

Green Economy in Brazil, the privatization of the Atlantic Forest: impacts from REDD projects and nature reserves on women and men in traditional communities

by Winfridus Overbeek ¹

“If only the Caiçara people existed, the forest would still be standing”
Resident of Caiçara community

The forest known as the *Mata Atlantica* (Atlantic Forest) in Brazil is one of the richest biomes in the planet in terms of biodiversity. It used to cover most of the coast of the country. But the process of brutal destruction suffered by the Atlantic Forest has been even stronger than that of the Amazon Forest, since the Atlantic Forest is located in the regions where the colonization and land exploitation processes not only began, but consolidated, from 1500 on. Today, with just 7% of its original surface area, the Atlantic Forest is the most threatened biome in the country. ²

The coastal area of Parana, especially the Antonina and Guaraqueçaba municipalities, are among the most beautiful landscapes in this state located in southern Brazil, given that this is where the largest continuous area of Atlantic Forest in the state and the whole country can be found. That this is so is directly linked to the presence of traditional populations and their conservation practices.

However, the survival of these populations is under severe threat from private initiatives in the region for forest areas appropriation for various ends. In this document, we focus on two of them in particular: The first is about carbon credits trade under the REDD mechanism, promoted by a Brazilian NGO, the Society for Wildlife Research and Environmental Education (*Sociedad de Investigación en Vida Salvaje y Educación Ambiental* - SPVS). The second one is about forest and biodiversity conservation in the ‘Salto Morato Nature Reserve’ owned by the Boticario Foundation.

In this article we’ll address the impacts of such activities on women and men in traditional communities in the region, and our goal is to warn about how these initiatives are related to the *green economy* proposal included in the Rio+20 conference agenda.



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² <http://www.sosma.org.br/index.php?section=info&action=mata>

A history of “good living”

Up to now and ever since the colonization process imposed in the 16th Century on the region, the Parana coast has been inhabited by traditional communities: Caiçara, Quilombola and Indigenous Peoples. Nowadays, there are tens of Caiçara communities in Antonina and Guaraqueçaba, in addition to two Quilombola communities –Batuva and Rio Verde—and one Guarani-Mbyá indigenous community in the Cerco Grande Indigenous Land, located in Guaraqueçaba municipality.

The ‘Caiçara’ communities³, who were originally the result of crossbreeding between Indigenous People and the first Portuguese settlers, spread over the states of Rio de Janeiro and Parana and their livelihood is mainly based on agriculture and forest product gathering. Historically, they have lived in harmony with the forest where they produce their food according to the fallow system whereby land is left to “rest”. In other words, they prepare an area to grow their diversified crops and after a period of time they abandon it, so that the forest and soil fertility can recover. Cassava cultivation for the production of flour has always played an important role within this system. In addition, the Caiçara people obtain from the Atlantic Forest palm hearts to feed themselves, lianas for crafts and timber for house construction, fences and canoes. They practice hunting and fishing to obtain food for their families. They have their own musical tradition, the *fandanga*, which they strive to preserve, with instruments built from raw materials obtained from the Atlantic Forest.

The Quilombola communities number over 2000 and are spread throughout the country.⁴ Several hundreds of them are located in the Atlantic Forest, where they usually practice diversified, small-scale agriculture in addition to gathering, hunting and fishing, while living in harmony with nature that provides their livelihood. They preserve their own dances and festivals. They are black communities that cropped up hundreds of years ago as an expression of resistance against the system of slavery and the quest for an autonomous life in freedom. According to Article 68 in the Federal Constitution of 1998, the Quilombola communities are entitled land rights, and this has been their main struggle. The lands of the Quilombola communities in Parana have not yet been demarcated.

The third traditional people with a significant presence in the Atlantic Forest are the Indigenous Peoples. In the case of the Parana coastal area, it is the Guarani people, which are also spread all over the South and South-East of Brazil and in Argentina, Paraguay and Bolivia. The Guarani people live in communities in a vast territory called *Tekoa Guasu*, where they are closely linked to each other. “Walking”, *Oguata*, has a religious meaning and stems from the idea of searching for the “land with no evil”, *Yvy marany*. This explains the arrival of a Guarani group in the region, some years ago. They occupied an area close to Guaraqueçaba town, with plenty of forests and surrounded by water.

Land for the Guarani people is not just a mere means of production; it represents a *Tekoa*, a place where the community can carry out their way of life. To achieve it they need forests, water, hunting and fishing. That is why the Guarani people have also been called *Ka’aguaygua*, which means “those who belong to the forest.”⁵

The Guarani-Mbya community in Guaraqueçaba fought hard to get land rights over the territory they have occupied, and that legal process has almost been concluded, according to the village’s Chief.

³ <http://www.ilhabela.com.br/CULTURA/index.html>

⁴ <http://www.cpis.org.br/comunidades/>

⁵ CIMI, Dossier of the International Campaign for the demarcation of the Tupinkim and Guarani indigenous lands, 1996.

Undoubtedly, to carry out their way of life, all these traditional communities, whether Caiçara, Quilombola or Indigenous, depend entirely on the forest, and that's why they have built a life in harmony with it. The fact that this whole region is so well preserved is a living testimony of the active presence of these communities, which often live in isolation though strongly linked with each other and in freedom.

Historically, the communities never cared to register or enclose the lands where they lived, since they considered the territory covered with forests, rivers, mangroves, islands and wetlands as a commons to be enjoyed in usufruct by everybody. Their lands are in most cases government-owned,⁶ and the families have been able to keep their properties within them, passing them on from one generation to the next. They have worked there sometimes individually as families and at other times collectively with their migrant crops.

The invasion of the communities' territory

Ranchers

The first big change in the region took place in the 1960s, with the arrival of logging companies, and especially of ranchers who started to register and grab lands, resorting many times to the illegal appropriation of land which is common practice in the rural areas of Brazil, by means of forging land titles in the territorial registries in the region. The families in the communities were threatened and very often thrown away from their territories. The ranchers used “*jaguncos*” (thugs, hit men) and buffalos to invade and grab the small-scale farmers' lands. Raising buffalo in the region, instead of bovine cattle, results from the fact that buffalos are coarser and sturdier, and therefore better suited to live in the clear-logged areas that become regularly flooded and which are generally difficult to access with any transport means.

The SPVS

Later, by the end of the 1990s, the Society for Wildlife Research and Environmental Education (SPVS) arrived in the region together with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), a US-based NGO, and began to buy huge stretches of land from the ranchers. They also bought some areas from occupants (*posseiros*), mainly from those who were under most pressure from the NGO activities. As a whole, the NGO's property in the region now adds up to 18,600 hectares in Antonina and Guaraqueçaba municipalities: the Cachoeira River nature reserves (8,600 hectares) in Antonina municipality; Serra do Itaqui (6,700 hectares) in Guaraqueçaba municipality; and Morro da Mina (3,300 hectares), also in Antonina municipality, which was given away as a donation to TNC in 1995 by a mining company that operated in the region.

Those areas now rank as Private Natural Heritage Reserves (RPPN)⁷. This means they are private areas aimed for biodiversity conservation where hunting, fishing and other gathering activities are banned.⁸ These reserves are part of a larger area that has been earmarked for conservation of the whole region's Atlantic Forest: the Environmental Protection Area (APA) of Guaraqueçaba, with 314 thousand hectares. An APA is an area where occupation and natural resources exploitation are allowed, but following rules that ensure their environmental protection.⁹

The SPVS acquired its lands thanks to the partnership with TNC and the financial resources provided by General Motors, American Electric Power and Chevron –three US based companies

⁶ Land lacking ownership titles, which therefore belongs to the State, who should allocate it for small-scale food production, so that those lands can fulfill their social function. They can't be transferred to big landowners. However, these have grabbed them illegally, many times through violent means and forged documents –a fraudulent process called “*grilagem*”.

⁷ <http://portugues.tnc.org/comunicacao-midia/destaques/em-tupi-guarani-guaraquecaba.xml>

⁸ <http://www.infoescola.com/meio-ambiente/reserva-particular-do-patrimonio-natural/>

⁹ http://www.ambiente.sp.gov.br/apas/oque_apa.htm

that share a common interest and goal: the carbon “stored” in those areas. TNC states that these companies “invested 18 million US dollars between 1999 and 2001 for the implementation, execution and maintenance of the Brazilian projects during 40 years.”¹⁰

Thus, in 1999, years before the mechanism for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) was launched, one of the first carbon projects in forest areas in the world was already underway.

According to TNC, 1,500 hectares of Atlantic Forest have already been restored. Gilberto Tiepolo, TNC’s forest carbon projects coordinator explains that “*the increases in plant biomass obtained from keeping forest areas in good conservation condition and through tree plantation, capture carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and contribute to global warming mitigation.*”¹¹ If, on the one hand, the carbon emitted, for example by Chevron, is equivalent to carbon absorbed by the trees inside the SPVS projects, in terms of the climate crisis, on the other hand, both carbons are very different, owing to the fact that the carbon emitted by Chevron’s oil increases the total amount of carbon present in the atmosphere, in plants, soil and seas, while the carbon absorbed by the trees in the SPVS/TNC projects are temporary carbon removals, at best, unable of “*mitigating global warming*”. In fact, the total amount of carbon and consequently global warming, tend to increase.

There are conflicting data to be found online regarding the amount of carbon that the projects would allegedly remove from the atmosphere. According to an interview with the SPVS published in 2010 by *Visao Ambiental Magazine*, the project has already removed 860,000 tons of carbon from the atmosphere through recovery of degraded areas, it is also estimated by SPVS that in the full 40 year period it would avoid the emission of 370,000 tons.¹² On the other hand, a separate article by TNC Brazil in 2012, states that from the time the project was first implemented, 322,401 tons of carbon have been absorbed, which reveals a difference of 539,599 tons with the other source. In addition, TNC’s article unveils other data, for instance, that throughout their 40 year lifespan, the SPVS projects would store 1,340,000 tons of CO₂, out of which 801,000 tons would come from preserved areas and 543,000 tons from restored areas in addition to the conservation of forest areas in general.¹³

Indeed, “*estimations on the volume of carbon stored in the different forest areas vary considerably*” and “*error levels over 50% or more are not uncommon.*”¹⁴ Meanwhile, under REDD projects, carbon storage estimations are based on the hypothetical situation of the project never taking place. As this is a hypothetical situation, it is impossible to have an accurate estimation of the carbon that would effectively be removed from the atmosphere as a result of the project.

Nevertheless, the SPVS's website¹⁵ publishes that according to the Brazilian Forestry Service, the project is under the category of “*REDD actions that have generated good results*”. And according to TNC, this is a “*pioneering model of Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) projects that has contributed to show ways forward for the development of the local areas that make up the APA.*”¹⁶ Under this logic, the credits from the “stored” carbon would be used by the three US companies that finance the SPVS to “compensate” part of their polluting emissions.

¹⁰ <http://portugues.tnc.org/comunicacao-midia/destaques/em-tupi-guarani-Guaraqueçaba.xml>

¹¹ <http://portugues.tnc.org/comunicacao-midia/destaques/em-tupi-guarani-Guaraqueçaba.xml>

¹² http://www.revistavisaoambiental.com.br/site/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=643:projeto-de-carbono-colabora-com-o-desenvolvimento-sustentavel-de-comunidades-no-parana&catid=5:noticias&Itemid=5

¹³ <http://portugues.tnc.org/comunicacao-midia/destaques/em-tupi-guarani-Guaraqueçaba.xml>

¹⁴ Kill, Jutta, “O REDD+ e os mercados de carbono: dez mitos detonados”. Fern, 2011

¹⁵ http://www.spvs.org.br/download/boletins/bol_jan10.html

¹⁶ <http://portugues.tnc.org/comunicacao-midia/destaques/em-tupi-guarani-Guaraqueçaba.xml>

Boticario Foundation

The Salto Morato Nature Reserve was created by the Boticario Foundation, which is part of the Boticario Group, a Brazilian company in the field of beauty products. The Reserve spans over 2,253 hectares and includes a 100 meter-high waterfall. The area was purchased in 1994 with the support of TNC.¹⁷

The Boticario Group, which is reckoned as a pioneer on “sustainability” issues, announces in their website that “21 years ago, before sustainability was a priority in the agenda of big corporations, our commitment to environmental concerns was already apparent in the creation of what has become today the Boticario Group Foundation for Nature Protection.”¹⁸

The Boticario Foundation is linked to other NGOs such as, for instance, SPVS and TNC in the “Climate Observatory” initiative. When introducing this initiative, the importance of the so-called *carbon market* is highlighted, and they describe it as the “strongest” initiative to combat climate change, stating:

“In the economic field, the carbon market represents the strongest initiative to combat climate change insofar it trades so-called carbon credits in stock markets or through deals linked to projects to reduce emissions in developed and developing countries, often funded by international institutions. The evolution of this market shows that developing countries like Brazil play an important role in the initiatives.”¹⁹

Impacts on communities

The initiatives in the coastal area of Parana, both by SPVS and the Boticario Foundation, have generated negative impacts on the local communities who live near those reserves, despite TNC claims that the region is currently experiencing a situation of “*visible recovery of the forest and wildlife*” and that “*families that derived their livelihoods from hunting and cattle raising are now obtaining concrete economic results from activities that are compatible with the preservation of the natural heritage.*”²⁰



¹⁷ http://www.fundacaogrupoboticario.org.br/pt-br/paginas/o-que-fazemos/areas-protetidas/reserva/default.aspx?idareaprotetida=6&titulo=reserva_natural_salto_morato

¹⁸ <http://www.grupoboticario.com.br/institucional/Paginas/institucional.aspx>

¹⁹ http://www.oc.org.br/index.php?page=Conteudo&id=1&expanddiv=menu_1

²⁰ <http://portugues.tnc.org/comunicacao-midia/destaques/em-tupi-guarani-Guaraqueçaba.xml>

No doubt, the arrival of SPVS and the Boticario Foundation dealt a severe blow on the communities. Following the privatization of the areas acquired by those organizations, the communities in the area began to lose access to the abundant forests in the region, to waterfalls, mangroves and rivers –they began to lose freedom, autonomy, the right to move about unhindered and most importantly, the right to maintain their local economies and carry out their way of life.

In addition to the impacts on men, in the field work for this paper we listened to women, because as a female resident of the communities said, *"for women it is probably more difficult. We are more afraid. Women often stay at home."*

Persecution

There has long been an environmental police corps in the region, but according to residents in the communities nearby the SPVS and Boticario Foundation reserves, the police never victimized the community the way they have since the arrival of these organizations. Almost all families in the area have stories to tell about the abuses of the environmental police in Parana, the so-called Green Force which has harassed families, in coordination with the new “green” owners of the reserves.

Women have been particularly affected, as they suffer greater exposure given that they are in charge of domestic chores and child care when their husbands go out to look for work. There are many women testimonies about the behavior of the Green Force, about how armed police officers break into their homes without any legal warrant.

A resident of Antonina municipality who lives nearby the SPVS reserve said *"they don't come here to talk, they come here to disrupt."* She said:

“They came to my house when I wasn't there, I had left to deliver some invitations (...) then they went to my house, my daughter was having breakfast. They didn't knock on the door; they went directly to the window. My daughter was afraid (...) When I came back they had searched all through my garden, without asking for permission (...) I didn't know they had already been inside my house. They had pointed on my daughter, not on me, with those small devices (GPS) and said: “your father has two rifles inside the house, where are they? Tell us where they are” (...), they upset me quite a lot, they wanted to enter my house, and did a great deal of atrocities (...) I was alone in my house. Alone with my children, without my husband who was out working somewhere else (...) there we stood surrounded by six men. And one of them said, if you don't give me (the rifle) we'll go after your husband. So I went to look for the gun and gave it to them.”

We listened to several testimonies by women about how their husbands had been arrested. The abovementioned resident told us that her husband had once been handcuffed by the Green Force in his own house, claiming that it was their “job”. In another occasion, he had felled down a tree to build a canoe, and he got arrested for 11 days. To get released, he had to pay bail. When their husbands get arrested, the insecurity and fear of women increases.

Residents of the Morato community living nearby the Boticario Foundation reserve say that the police are always prowling about in the community. One female resident told us how they broke into her 80-year-old grandmother's house:

“My grandmother has high-blood pressure, and she didn't enjoy it when they came in. She got very nervous. She was cooking pork and chicken. They rushed in without asking for permission, and began to search through everything. She was in the kitchen as always. They scared her. It was no fun time for my grandmother. But if anyone dares to say something, they get arrested.”

In the Quilombola community of Batuva, a resident was arrested for extracting timber. Another Quilombola resident's arrest and imprisonment was the focus of particular public attention because of the length of his detention period. He spent 47 days in jail after being accused of killing a wild animal.

The people's outrage is even greater when they realize that big landowners are not given the same treatment, whenever it is them and not the communities who log down the native forest to plant palms to produce palm hearts, for example.

The right to use the forest

There was a case where one resident of the Quilombola community of Rio Verde cut down a native tree, and a group of police officers who were driving a vehicle given by the Boticario Foundation, went to his house to seize the timber, claiming that he didn't have authorization to cut it down. The resident who needed the timber to fix his house as a matter of urgency couldn't do so.

But this resident does have the right to cut down native trees because he is a member of a traditional community. Federal Law 11,428 dated December 22, 2006, ensures the right of traditional communities to use the forest to meet their livelihood ends. Based on this federal law, resolution 007 dated April 18, 2008, drafted by the state authorities of Parana, establishes that residents of a traditional community have the right to 15m³ of timber per year, as long as it is not from endangered tree species. In the case of the Rio Verde community resident, the tree was a Guaricica, which is not an endangered species.

An environmental police officer who was heard in this case, said that the resident had to have the relevant registry document, and that that would be, according to him, quite simple: he would only have to take his land titles to the competent body to get them registered. But this has proven to be difficult, or even impossible for most families, given that they are generally occupying lands for which they have never registered property titles. This is an example of legislation drafted without the participation of those who the law aims to benefit, and that in the end, results in a process of unacceptable persecution for something that is in fact their right.

And it also leads to other distressing situations, for instance, the case of a resident that planted a plot with juçara-palm, a native species. He says he is no longer permitted to cut down these trees, even though they are planted in his own land.

Health problems

The new obstacles that have been imposed on traditional communities for growing crops using the fallow system, on hunting and fishing and for practicing traditional medicine, have resulted in a situation whereby the healthy food staples without chemical pesticides that were once readily accessible to them, no longer exist to be consumed. Instead, families now have to buy most of their basic food, which is very often contaminated with chemical pesticides. According to women, these involuntary changes in their food habits explain the emergence of new health problems.

An old female resident told us "*people used to lead a more relaxed life before*". The community produced its own food. The difficulties now faced by families to produce their own food are due to the lack of lands. And she added: "*The diseases that are now affecting us didn't exist before. The diseases we suffered back then were measles, whooping cough which has always existed, chickenpox, mumps. But current diseases such as diabetes, arthritis, osteoarthritis, thrombosis, didn't exist at all, nobody fell ill from them.*"

Earning money to buy food has become an additional pressure on people to leave the communities to look for a job.

Unkept promises - forced to look for jobs outside.

This sort of bullying and persecution has led to a situation where communities feel themselves as being “prisoners” and “cornered” in their own homes, fenced by a forest that they can only admire, but which they cannot enter and whose benefits they can no longer enjoy. When they are asked if the projects help preserve the forests, the residents state that when they had their crops near their homes, there was a lot more wildlife to hunt because the animals fed from the crops. But nowadays they are not allowed to grow anything, so animals have moved away.

However, not everyone is accepting this situation. When they were asked if they can still grow their crops according to the fallow system, one resident answered: *“Hidden and something small, just to survive, for our own consumption. I grow beans to eat at home. I grow beans, bananas, cassava, yam, potatoes. But merely planting is not enough. Everything is done hidden because we are afraid.”*

They don’t agree at all with claims that the traditional use of the forest they used to practice was endangering the forests future. For instance, regarding palm hearts, one of the communities’ most common and best appreciated food stuffs, one female resident said: *“Right here, surrounding my house, there are a lot of palm hearts, seeds fall on the floor; sometimes, we spread them in the forest, but we can’t pick them up afterwards, we’re no longer allowed to touch them.”*

It is for this reason that many residents, mostly men but also women, have been forced to sell their labor to the ranchers in the region or to look for jobs in the small cities of the area or the capital city.

Ensuring a monthly income by working for SPVS isn’t either a viable option for the communities. When it arrived, SPVS promised jobs that would last approximately 40 years, equivalent to the expected life time of the carbon project. According to residents, SPVS hired 47 people of the community at the beginning, most of them as forestry guards, but only a few remain today. Former employees told us most of them had been fired, and there are only seven workers still remaining. In addition, the salaries they paid were and are still quite low, just a bit over the minimum wage. Only three out of 47 employees that were hired at the beginning were women, and their salaries were even lower than those of men. The situation is not that very different at the Boticario Foundation. According to residents in the Morato community, there are only six people working there as hired labor.

While middle class families from the state’s capital Curitiba are now buying houses in the area for their weekends and holidays, several local community families have given up living there and have left, leading to the progressive evisceration of communities. However, there are also families who have returned to their communities because they found it difficult to adapt to life in town. A resident who lived for some time in town and returned to the community said *“(…) I prefer this place, it is calm and quiet here. But (...) we’re no longer allowed to do anything here.”*

Promises by SPVS about income generating activities for the local communities and improvement of their quality of life, resulted in some initiatives that fell apart after some time. A group of women organized themselves to generate more income by sewing and tailoring clothes, and that worked for a while, but according to testimonies from several women in the communities, that business initiative is now paralyzed. The only seemingly successful income generating initiative that is still up and running is a honey production business started by SPVS, but it does not involve the most impacted communities directly.

A hard struggle for their own land

In spite of all these circumstances, the communities are still resisting the pressure from SPVS and the Boticario Foundation, which seem to be set to push them out from the area. One of the communities organized itself in a special way. At the beginning of the past decade, a rancher in Antonina municipality wanted to sell his property to SPVS, and that would have led to the eviction of all the families living in that place. They organized themselves, and with the support of the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST), they occupied the rancher's property in 2003. Currently, there are 20 families living on that land, and they are fighting for the official recognition of their tents camp in Rio Pequeno, which they named after the environmental activist Jose Lutzenberger, so that it becomes an agrarian reform settlement.



They resisted a strong SPVS campaign against them, including a report where the NGO states:

“Numerous technical, economic and historical data show that this (new rural settlements) is unfeasible. Accepting more settlements in the Guaraqueçaba APA would set the stage for a dangerous precedent, with serious environmental and socio-economic consequences. In addition, the families which would be eventually settled would be condemned to very limited possibilities of success, given the area's low ability to sustain agricultural activities.”²¹

As part of the hard struggle of this community against the pressures from the rancher, SPVS and environmental bodies, the residents have denounced environmental crimes committed by the rancher, such as a river diversion and the indiscriminate use of chemical pesticides, but none of their claims has been addressed by the environmental bodies or SPVS.

²¹ http://www.oeco.com.br/maria-tereza-jorge-padua/16283-oeco_18681

The community has started to implement small-scale reforestation activities and chose to work collectively on agroforestry systems with an agroecological approach, as their main proposal for income generation for the families in the future. In addition, each family will get their own individual plot to cultivate their basic subsistence crops. During one of the agroforestry-based reforestation activities in one of the areas that had been degraded by the rancher, a female resident said:

I've been living here for four years, and I like it (...) I work here, I also have a piece of land and we work collectively (...) That way we ensure that everyone is helping, and this is working, it is very good (...) In the future there's going to be bushes right here which will become agroforest (...) so we can get some income in the future, both me the rest of my fellow women here. And it is nice, coming in here and seeing all the trees and plants. We are working here not only for money, we are working for life as well. We work very proudly, with much love. Because plants are alive just as we are, they are thirsty too (...) I lived in the city, (...) the city is horrible. (...) It's different here, the houses can be left unlocked. (...) And for my children, this place is paradise. (...) There is no violence here at all."

The settlement neighbors the SPVS reserve, and according to the residents, the community-controlled forest areas are in better condition than those inside the SPVS reserve. This information and a resident's testimony squarely belie the statements in the aforementioned SPVS's report.

Threatened future

Nearby one of the communities lies a house in the forest where SPVS is doing research about the Atlantic Forest species, with funding from its association with the HSBC bank, through the HSBC Climate Partnership. According to the HSBC's website, this is an "innovative environmental program" designed to "give continuity to the planet's preservation."²²

Meanwhile, the future of the communities is severely at risk if the SPVS and Boticario Foundation forest conservation proposal prevails in the area with full backing from the state's apparatus, mainly its environmental and police departments. As a matter of extreme urgency, the abuses and persecution against communities need to be stopped. According to residents' testimonies, what is effectively taking place are serious human rights violations, and even social, cultural and environmental rights violations.

As a female resident synthesized:

"Yes, we have always preserved the forest. But sometimes we also need to cut down some trees, sometimes we need to build a house, we need timber. We are no longer allowed to do that, so everything is more difficult. (...) We used to grow crops there before, but now we're not allowed to do so anymore. When SPVS arrived, everything ended. Where my father used to live, it is no longer permitted now. Nobody bought beans or corn before, we used to grow many vegetables, we'd clear the lower end, cleaned it and planted it; we gathered most of the things from the land. But we're not allowed to plant anymore now, we have to buy everything. (...) We didn't see any diseases before. Today, almost everybody is sick, many people. (...) They talked, they promised they were going to help my father, but so far we haven't seen any help, it got increasingly worse because they said they were going to help and then the Green Force came and they even wanted to arrest my father. That's their help."

²² <http://www.hsbc.com.br/1/2/portal/pt/sobre-o-hsbc/sustentabilidade/meio-ambiente/hsbc-climate-partnership>

Green economy vs. life economy

The situation that these communities are facing is an example, and at the same time, a warning about the perversity of the green economy proposal that is in the agenda of the Rio+20 conference to take place in June, 2012. One of the Green Economy pillars is trading environmental services such as carbon, biodiversity and water. The Parana projects show that this type of “economy” will enable the massive green-wash of the polluting activities of the companies that sponsor the forest conservation areas under discussion, while the privatization and control of those areas result in various violations to the rights of men and women living in those communities.

Take for instance Chevron, one of SPVS’s sponsors, which in addition to the emissions it generates through its oil burning and extraction activities, is now causing even more environmental degradation, through, for example, the oil spill accident that polluted the sea in Campo da Frade, in the Campos Basin, Rio de Janeiro, in November 2011,²³ and another accident that took place in May 2012 in the same area. The compensation that the Brazilian Federal Public Prosecution Service has demanded from Chevron as a result of the accident in November 2011 amounts to 20 billion Reais, almost 12 billion US dollars.²⁴ Quite obviously, it turns out very convenient for this company to have a project such as SPVS to help it green-wash its image while it continues degrading the environment.

The Boticario Foundation has pursued hiring new employees to act as “*payment for environmental services and green economy.*”²⁵ According to this logic, areas such as the Salto Morato Nature Reserve would “compensate” the environmental degradation generated by the current or future production activities of the company and/or other companies, with the “environmental services provided” in the reserve -such as carbon storage and water and biodiversity protection--, under the false premise that it will indeed be possible to carry on with the current model of production and consumption while taking care at the same time of the environment, the climate.



The green economy would allow the polluting and destructive economy to carry on at full speed, while its concrete “conservation” proposals end up destroying the local, traditional and subsistence

²³ <http://www.cartacapital.com.br/carta-verde/foi-a-mae-natureza-diz-executivo-da-chevron-sobre-acidente/>

²⁴ http://www.dnonline.com.br/app/outros/ultimas-noticias/38,37,38,72/2012/03/18/noticia_interna_brasilemundo,94018/apos-acidente-executivos-da-chevron-estao-impedidos-de-deixar-o-brasil.shtml

²⁵ http://www.nqm.com.br/index.php/login/clipping/150/?sel_pasta=491&sel_mes=10&sel_ano=2011&visualizar=10282547

economies that seek to contribute exactly to the conservation of forests, being indeed a part of them. The green economy logic threatens the families and exposes them to persecution, diseases and lack of jobs and income. As the climate crisis tends to aggravate, if the *green economy* proposal is implemented, it will impact even more severely on forests and the lives of those people.

But the situation in Parana also shows that communities are resisting. And they are offering a series of elements to rethink the perverse development model that the green economy aims to perpetuate. For instance, the families that practice the recovery of nature: they show that human beings are part of and depend on nature, that nature is a treasure that allows the community to "live well", preserving and enjoying that true wealth.

Therefore, it is important to listen to these communities and think of other paths for the dominant development model, giving priority to life, not profit-making. It is necessary to learn with them to find inspiration and new paths. Some proposals in that direction can be elicited from the following testimony by a resident of the Rio Pequeno settlement, when he explained the agroforestry system he implemented around his house in an area that had been formerly logged and degraded by the rancher:

“Here’s a green fertilization, a recovery area with green fertilization. This is called *mucura*, it is a leguminous plant that produces a lot of organic matter for the soil, it produces biomass, organic matter. This means, it produces carbon. The transnational corporations are using the forest to produce carbon, we do it with green fertilization, with mucuna, napie, with leguminous plants that capture the nutrients from the air and put them back into the soil. So we have a “carbon capture” project [laughs] that is based on agroecology and for the benefit of the community, not the transnational corporations (...) It is a project that produces wealth for the soil and the fertility we need to produce our own food. It is the opposite of the projects by the transnational companies that capture carbon through the use of forests only to win extra value in the capitalist market (...) The forest is for human beings to live in. God gave the forests to the communities, the people, so that we have a good quality of life in the forest, despite it being in the hands of speculators. The governments fell to the logic of capital. It is not only the forest, it is water, the soil, it is all the biodiversity that exists in the forest. (...) for us, the forest is our home, it is our way of life.”