



The primary aim of ENGOV is to generate new knowledge on how environmental governance is shaped in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). The project focuses on new developments and policies that enable or prevent the dual goal of ending poverty and protecting natural resources. Another important aim of ENGOV is to develop a more integrative analytical framework on environmental governance and natural resource use in LAC.



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WEBSITE

More information on the partners, activities, results and publications of the project can be found at www.engov.eu

SPECIAL EDITION:

CONFLICTS, KNOWLEDGE DIALOGUES AND ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

Mina Kleiche-Dray (IRD, France)

The UN General Assembly declared 2014 the International Year of Family Farming. It is a way of acknowledging the contribution of indigenous and peasant populations to 70% of the worldwide food production. In France, Laurence Tubiana, a special representative for the Climate Conference (COP21) to be held in Paris in 2015, has depicted family farming as a way to respond to the reality of Climate Change. However, peasant movements in the international sphere, including Vía Campesina, claim that the only way to face the challenge may be if the Agrarian Reform is accomplished. This tension between social activism and the international discourse acquires a symbolic character whenever the involvement of indigenous and peasant populations in environmental government is at stake.

This ENGOV newsletter presents a number of conflicts, resistances and attempts at dialogue between governmental projects and the response of populations. Conflicts about transgenes in Mexico, water governance in Ecuador, timber exploitation in the Brazilian Amazonas and the renewed academic interest in the articulation of traditional wisdom on nature bear testimony to that.

THE LEGAL BATTLE AND SOCIAL CONFLICT AROUND TRANSGENIC CORN IN MEXICO

Jean Foyer (CNRS, France)

The ratification at court of the ban on the commercial sowing of transgenic corn in Mexico has rekindled a more than ten-year-old debate on the co-existence of transgenic and local varieties of corn. In Mexico, the potential advent of the first transgenic corn on the one hand is perceived as a threat against biological and cultural diversity, and on the other it raises awareness of the value of local corn strains.

Since the arrival of transgenic Mexican corn in 2001, a social movement of resistance has spread throughout the country. In 2002, the Network in Defense of Maize (Red en Defensa del Maíz, RDM) started organizing forums and awareness workshops on the theme of corn among peasant communities, and introduced its own research on the presence of transgenes in the local maize strains. Other organizations, including Greenpeace and the Environmental Studies Group (Grupo de Estudios Ambientales, GEA) have been equally active in awareness-raising and in the legal dispute around the genetically modified organisms (GMOs). In 2007, another social platform was launched around the movement "Without Corn there is No Country" (Sin Maíz No Hay País).

Caught between this resistance movement and commercial pressures, the Mexican government has remained in an ambiguous position. While it mandated a moratorium in 1998 on transgenic corn plantations, it also let in approximately 10 million tons of corn, essentially transgenic, imported from the USA. Faced with an almost total lack of applicable biosafety rules (no control at the borders or on labels) these imports have exposed the country to the dissemination of transgenes in local corn. This is coupled with the biosafety law enacted in 2005 that was intended to end the moratorium by adopting a framework for the co-existence of transgenic corn in the states of the

north with subsistence crops of local corn in the center and south of the country. A series of legal actions taken as part of the active resistance of several Mexican organizations has so far been able to block commercial permits, bringing the issue of transgenic corn to the top of the national agenda in Mexico.



Yachay City of Knowledge Project, Ecuador. After the expropriation of several estates in Urucuquí, a project inspired by the Silicon Valley was born. (Photograph taken by Thierry Ruf)



Yachay City of Knowledge Project Model, Ecuador (Photograph taken by Thierry Ruf)

TOWARDS WATER GOVERNANCE IN ECUADOR: HOW TO INTEGRATE THE HISTORY OF THE URUCUQÍ IRRIGATION CHANNEL INTO THE YACHAY PROJECT

Thierry Ruf (IRD, France)

In 2011, the President of Ecuador selected Urucuquí, in the north of the Ecuadorian Highlands, as location for a major project driven by his administration: the creation of an Ecuadorian “Silicon Valley,” through the expropriation of 4,000 hectares of farms (“haciendas”) in the area. It involves a vast operation for the construction of a new city of 100,000 inhabitants known as Yachay (meaning “knowledge” in Quechua), with the goal to start a university focusing on the new technologies and innovative startups.

In this context, the political power in Quito draws on the support of a local population that has been able to resist and improve its farming practices by reorganizing water distribution and producing the food base since colonial times (CICDA Project, now AVSF). The Urucuquí territory is thus of particular interest in terms of community water management.

Urucuquí has seen successive phases of water conquest. During the Inca rule, it was a Caranqui dominated area, and water management remained in indigenous hands even well into colonial times, to the bewilderment of the Royal Audience of Quito. With the progressive settlement of people from the colonies in the borders of the indigenous territory, chieftains ended up losing their rights to the “big channel” they had built back in 1592 on the “mother of the water” river. They were deprived of any governance on the waterways, and excluded from other local resources. Likewise, when in the mid-20th century the mestizo descendants of the chieftains staged an uprising against the largest hoarder of water, Jijón & Caamaño, owner of the San José Hacienda, the community advocated for a model of social redistribution of water in Ecuador. The constituent assembly of Quito in 1944 expropriated Jijón & Caamaño’s rights to the big channel, and entrusted its management to the local assembly of Urucuquí. However, it was an action with a limited scope, as only 300 hectares of family farmlands were irrigated then, while some 50 haciendas continued to have full control of all other channels to irrigate 4,000 hectares of sugarcane.

Some decades later, in the early 21st Century, the Andean sugarcane economy collapsed. This marked the end of the era in which water and land governance without a common consensus was possible. The next era was signaled by a crisis of haciendas that changed hands and found almost no alternative productive solutions.

In this context of disruption of the old territorial domination pattern and promotion of a guiding project for urban and technological development an urgent question has to be raised; Will the instances of scientific and academic involvement requested by the government be capable of improving the position of peasant families in the local governance of lands and channels?



Tending the forest (Photograph taken by Claudia López)



Ka'apor artisan women (Photograph taken by Claudia López)

THE KA'APOR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY AND ITS STRUGGLE TO DEFEND THEIR TERRITORY IN THE BRAZILIAN AMAZON

Claudia Leonor López (Museo Paraense Emilio Goeli, Brasil)

The struggle of the Ka'apor to defend indigenous territory in Alto Turiçu, in the Brazilian Amazon, stands out in the prevailing context of socio-environmental conflicts. In the 1960s, with the construction of the Belém-Brasília road, the state of Maranhão became integrated to the dynamics of expansion of the agricultural and lumbering frontier. A rapid deforestation process was triggered by the raising of cattle for export, soybean crops, eucalyptus plantations for the production of pulp, timber production, and mining. The opening of the road between Belém and São Luis, the capital of the State, gave rise to a dynamics of encroachment into the primary tropical forests of the Maranhão Amazonas, where small villages were formed that nowadays are the center of several municipalities.

In the 1980s, approximately 1300 settlers and lumber workers invaded the Indigenous Land of Alto Turiçu, the Ka'apor territory, and the Gurupi Biological Reserve, extracting large amounts of fine wood, especially de *pau d'arco* (*Tabebuia sp.*), a species which, according to the Ka'apor cosmology, gave origin to this people. In 1993 there were attacks on the indigenous villages by settlers and lumberjacks, and counter attacks of the Ka'apor on the illegal camps established within Indigenous Land. Some areas suffered a larger impact from illegal lumbering, mainly in the south, and in the surroundings of what is today the Xiepihu-rena village, established in 2002 by Ka'apor leaders with the goal to prevent future invasions.

In the course of the 21st Century, the Alto Turiçu Indigenous Land continued to be subject to continued invasions by lumberjacks that illegally exploit natural forestry resources, generating serious conflicts in the villages and attacking the indigenous population that declares its opposition to these criminal actions.

In August 2014, and in the absence of any assistance from the responsible entities, the people of Ka'apor took the defense of their territory in their own hands. The effort had extensive reverberations in the media, and the Ka'apor reappeared in the national and international political scenario, with their claims on their territory and on the natural resources, even confiscating machinery used in illegal lumbering. New villages are being established in the areas that are most heavily impacted by these illegal activities, as part of a strategy to guarantee occupation and defense of the territory.

Based on their thinking tradition and cultural expressions, but also by means of their political activism and fighting for recognition of their collective rights, the Ka'apor are trying to build their livelihood, seeking, in the first place, to guarantee their physical existence but also importantly, the right to a territory that is free from invasions and will enable the autonomous reproduction of their lifestyle and cultural identity as a people.



During a Chamula ritual, proposed as an additional activity to participants of the Mexican Ethnobiology Conference (Photograph taken by David Dumoulin).



Mexican Ethnobiology Conference (Photograph taken by David Dumoulin).

ANOTHER ETHNOBIOLOGY IS POSSIBLE!

NINTH CONGRESS OF THE MEXICAN SOCIETY OF ETHNOBIOLOGY, SAN CRISTOBAL DE LAS CASAS, APRIL 24 – MAY 4, 2014

David Dumoulin (Université de Paris-3, France)

The 9th Mexican Ethnobiology Congress counted on the participation of a thriving academic community. It was the first time ever that the Congress had such a large affluence: more than 650 presenters and almost one thousand participants. Behind the amalgamating power of the term “ethnobiology,” a series of sub-disciplines were deployed at the Congress: ethno-mycology, ethno-ecology, etc. True, the discipline of ethnobiology yet hardly finds its way to the names of labs, departments or university programs. However, it has been gaining visibility, particularly starting with the transformations of the “Ethnobiology” magazine and the rapid growth in the number of Bachelor theses dealing with this topic.

The title of the 9th Congress, “Why Another Ethnobiology is Possible,” refers to the politically ambiguous uses of the discipline, as well as crosscutting internal controversies, particularly regarding relationship between scientists and those maintaining traditional wisdom alive. In the borderline between utopia and methodological discussion, the *Other Ethnobiology* would open up new avenues of research, where scientific production would no longer be at the service of the dominant epistemology and its mode of accumulation. It proposes a new scientific world that can in turn accommodate a diversity of worlds. A different ethnobiology is possible!

RECENT ENGOV PUBLICATIONS

- Bull, Benedicte and Mariel Cristina Aguilar-Stoen (eds) (2014) *Environmental Politics in Latin America: Elite dynamics, the left tide and sustainable development* (Earthscan from Routledge).
- De Castro, Fabio, Pitou van Dijck, Barbara Hogenboom (2014) **The Extraction and Conservation of Natural Resources in South America: Recent Trends and Challenges** Cuadernos del CEDLA, No. 27: http://www.cedla.uva.nl/50_publications/pdf/cuadernos/cuad27.pdf (Open Access).
- Dijck, Pitou van (ed.) (2014) **What is the Future for Amazonia? Socio-Economic and Environmental Transformation and the Role of Road Infrastructure What is the Future for Amazonia?** Cuadernos del CEDLA, No. 28: http://www.cedla.uva.nl/50_publications/pdf/cuadernos/cuad28-What-is-the-Future-for-Amazonia.pdf (Open Access).
- Drummond, José Augusto (2014) *Proteção e Produção: Biodiversidade e Agricultura no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro; Garamond).
- Leiva Lavallo, Patricio (ed) (2014) *Hacia un espacio Eurolatinoamericano para la educación superior, ciencia, tecnología e innovación* Primera Cumbre Académica, Comunidad de Estados de América Latina y el Caribe – Unión Europea, Foro Académico Permanente ALC-EU (Santiago de Chile: JC Sáez Editor SpA.). Con contribuciones de Michiel Baud, Cristián Parker y Héctor Sejenovich.

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