monitoring of EIA, however the rampant search of minerals, waterpower, agrobusiness and related infrastructure for commercialization led with unprecedented speed to violation of human rights and minority rights as well as to destruction of entire ecosystems, droughts and warming up in Amazonia so that the breakover point approaches quicker then estimated beforehand.

Promoting university studies of indigenous peoples

In 2013 Ex-President Dilma Rousseff started the Program of Permanent Scholarships (Programa de Bolsa Permanencia, PBP) to facilitate university studies for indigenous people and *quilombolas*, which was reduced in 2018.⁴⁵ From the beginning it granted access to education for more than 18 thousand students paying for their housing and transport. Dinamam Tuxá, a leader of the Articulation of the Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (Articulação dos Povos

⁴⁴ For instance: The Initiative for the Integration of the Regional South American Infrastructure (La Iniciativa para la Integración de la Infraestructura Regional Suramericana, IIRSA) ; other large scale projects with impact chains are such as bauxite-energy-aluminium production and supply chain in the tropical forest, Impacts at all places of production chain: uprooting, displacement of population, deforestation, methane emissions caused by decomposition of biomass in the water reservoir, Pollution respectively intoxication of the water bodies, Impoverishment of the soils etc.

⁴⁵ Brasil de Fato 7.6.2018.

Indígenas do Brasil, Apib), laments, that these cutbacks of education by the federal government cause the lessening support of indigenous peoples and at the same time there are cutbacks as health, housing and access to land. *"This policy of cutbacks exceeds not only budget questions, but also a policy of genocide which the Brazilian State is adopting in the last years."*

Young indigenous women and men lawyers take up the defense of their peoples

The scholarships for indigenous peoples in Brazil and other amazon countries already had a remarkable effect.

For example: the indigenous lawyer Joênia Wapichana from the Wapichana People in Roraima/ Brazil has been elected as deputy in the Brazilian Congress. She is working with the Indigenous Council of Roraima (CIR), in order to create a better way to make their voices heard. CIR is enlarging its legal support work thus making it possible for victims of persecution, torture and racial discrimination and other violent attacks, to advance their cases in a legal way, in order not to be treated as second class citizens. By strengthening local capacities, she is acting as a bridge between the indigenous community and representatives of the government. *"It is as David and Goliath. But it has always been like that for us. We had to fight for everything we have in order to conquer it. Although I am the only indigenous voice in Congress, I will not be alone (R. Leonhard 2018).*

Patricia Gualinga an indigenous lawyer from the Kichwa people in Sarayaku/ Ecuador has led a long fight of her people against an oil company on their territory (R. Leonhard 2018):

"We had gained the right of our territory however according to the constitution everything under surface belongs to the Ecuadorian state. The government has the control over it. And that is what they pushed through. In 1996 without consulting us they gave a license to the Argentinian oil company CGC. Hiding behind it there is French and US capital, which prefers to outsource the dirty side of the business to a less known company...We were confronted with militarization, a strategy of defamation and intimidation, a strategy of blockade of our access roads. But we withstood many month...who does not communicate does not exist we laid the first internet access to Sarayaku in order to ask the world for support. We installed a website and alarmed all our alliances from human rights organizations to exert pressure on the Ecuadorian state."

They ran an internet café powered solar cells. At the same time, they appealed to the International Court for Human Rights, which finally in 2012 pronounced a judgement in their favor. The oil company had to leave with all their explosive substances for oil drilling, however with a compensation by the state. The community received a compensation as well with which a bank for microcredits was opened and two airplanes bought in order to be able to transport ill or injured people to the next hospital.

Fany Kuro Castro from the Uitoto people in the remote south of Colombia has studied law as well and became the first woman lawyer, who could work for her people. At the beginning of the 20th century, they numbered around 50 000

people. “By the rubber extraction in our forests we were eradicated with only 60 persons surviving”. Now the Uitoto population grew again up to 3000 persons. Fany is engaged to support the indigenous peoples who do not want to be in contact with civilization, but rather kept in peace. This is a problem as there are many interests to invade their territories. She explains the example of the Nukak Maku in the Guaviare, who were discovered 30 years ago:

“Of originally 2000 no more than 500 are left. They disappear like water between the fingers. Government has not been able, to avoid this dying away. The guerrilla, right wing paramilitary, illegal wood merchants, Coca peasants invaded their territory and caused a social chaos.” For her the preservation is an important task, as *„the use of one’s own language is putting order to thoughts on the own territory.”*

Communication Potential of indigenous peoples

The new instruments of communication between the organizations and their legal assistance have advanced in a significant way. That is how by using these new instruments some indigenous peoples were able to defend themselves against oil prospection and exploitation, against the construction of some hydroelectric dams for the time being.

Unifying criteria in a conceptual perspective

What is necessary however – considering the human rights abuses, the still prevailing racist disrespect of the guardians of the forest – is a new vision of how to break up a system that has lost respect for life of human beings and nature and of how to invert it. The Amazon biome has suffered not only several wounds but is being intervened in a mortal way: deforestation affects the headwaters of rivers, blocks the lifelines of the forests and its peoples by the construction of dams. Rivers are disappearing owing to large monocultures, the relatively thin layer of humic soil is not cared for and disappearing. The forest that used to serve as a sink for carbon dioxide is being cut down, the atmosphere is enriched with emissions of methane from forests drowned in the reservoirs of hydroelectric power stations, from the per fluorinated hydrocarbon emitted into the air by aluminum smelters. The race for more and more profits has even led to conscientious calculation of death: Iron ore mining process – like most mineral extraction – needs retention reservoirs.

For example: In 2015 the tailing dam of the retention reservoir of the iron ore mine Germano at the Rio Doce in the Municipality Mariana/ Brazil broke: 62 Mio.m³ tailings destroyed villages along the river Doce in the state of Minas Gerais and the coast of the state Espírito Santo. Water supply of some of the 230 municipalities and of big towns in the watershed was in danger, nineteen persons lost their lives. The mine is an enterprise of the Vale S.A. and BHP Billiton. The height of the dam had just been increased. Only three years later at the beginning of 2019 the tailing dam Córrego do Feijão of the retention reservoir of the iron ore mine Brumadinho/ Brazil broke. Ca. 15 Mio. m³ mud with the tailings of the

iron ore mine covered the mine at noon including the staff canteen and neighboring houses, farms, guesthouses and roads. 272 people lost their lives. The owner was again Vale. The technical supervision association, who had approved the functioning of the dam, was accused.

In the course of the mining activities this is quite a common danger: companies who want to get hold of faster profit look for the possibility to construct large mines with corresponding large retention reservoirs.

A new way of dealing with this phenomenon can be exemplified with the case of the retention reservoir which is being constructed for the “Mirador Copper Mine Project” in Ecuador in the upper watershed of the Amazon. On the 1st of March 2019 experts of the “UN Rights of Nature” requested the Ecuadorian court to suspend the construction of the retention reservoir for the Mirador Copper Mine in Zamora Chinchipe an Amazonian province of Ecuador. The mine was to extract 60 000 t copper ore. The open cast mine was to measure a depth of 800 m and a latitude of four kilometers. It would have impacts on 200 water bodies and terrible consequences for the Shuar culture and their capacity to carry on their lives. The region is of a high biodiversity and contains endemic species. So, the mine is in direct contradiction to the rights of nature, centerpiece of the Ecuadorian constitution.

Indigenous way of life respects the interrelationship of all living beings: mother earth

Courageous reversal of this process is overdue. Listening to indigenous peoples we hear them say that mother earth is maintaining them, caring for them giving them all they need and that they feel responsible for mother earth for her protection and for re-establishing the equilibrium necessary for life in harmony with nature, which they are always striving for, for “sumac kawsay”(Ecuadorian constitution inspired by Kichwa culture), “suma qamaña”(Bolivian Constitution inspired by Aymara culture), “tajimat purus” (concept of the Awajun und Wampis peoples in northern Peru that means good life). (B. Weiler 2017)

Green supply chains – respecting symmetric cooperation – care for mother earth.

Contamination of water and soil, deforestation, risk to heating up the atmosphere put in danger the whole planet. APIB leader Sonja Guajajara said at the 15th free land camp, when 4000 persons from 150 indigenous peoples gathered in Brasilia in April 2019. *“If you compare indigenous territories with other areas of nature protection you can see that indigenous territories are kept in the best form.”*⁴⁶ The Brazilian indigenous organization APIB together with Amazon Watch has compiled a list of 27 north American and European companies that had business relations in 2017-2019 with Brazilian loggers, agrobusiness and soya producers, who are involved in conflicts with indigenous territories, for which they had been

⁴⁶ Indigenous Leader urges to put sanctions on Brazil, The Guardian 18.12.18.

made responsible and accused.⁴⁷ Her legal assistant, the indigenous lawyer Eloy Terena, from the Terena people, explains that it is necessary to create green supply chains, better coordination, more transparency of capital flows.⁴⁸

“European and North American merchants can contribute by revoking the relations with those Brazilian companies that do not respect our protection. In this way they send a signal to Bolsonaro, that the rest of the world does not tolerate this policy. If European companies, go on to support these Brazilian companies they will have to assume the responsibility for destroying tropical forests and committing crimes to indigenous peoples.”⁴⁹

Wholistic answers in the interrelated ecosystems– based on common analysis

As environmental and human rights conflicts worldwide⁵⁰ surpass limits of survival of ethnic minorities and ecosystem survival the ‘Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin, COICA’⁵¹, has published an open letter in which they declare an ecological and humanitarian emergency. They further state:

“We request and summon the unity and solidarity of all the Indigenous Peoples of Abya Yala and the world to testify, denounce and end the genocide and ecocide that the peoples are suffering in the ancient territories of the Amazon basin.”

Actually, we open our eyes and perceive, that local, regional and even national impacts are in danger to induce global impacts. Human rights, environmental movements and public administrations on regional level form alliances with guardians of the forest. Indigenous women point out that global challenges have led to a planetary struggle.⁵²

⁴⁷ Insisting on this “Indigenous Groups Call Out the Financiers of Amazon Destruction at COP 25: Black Rock, Vanguard, JP Morgan Chase, Santander, BNP Paribas, HSBC and all the banks and asset managers providing financing for and investing in industries in the region.” Signed by the APIB, Amazon Watch and Rainforest Action Network, see Financial Times' special COP 25 supplement on 5th of December 2019 names and shames those profiting from Amazon destruction.

⁴⁸ Complicity in Destruction, how northern consumers and financiers sustain the assault on the Brazilian Amazon and its Peoples, Amazon Watch September 2018.

⁴⁹ Sonia Guajajara and Nicole Polsterer: EU must back indigenous people against Bolsonaro’s attacks, FERN Blog 12.4.19: “The EU is a huge market for Brazilian agricultural exports, in particular, soya and beef – which are major causes of land rights abuses and deforestation in Brazil. In 2017 Brazil accounted for or 42 percent of EU beef imports, and historically soy products accounted for a third of Brazilian agricultural exports to the EU.

What’s more, the EU is also in the throes of negotiating a comprehensive free trade deal with the so-called Mercosur trading bloc, of which Brazil is the largest and most powerful member.

Given all this, the EU is well placed to exert the kind of demand-side financial pressures that could act as a brake on Bolsonaro. As one commentator put it: “For a country that has become an agricultural superpower, exporting massive amounts of soybeans and beef, the loss of even a small part of these markets translates to millions [of dollars].”

⁵⁰ See EJOLT project mapping of environmental justice <http://www.ejolt.org>; <http://www.ejolt.org/2014/01/international-law-and-ecological-debt/>

⁵¹ The indigenous partner association of Climate Alliance in Amazonia.

⁵² On their march in Brasilia 14th of August 2019.

Ecological Law – Rights of Nature – Integral Ecology – turning away from anthropocentrism

Indigenous peoples experience tells them, that reciprocal relations between communities and nature can maintain ecological harmony. More and more lawyers and their colleagues from other disciplines point out

“(…) that the current structure and implementation of environmental law and governance is not adequately protecting the foundations of life...only an Earth-centred approach to law and governance, in harmony with nature, can offer hope, truth and justice.”⁵³

In their Siena declaration 2018 the Ecological Law and Governance Association (ELGA) challenges the

“(…) notions of state sovereignty without global responsibility, the concept of growth without limits, fields of economics not rooted in ecological realities, and negotiation practices that fail to recognize power imbalances and the foundational necessities of life on Earth.”

ELGA follows and complements the Global Alliance for the rights of nature (GARN).

GARN was formed in 2010 in Cochabamba where they defended:

“The idea of a non-human entity having legal personhood is nothing new; we already grant this to corporations, trusts, charities, joint ventures and nation states. Although referred to as a legal “person,” these legal rights are not the same as human rights, which include civil and political rights. Instead legal rights comprise three elements: legal standing (the right to sue and be sued in court), the right to enter and enforce legal contracts, and the right to own property.”⁵⁴

That is why they are

“(…)asking the UN to formally engage in drafting and adopting a Declaration of Rights of Mother Earth to complement the Human Rights Declaration. A Declaration acknowledging Nature as a living being, deserving of rights and protection just like humans.

Under current law, Nature is treated as a commodity and has no standing in court. This void in the law is at the core of the depletion and destruction endured by Nature today and must be corrected.

We propose the adoption of the from the people’s conference in Cochabamba to be adopted by the UN, or to be used as inspiration. This Declaration includes the wisdom and knowledge of people from ancient and modern societies from around the world and points the way to aligning our laws and ways of living with those of Nature.”⁵⁵

⁵³ Ecological Law and Governance Association (ELGA): The Siena Declaration of Solidarity at the Launch of the Ecological Law and Governance Association (October 2017) <https://elga.world/siena-declaration> is an Addendum to the Oslo Manifesto for Ecological Law and Governance from 2016 <http://oslomanifesto.org/>. ELGA, has its origins in the 2016 Oslo Manifesto for Ecological Law and Governance, a call to action to reframe law and governance “from environmental law to ecological law.”

⁵⁴ <https://therightsofnature.org/new-article-about-rights-of-nature/>

⁵⁵ <https://www.rightsofmotherearth.com/our-mission>

In 2014 the International Tribunal for the Rights of Nature was

“(...) established by citizens to investigate and publicize human rights violations (...) provided social pressure to create and strengthen international human rights law, the International Tribunal is meant to foster international Rights of Nature law.”⁵⁶

The initiative explains, that the

“(...) ‘People’s Tribunal’ provides a vehicle for reframing and adjudicating prominent environmental and social justice cases within the context of a Rights of Nature based earth jurisprudence. The adjudication process provides a platform for informed legal analysis of diverse cases based on Rights of Nature. With each case, the Tribunal will recommend actions for reparation, mitigation, restoration and prevention of further damages and harm. The Tribunal provides a framework for educating civil society and governments on the fundamental tenets of Rights of Nature and an instrument for legal experts to examine constructs needed to more fully integrate Rights of Nature.”⁵⁷ (H. Kopmina et al 2019)

Preventive legal action in favour of the rights of nature, of mother earth and peoples – An example

In the course of the mining activities it is quite a common danger: companies who want to get hold of faster profit look for the possibility to construct large mines with corresponding large retention reservoirs. Above we have already looked at the case of the Mirador Copper Mine. Another instrument to order human rights violations and destruction of nature is on its way worldwide by those who defend responsibility of corporate interests, a treaty alliance that is working under the auspices of the UN. Some countries have already passed a supply chain law, which addresses the social and ecological care of the products imported. NGOs of other countries – like an alliance of NGOs in Germany – are on their way to pressure for a supply chain law.⁵⁸

The form to make such human rights violations visible to a larger public in order to be able to confront and stop them can be promoted by media. A Case of the EU Action Plan to Protect Forests and Respect Rights shows how this has been an important instrument: The French corporation Bolloré was filmed by France Télévisions. Vincent Bolloré, one of the key shareholders of SOCFIN, is a European palm oil and rubber company reputed for land-grabbing and violating the rights of communities living near plantations.

“The documentary revealed the poor living conditions of workers and child labour in the plantations of SOCAPALM, a subsidiary of SOCFIN and the biggest palm oil company in Cameroon. Bolloré claimed the documentary was defamatory and demanded that France Télévisions pay the exorbitant sum of EUR 50 million in damages but lost his defamation case on 27th of March 2019. Journalists stated

⁵⁶ CRAIG M. KAUFFMAN and PAMELA L. MARTIN

⁵⁷ <https://therightsofnature.org/rights-of-nature-tribunal/> Looking for integral analysis of man-nature-relations:

⁵⁸ <https://lieferkettengesetz.de/> The ministers of work, cooperation and economy decided to adopt such law on the 12th of February 2021.

*that his proceedings were initiated to silence their voices. The Court of Appeal in Paris (Pôle 2, ch. 7, n 18/15647) has now agreed, condemning Bolloré for initiating 'abusive proceedings' and ordering EUR 10 000 in damages to the television company. The situation is not rare. Despite voluntary adoption of social responsibility and zero deforestation policies on paper, some European companies' actions are in stark contrast. This recent jurisprudence is remarkable, showing that the corporate giant does not always win. Yet the journalist, television company and communities in Cameroon should not have had to fight so hard and so long, and at such expense, for justice: structural change is needed."*⁵⁹

Integral Ecology

The concept of Integral Ecology becomes the point of reference not only for lawyers who look for "Ecological Law" but also for some of those, who have been accompanying indigenous peoples. With his encyclical "Laudato Si" Pope Francis highlights this concept which expresses the reciprocal relation between human beings and nature.⁶⁰ He emphasizes that it will be necessary to look responsibly for the aims and consequences of economy taking into account the integral ecology:

*"For new models of progress to arise, there is a need to change 'models of global development'; this will entail a responsible reflection on 'the meaning of the economy and its goals with an eye to correcting its malfunctions and misapplications'. It is not enough to balance, in the medium term, the protection of nature with financial gain, or the preservation of the environment with progress. Halfway measures simply delay the inevitable disaster. Put simply, it is a matter of redefining our notion of progress. A technological and economic development which does not leave in its wake a better world and an integrally higher quality of life cannot be considered progress. Frequently, in fact, people's quality of life actually diminishes – by the deterioration of the environment, the low quality of food or the depletion of resources – in the midst of economic growth. In this context, talk of sustainable growth usually becomes a way of distracting attention and offering excuses. It absorbs the language and values of ecology into the categories of finance and technocracy, and the social and environmental responsibility of businesses often gets reduced to a series of marketing and image-enhancing measures."*⁶¹

With his Amazon Synod Pope Francis met amazon peoples in Puerto Maldonado/ Peru in the beginning of 2018. During the preparation phase more than 86 000 peoples had answered the questions. In Puerto Maldonado/ Peru he at first listened to indigenous men and women. This is reflected in the Final Document of the Synod, which took place in Rome in October 2019:

⁵⁹ <https://www.fern.org/consumption/eu-action-plan-to-protect-forests-and-respect-rights/> (Pôle 2, ch. 7, n 18/15647); World Rainforest Movement: SOCFIN's plantations in Africa: many places of violence and destruction, Bulletin 233, Sept. 21, 2017.

⁶⁰ Gods order to human beings, (see old testament Genesis 1,28): „Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that move upon the earth."

⁶¹ Laudato Si 194.

“All participants were very conscious of the dramatic situation of destruction, which is affecting the Amazon. That means the disappearance of the territory and its habitants, specially the indigenous peoples. The Amazon forest is a ‘biological heart’ for the earth which is more and more put in danger. It is in an uncontrolled rush towards death. It urgently needs radical changes, a new direction, which permits to save it. Scientifically it has been proved that the disappearance of the Amazon biome will have a catastrophic impact for the whole of the planet!”

As the Vatican News states:⁶²

“Pope Francis went on to stress the importance of the Amazon, calling it a symbol. He postulates that the bishops need support constructing a church with an Amazon vision and urges that the future is at stake there. The Pope states that exploitation ‘does not just harm creation, but people.’ Indigenous Peoples had to face brutal exploitation at every level, as well as the ‘destruction of their cultural identity.’ Referring to those who are aware of it: ‘We have seen how many young people are demonstrating in favour of the Amazon.’ being aware of the ecological dangers ahead, not only in the Amazon but also in the Congo and in other places, like his own home in Argentina.”

The post synod period is the third phase of a societal departure, a turnaround for strengthening of cultures, looking for broad alliances for care of nature.

Bishop Erwin Kräutler – the bishop of Altamira who supported indigenous peoples in their fight against the Belo Monte hydroelectric dam over the Xingu River - sums up the lesson learnt with all those participating in the Amazon Synod in Rome by citing the correct translation of the man nature relationship explained in the Bible: *“Put your foot on the earth, nourish her and care for her!”*⁶³

Leonardo Boff, known as representant of theology of liberation, insists on that we really have to change the course redirecting us to true sustainability. Otherwise, the

“(…) destruction of livelihood, decline of biodiversity, unlimited exploitation of resources, permanently rising consumption of energy, economic and financial systems hostile to life will lead the planet on the brink of the abyss.” (L. Boff 2016)

Language and concepts of indigenous peoples – actual potential to unify perspectives and actions

When the ecological economist Juan Martinez Alier wrote about the environmentalism of the poor he found that the language poor people used was different to the language of environmentalists (J. Martinez 2002). Looking at the global upsurge of conflicts, which involve poor people who defend the forest – the case of the Chipko movements in the Himalaya in the 70ies, the case of the seringueiros (rubber tappers) fighting with Chico Mendes in the Northwest of the Brazilian Amazon against loggers and ranchers in the 80ies, the Ogoni and others who struggle in the Nigerian Delta in Africa against oil extraction as well as those who fight Eucalyptus plantations in Thailand and the oustees who fight against

⁶² Vatican News 26.11.19.

⁶³ (Setz den Fuß auf die Erde und hegt und pflegt sie.) cf. Old Testament Genesis 1,28.

the damming of rivers with the construction of hydroelectric plants in India or the atingidos (those affected) who fighting against the dams across the Tocantins, Xingu, Tapajos and other rivers in Brazil and other countries, new peasant movements who joined via campesina against agro-industry and biopiracy – he gathered that their movements strive for social justice against large enterprises and the state. They try to stop harm to their lives, health and culture and insist on all levels to be heard to maintain the global commons: soils, waters and atmosphere. Juan Martinez Alier gathered that all of these contained ecological conflicts although the terms were not used. Those movements affected by the unequal distribution of ecological costs and benefits will not be silenced – on the contrary their claims are heard by those who agree to stop those who are destroying local and global environments. So, languages used have not been the same. There were no symmetric dialogues.

However, the indigenous concepts of the multiple care for mother earth has gained the potential of unifying perspectives. The Ecological Law and Government Association (ELGA) states, that the environmental law “*is not adequately protecting the foundations of life.*” They challenge notions of

“(...) state sovereignty without global responsibility, the concept of growth without limits, fields of economics not rooted in ecological realities, and negotiation practices that fail to recognize power imbalances and the foundational necessities of life on Earth.” (ELGA 2017)

These lawyers ask for global responsibility as they conceive the interrelatedness in integral ecology. They emphasize the importance of symmetric relations in order to maintain life on earth.

For the catholic church Integral Ecology is the concept which is used synonymous with mother earth. It shows a departure and turnaround of the catholic church. As ‘Laudato Si’ emphasizes there is no possibility to choose a compromise on whatsoever middle course. This is emphasized also by Leonardo Boff, who explains, that up till now concepts of economic development have – in spite of the label ‘ecological’ or ‘sustainable’ – remained inside the old paradigm of growth and therefore are inadequate. He insists in a new relationship of mankind to all non-human beings and to earth and thus underlines the perspective of integral ecology.⁶⁴

Antonio Nobre from the National Institute for Space Research (INPE/ Brazil), whom we mentioned earlier states in 2015⁶⁵:

“We have already lost almost half of the original forest to clearcutting, deforestation and forest degradation. The most serious problem is that the degradation of the forest comes not only from the usual causes, such as logging, cattle raising and other similar things. The climate, altered by human actions, is drying the forests that are still intact, generating a domino effect in which the dry

⁶⁴ Leonardo Boff wrote this in 2016 commenting ‘Laudato Si’ including recommendations for economy, education and society.

⁶⁵ Quote from: Antonio Nobre, A scientist advocates for the Amazon, Researcher explains how we can restore and protect the world’s largest forest, Interview with Karina Miotto, São José dos Campos, Brazil 2015.

forest catches fire and is destroyed, which further alters the climate, compromising other areas that could otherwise be preserved.”

In an Interview in 2019 he differentiates between three impacts: the local, regional and global:

„These three (impacts) have already reached a serious even catastrophic level. New studies show that the east of the Amazon has already passed the breakover point. The climate has already changed to such a degree, that the forest cannot maintain itself any more.”

„Again that has immense impacts on the ‚biotic pump‘, which is creating the so-called flying rivers. (It induces) air currents, which carry the humidity that has evaporated from the forest in the atmosphere thousands of kilometres to central Brazil with its enormous agrarian production and to the Brazilian south, the economic centre of the country. There rain is coming down and is permitting life in the towns like São Paulo. Without this water from the Amazon there would be a desert there.”

“The local and regional effects of course do have strong global impacts”

„What we need, that is all over the world, is what I call ‚esforço da guerr‘. That is a reaction, which is synonymous to the drama of war. Climate Change is a reality. Climate Scientist are warning in the past 30 years. Now we enter the critical state of emergency, a situation which had been predicted for in about 100 years. Now there is no more talk about 100 but rather of 8 years (...) colleagues say, if we do not reroute radically in 18 months, we will have lost the ship (...). The international group of researchers, to which I belong, says in the past 15 years, that forests are essential against climate change. However inside of the academic community there were doubts about this.”

„Our approach is based on the water cycle, which is being supported by the forest, that is by its function as biotic pump.” He then stated that we could go about reaching to maintain this. “Look at Greta Thunberg she is telling the truth. We must at once dare to put everything we have to reach this, otherwise we will perish.”⁶⁶

Indigenous claim for symmetric relations – shared in solidarity by youth and scientists.

All who esteem self-determination, cultural and biological diversity, understand that the perspective of cultural diversity is the base for integral ecology on local, regional and planetary level to start actions that counteract colonial asymmetric relations.

Greta Thunberg who understood the planetary challenge as well was able to stimulate the Fridays 4 Future movement. After her intervention in the United Nations

“(…) sixteen child petitioners – including Greta Thunberg and Alexandria Villaseñor – from 12 countries around the world presented a landmark official complaint to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child to protest against the lack of government action on the climate crisis. The child petitioners – aged between 8 to 17 – allege that Member States’ failure to tackle the climate

⁶⁶ „Amazonasexperte warnt: ‚Nicht nur für Brasilien wird es das Ende sein‘, Die Vernichtung des Amazonas' wird auch Europas Klima verändern, warnt einer der führenden brasilianischen Umweltforscher“. An Interview of Andreas Weiser, Tagesspiegel printed edition 30th of August 2019.

crisis constitutes a violation of child rights. They urge the independent body to order Member States to take action to protect children from the devastating impacts of climate change."⁶⁷

"Change needs to happen now, if we are to avoid the worst consequences. The climate crisis is not just the weather. It means also, lack of food and lack of water, places that are unliveable and refugees because of it. It is scary," said Greta Thunberg on that occasion.

Anita Jakawilu Juruna from the indigenous people Juruna who live in the Brazilian Amazon lowlands initiated a climate conference to bring together "(...) youth activists, indigenous leaders, scientists and forest dwellers in a region known as Middle Earth, they are building a new alliance and demonstrating that the rainforest is central to life on Earth." Anita explains: "(...) we are connecting young people from Europe to the youth of indigenous peoples, youth of quilombolas and youth of ribeirinhos, who live at the riverbanks."⁶⁸ Thus she and her community accompanied by the indigenous leaders Davi Kopenawa Yanomami and Raoni Metuktire Kayapó and by scientists are promoting postcolonial alliances to maintain diversity.

Radical change prioritising integral ecology and symmetric relations unify perspectives to care for mother earth.

⁶⁷ 16 children, including Greta Thunberg, file landmark complaint to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF UN for every child in danger 23rd of September 2019. They are represented by global law firm Hausfeld LLP and Earthjustice.

⁶⁸ The Climate Conference (COP 25) had been planned in Brazil in 2019. Bolsonaro, the Brazilian president, cancelled this plan. Chile also backed out of hosting the COP. So, it then took place in Madrid/ Spain. Fabio Erdos, Jonathan Watts, Marina Costa and Lawrence Topham: Middle Earth, the fight to save the Amazon, The Guardian 3.12.2019 (video).

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