

6. The Significance of the New Constitution of 1988 for environmental policy in Amazonia

6.1. Steps in the development of Brazilian Environmental Policy on the way to integration into the New Constitution by “Nossa Natureza”

As already mentioned,¹⁵⁸ Brazil had its first federal forest law (Código Florestal) in 1934, combined with laws for fishing, hunting and water protection. With the takeover of power by the military regime, a long prepared new forest law (Novo Código Florestal) was passed in 1965. Forests became “goods of public interest,” from which legal restrictions on private property could be derived. In addition, it was decided to establish national, state, and municipal parks as well as biological reserves. In pristine forest areas, logging of up to 50 % of private property was allowed.

For the first time, the exploitation of primary forests in Amazonia without consistent land use plans was prohibited. Not only did the legal provisions offer many opportunities for flexibility – increased clearing through repeated sale of parts of the property (“mathematics of devastation”) – but the Military Government’s development strategies for Amazonia pushed environmental and especially forest laws into the background. When demands for a national environmental protection policy arose in Parliament in the second half of the 1960s, the Military Government took them up only indirectly in 1967 by establishing a National Council for Combating Environmental Pollution (Calcagnotto 1990).

At the first United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972, environmental protection was described by many developing countries, including Brazil, as a luxury of the rich industrialised countries and an obstacle to development. Despite the vehement reaction of the developing countries, however, Stockholm provided the first decisive impetus to create the conditions for a national environmental policy, including in Brazil.

Official environmental policy in Brazil began with the establishment of an Environmental Protection Agency (SEMA), created in October 1973 by a decree of the then Brazilian President General Médici. In this most repressive phase of the military dictatorship, where environmental issues were dealt with by the National Security Council (SNI) (Guimarães 1989), this step was initially surprising.

Two reasons were crucial for the creation of SEMA (Kohlhepp 1991a; 1991d; 2020a):

158 Cf. chapter I.3.3.

1. SEMA was intended as a response to international criticism of Brazil's stance in Stockholm and had both tactical and pragmatic reasons. It was foreseeable that environmental protection requirements were to be expected in the future when granting international loans, especially by the World Bank (Goodland 1985; 1989).
2. A nationally publicised case of environmental poisoning by a cellulose factory near Porto Alegre had led to considerable unrest among the population and to initial protest actions for better environmental protection. A citizens' initiative had demanded the establishment of an environmental authority.

Although there were authorities responsible for environmental issues in the broadest sense, they were assigned to nine different ministries and were embroiled in jurisdictional disputes. The solution was seen in a central federal authority with subordinate state authorities.

However, SEMA proved to be institutionally weak and politically wanting from the beginning. Although it met the formal requirements of international organisations and their loan conditions (Viola 1988), it only had a marginal position in the Ministry of the Interior, to which it was assigned. Ecological problems in the exploitation of Amazonia were not taken seriously by the government and there was no political will to equip SEMA according to its necessary tasks. SEMA's area of work in the 1970s was the control of environmental pollution and contamination. The problems of natural resource degradation, including the tropical rain forests of Amazonia, were subordinated and politically negated because of the government's national development strategy for Amazonia. The majority of SEMA's staff were natural scientists, and the agency could be described as "depoliticised" (Guimarães 1986, 321).

The head of SEMA, Paulo Nogueira Neto, an internationally renowned scientist, had repeatedly pointed out the existing environmental problems during the Military Government, despite difficult political conditions and poor facilities, and held his office for 12 years with great personal commitment.

In 1981, the national environmental policy was redefined (PNMA), positively influenced by the 1st United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972. During the slow political opening, responsibilities were hierarchically structured in the National Environmental System (SISNAMA). Its highest body, the National Environment Council (CONAMA), had the task of formulating environmental policy guidelines, but did not meet for the first time until 1984. CONAMA included representatives of state institutions, but civil organisations were far underrepresented. The military treated CONAMA and its activities with the greatest suspicion (Melo-Reiners 2009, 151). CONAMA's most important resolution concerned the performance of environmental impact studies prior to the official approval of projects with a major impact on the environment (road and railway construction, dams, power plants, high-voltage transmission lines, industry, etc.). A distinction was made between a detailed study of the environmental impact (EIA) and a summary of the results of the EIA, a report (RIMA).

SEMA's marginal position remained even after the end of military rule in the New Republic after 1985. In the case of SEMA, for example, the "ecology programme" ("paquete ecológico") announced with great propaganda effort by the new Sarney government in June 1986 comprised only one sixth of the budget of the environmental agen-

cy of the state of São Paulo. The new head of SEMA resigned in 1988 after two years, pointing out that the agency was unable to fulfil its tasks and was not fit for work.

At least since the 2nd United Nations Conference on the Environment in Nairobi in 1982, it was clear to many developing countries that preventing environmental damage was cheaper than mitigating the damage afterwards. However, this self-knowledge was apparently less important than the fact that the World Bank had been demanding environmental impact assessments when granting loans for development projects since the second half of the 1970s.

In the meantime, public interest in increased environmental protection had been articulated in Brazil. And not only in the urban areas, but also in the rural regions with the problems of modernising agriculture with over-fertilisation, excessive use of insecticides, pesticides and so on. But this was especially the case in the Amazon region due to the exploitation of the natural potential and the large-scale destruction of the tropical rain forests.

The 1988 Federal Constitution was the first Brazilian law to dedicate a separate chapter to environmental protection, thus accepting and strengthening the environmental legislation of the time and promoting the creation of new regulations.¹⁵⁹ The Constitution of 1988 is a 245-clause charter that was drafted in 17 months by the Constituent Assembly. The 1988 Constitution can be seen as an attempt to replace the constitutional order and the military's strategy of economic growth over any social improvement with the suppression of civil liberties and the presence of an all-powerful central government.

In chapter VI, Article 225 of the Constitution (Constitution 1988), the topic of the environment was dealt with:

Everyone has the right to an ecologically balanced environment, which is a public good for the people's use and is essential for a healthy life. The government and the community have a duty to defend and to preserve the environment for present and future generations.

Paragraph 1 set out the government's responsibility to obtain these rights:

1. preserve and restore essential ecological processes and provide for ecological treatment of species and ecosystems,
2. preserve the diversity and integrity of the genetic patrimony of the country and to control entities engaged in research and manipulation of genetic material,
3. define, in all units of the Federation, territorial spaces and their components that are to be specially protected, prohibiting any use that compromises the integrity of the characteristics that justify their protection,
4. require, as provided by law, a prior environmental impact study, which shall be made public, for installation of works or activities that may cause significant degradation of the environment,
5. control production, commercialisation and employment of techniques, methods and substances that carry a risk to life, the quality of life and the environment,

159 The eighth Constitution in the history of Brazil entered into force on October 5, 1988.

6. promote environmental education at all levels of teaching and public awareness of the need to preserve the environment,
7. protect the fauna and the flora, prohibiting, as provided by law, all practices that jeopardize their ecological functions, cause extinction of species or subject animals to cruelty.

§2 of Art. 225 provides that those who undertake mining activities shall restore any environmental degradation to its previous condition, according to the technical standards issued by the competent public authority.

One of the most important legal regulations (§ 1,4) requires that the competent authority requires in advance a written assessment of the impact that any potentially harmful activity could have on the environment. Permission to start construction of the installation or to commence the activity is made conditional on the submission of this study (Rocha 1989).

- §3: Procedures and activities found to be harmful to the environment shall entail criminal and administrative sanctions against the polluters – natural or legal persons – without prejudice to the obligation to remedy the damage caused.
- §4: The Brazilian Amazonian Forest, the Atlantic Forest, the Serra do Mar, the Pantanal Mato-Grossense and the coastal zone are part of the national patrimony, and they shall be used, as provided by law, under conditions which ensure the preservation of the environment, therein included the use of mineral resources.
- §5: The unoccupied lands or lands seized by the states through discriminatory actions which are necessary to protect the natural ecosystems are inalienable.

Although these statements were kept in a very general form and the nature of the measures was completely open, Article 225 was only included in the Constitution after tough debates in the Constituent Assembly. The Brazilian environmental movements played a major role in the first inclusion of an environmental chapter in the Federal Constitution.¹⁶⁰ Fábio Feldmann, member of Parliament of the Green Party (Partido Verde), coordinated the environmental activities and acted as mediator between the ecological movement and the Constituent Assembly. Environmental protection had been successfully incorporated into the Federal Constitution in an adequate form. In 1988/89, environmentalists engaged with strong commitment in anchoring environmental protection in the constitution of federal states.

Overall, it can be stated that “the Federal Constitution of 1988 represented a milestone in the Brazilian environmental legal system” (Silva and Lages 2020, 24) and included significant advances for environmental protection. An environmental dimension of fundamental rights was added to the social dimension (Melo-Reiners 2009, 165). Thus, the full extent of the worsening ecological problems of the Amazon region was officially recognised in Brazil (Vieira 1988; 1993, 113). The environmental legislation also included effective resource protection in the Amazon area. The environment was recognised as a constitutional right “since its violation encompassed risks that included political, legal and social insecurity, standing out for the rapid trajectory of transformation and incorporation in the law” (Silva and Lages 2020, 22).

160 Cf. Chapter I.6.2

The concept of “national patrimony” (§4) meant for the Amazonian rain forests that they are protected and that land use in these regions is carried out under the legal conditions that guarantee the preservation of the environment. However, the term “national natural heritage” is not clearly defined, the spatial boundaries of the large-scale division of the natural area are not clearly established and no land use plans are drawn up. Specific legislation on ecologically compatible land use did not exist.

The previous approaches to a natural or economic differentiation of large areas, e.g., for spatial planning in Amazonia, had been based on different criteria (agro-ecological zoning, economic-ecological zoning), which were often completely incompatible with reality.

After the dissolution of the former authorities IBDF (forestry), SUDEPE (fisheries), SUDHEVEA (rubber extraction) and SEMA, IBAMA was founded in February 1989 as the new central authority for the environment and renewable natural resources. As an independent organisation, IBAMA was initially attached to the Ministry of the Interior and was responsible for formulating, coordinating, executing (including by delegation) and monitoring national environmental policy. IBAMA thus took over the tasks of the former SEMA and was now responsible for the implementation of the new National Environmental Programme (PNMA), which was financed with US\$ 200 million in international funds (World Bank 1990).

Against the background of increasing internal disputes over non-compliance with environmental laws and strong external pressure on the Brazilian government for better protection of the Amazon rain forest, IBAMA's task was to devote more attention to monitoring natural resources and controlling economic activities. This concerned in particular the detection and prosecution of illegal logging and the prevention of illegal trade in wildlife, hides and skins.

As part of the reformulation of numerous legal provisions, it was also stipulated that the legally binding forest reserves of each plot of land must be registered in the land register in order to prevent sale and subsequent clearing. CONAMA had to cede the political function of advising the president to the Supreme Council for the Environment (CSMA), which led to competence problems.

As a new substantive version of environmental policy, the programme Our Nature (Nossa Natureza) was implemented in the last phase of the Sarney government in 1989, which was greatly enhanced by political propaganda (a catalogue of environmental measures unique in the world). The objectives of the programme, the main points of which were incorporated into the Constitution, were the protection of large ecosystem complexes, the systematic organisation of environmental protection, strategies to prevent environmentally harmful activities, environmental education and the development of public awareness for nature conservation. In addition, the organisation of settlement and exploration of the Amazon region, the appropriate use of renewable natural resources, the regeneration of damaged ecosystems and the protection of Indigenous tribal groups and their collective economy were mentioned as objectives (Constituinte 1989).

Within the framework of the Nossa Natureza programme, numerous laws and ordinances were passed that were intended to restrict the existing scope of action of economic actors in the Amazonian rain forest for environmental reasons. For example, all tax incentives for cattle grazing projects in the planning region Amazônia Legal were cancelled, initially limited to 90 days. In addition, all companies involved in the indus-

trial processing and trade of raw materials had to register with IBAMA. The conditions for charcoal production were also detailed, and producers were obliged to carry out reforestation. Six inter-ministerial working groups were set up to propose solutions.

Finally, in July 1989, the National Environmental Fund (FNMA), one of the components of *Nossa Natureza*, was established. The future resources of the fund were to be used for the development of projects that took into account the environment and natural resources.

Like the establishment of SEMA and IBAMA, *Nossa Natureza* should be seen as a reaction to the vehement criticism of international institutions, foreign governments and NGOs rather than an independent concept. Before the announcement of the *Nossa Natureza* programme, there was – once again – a highly polemical discussion in the media by senior military officials about the threatening internationalisation of Amazonia and the endangerment of national security. Even civilian members of the government, such as the IBAMA president, were not fully informed about the content of *Nossa Natureza* until the programme was announced.¹⁶¹

The establishment of environmental agencies and the passing of corresponding laws were by no means a guarantee that the issues discussed were put into practice and that the legal requirements were fulfilled. Due to its size – the planning region *Amazônia Legal* covers an area of more than 5 million km² – and the natural conditions, the Amazon region was difficult to fit into the state regulatory framework. In particular, it was a major problem to monitor the implementation of the necessary measures and their impact. On the other hand, the administrative apparatus was in a constant process of reorganisation and development projects were underway or being planned. Apart from the existing difficult coordination problems, the effectiveness of the measures was also hampered by pervasive corruption (Kohlhepp 1991a).¹⁶²

When in 1988 and 1989 government agencies and even President Sarney overreacted and described the justified criticism of deforestation as harassment and attempts to internationalise Amazonia, this was certainly not the best way to convince domestic and foreign observers or even international lenders that the problems were being discussed soberly and objectively or that the political will existed to enforce the new environmental legislation (Schipulle 1989). In the new Constitution, clear-cutting was still seen as evidence of economic activity, even though the destruction of rain forests often did nothing but fuel speculation, which led to an increase in land values.

The new Constitution addressed two other fundamental problems of Amazonia: Land reform and Indigenous problems.

Land reform gave rise to heated debates, but the final text showed the domination of the interests of the landowning class, especially in the National Union of Landowners (UDR). Art. 184, in principle allowed the central government to expropriate rural landholdings that did not fulfil their social function. However, expropriations for the purpose of land reform were not supposed to affect productive property and were “in a sufficiently vague manner so as to block effective redistribution of land” (Rocha 1989, 77). Agrarian reform was postponed. In the preference for the economic constitution and the lack of a forward-looking development concept, the problematic relationship

161 Cf. *Jornal do Brasil*, April 7, 1989.

162 Today, the Sarney government is considered disastrous by Brazilian experts. Clientelism was widespread, with long-lasting consequences for the Brazilian Republic after the military dictatorship.

of the new Constitution to the reality of the country found its most obvious expression (Paul 1990; 1994, 204).

Article 231 of the Constitution recognised the social organisation, customs, languages, beliefs and traditions of the Indigenous peoples, as well as their original rights to the lands they had traditionally inhabited. Formal ownership and demarcation of their lands rested with the central government. The Indigenous population was granted exclusive extraction of resources from soils, rivers and lakes. However, there was an important exception: in the case of exploitation by third parties,

the exploitation of resources from rivers, including the generation of energy, as well as mineral extraction and research in the lands inhabited by Indigenous tribes, shall be made conditional upon a prior authorisation from Congress, which can only be granted after consultation with the interested Indigenous communities (Rocha 1989, 82).

These communities must share in the profits from exploitation. The problems of natural resource exploitation in Indigenous territories have not been solved to this day and the laws are repeatedly circumvented through exemptions.

According to Rocha (1989, 82), "it is clear that the Constitution stopped far short of a clearcut solution of this highly controversial issue," and the prohibition of all mineral exploitation on Indigenous lands would be the best solution. Art. 232 states that Indigenous individuals and communities have legal capacity and are represented by a public defender (Ministério Público). FUNAI remained the official body entrusted with the task of representing the interests of Indigenous communities.

Brazil's quite progressive environmental legislation was unfortunately in stark contrast to actual practice, which was characterised by disregard for environmental regulations, especially in Amazonia (Melo-Reiners 2009, 165). The 1988 Constitution "failed due to the real conditions of implementation, remained in many parts symbolic external representation of the political system without chances of normative integration into the social process" (Paul 1994, 204).

The discrepancy between the claim to protect the tropical rain forests with the new environmental legislation and the reality in Amazonia could not have been greater. Despite the commitment of some employees of the environmental authorities, scientists, and NGOs, and despite the increasing awareness of the media, individual and group interests in combination with organisational deficits had so far managed to prevent a general breakthrough in the protection of the forests of the Amazon region. Conflicts of interest over land settlement and land use in Amazonia have escalated to the point of violent confrontations.

Against this backdrop, and given the disastrous financial situation of the country, the fact that in 1989 only one third of the US\$ 180 million earmarked for investment in *Nossa Natureza* was available was proof that the attempts to halt the progressive destruction of biodiversity in Amazonia with innovative laws in the new Constitution were in jeopardy. During the Sarney government, there was a lack of political will to implement the environmental protection measures enshrined in law in the Constitution. This was especially true for the protection of the tropical rain forests, for which external funding was offered but still rejected by the government.

6.2. The emergence of environmental movements and their active political role¹⁶³

As early as the most repressive phase of the military regime in the early 1970s, the first cautious statements on environmental policy were made, pointing to the ecological consequences of the uncompromising economic development model. Criticism of the development strategy of the time was interpreted by the military as subversive behaviour and identified as anti-government with accusations of communist infiltration. Thus, it is understandable that criticism dared to be voiced mainly in scientific circles and on certain technical issues.

Although the Fundação Brasileira de Conservação para a Natureza (FBCN) had been founded in Rio de Janeiro in 1958 as the first nongovernmental organization (NGO), the group was recruited from the elite of traditional conservationists and did not achieve prominence. In addition, regional efforts by conservationists and naturalists to establish nature reserves became known.¹⁶⁴ All these approaches had no environmental significance.

In 1971, with the founding of AGAPAN, the first NGO in environmental protection and an important movement in Porto Alegre/Rio Grande do Sul, environmental problems were put into a development policy context for the first time. José Lutzenberger, an agricultural engineer who had previously worked in the chemical industry in the area of crop protection, initiated the discussion about the consequences of the rapid modernisation of agriculture with aggressive statements against the use of agrochemical products. He began a vigorous campaign against pesticides and in favour of organic farming. In his Brazilian *manifesto*, provocatively titled “The end of the future?” (Lutzenberger 1977), he vehemently criticised Brazil’s economic development model and the power structures behind it. His commitment to an ecological society soon brought him contacts with European environmental groups and thus an international reputation as a particularly militant environmental activist.¹⁶⁵

At the end of the 1970s, the first signs of a political-ideological approach linking social reforms and ecological goals began to emerge. Despite some courageous actions by individual campaigners, the environmental movement had not yet succeeded in influencing the political debate (Viola 1988).

This changed quickly, however, when the 1979 amnesty allowed numerous exiles to return to Brazil, helping to spread European environmental ideas. Militant leftists associated with “green” ideas during their exile in Western Europe became leaders of the Brazilian environmental movements and also played a crucial role in the founding of the Green Party (Partido Verde, PV). After the military regime, these informa-

163 This chapter is based on Kohlhepp (1991d).

164 Regional activities took place in Santa Catarina (Raulino Reitz), Espírito Santo (Augusto Ruschi) and Rio Grande do Sul (Henrique Rössler) as well as of the well-known landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx.

165 During the Collor de Mello government (1990–1992), Lutzenberger was appointed the first special Secretary of the Environment in 1990. He used his position to reverse policies that favoured large corporations to destroy Amazonian rain forests and played an important role in the recognition of Indigenous territories. Permanent attacks by powerful interest groups hindered his activities. After a sharp confrontation with a vice-president of the World Bank and his provocation against IBAMA, which he called a 100 % subsidiary of timber trade, he had to resign in March 1992.

tion streams met the youth of a new middle class that, after a long period of political repression, sharply attacked the military's earlier decisions in the economic and socio-political spheres.

In Brazil, the development of the Green Party and its electoral potential was linked to the emergence of this new middle class, whose youth wanted to articulate their protest in social and environmental policies. Environmental groups succeeded for the first time in 1982 in electing three deputies at the state level in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul. The decisive year of the environmental movement's political participation was 1986, when various meetings produced the environmental organizations' guidelines for the new federal Constitution, as well as non-partisan "green lists."

When the environmental movement could not agree on the formation of a Green Party, the leading "Greens" Fernando Gabeira, Carlos Minc¹⁶⁶ and Liszt Vieira entered into a coalition with the Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores, PT) in Rio de Janeiro in 1987. Finally, in 1988, the Green Party (PV) was founded with the goal of implementing "socialist and ecological policies." Because of the prevailing problems, close ties had to be forged with leftist groups.

For the non-partisan Green Parliamentary Front that emerged in 1986, the lawyer Fábio Feldmann (São Paulo), already known as president of the NGO Oikos, represented the environmental movements in the Constituent Assembly and did much to introduce the environmental chapter into the Federal Constitution.

For the overall understanding of the Brazilian environmental movement, it is important to emphasise that the autochthonous groups distinguished themselves from the PV, since the founders of the PV did not come from the ecology movement but lived in exile as representatives of the leftist resistance against the military regime in various European countries and had little involvement in the self-discovery of the environmental movement in Brazil.

In the early 1990s, the programmatic statements of the new president Collor de Mello,¹⁶⁷ the emphasised openness towards NGOs and the involvement of some groups in the field of environmental planning and implementation created an overall positive climate for NGO activities in environmental issues. In view of the extraordinary financial bottlenecks of state institutions and the continuing administrative sluggishness, private environmental organisations saw an almost unlimited field of action for the implementation of environmental protection measures. Possibilities of tax deductibility for the establishment of environmental foundations as well as the expectation of internal and external donations and the use of tax funds for environmental projects led to a founding boom of environmentally oriented NGOs. While in 1983 SEMA put the number of active environmental groups in Brazil at 563, in September 1989 around 1500 were counted.

After the phase of protest actions and targeted public relations work, NGOs became increasingly involved in the development of solution concepts and against envi-

166 Carlos Minc became Minister of Environment in 2008–2010.

167 Collor de Mello defeated the leftist politician Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in 1989 and in 1990 became Brazil's first popularly elected president in nearly 30 years. The country's economic decline, a staggering foreign debt and hyperinflation, failed to improve. Moreover, Collor de Mello was accused of corruption, and he resigned in December 1992 as his trial was about to begin. He was convicted in 1993 and barred from holding public office for a period of eight years.

ronmentally harmful development projects, organised seminars and workshops with specific problem-oriented environmental topics.

Admittedly, it must be borne in mind that only a few environmental organisations had the technical capacities, the organisational structure and the national and international contacts to carry out sound and continuous work in the environmental field. Many new environmental NGOs tried to participate in environmental projects of government agencies, especially in the run-up to UNCED 1992 in Rio de Janeiro and because of the expected funding from external sources. Aziz Ab'Sáber (1989) saw less the problem of administrative inexperience or opportunistic free riders among NGOs, but rather the lack of ecological expertise among many of those involved.

At the beginning of the 1990s, there was a wide spectrum of impressive environmental activities shortly after re-democratisation:

- professionally managed large organisations, which had a special lobby with state environmental entities, performing a kind of consulting function, with technically and politically experienced leaders and competent collaborators (e.g., SOS Mata Atlântica, São Paulo, founded in 1986);
- smaller, tightly managed NGOs, whose high level of factual competence was concentrated in a specialized leader (e.g., IEA, Mary Allegratti, Curitiba; 1986; Ecotrópica – Foundation for support of life in the tropics, Adalberto Eberhard, Cuiabá; 1989);
- organisations close to political parties that had political influence through well-known personalities and integrated environmental activities into economic and socio-political objectives (e.g., NGO Oikos, Fábio Feldmann, São Paulo; 1982);
- groups that had constituted themselves as NGOs with a regional reference (e.g., Amazonia) or sectoral goals (e.g., environmental education) on a scientific basis and due to many years of ecological research beyond day-to-day political events. They were led by scientists with an international reputation without a large administrative apparatus and worked voluntarily on a multiplier basis with publications or TV-presence (e.g., CNDDA, 1967, with Orlando Valverde and colleagues in Rio de Janeiro; ADEA, 1974, with João José Bigarella in Curitiba);
- nature conservation groups of traditional orientation, which without elaborate organisation in the beginning focused on local or micro-regional environmental problems, starting their activities on a voluntary basis and contributed with their public relations work to the strengthening of the environmental awareness of the population (e.g., APREMAVI, Miriam Prochnow, Wigold Schäffer, Alto Vale do Itajaí, Santa Catarina; 1987), among others;
- groups with an idealistically philosophical view of nature conservation, at that time especially in Southeast and South Brazil;
- groups that were increasingly or exclusively activist and wanted to raise awareness in demonstrations or special actions in the environmental field or were using environmental issues in a specific party-political way but did not strike for concrete project activities.

Some of the smaller NGOs have been particularly active in Amazonia, where they have contributed a lot to the analysis of problems of exploitation in this region and have de-

veloped approaches to solving unsolved problems.¹⁶⁸ In addition, they even succeeded in raising international funding through extensive applications.

In 1992, the UNCED conference also led to the founding of a so-called “consórcio,” an association of 13 environmental organisations that sought to allocate foreign debt and use this money for environmental projects (“debt-for-nature swaps”). A debt-for-nature swap is an agreement in which an indebted developing country, in exchange for the cancellation of part of its foreign debt, seeks to create funds in local currency that will be used to finance a specific conservation programme. Debt-for-nature swaps are not part of World Bank lending. However, the objectives of debt-for-nature swaps fit with the Bank’s support for conservation and debt reduction, and such arrangements have been facilitated by the World Bank.

Project proposals included the establishment of “Unidades de conservação” (protected areas: parks, biological and ecological reserves) at federal, state and municipal levels, environmental education and ecotourism, establishment of databases, and institutional strengthening of NGOs and research institutes. The total amount of projects submitted up to June 1990 was US\$ 265 million (Kohlhepp 1991d).

It became apparent that the favourable situation in the implementation of the UNCED findings in 1992 was exploited in Brazil, sometimes leading to generous cost calculations for project proposals and raising suspicions of a bidding mentality out of self-interest (staff positions). In view of the advantageous upswing in the environmental sector, considerable expertise in the field of application was deployed and competition for funding developed. Major multinational environmental organisations (including WWF) had close links with Brazilian NGOs and were already quite generous in co-financing projects.

By networking environmental activities, conservation organisations increasingly received support from Indigenous organisations, from the independent rubber tapping movement and from church circles.

The 1990s showed an impressive development of NGOs, which increasingly became involved with meaningful ideas in public discussions, in the environmental impact assessment of major projects, and in the critical analysis of official environmental policies. This was especially true for their activities regarding Amazonia.

168 CNDDA, founded early in 1967, with its publication “A Amazônia Brasileira em Foco,” IEA (Institute of Amazonian Studies), founded in 1986 in Curitiba, with research in Acre on extractive reserves and *seringueiros* (Allegretti 1990); among others, SOPREN (Belém), ECOTRÓPICA (1989, Cuiabá), ECOPORÉ (1988, Ação Ecológica Vale do Guaporé, Rolim de Moura, Rondônia), FBCN (1958, Rio) and Fundação GAIA (founded in 1988 by Lutzenberger) had projects in Amazonia in 1990. In 1990, IMAZON (Amazon Institute of People and the Environment), later on one of the most active NGOs, started its activities in Belém.

