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Anna Greissing, François-Michel Le Tourneau

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Traditional communities, multinationals and biodiversity: the example of an innovative partnership between the cosmetic firm *Natura* and the Brazil nut extractivists of São Francisco in the Sustainable Development Reserve of the Iratapuru river region.

Autor :

Anna Greissing

PhD student, Centre de Recherche et de Documentation sur l'Amérique Latine (CREDAL),

UMR 7169 of the CNRS,

28 Rue Saint Guillaume, 75007 Paris, France

annagreissing@gmail.com

Co-author :

François-Michel Le Tourneau

Geographer, Centre de Recherche et de Documentation sur l'Amérique Latine (CREDAL),

UMR 7169 of the CNRS,

28 Rue Saint Guillaume, 75007 Paris, France

fmlt@fmlt.net

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Abstract:

The Iratapuru Sustainable Development Reserve is mainly exploited by the community of the São Francisco village. Due to its efforts to organize its members around a production co-operative and to improve their living standard, but also as a result of massive funding from local and international institutions, this community has become a symbol for the actions of sustainable development undertaken with and in the benefit of « traditional » communities living in protected areas in the Amazon region. After a long period of support by several public policy institutions, Brazilian as well as international, a new private actor is continuously taking the place of the state since 2004, when an innovative partnership was established between the Brazilian cosmetics company Natura and the São Francisco village. During the last five years, this community-company deal has clearly exceeded the limits of a pure commercial contract in order to develop into an “all-inclusive” sustainable development model for the extractivists of São Francisco induced by the representatives of Natura. Corresponding to their marketing strategy as a socially and environmentally responsible firm, this model should be based on several agreements between the community and the company that would allow economic growth and social equity through the exploitation and transformation of Natural resources (above all, the Brazil nut) by the local cooperative, as well as the preservation of the Natural habitat of a community that has traditionally been making its living from a rational use of tropical forest products.

However, if a certain economic stability of the extractivists of São Francisco can be affirmed during the last six years, a number of questions arise nonetheless around the degree of sustainability that their partnership with Natura has brought to the community in social and cultural terms. This article tries to discuss these issues on the basis of a several fieldworks done by the authors in the region.

We will first give a short outline of the rise of extractive reserves as a policy making device for the preservation of socio- and biodiversity in the Amazon region, and a résumé of the geographical context of our study area, the Jari river region. We will then describe the Brazil nut collecting activity as it is done by the extractivists of the São Francisco community inside the protected area of the Iratapuru reserve. The article shows how the São Francisco community has gradually become a showcase for different public policy development models aiming to strengthen the local economy. Finally, we will focus on the latest case in this chain of experiences: the community-company deal between the “traditional community” and the multinational Natura, as the first of its kind in the Brazilian Amazon region, and discuss its different consequences for the community in social, economical and ecological terms.

Key Words: Brazilian Amazon, sustainable development policies, protected areas, Natural resources, extractive activities, traditional communities.

Introduction:

The rise of extractive reserves as policy making tools for conservation of biodiversity and traditional populations in the Amazon region

Extractive reserves appear in the Brazilian Amazon at the beginning of the 1990ies, in response to the assassination of the rubber-tapper movement leader Chico Mendes (Brown and Rosedo 2000a and 2000b; Alegretti, 2002). Their objective is to guarantee land tenure to “traditional communities” living from “extractivism”, that is collecting resources in the rainforest and selling them on local markets (Hecht, 2007). Most of them were obtained after years of political fight, local population usually building successful alliances with local or national preservationist NGO (Brown, 2002; Brown and Rosendo, 2000). Several legal statutes exist for these reserves, the main ones being the “Extractive reserve” (*Reserva Extractivista* - RESEX) and "Sustainable development reserve" (*Reserva de desenvolvimento sustentável* – RDS). Both RESEX and RDS are protected areas belonging to the category of "direct use", designated to a sustainable use of their Natural resources by local communities (Fearnside, 2003; Allegretti 1990, 2000) and to the joint objective of biodiversity conservation and economic development (Goeschl and Camargo Iglioni, 2006).

Although RDS and RESEX show some minor differences at the juridical level (the RDS statute still lacking final rules, see Pinsard Vianna and Rivaben de Sales, 2006), they generally have very similar characteristics in practice. They show the same property right structure, with land belonging to the federated or federal state and right of use being granted to communities or individual households, the management of which is ruled by “traditional” principles. Currently the Brazilian Amazon holds 68 RESEX (25 belonging to federated states and 45 belonging to the federal government) and 16 RDS (15 belonging to federated states and 1 belonging to the federal government), totalizing more than 238 350 square kilometres of legally protected land (~22,23 % of all the Conservation Units of the Brazilian Amazon).

Even if the extractive reserves have been endorsed as relevant conservation tools by big international institutions such as the World Bank (Whitesell, 1996), their economic viability is, however, unclear (Coomes and Barham, 1997; Peres et al., 2003; Escobal and Aldana, 2003). As a matter of fact, some authors state that they are unviable (Homma, 1993) or only conditionally viable (Browder, 1992; Goeschl and Iglioni, 2004; Brown and Rosendo, 2000; Wunder, 1999; Southgate, 1998; Assies, 1997; Almeida, 1994), because of the low price local markets offer for the forest products and the often missing structures for commercialisation, as well as the distance to the market, and the lack of technical innovation or new product research initiatives. Even within the advocates of extractive reserves (Allegretti, 1990 and 1994; Menezes, 1994; Andrade, 1999) many acknowledge that land tenure security granted by the reserves is not enough and that economic initiatives, focusing on product transformation *in loco* or targeting specific high value market niches must also be set up in order to make extractive reserves economically viable in the long run. There are many examples of such attempts, for instance around the *couro vegetal* (Silberling, Pantoja Franco and Anderson, 2002) or around the exploitation of the Acre rubber-tapper image in order to promote some products (such as condoms made of their rubber). However, one could hardly point out a case of unconditional economical success in those projects (Goeschl and Iglioni, 2006), and the living standards inside the extractive reserves in general still remains very low. This raises the question of the value of the standing rainforest (Lescure and de Castron, 1992; Clay and Clement, 1994).

In other aspects, as much as ecology or culture conservation is concerned, extractive reserves have been rather successful. From the beginning, authors pointed out that traditional communities had an interest in protecting the forest from which they gain their living and which they have been managing for decades (Anderson, 1992; Plotkin and Famolare, 1992; Clay and Clement, 1993). As a matter of fact, extractive reserves have permitted to a number of communities to maintain their livelihood in the forest, and have also been efficient in inhibiting

deforestation (Lefebvre et al., 2006). This point is important since the question of compatibility between the inhabitant's presence and biodiversity conservation has been harshly debated (Brown, 2002). Extractive reserves have also put an end to the traditional “*aviamento*” system, which was in many cases very close to a kind of slavery, where the extractivist was kept in eternal debt towards his patron (Hecht, 1989).

The rubber-tapper extractive reserves of the Brazilian Amazon, especially those of the state of Acre, are the best known examples. The movement has however spread more widely and touched other types of traditional communities. In the state of Amapá, extractive reserves were created in benefit of the Brazil-nut gatherers (*castanheiros*) of the Jarí region who, similarly to the rubber-tappers, earn their life collecting resources deep inside the rainforest. Within these, the case of the São Francisco do Irapuru community is especially interesting. After several attempts by their cooperative to find a way to valorise their production on the market, they ended up passing a contract with a cosmetic company named Natura, which claimed that this commercial partnership would be oriented in order to create a situation of sustainability. After six years, the results of this quest for sustainability and the determinants of this relationship can be analysed¹. To that end, we will first make a presentation of the study area (the Jarí river region) and of the Brazil nut production process in the case of the extractivists of the São Francisco community. Second, we will give an overview of the different development efforts in Irapuru, concentrating on the latest experience with the cosmetic company Natura. Last, we will discuss some aspects of the relationship between Natura and São Francisco as a special case of a community-company deal.

I. History of the Jarí river region and the creation of the Irapuru Reserve for Sustainable Development

a) The Jari region and its geo-historical context

The area surrounding the Jarí river is a region of dense Amazonian rainforest, characterized by high rainfall (2400 mm per year) during the rainy season (January - July), but also by a long dry period (August-December) (IEPA, 2002). It is covered by a forest particularly rich of Natural resources traditionally collected in the Amazon: rubber (*Hevea Brasiliensis*), *copaíba* (*Copaifera reticulata ducke*), Brazil nut (*Bertholletia excelsa*), and many others. The region was disputed by the Portuguese, the French and the Dutch, and ended up in the hands of the formers that developed permanent settlements since the XVIIth century.

From 1889 on, a young adventurer from Ceará named José Julio de Andrade starts building an empire in the region. By controlling all of the entry and exit points of the river system in an area larger than 3 million hectares, he becomes one of the biggest *seringalistas* in the history of Amazonia. Using violence and relying on the traditional *aviamento* system, he keeps the monopole over the exportation of raw materials of the area. According to some sources (Picanço, 2005) production of the Brazil nut reached up to 75 000 hectolitres per harvest at this period, seven times more than the production of the state of Amapá in 2004. In 1948, at the age of seventy, Julio is obliged to sell his « property » to a company owned by a group of Portuguese businessmen, who govern the region until 1967, when their main company, the *Jarí S.A.*, is purchased by the American multimillionaire Daniel Ludwig.

Ludwig aims at constructing a huge and exemplary project grounded on the use of biomass for the production of industrial cellulose and the exploitation of mining resources (kaolin, bauxite). Investments were huge. A special factory-plant was even imported from Japan and brought by sea to the port of Monte Dourado. The « Jarí project », which was strongly criticized in the following due to the deforestation it provoked, also remodels completely the whole region, as the jobs promised by the company induce a strong migratory movement. The project however encounters severe economic problems, forcing the American to sell it in 1981. It is then taken over

¹ This work is grounded on three fieldworks held in 2007 (as part of the DURAMAZ project) and 2009.

by a number of Brazilian businessmen before ending up under the ownership of a company originating from São Paulo, the ORSA Group, in 2000.

The economic transformations of the region induced by the project have both directly and indirectly influenced the extractive populations of the upper Jarí river region. Many extractivist families decided to abandon the forest and to move to the new cities (Laranjal do Jarí, Munguba and Monte Dourado). Some of them have managed to be employed permanently by the company; others have developed a « come and go » strategy between the city and the forest. In other cases, some of the migrants that had been attracted by the Jarí project in the first place have then settled within some of the already existing extractivist communities in the region or have gathered together at some point in the forest, leading thus also to the creation of new communities.

In terms of land rights, the presence of the Jarí Company has always constituted an important mortgage for the extractivists, as the company considered some of their collection areas as their property. During the 1990ies, this latent land conflict is nevertheless resolved successfully by the creation of two conservation units (*unidades de conservação*, UC) by the Brazilian government: the Cajarí River Extractive Reserve (RESEX) in 1990 (as one of the first 4 extractive reserves in Brazil), and the Iratapuru Sustainable Reserve (RDS) in 1997². The latter is of a special importance as it constitutes the « entry door » into a massif of UCs between the Amapá and Pará states (Figure 1), as well as a territory particularly rich in Brazil nut trees.

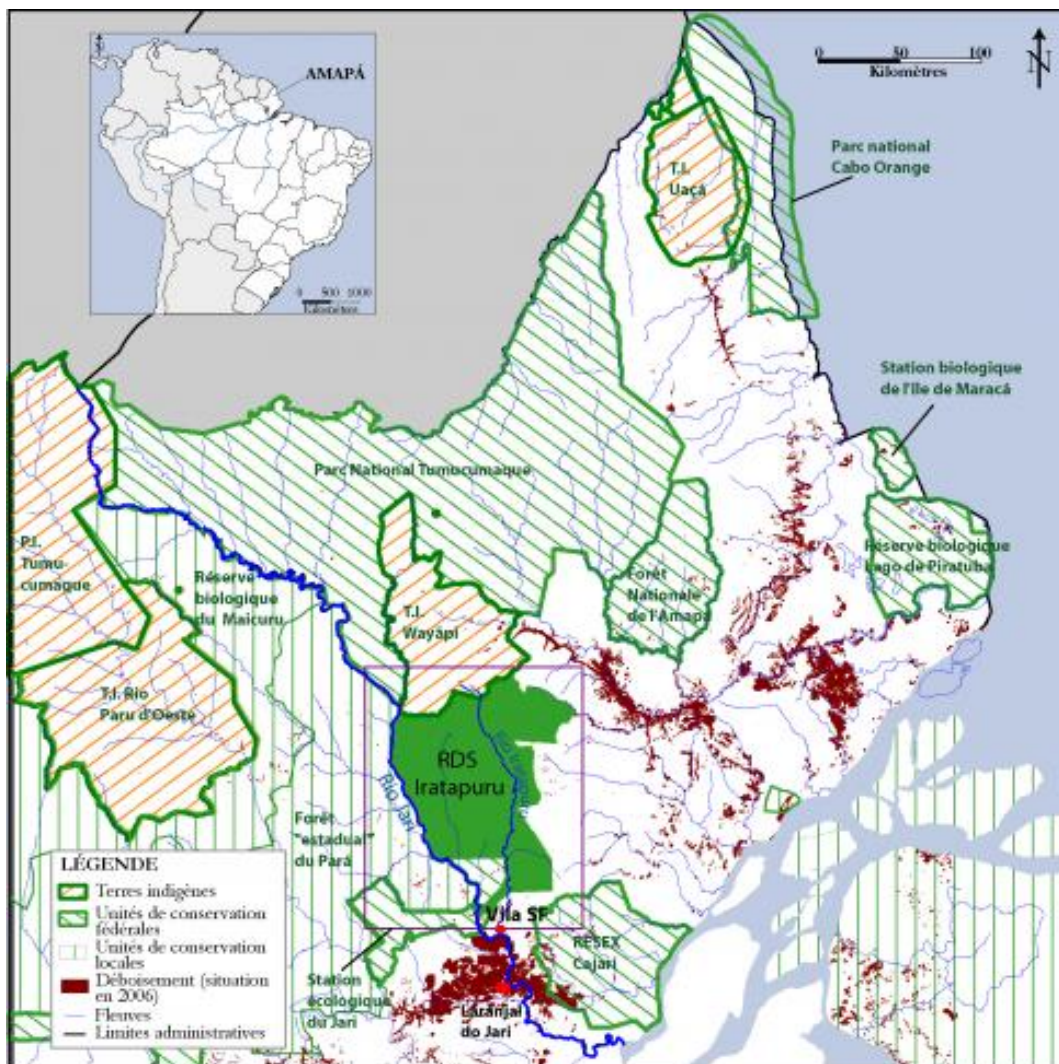


Figure 1: Map of study area

² A judicial conflict between the Jari S.A. and the federal government will continue after this point, but it will be resolved at the advantage of the government in 2008 for the RESEX Cajarí and there are no doubts that some contested lands in the area of the RDS will also be confirmed.

b) The Iratapuru Reserve for Sustainable Development

The Iratapuru RDS extends over more than 806 000 hectares of forest, spread over three of the state's *municípios*: Laranjal do Jarí, Pedra Branca do Amaparí and Mazagão. There is no population living in the reserve itself, but communities situated at the north-east frontier (the communities of the *Cupuxi* river), and above all at its southern limits (*Cachoeira de Santo Antônio, Padaria, São Militão, Retiro, São José* and *São Francisco do Iratapuru*) exploit some of the Natural resources of the reserve. Nevertheless, the latter can be considered as its main beneficiary today, as most of the collection areas (*colocações*) are owned by the families of this community, whose position at the mouth of the Iratapuru river allows them to control the access to most of the RDS territory.

In spite of its proximity to the city of Monte Dourado and Laranjal do Jarí, the community is still strongly isolated due to its difficult access. In fact, it is not possible to go up the Jarí River because of the waterfall of Santo Antônio da Cachoeira. People living up the Jarí river thus have to rely for their transportation needs on a combination of road and boat difficult to set up as there is no public transport and no telephone exists.

São Francisco (hereafter São Francisco) can be considered a *village* since the late 1980ies, when several families, formerly living isolated along the Iratapuru river, decided to gather at its conjunction with the Jarí river. They created a cooperative in 1992 (the *Cooperativa Mixta dos Produtores Extrativistas do Rio Iratapuru* or Comaru) for the production of Brazil nut flour, which was sold in the city for a better price than the raw nut. In the years after its creation, the cooperative attracts more and more families, so that almost all of the families that had once been living spread up along river eventually joined the São Francisco community by the end of the 1990ies. In August of 2007, the village counted 35 houses and 184 inhabitants, and was characterized by a very young population (57% of the community's population is under eighteen).

II. The Brazil nut production process of the extractivists of São Francisco

a) Collection, transformation and commercialisation of the Brazil nut: an arduous activity

The exploitation of the Brazil nut is the most important activity of the community of São Francisco. At the same time, it supposes a complex and physically exhausting enterprise, as the collecting areas (*colocações*) are located far at the inside of the reserve, up to 80 km from the village, spread along the shores of the Iratapuru River, as well as along his three main tributaries - Amazonas, Pau Mulato and Areião. These areas (figure 2) are only accessible by boat, and only during a certain period of the year, when the river is high enough for navigation.

There are 62 *colocações* inside the RDS, most of them belonging to families of São Francisco, either attributed according to a system of customary law (transmission by heritage) or through the right of usage (for new areas or areas that are abandoned by their tenants). Their management and exploitation is structured around an informal system, characterized by a vivid exchange of *colocações* between owners (*donos*) and tenants (who rent one or more *colocações* for exploitation). The contracts are made orally, and can take the most diverse forms: a fixed renting fee paid at the beginning of the season, a fixed or proportional share of the season's production, etc.

In order to collect and transport the nuts, the people of São Francisco use home-made wooden boats, as well as lighter aluminium boats for transportation. Several small waterfalls and rapids make these trips a difficult and often dangerous enterprise, as shipwreck often means the loss of big part of a family's production and equipment, sometimes devouring the whole of a seasons' benefice. The collecting and transportation process is also a race against the clock. Brazil nuts are ripe from the end of January on, but it is not possible to collect them before the end of February, when most of them have already fallen on the ground, because of the danger represented

by the fruits fall³. It is in March, thus, that most of the families undertake their first expeditions into the forest. The gathering process ends with the beginning of the dry season, when navigation gets more and more difficult and eventually impossible, usually at the end of July.

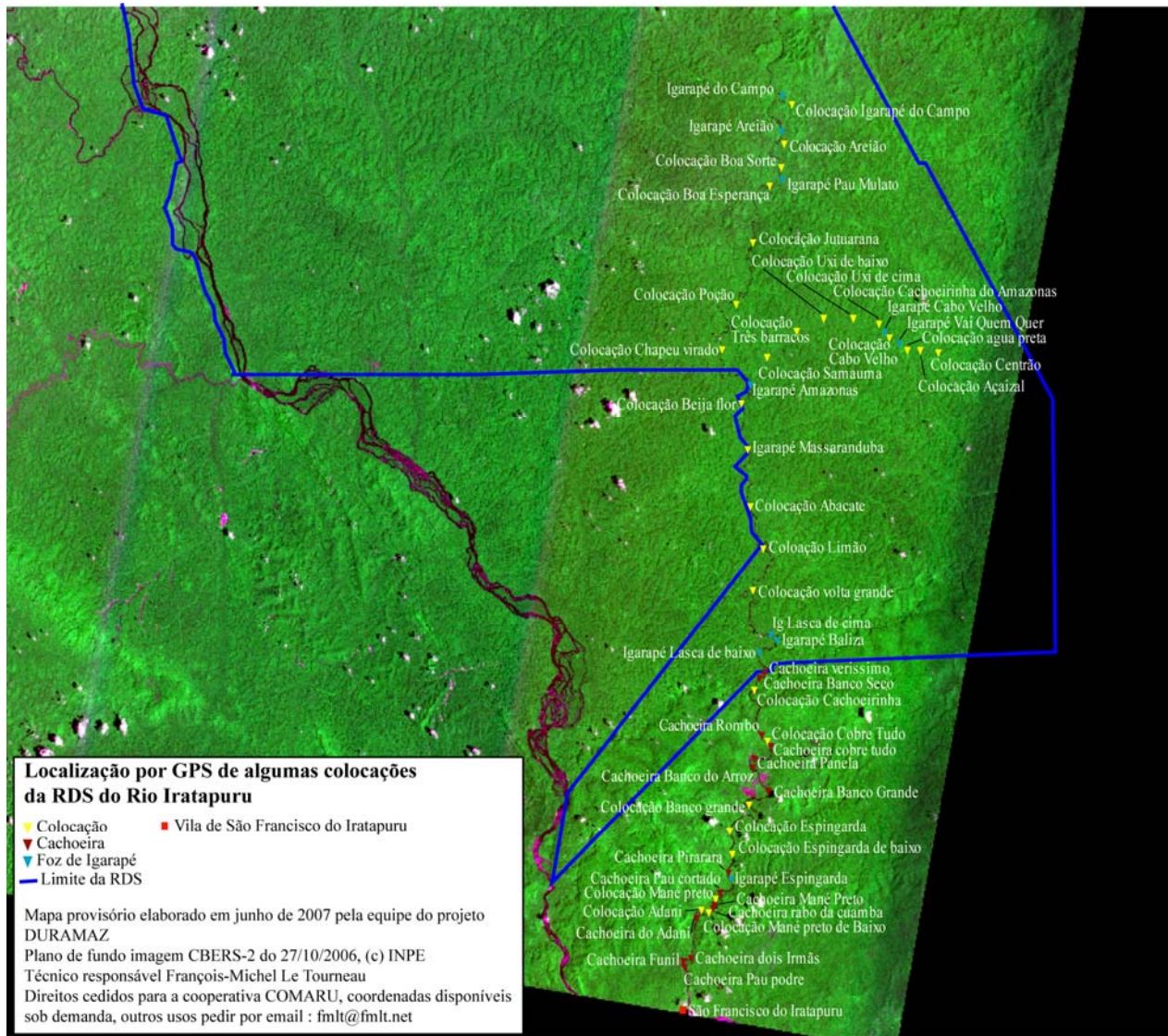


Figure 2: GPS localization of some of the *colocações* used by the people of São Francisco

Expeditions are generally organized by patrons (*donos*), who possess a collection area and a boat. They hire several men (*castanheiros*) that will stay in the collecting area during the whole harvest. These *castanheiros* are often members of the family (some of them living in other parts of the region and coming to Iratapuru only for the harvesting period) but also workers employed only seasonally (*contratados*). Other members of the patron's family (spouse, children) also often accompany him during the expeditions. According to their location, the trip to the collection areas can take from a few hours to several days. Besides the crew, the boat is usually fully loaded with a large stock of food and supplies, as everything needed for a long stay in the forest has to be brought on board (supplies for working, cooking and hunting, medication, cloth, hammocks, etc.). The harvesting takes several weeks, even months, depending on the number of *castanheiros*, the size of the collection area and the productivity of the Brazil nuts trees. As Hecht (2007) points out

³ Brazil nuts generally have the size of a small coconut when they fall from the trees. They are collected by the extractivists and carried together to a big pile at strategic points between the Brazil nut tress, where they are broken up with the help of an axe. Each nutshell contains an average of 10 to 15 seeds, still covered by a hard shell. It is those seeds that are packed and brought down the river.

in the extractive reserves of Acre and Rondônia, women play a significant role during the stay in the forest, as they carry out complementary activities to the ones connected to harvesting, such as cooking, keeping the base camp clean and taking care of the children, but also fabricating the baskets used for collecting or even participating in the laborious work of cracking up the hard nut shell in order to set free the nuts inside and carrying them to the camp, where they are washed and packed into sacks for later transportation to the village.

The *colocações* are reached from the river bank, where the base camps are installed. They include deposits (*paiol*) for the storage and pre-drying of the nuts that are afterwards packed into 60 kg sacks (signed with the owner's initials) and piled up at the river bank. They are then ready for transport to the village (figure 3). Brazil nut trees (*castanheiras*) are spread up in the forest, sometimes at considerable distance one from the other. The whole collection area is called *castanhal*. A complex system of paths (*piques*) link up the different areas rich in Brazil nut trees and the base camp, and, when the path system is extensive, intermediary deposits are created for a better organization of the harvesting (figure 3). The harvesting work is not continuous. Many days and often nights are spent in more intensive hunting or fishing. Also, visits to other *colocações* play an important role in the building up of solidarity relationships with other families, as mutual aid is often required. Also, these visits are appreciated as moments of exchange and conviviality in the otherwise often solitary weeks of the harvesting period.



Figure 3: Images of the collecting process: breaking of the *oriços*; storage at the base camps close to the river; Earmarking the sacks with the certification label; transport down the river to the village

The transport of the nut to the village constitutes another laborious and time consuming enterprise. It has to be done in several steps because of rapids and waterfalls complicate the journey down the river: at two of the five waterfalls (see figure 2), the boat's contents must be unloaded and transported manually. For the men, this often implies days of charging the 60kg

weighing sacks filled with Brazil nuts, while at the same time pulling up or descending the boat with the help of a rope. Another strategy consists in keeping only a small part of the sacks in the boat in order to pass more safely the critical sections of the Iratapuru, using intermediary storage points along the river and making more trips up and down the river. Despite the difficulties, the patrons generally rush to have their nuts down the river because the price paid by the intermediaries is usually at the highest in the beginning of the harvesting season. Also, a short storage of the nuts guarantees a better quality, whereas at the end of the season humidity and rain often produce high losses of nuts.

Once the sacs have arrived at the village, they are either delivered to the cooperative or sold directly to the intermediaries who show up regularly in the village. *Donos* who possess a boat also often drive their production directly from the RDS to the city or at least up to the nearest road, as prices for the nuts are higher the closer you sell them to the city: in 2007, 50 R\$ per hectolitre at the village, 55 R\$ at Porto Sabão (the connection point between the Jarí river and the road leading to Monte Dourado), 60 R\$ at the city. This allows them to sell their nuts behind the backs of the cooperative leaders, as the *castanheiros* do not always stick to their promises of delivery to the village cooperative.⁴



Figure 4: Passing of the waterfall of *pau cortado*; boat inside an *igarapé* transporting *castanha* to the village

In the case of the nuts being delivered to the cooperative, they are first dried in the sun during several days. The rotten ones are then sorted out - a work usually carried out by women and children. Then, the nuts are carried to the cooperative, where they are toasted in a special drying machine and then opened with the help of small mechanic machines operated by one person. This rather tedious work is carried out by both women and men of the village during various weeks at the end of the harvest season.

b) *Brazil nut extractivism: a prosperous activity?*

Even it is very difficult to determine the real amount of profit that the Brazil nut actually brings to the Iratapuru community (we have identified an astonishing multitude of other economic activities, which makes it difficult to calculate the exact financial benefit of each), the data we have been able to collect show a raise of most of the families' income in the recent years, especially if compared with those of the neighbouring communities. Our calculations for year 2007 reveal an average wage of 1.6 minimum wages (380 R\$ in Brazil in 2007), which represents a fair wage in rural Amazônia. Comparing with the statistics of the 2000 census, we see that 60 % of the families in Iratapuru gain more than a minimum wage, whereas more than 60% of the

⁴ The reason for this is frequently that the extractivists have to sell their first production to the intermediaries in order to finance their second trip to the *colocações*, as selling to intermediaries, even if they certainly pay less than the cooperative, means cash payment.

households of the neighbouring communities gain less than that.

If the average income of the members of the São Francisco community can be considered as rather high, disparities of wage between the different members of the community also are significant and depend on the amount of nuts harvested by each of the families, their different strategies of commercialization, as well as participation of the each of the families in other services, but also on the other income sources that a family has been able to activate, such as for instance benefits from the local and federal government (retirement pension, *bolsa familia*, etc), or other work done outside the community (gold-digging, boat or house construction, local commerce or the selling of agriculture products, fish or meat on a local base). Families that do not owe an area of collection (*castanheiros*) usually have the lowest income, as they often depend on occasional jobs on a daily basis, such as boat trips for transportation or breaking the nuts at the end of the harvesting season. In conclusion, a most decisive factor for the benefits remaining at the end of the season is the ability of each of the families to manage their business as a complex combination of different activities.

III. Iratapuru, a laboratory of development models

The actual prosperity of the community is based on the efforts made since the beginning of the 1990ies, when several significant interventions took place that were framed by different development institutions and policy makers.

a) Public policy initiatives for São Francisco: from government efforts to support by international institutions (1992- 2002)

Since the beginning of the 1990ies, the community of São Francisco do Iratapuru has been developing a gradual process of improvement of their living conditions and income perspectives, undergoing several significant processes framed by different development initiatives. Its first and most important instrument in the development of their nut exploitation practices has been the installation in 1992 of the Comaru, not only as a means for the creation of added value, but also as a way to confront the land claims of the Jarí company and its plans of constructing a hydroelectric barrage on the Jarí river (Guedes Dantas, 2003). In the following years after its creation in 1992, the cooperative multiplies its marketing experiences for the different products deriving from the Brazil nut, resulting in better prices for the extractivists. In 1993, a series of small-scale production experiences around the manufacture of flour and biscuits made of Brazil nut is initiated on the basis of a grant from the municipality of Laranjal do Jarí. A year later, a warehouse for the storage of the production of the Comaru is constructed in the village, again with the help of public funding.

But it is from 1996 on that things eventually get faster. João Capiberibe, elected governor of the state of Amapá in 1995, aims at putting into reality an ambitious project, the "Programme of sustainable development of the Amapá" (PDSA). One of the main elements of this program is the support of local cooperatives and in particular the promotion of forest products from local extractive activities. Due to its exemplarity in organization but also because of the strong identity displayed by the *castanheiros* of the Iratapuru community as inhabitants of the forest, the Comaru is largely benefited by this new policy. First of all, in 1997, the state of Amapá creates the Reserve of Sustainable development (RDS) of Iratapuru, eventually granting a stabilisation of the land issue that had been claimed by the members of the Comaru since its creation. The choice of the status of "Reserve of sustainable development" (and not the already existing category of "Extractive reserve", reflects the will of the PDSA for innovation, as well as the reinforced stipulation of the community's extractivists for their participation in the creation process and the management of the area, as the implementation of the RDS officially foresees the constitution of a management board composed of both representatives from state institutions and local associations

(an enterprise that has, however, not yet been put into practice). Second, the government multiplies direct and indirect subsidies for the Comaru from 1996 on, and gives support for diverse development projects inside the Iratapuru community. One of the projects consisted in the supply of Brazil nut biscuits made by the Comaru for a number of school dining halls in the Amapá. From 2000 on, the state government thus purchases the biscuits made in the São Francisco community for a much better price than the one on the conventional market, exempting them from part of the value added tax and guaranteeing low interest credits to the Comaru. In parallel, the Amapá government tries to organize the regional market of the Brazil nut and to reinforce local cooperatives. (Nelson and Fujiwara, 2001).

At the same time that support by the local government was increasing, some big international institutions also began to show interest in the community of São Francisco. Obviously, the PDSA program of Capiberibe and his personal charisma had attracted the attention of international sponsors, aiming to participate in what seemed to be the promotion of new models of sustainable development in the Amazon region. Thus, the PPG-7⁵ decides to finance the construction of a new and modern factory for the production of nut biscuits. On the same line, the French Global Environment Facility (FFEM) liberates an important sum in 2000 for the whole region of the south of Amapá, including interventions focused on the development of ecotourism in the São Francisco community.

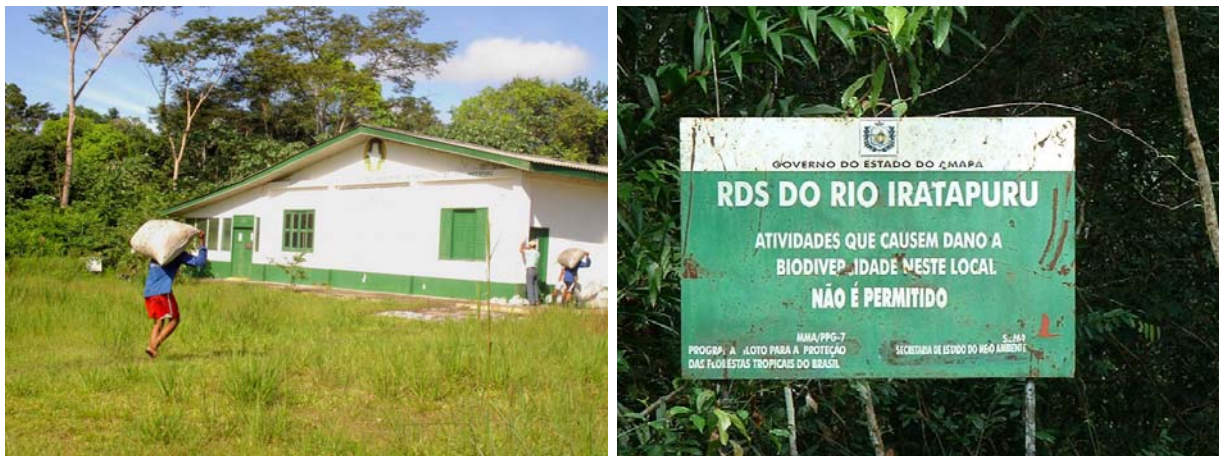


Figure 5: Comaru building; sign of the RDS Iratapuru “activities that could harm biodiversity are not admitted...”

Despite the very large amount of national and international funding, the expected benefits appear only slowly whereas several problems emerge rapidly. The cooperative, for instance, encounters severe difficulties to produce the quantity of nut biscuit demanded in its contract with the government. Until 2002, when the new factory, financed by the PPG-7, is inaugurated, if the contract with the state government of Amapá supposed a monthly production of 9 tons, the annual production did not exceed 3 tons. In the following, if the new factory allows a significant increase of the production, difficulties still remain due to an overall lack of organization and management of the working capital (in spite of low interest financing from the BANAP (Banco do Amapá) and AFAP (Agência de Fomento do Amapá), limiting the cooperative to only 33 % only of the effective production potential (Guedes Dantas, 2003). In general, the whole enterprise of the biscuit production can be considered as non-rational in economical terms, as in-situ production also implies high-cost transportation from the city to the forest of all of the primary ingredients for

⁵ PPG7 is the Pilot Programme for the Protection of the Brazilian Rain Forest, launched in 1992 with financial support from the governments of Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, France, Japan, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, and from the European Commission and the Brazilian Government., under the Rain Forest Trust Fund (RFT) managed by the World Bank.

the biscuit (except the nuts), forcing the government to pay double the local market price in order to make the biscuits financially viable for the community.

The "biscuit episode" is only one example for the misconception of some of the initiatives that have been initiated in Amapá during this period. Multiple causes could be found for their unsuccessfulness, but it is, above all, the political vulnerability of some of the development projects initiated in Iratapuru that stands for the failure of most of the initiatives undertaken by the Amapá state government and international institutions.

In 2003, the new elected Valdes Gomez substitutes Capiberibe as the state's governor, leading at once to the abandonment of all the attention and support that the extractivists of São Francisco (and in a minor degree all the other communities in the regions) had been receiving since the 1990ies. As a reflection of these external turbulences, the management of the Comaru also undergoes a profound crisis in 2002, leading to a change of its leadership and the expulsion from the village of the former cooperative's director and his family, accused of corruption and the misappropriation of cooperative funds. On October 1st, 2003, the cooperative goes off in flames, and its destruction is immediately associated to a possible revenge of the expelled leadership and to their interests in eliminating compromising documents. Finally, as for the FFEM ecotourism project, another social conflict between the project's responsible and the community causes its discontinuation from 2004 on. Those events are probably the reflexion of what K. Brown (2002) called an "over-simplistic approach" towards the characteristics and functioning of a local community". At the end of 2003, the situation of the Comaru is thus very delicate. Its factory destroyed and its leadership debilitated, the cooperative finds itself in heavy debts, as part of the subsidies had been received in the form of loans. It is in this context that the Brazilian company of cosmetics Natura gets actively involved with the Iratapuru community.

b) *Natura as private partner: beginning of an innovative community-company-deal*

In 2000, Natura decides to develop a new strategy in order to gain market shares. The company opts to introduce an innovative line of products that would particularly incorporate Natural ingredients having their origin in the Brazilian rainforest, strengthening thus its image of a company concerned with the search for new sustainable development models that could imply active protection of the Amazon. Around this concept, the company creates the «EKOS» line, based on the use of forest products collected by small producers who are certified in order to guarantee a sustainable exploitation of the resources. Looking for suppliers that could offer also an important value in terms of image, Natura quickly discovers the Iratapuru region as an area of great Natural beauty and of an exceptional degree of preservation, corresponding perfectly to the objectives for the EKOS line.

At first, the company does not gain much attention from the Comaru, too busy with its production of biscuits. In spite of the acquisition of an oil press and some tests of its capacities in 2000, no contract is signed. The Comaru even decides to lend her press to a potential concurrent, the COMAJA (*Cooperativa Mixta dos Agroextrativistas do Jarí*), thus inadvertently saving it from the fire of October 2003. Shortly after the catastrophe, Natura appears again, and its relationship with the Iratapuru community becomes much closer. Knowing that no support is to be expected from the new government, the cooperative desperately needs a new partner and accepts to focus on the production of Brazil nut oil.

In 2004, Natura finances the reconstruction of the factory's building; the press is recovered from the COMAJA and put up for production. The company also initiates a process for the certification by the FSC of the *colocações* exploited by the Iratapuru extractivists, and establishes the contact between the Comaru and the company COGNIS do Brazil, assigned by Natura to buy the oil and to control its quality. In the following, COGNIS engages itself in providing the community with technical assistance and product control. Other regional products are also tested, leading to a second contract with Natura, also in 2004, for the purchase of *bréu branco* (used for fragrance and fixing of perfumes).



Figure 6: Brazil nut tree and Natura product on the basis of Brazil nut oil; resources: Brazil nut and *bréu branco*

Engaged in a quest for a new models of development (according to its own terms), Natura establishes a very innovative partnership with the Comaru. First, the company chooses to make use of new legal instruments set up by the CGEN⁶, initiating, for the first time in Brazil, a process for the acquisition of the “rights on traditional knowledge and exploitation of the genetic patrimony” for the *bréu branco*. Due to this juridical process, the community has effectively gained much more than simply a better price for its products, since the acquisition of those special rights implicates the payment of considerable sums, largely exceeding the amount of money earned by the cooperative from the simple selling of the raw material. Also, the access to the genetic patrimony implies a compensatory payment to the owner of the zone, in our case the state of Amapá, with the obligation for the latter to invest this money for the benefit of the communities living in the region.

But the initiatives taken by Natura did not end there. The company also signs a contract of exclusivity with the Comaru for the supply of *bréu branco* and Brazil nut oil, and promises the community of São Francisco access to the “Natura Fund”, a credit line destined to the carrying out of economical and social projects for the benefit of the whole community. The fund is nourished by 0.5 % of all of the company's turnover (without taxes) issued from products including ingredients that have been produced by the Comaru and which are mentioned on the packaging, as well as 0.15 % of the turnover of the products including ingredients that have been produced by the Comaru but do not explicitly appear on the packages. Those mechanisms clearly show that the partnership between Natura and the Comaru exceeds the context of a simple commercial contract, representing a more complex and innovative experience than other well known examples in the Amazon region, such as, for instance, the Body shop endeavour with the Kayapo Indians (Clay, 2002).

| Year | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|-----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|
| Oil bought (kg) | 7 500 | 9 000 | 1 500 | 6 500 | 2000 | 2 000 |

Table 1: quantity of Brazil nut oil bought by Natura (2004-2009)

⁶ The CGEN (Genetic Heritage Management Council) represents a national authority institution inside the Brazilian Ministry of Environment for the establishment of rules and the control over the access of genetic heritage components and the associated traditional knowledge. It came into effect in April 2002.

c) ***Problematic issues of a relationship between two unequal partners:***

However, since the beginning of the commercial relationship in 2004, the problems encountered from both sides have been several. First, the amount of Brazil nut oil bought by Natura is not stable (table 1). This variation was not linked with a fluctuation of the company's sales but rather with the instability of the cooperative's production. Moreover, the Comaru is in debt vis-à-vis of the Cognis, as in 2006 the cooperative had engaged itself to deliver more oil than it could *de facto* produce: of the promised 16 tons, less than 2 were delivered. These failures have led Natura to find another supplier, threatening the stability of the relationship with the Comaru. More generally, the managing of the cooperative seems very weak and lacking competency, a surprising point if we consider the huge amount of money received since 1992. This point has started to create a frustration in the Comaru's relationship with other local actors: "they should have learnt already!" angrily told us the Amapa's state secretary to the environment when asked about it.

Considering the prices paid by COGNIS, the selling of the Brazil nut oil represents a much higher income for the community than the selling of the raw nut to the intermediaries. When transformed in oil, the price paid per hectolitre oscillates around 120 R\$, whereas the hectolitre of raw nuts only brings at most 60 R\$ on the local market. However, the amount of nuts transformed in oil is still very small in comparison to the overall production of the Iratapuru village: in 2007, the community's production totalized about 7 000 hectolitres, but only 1000 hl of these were in fact transformed into oil⁷, that is, not even 15 % of the whole harvest. In spite of the symbolical importance and the better price gained by the partnership with NATURA, the older intermediary system still buys the biggest part of the production. The function of the intermediaries as a bridge between the forest and the local market remains thus indispensable for the survival of the *castanheiros*.

It is important to point out that, the commercial mechanisms implicated in the contract with COGNIS significantly contribute to this situation. The company only effectively pays the cooperative when the production arrives at their warehouse in São Paulo, which generally is only about six months after the end of the harvest. As we have seen before, most of the patrons need fresh cash immediately after the harvest, and are thus forced to sell a part of their production to intermediaries, to the disadvantage of the cooperative. At the same time, various attempts of pre-financing of the harvest by COGNIS or NATURA resulted in an even worse situation since production never met the objectives, leaving the cooperative with an operational prejudice.

Concerning the *bréu branco*, the transactions are minimal, as the amount of raw material used is very small in volume: a single delivery of 300 kg has been effectuated in 2004, and a second one was done in 2008 for the same amount. But the small volumes of the *bréu branco* sold by the community should not dissimulate that due to the royalties, this product is the most profitable one of the partnership between NATURA and the community in economic terms (even more than the Brazil nut oil, which is, in turn, the most profitable for the company in terms of image). According to internal documents of NATURA, the royalties for the *bréu branco* and deposited in the Natura Fund already sum almost 1, 6 millions R\$ (~1 million US\$), whereas the single selling of the 300 kg of *bréu branco* in 2003 (sufficient for the company's production until 2008) has only brought approximately 10 000 R\$.

III Achievements and step-backs in the path towards sustainability: Has the relationship with Natura succeeded in bridging conservation and development?

The special character of the relationship between NATURA and the community of Iratapuru can be considered as the cornerstone of the recent progress registered in Iratapuru in terms of economics and living standards. But these advances do not seem to be spared by a

⁷ One hectolitre of raw nut is needed to produce 6,5 kg of oil.

number of misunderstandings and step-backs.

a) Distribution of bargaining power and risk-sharing:

If the community-corporation deals are considered to give more bargaining power to the former (Palmer, 2005; Mayers and Vermeulen, 2002), this does not seem to be the case here, in great part because of the extractivist nature of the product bought by NATURA. Unlike forest concessions (Engel and López, 2004; Palmer 2004 and 2005; Ezzine de Blas and others, 2009), the Iratapuru community is not selling the right to the corporation to extract valuable resources from a given area, but a product, that is not very rare in the Amazon.

It seems clear that the cooperative's dependency on the prolongation of the contract with NATURA as their only purchaser of Brazil nut oil strongly diminishes its bargaining power in respect to the contract's conditions (amount and prize of the oil, delivery conditions, etc.). This year's (2009) meeting of representatives of the company with the COMARU reflected this unequal power distribution. First, NATURA adopted a paternalistic attitude, reminding that it continued to support "its" community despite repeated failures. Then, it stated that this year's amount of Brazil nut oil would be very low (which the company justified by subtly reminding the cooperative of its delivery failures during past seasons), due also to the negative trends in client demands of the Brazil nut line. They continued informing the community that the prize paid for the nut oil would be the same as last year, (31,5R\$ per kg instead of 41R\$ as had been demanded by the cooperative leadership). The company executives then read the contract to the community, affirming their willingness to explain each point. However, at no time a serious possibility of reformulation of the contract's conditions was realistically opened, not only because of the juridical language of the contract and the reading speed, but also because of the little effective bargaining power of the cooperative due to their dependency on the company as only oil customer. Thus, the annual negotiation of the contract has to be described as a passing on of information about already set up contract conditions rather than a real bargaining process between two partners on an equal basis.

Regarding risk sharing, it can be said that the biggest part of potential risks is supported by the community, which has to cope with the irregularity of the natural production and with the complexity and the cost of the production process. The exclusivity awarded in the contract does not compensate this part, since it only works as long as the community is able to supply the desired quantity of product. When this is not the case, NATURA can purchase from other suppliers, which means that they do not undergo any risk of shortage and are thus not compelled to invest in the production process in Iratapuru. The advantage that São Francisco's people could have both in being themselves the producers of the Brazil nut oil (like communities participating directly from forest extraction, see Barton Bray, 2003 or Ezzine de Blas and others, 2009) and in having their rights on the resources granted by the RDS status, is thus being reverted since they are also the bearers of all risks of the production process. On NATURA's side, as we will stress further on, the benefit of the operations in Iratapuru is essentially centred on associating the company with the very positive image of a truly intact reserve known for its rich biodiversity. Thus, the only risk from the part of the company would be a loss of this positive association or a deterioration of the region's image. The first one could be an interesting bargaining lever for the community, which however do not yet seem to be conscious of this possibility. The second one is a preoccupation of the firm, which tries its best in order to control and keep the region's prestige

In that context, the term "partnership" could be contested as a the adequate term to classify the relationship of NATURA with the COMARU, since, as Mayers and Vermeulen (2002) point out, a partnership supposes an "informed consent" – which is only partially met in our case - and a "sharing of the risk" – absent in this context, as we have seen.

b) Several interventions, one goal: it's all about image gain

If the company shows a real ambition of promoting sustainable development, it is also evident that the relationship with Iratapuru makes part of a marketing strategy that does not leave anything to chance. Today, the rather negative trend in the demand of Brazil nut products within the *Ekos* line as well as the difficulties encountered by the Comaru have resulted in a significant reduction of the oil needed by Natura, who also disposes of other suppliers. The interest of Natura in continuing to buy the Comaru's product is thus not grounded on the local production (the oil produced in Iratapuru is more expensive than others) or on economic benefits (several investments made by Natura are still not recovered) but on the image gain. The image of the people of Iratapuru is widely used by the company in its website, advertising films or during events, such as the inauguration of the new Natura's shop in Paris when one leader of the Comaru was invited. Not surprisingly, even if great part of the Brazil nut oil used in Natura's products originated from other places in the Amazon, Iratapuru continues to appear as the icon of the Brazil nut *Ekos* line. Hence, in order to maintain its reputation of a company concerned with ecology and sustainable development, the firm biggest preoccupation about Iratapuru is to maintain the positive image of the RDS, displaying for that reason a very high level of intervention in the community's life.

In relation to the environment, Natura thus introduces São Francisco to the FSC, financing the certification of the collecting area. This has, however, influenced the cooperative's activities and also the traditional behaviour of the *castanheiros* who had to adapt to the company's ideas of what a "right" behaviour of a "traditional" community should be. As a result, the production of *copaiba*, for instance, has been discontinued by the Comaru from 2004 on, since the certification firm (IMAFLOA) was worried about the ecological sustainability of the local production process. However, this and other "rules" make it harder for the Comaru to diversify its products and clients, since *copaiba*, for example, would be a product with a good selling potential. Also, the prohibition of child labour stipulated in the certification rules gave a halt to the prolonged stay of children inside the forest during harvest time. What can certainly be considered as a step forward in the sphere of human rights does at the same time raise certain questions concerning the transmission of traditional knowledge: how will the young people of the Iratapuru community acquire the apprenticeship of the forest necessary for the exercise of the profession of *castanheiro* if they do not learn the skills with their parents during the harvest time? Will they be able to maintain the degree of familiarity with the forest that justifies their denomination as «traditional populations»? The certification report of IMAFLORA⁸ mentions this problem in 2004, proposing the adaptation of the schooling calendar to the extractive activity so that both could be combined. However, the issue has not been developed since.

Moreover, it can be stated that the certification process is but little objective, as it is based on the idea that the exploitation practiced by the extractivists is sustainable in itself. As a matter of facts, there are reasons to believe that intensive gathering could threaten the emergence of new young trees (Peres et al., 2003). However, this point was not addressed by the FSC report (FSC, 2004), which does not give any indications concerning the quantity of nuts to be collected in the region without putting in danger the capacity for regeneration of the trees in the collecting areas. Also, the estimation of the total surface used for the nut collection is very imprecise, as nobody has actually realized a detailed mapping of all of the *colocações*.

The control exerted on the Natura Fund is another striking example of the company's intervention. Theoretically, the fund's objective is to "*conceive new ways and sources of income that protect the environment [...] to find information and courses on projects that could prepare the community for this [...] and to maintain and improve infrastructure for the execution of these new projects and of projects that are already being carried out in the community.*". However, in practice, the fund has only been used very few times until now, either to support the activity of the

⁸ Imaflora (*Instituto de Manejo e Certificação Florestal e Agrícola*) is the Brazilian Rainforest Alliance partner, responsible for the forest certification processes in this region.

cooperative, or to pay for consultancy about possible development plans, which can hardly be called a social investment. In the first case, the intervention marks a clear evidence of a tendency to confound the cooperative with the community, simplifying the conflictive relationship between the two entities and reflecting what K. Brown (2002), rejoined by Hecht (2007), called an "over-simplistic approach towards the characteristics and functioning of a local community". This point was particularly obvious in 2008, when Natura disapproved of the creation of a local association⁹ (RIOBIO), pointing out that in their opinion such an association would be superfluous for a community of only 40 families, only complicating the power relationships between the different entities. However, the fact that the contract of the fund has been established with the cooperative but should benefit the community as a whole has led to a mixture of interests and hampered the Fund's efficiency. Every financial transaction between Natura and the community, like the payment of associated traditional knowledge, has to pass through the cooperative, even if its application is decided by the general assembly of the community. As a result, the cooperative's representatives have, until recently, privileged mainly economic projects. Only in 2008, with the creation of the local association, some money was eventually spent on some few social projects, such as a reconstruction of the school or the organisation of a Christmas party inside the community.

In the second case, large amounts of money (about 20% of the fund, which totals 1,9 MR\$) were paid for consultancies, which, however, did never result in concrete investments, such as basic sanitation infrastructure, which in our opinion would be absolutely necessary in order to improve the living conditions of the families. In this sense, even if the "*diagnóstico local participativo*" elaborated by AMAPAZ (a consultancy from the south of Brazil) in 2004 under the commission of Natura in order to collect data for a sustainable development plan for the village, points out a striking need for sewing, water treatment and health care, the community does not dispose of clean drinking water nor of any type of health care until now. According to promises articulated recently by Natura, some of these installations should eventually be constructed in late 2009¹⁰, which is more than five years after the beginning of their partnership with São Francisco. Thus, despite having millions at the bank, the living conditions of the community have barely developed since 2004, raising the question of the real purpose of Natura's control over the fund.

c) *Assistencialismo and Patronage: Observations on the community's perception of their relationship with Natura*

If there are misunderstandings from the part of Natura concerning their intervention in Irapuru, the community's perception of its relationship with the company also seems to be unclear. It seems that what is sought for by the extractivists is not so much a commercial innovation, but rather a relationship where Natura would be some kind of "good" intermediary or patriarch figure, resulting not only in high prices for their products (better than the ones offered by the conventional intermediaries), but also in personal ties, generosity and solidarity in bad times. Thus, much of the money spent by Natura and Cognis for pre-financing was not so much understood as a contract by the local people, but more as a gesture of generosity. Therefore, the extractivists did not feel much preoccupied by the fact that they did not meet the production objectives, since they counted on the comprehension of Natura for their difficulties. Also, most of the families seem to be convinced that the company would not abandon them in spite of repeated financial prejudices, believing that by now they had established strong personal ties with the

⁹ The firm had already been successful in deterring the creation of a local council until now.

¹⁰ In fact, this will only be the case if the cooperative succeeded in paying back their debts with Natura, who had liberated some money from the Natura Fund last year in order to finance the Brazil nut harvest. As the cooperative has not yet been able to pay back, all projects, including the social ones, were suspended temporarily in 2009 by Natura until the situation will be regularized. Thus, the cooperative financial mistakes have resulted in a big disadvantage for the community as a whole.

firm's representatives, who they called "friends". This reminds the Kayapo's relationship with the Bodyshop (Clay, 2002). Needless to say, the company does not share this vision.

Coming close to Harris' (2006) analysis on the importance of adaptation in the *caboclo* culture, we can consider that the community is engaged at the same time in a learning process of a new type of commercial relationship¹¹ and in an adaptation process of this new kind of relation to their traditional interests of pure survival (an alliance with a good intermediary offering more than just a commercial relationship). The discourse developed today by the extractivist leaders about nature and development is a clear sign of the flexibility and learning capacity of the community within this process, as it clearly represents a copy-paste of the discourse established by the company rather than an endogenous thinking, similar to what has already been observed about the ecological conversion of indigenous groups of the Amazon during the 1980ies (Ramos, 1998).

There were thus also non-strictly economical expectations from the part of the community in respect to the appearance of Natura in 2003. This is not surprising since the company had from the very beginning taken the place of the Amapá state government (another "good" partner), which had always granted also social benefits along with its support of the Comaru¹². The state institutions also shared this view, so that the whole context was similar to that pointed out by Palmer (2005) in Indonesia: "*there was a kind of understanding among all parties, including local governments, that they [the companies] would fulfil what would perhaps normally be considered a function of the state*". People of Iratapuru were then disappointed to see that the social investments were not turned into reality.

Finally, the influence of old patronage relationships and of local politics should be acknowledged, like Gillingham (2001) shows in the case of the RDS Mamiraua. On the one hand, the former intermediaries still buy most of the village's production, constituting an alternative for the extractivists if something should go wrong with Natura. In this sense, the community still has a feet in its past, not being able to fully adopt the new vision proposed by the firm. On the other hand, we have observed that certain actors of local intuitions who have political influence on the management of the Iratapuru reserve (and thus on the community) seem to be attracted by the money of the Natura fund, trying to have some influence on its spending. As an actual example of these doubtful interests from exterior political entities, the recently created RIO-BIO association has been instigated to require the transfer of the fund's control from the cooperative to the association (claiming that they would better represent the community as a whole). This manoeuvre was, however, rapidly deterred by Natura.

IV Consequences for the extractivists of the São Fransico community: a first balance

a) *Environmental impacts:*

The clearest success of the creation of the Iratapuru reserve as a new policy device and the different interventions of several actors in quest of a more sustainable development for the local extractivists in the South of Amapá has certainly been in terms of biodiversity and environmental protection. The Iratapuru reserve seems perfectly preserved until now, showing only 1% of deforestation. Its creation in 1997 has succeeded in preventing illegal invasion of gold-digger or loggers. Nothing indicates a loss of the rich biodiversity inside the reserve. Moreover, the proclamation of a reserve has resulted in important land guarantees for the extractivists of São Francisco, as well as unlimited access to the natural resources they depend on, making them at the same time the real "guards of the forest". The initiative of Natura to incite the certification of the collecting areas has also led to

¹¹ Some younger actual leaders of the COMARU are more conscious of the different implications of the contacts, and they have imposed that in 2009 the money destined to pre-finance this year's harvest will be done with written contracts and not only orally.

¹² Also, "social benefits" are frequent in community-corporation deals (Palmer, 2004, Mayers and Vermeulen, 2002).

modifications of the habits and perceptions of the extractivists in regard to their environment. The adaptation of a “green” discourse of the community leaders, or new methods for trash collecting in order to avoid pollution are some positive examples of the efforts for consciousness-raising concerning environmental protection by public institutions (such as the SEMA) as well as the private company.

Some fragilities must, however, be stated in this context: What the Iratapuru reserve is concerned, the recently expanded use of diesel motors during the collecting process could suppose a significant pollution of the rivers in the long term, as a high amount of fuel is used every harvest. Moreover, the bad hygienic conditions within the community due to the lack of clean drinking water or a sewing system, do not only prejudice the environment next to the village but also the health of the families. Intestinal infections are frequent and especially serious with babies. As no health service nor access to medicine is available in São Francisco, sick people have to travel to the next city of Laranjal (about 60km from the village but of difficult access because of a general lack of means for transportation) in order to find treatment.

Summarizing, we can thus say that even if human pressure is still very small on the environment as a whole (only about 40 families for a protected area of 800.000 ha), local pollution effects close to the São Francisco area are not impossible in the future if basic sanitary investments are not made.

b) *Consequences on the economic level:*

As we have seen, numerous initiatives have been developed in São Francisco in order to fortify and diversify the local economy; first, during the “government era” in the 1990ies, then, through the partnership with Natura since 2004, accounting for big changes within the São Francisco community in a relatively short time: installation of a cooperative; different programmes for the support of the Brazil nut production and commercialisation by national and international public policy makers; the construction of a fabric for transformation; and, finally, the partnership with a private company.

These achievements have led to a certain raise of the community’s living standard: according to results from our fieldwork, most of the families have succeeded increasing their material goods since the beginning of the 1990ies (television, radio, motor, boats, etc), more than 85% have access to energy through the village motor (even if this works only for a few hours in the evening), 45% have water coming from a tube (even if it is not clean drinking water). Also, more than half of the families earn between 1, 5 and 3 minimum salaries, which is superior to the average salary of most of the other communities in the region. However, concerning social equity, we have found important disparities between the different extractivists of São Francisco: if some families did not gain more than 1 minimum salary in 2007 (above all those families who do not possess a *colocação*), others had an income of almost 8 minimum salary (those who have big collecting areas, dispose of more than one boat, and have “good connections” with the cooperative leaders...). These differences in income determine the power relations between the different families, debilitating the coherence inside the community. Thus, if positive developments of the São Francisco community in a material sense cannot be denied, these seem to have been rather punctual improvements, lacking further sustainability. Certain problems that were present from the very beginning still remain today in different degrees: difficulties in the management of the cooperative, lack of circulation capital for the production process, or dependency on a single buyer (as a result of the lack of product diversification and negotiation capacities), are only some of the everlasting problems that seem to block sustainable development in the long term. Tensions and power conflicts between families notably concerning cooperative leadership are omnipresent, sometimes resulting in tragedies such as the burn down of the factory in 2003. At the other hand it can be stated that it was

the creation of the cooperative that gave birth to the village, and that is persisting in spite of all difficulties since 1992. Even more, the cooperative has allowed the community to organize the Brazil nut production process and to articulate their demands vis-à-vis governmental and international institutions. In the following, the contract with Natura has opened up an important alternative to the intermediaries on which the cooperative had largely depended until then for the commercialisation of their production. It is interesting to note, however, that the intermediaries still play an important role today in the community, especially because selling to them means immediate cash (even if the prize paid is lower), whereas the cooperative only pays the extractivists long-time after the end of the harvest. As the families usually need this money before in order to survive, this is one of the main problems for building up a structure of confidence, which would be so necessary to strengthen the cooperative power. Moreover, there have been important fluctuations in the amount of Brazil nut oil bought by Natura since 2004 (see table on page 13), and there is no guarantee that Natura will prolong its contract with São Francisco in the future. The cooperatives main challenge today is, thus, to search other clients for their oil other than Natura and to invest also in productions other than the Brazil nut oil. The high amount of natural resources and the privileged status of the São Francisco extractivists as “guards of the forest” should propose a good basis for new enterprises.

c) *Socio-cultural impacts :*

As can be observed frequently within communities in the Amazon region, São Francisco shows several paradox characteristics particularly what its social system and cultural development is concerned. For example, it can be noted that in spite of a relatively small distance from the city of Laranjal de Jarí, the community still remains in a high isolation because of the lack of communication (there is no telephone nor internet to be found in São Francisco) and of a regulated transport. However, frequent trips to the city are imperative for the families in order to provide them with food, cloth or medicine.

An interesting point is that despite the lack of material wealth and infrastructure, a strong identity of the families as *castanheiros* can be observed, as well as a valorisation of their work inside the forest and of their living conditions in general. For instance, the question on what kind of future they imagined for their children, 85% of the parents of São Francisco stated that they should stay in the community (after completing their studies in town) and work as extractivists, underlining the high quality of life close to the nature; only 15% thought that they would have better chances to find a job in the city. Education is, however, a problem, as only elementary school is offered in the community, forcing the young to go to Laranjal to study. The question to be raised here is, again, if these young people will still want to be *castanheiros* after their education.

Another interesting paradox is the role of the cooperative, which, as we have already seen before, works as a basis for the social coherence of the community, at the same time as it gives origin to powerful conflicts between the different leaders, resulting in a sort of mixture between the cooperative and the community. The recent creation of a community association is likely to resolve this issue (or, on the contrary, lead to a further complication of the matter). The fact that the whole community goes back to only three foundation families (which means that all of them are somehow related to each other), creates a certain degree of solidarity between all of them on the one hand, but also presupposes a higher potential of conflict, above all if new families are involved.

As we have seen, the influence of Natura on the development of São Francisco as a whole has been very strong in the last years, helping the community first to recover from the catastrophic events of 2003, and shaping the activities and power relationships of the different community members since then. It seems thus as if the innovative partnership proposed by Natura had as a counterpart a kind of “looking right” over the future of the

community, whose capacity to gain more independency and to improve their negotiation power vis-à-vis of the company will thus be decisive for their future development.

Conclusion:

São Francisco is the main beneficiary community of the RDS Iratapuru. As such, it has experienced profound changes during the last 15 years, having passed from total isolation in the *colocações* to a community union within a village, and from the system of *aviamento* to the establishment of a village cooperative. The territory of their extractive activities has been transformed into a protected area, two factories have been built successively, and several contracts have been signed, first with the government of the Amapá state, then with the Natura cosmetics company. The result of those developments is a mixed process of economic progress (which would be enviable for most of the Amazonian communities) and social disequilibrium which affects the quality of life of the village population.

On the one hand it can be stated that the community has succeeded in working out a modern model of extractivism by producing added value to a resource collected inside the rain forest, which is a rare success in the context of the Amazon region. Furthermore, even if the major part of the community's income is gained from concessions paid for immaterial goods much more than from the nut business itself, the people of São Francisco did not become subsidized retirees. They maintained their collective identity as "*castanheiros*", especially forged during their long stays in the forest, where solidarity and mutual aid are fundamental. On the other hand, improvement of life condition still lags behind the economic success, and the Comaru remains weak against new turbulences or a collapse of the alliance with Natura. Behind this, the old intermediary system still accounts for a great part of the economical life of the village.

In spite of several step-backs in the development of the community in terms of sustainability, the originality of the Iratapuru case within the Brazilian Amazon should be underlined. In effect, the community did not rely on an alliance with national or international NGOs in order to claim its land, nor did it stay within the domination of local political power. Its partnership with Natura, which combines commercial contracts for the delivery of processed resources, royalties and the payment for immaterial goods, is highly innovative and might encourage other future experiences that could, in fact, promote more sustainable and socially equitable forms of extractivism in the context of protected areas the Amazon region.

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