



UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

<https://helda.helsinki.fi>

The new 'sustainable communitarian' logging schemes and their critique inside multiple-use conservation areas in the Brazilian Amazon : preliminary notes

Kröger, Antti Markus

2018-06-01

Taylor and Francis Ltd.

<http://hdl.handle.net/10138/238273>

Kröger, A M 2018, 'The new 'sustainable communitarian' logging schemes and their critique inside multiple-use conservation areas in the Brazilian Amazon : preliminary notes', *Globalizations*, vol. 15, no. 5, pp. 581-592. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2018.1474032>

Downloaded from Helda, University of Helsinki institutional repository. <https://helda.helsinki.fi>
This is an electronic reprint of the original article.
This reprint may differ from the original in pagination and typographic detail.
Please cite the original version.



The new 'sustainable communitarian' logging schemes and their critique inside multiple-use conservation areas in the Brazilian Amazon: preliminary notes

Markus Kröger

To cite this article: Markus Kröger (2018) The new 'sustainable communitarian' logging schemes and their critique inside multiple-use conservation areas in the Brazilian Amazon: preliminary notes, *Globalizations*, 15:5, 581-592, DOI: [10.1080/14747731.2018.1474032](https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2018.1474032)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2018.1474032>



© 2018 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 01 Jun 2018.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 190



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

The new ‘sustainable communitarian’ logging schemes and their critique inside multiple-use conservation areas in the Brazilian Amazon: preliminary notes

Markus Kröger 

University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

ABSTRACT

Deforestation has risen sharply in Brazil since 2012, and conservation areas are facing increased pressure. This article studies the rise of so-called ‘sustainable’, ‘communitarian’, and/or ‘cooperative’ logging schemes inside multiple-use conservation areas in the Amazon. The findings, based on fresh field research in Acre and Pará, reveal conflicts, problems, and risks associated with logging schemes, although they are portrayed in the international timber trade as certified and socio-environmentally sustainable solutions that help conservation. However, the expansion of logging presents a danger for curtailing forest degradation, fires, and corruption that is linked to the fast returns from sale of timber, especially inside conservation areas that have been mostly intact until now. There is an urgent need to change the strategy of promoting logging as a key source of income for forest-dwellers, and a need to change the policies allowing the expansion of ‘sustainable logging’.

KEYWORDS

Deforestation; the Amazon; multiple-use conservation areas; logging; sustainability; forestry

Introduction

The Brazilian Amazon has seen the establishment of dozens of large, multiple-use conservation areas since the mobilization by forest-dwellers such as the rubber tappers like Chico Mendes in the 1980s. Starting in the state of Acre, Extractive Reserves (RESEXs) and other similar conservation units have spread around Brazil. In 2014 there were 65 RESEXs in the Amazon that covered 13.49 million hectares; National Forests (FLONAs), which are often used in practice in pretty much the same way as RESEXs (although they are different legal instruments), covered 31.62 million hectares, spread around 58 FLONAs.¹ The idea behind RESEXs, which are quite similar to National Forests in their de facto land usage in many cases, is to offer ways for local populations to live in the area in the traditional way, but also to preserve the environment and particularly the Amazon forest cover where this exists.

However, there is an in-built schism between the *modi operandi* of such multiple-use conservation areas. Many of the developmental schemes pose imminent or indirect threats to the sustainability and longevity of the preservation imperative. The government, with its institutions, as well as private groups, drive deforestation inside these reserves through several developmental projects, whose number has been on the rise in the past years.

CONTACT Markus Kröger  markus.kroger@helsinki.fi

© 2018 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

In this article, I will elucidate how the much-lauded and often high-yield ‘sustainable communitarian logging’ schemes, although held in high esteem by several would-be developers, are currently advancing and operating inside three seminal conservation areas in the Amazon: the Chico Mendes Extractive Reserve (CMER) in Acre (931,537 hectares), the FLONA Tapajós (527,319 hectares), and RESEX Tapajós-Arapiuns (647,611 hectares) in the Santarém region in Pará. The RESEX Tapajós-Arapiuns is Brazil’s most populous conservation unit, and was the first of Pará’s RESEXs. It has received ample support, e.g. development project aid, as has the FLONA Tapajós on the opposite side of the Tapajós River. The latter is the most studied multiple-use conservation area in Brazil, according to Observatório das UCs (2015) and an ICMBio official interviewed in Santarém by the author. This article is based on the knowledge gathered during many field visits to the conservation units in the Santarém region since 2005, where participant observation among the communitarian leaders and reserve inhabitants was conducted. The discussion here focuses on the Santarém-Belterra region in Pará, and Acre’s Xapuri-Brasileira-Assis Brasil municipalities’ region. Analysis is primarily based on field research in 2017 and 2018 in these areas, that lasted for a total of two months, and included dozens of interviews with the key players. I also analyse policy documents and recount the findings from field visits where the logging operations were observed in practice.

This article offers fresh insights into the current situation and thrust of the so-called wood-based ‘management plans’, that are labelled as sustainable and/or communitarian. This is an important discussion in terms of both conservation and development of economic opportunities, since at least formal and highly esteemed cooperatives at times conduct the ‘sustainable logging’, instead of the notoriously scandal-ridden and violent private logger companies, called *madeiros* in Brazil. However, these cooperatives also have problems, as I will discuss. In fact, their spread can pose a serious threat to the Amazon forest cover in several ways.

In comparison to agribusiness areas, RESEXs and other multiple-use conservation areas are generally much better protected (Nepstad et al., 2006). However, as I will argue, this is not due to ‘sustainable logging’ schemes, but rather to the non-wood extractive practices, such as latex collection. Now, as the rubber economy has almost collapsed with no more state subsidies (Jaramillo-Giraldo, Soares Filho, Ribeiro, & Gonçalves, 2017), some areas with fewer alternatives, and a lot of pressure from deforesting actors, are turning to ranching and logging all under the name of ‘sustainable communitarian’ schemes, which are just false frames in most cases. These schemes are now quickly increasing the deforestation and degradation in these areas. There is a need for public discussion and research on these changes.

The so-called ‘sustainable forest management plans’ are not sustainable according to a review by Philip Fearnside (2017), as well as Freris and Laschefski (2001) and Laschefski (2003a, 2003b). In these plans, typically, a forest area is harvested of almost all the trees with a market value, and then ideally left to regrow naturally for a period that is normally (or should be) 30 years or more. However, Fearnside (2017), citing Kageyama (2000) argues that ‘based on the population biology of the trees, the current rules for management projects are unlikely to maintain forest indefinitely even if followed as theoretically envisioned’. However, many of these programmes have received Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certifications, which is an absurdity according to those who have studied these logging schemes and the birth of their certificates such as FSC since their inception, such as Klemens Laschefski (author’s interview, Belo Horizonte, 28 February 2018). According to Laschefski, when these logging schemes are opened in the primary forests, they lead to extensive deforestation through the building of access roads. Huge machines are brought in, and the largest trees cut down. This opens the canopy, which makes a bushland to cover up the opened space very rapidly; thus, the forest area is rendered largely unusable for traditional uses, such as collecting non-wood forest products (NWFPs).

Logging schemes make it unviable to use the area for other uses, although often the cooperatives that are formed are often officially mixed-revenue cooperatives making also potentially use of NWFP, such as the COOMFLONA cooperative operating in the FLONA Tapajós. While visiting the COOMFLONA areas in February 2018, I was told by their forest technicians that the areas could be used for NWFP collection, but they said that this had not yet been done, although the logging had already been ongoing for nine years, and almost 9000 hectares had been harvested.

Klemens Laschefski, who has studied logging schemes in the Amazon since the 1980s, argued to me in an interview (1 March 2018) that logging schemes present ‘an absolutely Western idea that is implemented in the forest’ based on miscalculation, as a system with lots of contradictions. For example, there is lot of illegal logging that occurs directly or indirectly because of these ‘sustainable logging’ schemes (as the evidence cited in this article also suggests). When he conducted his research in 2000, in Itacoatiara, near Manaus, with one of the first ‘sustainable Reduced Impact logging’ schemes, Laschefski noted that an 80,000-hectare logging area was ‘evaluated’ for its sustainability in only three days. An analysis of the recent certification report (IMAFLORA, 2018) of the reassessment of the same company that nowadays has more than 227,000 hectares of certified forests, reveals there is no change within these procedures. Furthermore, he explained that this logging ‘opens the canopy’ which results in a higher risk of fires; when these occur, ‘the locals are criminalized’. Besides that, within the logged forests the shrub level becomes very dense and ‘unusable for traditional uses’. That was the reason about 1400 locals reported the negative impacts of the new logging scheme, which had been adopted by another company, to the environmental police of the state of Amazonas, Brazil. Laschefski considered these schemes to be ‘hidden land grabbing’, as people have to change the use of land, as forests become crippled, cut from the ‘base of the forest’, which is timber. He explained that the ‘sustainable logging’ schemes were included in multiple-use conservation units as an integral and central component to the creation of overall management plans for these units in 2008 due to the strong pressure and influence of Tasso Rezende de Azevedo, who is a notable figure in the history of logging schemes.

Azevedo participated in the creation of IMAFLORA (*Instituto de Manejo e Certificação Florestal e Agrícola*, the Institute of Forest and Agriculture Management and Certification), an FSC certifier, that nowadays is the Brazilian Branch of Rainforest Alliance. Until 2003 Azevedo was the director of IMAFLORA. From 2002 to 2009 he worked as General Director of the Brazilian Forest Service of the Ministry of Environment, developing the National Forest Plan, implementing in 2006 the Law of the Management of Public Forests.² This law is the base of the regulation of forest concessions, environmental auditing, and management plans of the sustainable use of forests. Within this context, private logging companies (including foreign consortiums) can bid for a concession and implement so-called Reduced Impact Logging. IMAFLORA began its activity by being the key player in pushing a logging scheme inside FLONA Tapajós, in 1995, when it ‘elaborated a plan for the communitarian use of forest resources’ (Observatório das UCs, 2015). It implemented a pilot project to help establish ‘sustainable logging’ inside the Amazon (called *Promanejo, Projeto de Apoio ao Manejo Florestal Sustentável na Amazônia*),³ with the partnership of the World Bank’s PPG7 programme (*Programa Piloto para Proteção das Florestas Tropicais do Brasil*),⁴ IBAMA (*Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e dos Recursos Naturais Renováveis*), and the German Development Bank (KfW). According to a manager of projects for IMAFLORA (interviewed in Observatório das UCs, 2015), ‘During that time we were thinking about how we could we could make the conservation units economically viable through ethical commerce’. These pilot events in the 1990s were essential in uniting different strands of the Amazon conservation community that had thus far been critical of logging – all under the pretence of saving the Amazon by logging it sustainably instead of logging it

illegally. However, this type of thinking, which was also criticized in many other parts of the world for its fallacy (e.g. in relation to the Polish ancient oak forests (Weisman, 2008), and in general (Wohlleben, 2016)), has led to many conflicts, and is apparently not as sustainable or developmental as assumed by its pioneers, as shall be discussed here.

Next, I will assess the contentious expansion of logging schemes to the *RESEX Tapajós-Arapiuns*. After this, I discuss the logging cooperative operations and the conflicts related them in *FLONA Tapajós*. Finally, the Acre *RESEX Chico Mendes* logging scheme debates are discussed. This will provide a brief panorama of the present situation and debates about and critical views of the so-called 'sustainable logging' schemes in multiple-use conservation units.

New conflicts in the *Santarém* region: RESEX logging schemes

As I witnessed in all three areas I analyse here, these logging schemes tend to create conflicts where they are proposed. In January 2018, I heard from the long-term communitarian leaders of the *Tapajós-Arapiuns RESEX* and other experts on its development worrying news about the current situation. They argued to me that the RESEX manager at the ICMBio (a state institution responsible for the management of conservation areas), and the president of the inhabitants' association (*Tapajóara*) may be in collusion with *madeiros* to expand a major logging scheme inside the RESEX, at the *Nova Canãa* community, which is the furthest community of the reserve. The informants also claimed that this scheme might be linked to key political parties in the municipality of *Santarém*, e.g. the Social Democratic Party of Brazil (PSDB). A wide range of documents, to which I gained access, portrays a rising conflict and hostility among the key institutions managing in practice this RESEX. Lawsuits have been raised between the different entities and their leaders. These documents illustrate that the rural workers' trade union (STTR) and the Extractive Populations' Union (CNS) have filed official calls to prosecutors to investigate the possible corruption and illegal logging schemes, related to capture by private logging interests. The leaders of regional STTR and CNS branches argued to me that 2018 will see major upheavals in this respect, when the schemes will be revealed to the public and investigated in detail. In recent years, *Santarém*, and the Amazon in general, have been sites of major corruption schemes within governmental authorities, such as the land institute INCRA.⁵ Given that the key state institutions related to land control permits in *Santarém*, such as INCRA, have been argued to be among Brazil's 'most problematic', there is every reason to be worried when long-term and internationally acclaimed communitarian leaders argue that an ICMBio bureaucrat has been involved in corruption schemes.

The setting is also highly violent and dangerous for those acting towards ensuring that environmental and other laws are followed. The lives of environmental authorities and activists who try to defend the forests and the people living in them are routinely threatened, and these threats also extend to their families. For example, according to several local people, a few years ago an IBAMA officer called Daniel was driven away from *Santarém* by the powerful local political-economic elite, whose logging interests his investigations were threatening. According to those close to him, he left the region after being mugged by a gang in front of his house, that ordered him to leave the region. It is important to note this violent political-institutional setting as the background for understanding where the new logging schemes are entering. Therefore, I do not use the names of the persons interviewed.

The process by which the *RESEX Tapajós-Arapiuns* was created involved a deep conflict in the 1990s with the illegal private logging companies that were beginning to extract wood in large quantities from the area that would become the RESEX. The mobilization by the locals was sufficient to

withhold this expansion, but left as a scar an access road from the western side of the RESEX to its internal part, where the loggers had a camp. Now the camp is abandoned, and the heavy tractors have been left there. However, three communities on the Western fringe of the RESEX, behind a difficult access by the *Maró* River, have not really taken up economic activities that would be sustainable, according to many informants, but have continued basing their livelihoods on random logging inside the reserve. In fact, a forestry technician who knows the area argued that ‘cutting wood illegally is the only source of income’ for these people along the *Maró* River; this is ‘the only available option’, and it is ‘passed on to the new generation’. Thus, they have also retained a close relation with the private loggers, to whom they sell the wood they have cut, legally or illegally (within or outside permits and permit procedures), in a quite substantial area. According to the technician, many people who live in the RESEX work as illegal loggers right outside the reserve. These informant claims were supported by the analysis present in the official Management Plan of the reserve, and its Resume (2016). These also illustrated that the *Nova Canãa* and the two other nearby communities are having the hardest time economically, and do not engage in food production, but continue to rely on buying food from the markets. Hence, the profile of these people is different in comparison to the livelihood strategies of the rest of the RESEX population.

This tension has manifested itself as a rising conflict when the official association representing the reserve has begun to support an increase in new logging schemes. These schemes were abandoned for the central part of the RESEX, for the time being, for multiple reasons, including resistance to them by the *Tapajós* and *Arapuins* riverside communities that are more environmentally minded and critically aware. However, on the western fringes, the logging plans continue, and, according to my informants, the ICMBio manager of the reserve, together with the *Tapajoara* president, are trying to put them quickly into action, together with the private logging companies that a façade ‘cooperative’ has contracted to do the actual logging. I witnessed how these official entities organized extensive trips to visit this area to execute these projects. The current extension and status of these logging schemes inside the RESEX is difficult to ascertain, given the difficulty of remote sensing or even flyovers to spot where trees are being cut. Nevertheless, I did hear from several sources that access roads and logistical networks had already been built in the region. This is an acute issue, since once logging begins in an area, or access roads are built, it is hard to control what happens next, especially when the local communities support the logging and participate in it.

According to several local leaders, the communities involved in the logging expansion have not allowed critical members of the RESEX to visit the area to check on the situation. ICMBio is notorious for not being able (due to lack of personnel) or willing (possibly because of corruption) to oversee and inspect (as it should) whether environmental crimes are taking place. For example, the *Munduruku* indigenous people have asked in vain for the ICMBio to conduct surveillance of the deforestation and river destruction done by illegal loggers inside their indigenous territories in Pará.⁶ Even after the critical news report by a major journal, whose journalist travelled to the site with *Munduruku* people and witnessed the destruction first hand, the ICMBio refused to acknowledge that there had been any destruction (see the above news report about their comment). However, as I observed in *Santarém* on the day after the publication of the news report, ICMBio was forced to take a better and more forceful stand on the issue after this news report, as a judge intervened after it and asked for the legal entities responsible for the management to resolve the problem. Publicizing news about environmental crimes is one of the often-necessary elements in pressuring the authorities to direct their attention to a problem, especially in Brazil. International news can have particularly strong effects in this sense, and given Brazil’s political turmoil and power shifts since 2016, the international arena is gaining much more importance.

Attention to problems would also be required in the case of increased logging inside the RESEXs, already for just opening up access to check what is happening. The trade union STTR reported that when they tried to enter upriver towards the community of *Nova Canãa*, the people in favour of logging on the route forced their boat to stop, stole their gasoline, and forced them to turn back, after threatening them. On the other hand, even if an outsider could reach the site, it would be quite easy for the locals not to show them the critical sites where logging is taking place. The problem is difficult to address, as the ICMBio and *Tapajoara* are currently in favour of logging, arguing that it would bring tens of millions of *reais* to the locals. An indigenous leader explained to me that the *Tapajoara*'s current president's actions were 'dubious in terms of the environmental question', and did not pay much attention to these; his focus is on economic development, according to this elder.

One key cause of disagreement is that this money would flow mostly to the companies doing the extraction. The costs of logging are very high (about 10 million *reais* for the first year), given the need for machinery and road building, and logistics to export the logs. The smaller part of the money would stay within the nearby three communities only, with *Tapajoara* getting 15% of the profits, which were estimated to total 4 million *reais* in the first year by the president of *Tapajoara* (interview, 15 February 2018). However, in the case of FLONA *Tapajós*, the model is different, as all the communities of the FLONA get at least some benefit from the cooperative logging scheme (which also has problems, as will be discussed below). In the RESEX, the massive inflow of money would go only for the three communities that have asked for new, separate logging management plans. One of these, at *Nova Canãa*, totals 28,000 hectares, and is supposed to be divided into 30 slots, where 1000 hectares per year are being cut, according to the president of *Tapajoara*. He denied that logging would have started yet, and argued that 'there cannot be companies' involved in this logging. However, the personnel from COOMFLONA, who were responsible for designing this very logging project also in RESEX, based on their pioneering regional experience, argued to me that one forestry engineer from their team had left them to form a private enterprise during the process of extending logging from FLONA to RESEX. According to several informants from different entities, this engineer managed to get the contracts for building a similar system, operated by his private logging company, for the three communities in RESEX, and left COOMFLONA outside of the deal.

Several private logging companies are involved in the scheme of establishing a 'communitarian logging scheme', which the STTR and CNS leaders argued to me to have been in the making for a long time, and have involved serious meddling in the elections of *Tapajoara* by loggers, who, according to them, funded the campaigns of the people who were elected. In the legal document sent to prosecutors on 18 August 2017, STTR and CNS argue that this is a 'strategy planned by the logging sector against the public forest patrimony and the integrity of a Conservation Unit in search of only profit, at any cost' (author's translation from Portuguese). They furthermore seriously claim that the state entity responsible for watching over the legality of the RESEX, ICMBio is 'complicit' in this scheme, and that *Tapajoara* has been 'corrupted'. They call, among other issues, for the prosecutors to investigate how the ICMBio has allowed private logging companies to enter into the RESEX; force the manager of the reserve out if irregularities are found; and investigate the logging company Amazon Consult for possible illegalities. Therefore, this scheme seems to be much more problematic than the COOMFLONA scheme.

FLONA *Tapajós* and the COOMFLONA logging expansion

Several experts, as well as local leaders, argued to me that the COOMFLONA logging project is exemplary, and possibly the best such scheme in Brazil. I talked to several engineers and forestry

specialists of the cooperative, as well as political leaders of FLONA, and ICMBio officials responsible for overseeing the management plan's execution and legality, all of whom gave positive accounts of the process. Cassio Alves, the director of INIAMA, an NGO, mentioned to me that he is afraid of the project because it is going so well, giving considerable funds and money to the locals, that it can be spread uncontrollably to other places. In fact, we are witnessing exactly this right now, in the form of the conflictive and possibly even corrupted RESEX expansion, that was discussed above. COOMFLONA logging has generated such a substantial new flow of money into the FLONA, and particularly to some families there, that there is much interest in expanding these kinds of schemes by those who have seen how their multiple-use conservation areas have not 'developed' in the same sense as the FLONA *Tapajós* after the logging scheme that began in 2005.

Significant new power has been created by the cooperative logging scheme, and not all are happy about this. Different entities resist the COOMFLONA expansion. They would like to see either a different system for distributing the revenues, or a stop to the whole process of logging. For example, the municipal leaders of Belterra have allegedly been irritated by COOMFLONA's apparent takeover of many public functions, as several people explained to me, including ex-bureaucrats of the municipality. The cooperative operates 'like a municipality' in many communities, listening to what they would like to have, and then implements projects with a part of the logging proceeds (20% of the profits according to the cooperative go to the communities), to benefit the communities socially in the form of building access roads, schools, new businesses of different types, and by other means that the communities can decide.

However, not all inside the FLONA are happy about COOMFLONA, or logging in general: especially the indigenous people, who have increasingly mobilized in the *Santarém* region, and gained legal recognition for their lands, are upset. An engineer of COOMFLONA said to me that only 'a minority of the cooperative members are indigenous', and mostly resist the logging; this is 'perhaps a cultural matter, related to this relation of Indians and the forest'. I asked a local indigenous leader about these logging schemes (interview, 26 February 2018, *Santarém*). He argued that COOMFLONA, or the cooperative form, is not a guarantee of the sustainability of forest management, since 'this is not an unlimited resource'. Fearnside (2017) has voiced similar concerns; his analysis points to 'sustainable logging' schemes as more akin to a tapping into nonrenewable resources, since it has taken hundreds of years for the massive trees that are cut down to grow, while new trees are not let to grow to such heights and dimensions in the areas designated as logging areas.

The resistance by the indigenous communities living inside the FLONA led to the creation of two Indigenous Territories for them: *Munduruku-Taquara* (25,000 hectares)⁷ and *Bragança/Marituba* (14,000 hectares).⁸ According to several informants, both those in favour and against logging, a key issue in the indigenous mobilization was to resist the logging schemes in their areas, a goal which they attained, since the declaration of these Indigenous Territories meant that COOMFLONA could no longer continue to log in these areas, and had to look for other areas for their schemes.

Besides a resistance against logging in itself, there was also criticism of how the wealth generated by logging is distributed. An indigenous leader alleged to me that there is a fundamental problem within COOMFLONA in terms of distribution of the returns: 'This richness belongs to all, but it is not distributed among everyone'. According to him, the directors end up remaining as directors without major changes, in a scheme where three to four families rotate the most lucrative leadership positions within the cooperative, taking the lions' share of the returns: 'The community does not know how much is taken out, and there is no benefit to the community'. This kind of argument about the relatively low remuneration to social development can be linked to the overall business

scheme. A technician claimed that the cooperative does not receive any premium for the price of their certified trees, in comparison to the illegal ones. However, ‘the cost of cutting legally is less than cutting illegally’, as there is ‘no need to pay bribes’, and when illegal, the cutting is not done effectively, ‘in a planned way’. The cooperative does not yet do value-added work with the logs, such as establishing sawmills, or building furniture, but simply sells the logs, relatively cheaply, in bulk, for the sawmills owned by the *madeiros* of the region. These logs are sold very cheap, and very quickly: only one or two generations will benefit from the sale of the ancient trees, and after that the forest will be ravaged, and even largely unavailable for NWFP collection. In general, 70% of the logs end up as waste in the sawmills in Amazon timber activities (Laschefski, 2003a).

Interestingly, a forest technician of COOMFLONA explained to me that when they sell the logs to these *madeiros*, they are very happy to buy these logs and even come to buy them directly from inside the forest, in the gathering areas, since the COOMFLONA production has got an FSC certificate. After the sale of these FSC logs to *madeiros*, they mix into the pile of FSC wood illegally cut logs from elsewhere, selling all as FSC wood, according to this technician who had first-hand knowledge of these operations. The sawmills ‘pull into piles legal wood and then put illegal wood in the middle’, the COOMFLONA technician himself, surprisingly, explained to me while we were getting to know the logging operations inside the forest. According to this technician, the certified loggers end up

encouraging also the certification of the illegal logs; they put in the middle their own illegal ones. It is difficult to know after this folding of the trees which ones are legal, since an *ipe* [*Handroanthus*] tree is mixed with other *ipe* trees.

I asked whether he considers there to be more wood piled and exported this way that is actually legal, or illegal, to which he argued that there is ‘much more illegal than legal. They [the sawmills exporting COOMFLONA wood] say that all of the trees are from here, but they are not from here’. This is a serious allegation, and should be investigated urgently by FSC and the officials.

If this is true, it means that the FSC certificate only makes things worse, since it makes it possible for illegal loggers to legalize illegal wood, and sell it as certified. Such criticism of FSC has been present since the beginning of these schemes (Zhou, 1998). In this sense, even a small-scale FSC-based logging operation in the context of the highly corrupted, and difficult to monitor setting of the Amazon offers a basis for a legal export of illegal wood. It is not possible to follow the chain of custody even inside COOMFLONA, since the ICMBio and other officials who should check if the forest has the trees that the technicians of the cooperative themselves identify as being there in the first instance, do not have the resources to check if the figures are correct. According to several informants, it is a very common practice to put too many trees into the inventory at the beginning. When the authorities at the gate to the park such as FLONA check how many trees have been taken out (if this even happens), they can have an idea that trees would be cut sustainably, still leaving trees in the woods, even though more trees had been cut than allowed. Transparency is difficult, if not impossible, to establish under these conditions. Outsiders are not allowed to visit these areas without permits, and being accompanied by company personnel, who are unlikely to show the areas where irregular activities are taking place. The decision of Greenpeace to leave FSC, which it helped to create, in March 2018, was based on their public acknowledgement that this certificate does not guarantee that wood is sourced sustainably, as ‘FSC is not consistently applied across regions, especially where there’s weak governance’.⁹

COOMFLONA petitioned to attain 60,000–80,000 hectares more of concession rights, to change the status of ancient primary rainforests inside FLONA from protected and preserved into areas that can be logged: the ICMBio and other officials in Brasília will decide on whether to allow this in

April–May 2018, but the permitting decision seemed to be already made according to the experts on this process to whom I spoke; thus, the permitting is a mere formality. This huge new petition is part of the general process in which those given concessions to log a given area during a typical 30-year period end up being given rights to log the whole area in a matter of few years instead; this pattern is one of the reasons why arguments about ‘sustainable logging’ schemes being able to curb deforestation and forest degradation are a ‘myth’ for example according to Fearnside (2017) and Laschefski (2003a, 2003b).

There seemed to be only few defenders of forests within multiple-use conservation areas, based on the environmentalist argument, since ICMBio and other government entities managing these reserves have promoted, and continue to strongly promote, ‘sustainable logging’ as the prime channel through which both sustainability and development goals can be obtained simultaneously. However, the indigenous movement in the *Santarém* region has a ‘new concept of quality of life’, which values trees over logging according to an indigenous leader. For them, trees have a specific ‘answer’; they are an answer to many problems; they are not a problem:

Many indigenous people believe that trees have an answer, a very significant role. They use a lot of their fruits as food. They use them as medicine. Many still ask for permission from nature to pick up wood to build a house. So, I see that they still have a lot of respect for nature, due to this issue of sacredness. They know that a tree has a life in the same way as we have a life. This is very important since they really do have a life.

To offer an account of another context, I will next assess the debate around the budding logging schemes in Acre’s largest, and possibly the world’s most iconic, multiple-use conservation area, the CMER.

The CMER: a critique of ‘community-based’ logging schemes

In May 2017 I observed a researcher who had worked before for a private entity promoting logging inside multiple-use conservation units, who tried to persuade the people living inside the CMER to participate in research whose goal was to study the governance of these logging schemes. The starting point of this forestry research initiative appeared to assume that these logging schemes are good, without questioning whether or not they are. The research then proceeded to analyse the negotiations and different ways in which people are implementing schemes in different conservation units. The researcher was travelling together with an ICMBio team to several communities in various locations of the Reserve, and observed people who were suspicious about this research agenda, and in some places, voiced outright and strong criticism. For example, in a community a few hours ride Northwest from Brasília, several leaders who had gathered from several communities answered the researcher asking permission to do this research by saying: ‘I think that this logging scheme is negative for the extractive reserve’. They wanted to shift the discussion away from the assumption that these would be good deals, and look at the wider set of forest use potential. Nevertheless, ICMBio officials were willing to let the researcher travel with them, in line with the larger positive policy line of ICMBio to support logging schemes, and see them as good opportunities, and as actions that could curb the option of clearing forest for cattle pastures. They argued that the reason for the CMER population to oppose logging schemes was that they saw these would bring in money only slowly; cattle-ranching is a faster and more viable option for gaining new income. However, although this might be the case for a considerable part of the CMER population (as there is a significant problem of deforestation caused by rampant ranching expansion inside the reserve, as I also observed), there are also important leaders

from the time of Chico Mendes who vehemently oppose the idea of logging, as can be seen in this excerpt from another leader, who criticized the research stance of the researcher above:

I have been part of the social movement since 1977; I am one of the militants of the social movement that created the Chico Mendes Reserve. I am deeply concerned, together with others; we are against the logging schemes, and in favor of a sustainable management plan. Why? ... In my view, God made the world a very good place, but humans used it badly, since the Amazon should not be deforested. The Amazon is the pharmacy of the world, in my view, and there does not exist a comprehensive study on this region. ... It is necessary to conduct research on medicinal plants to fortify the Amazon without deforestation and without taking out wood. When we take out mahogany, for example, it can be licensed, but when we drag it down we are killing thousands of herbs [and other plants]. ... For this reason, in my view, it is necessary to conduct research on medicinal herbs to generate value, aggregate value, and jobs, and to strengthen the Amazon.

The researcher replied to this that she is interested in understanding the logging schemes, but cannot yet say if these are good or bad, to which another leader replied: 'It is bad, for us it is bad. It is not sustainable'. This leader continued explaining in detail that only when the forest goods are taken without ending with them can this be called 'sustainable'. As an example, he gave rubber extraction and Brasil-nut trees (the already existing ones and the planting of new ones), based on which he argued that it is possible for him to sustain his livelihood 'without an aggression towards the forest'. He continued that 'for me this is the largest life of the world; indeed, I think that when I was born the spirit that embodied me was of an Indian'. After telling more details of his personal story, he continued:

Do you think that if I had deforested, with all the years I have been here, there would still exist forest? No, there would only be pasture grass. ... I have hate and fear towards deforestation. ... I have a colleague here who wants to plant 50 hectares of forest. You can say that he is stupid, but he is going the right way.

To this, the researcher replied, 'I want to hear all the sides ... also those working with ranching and logging', which she said is already taking place in Xapuri, and that 'there is a discussion here in Brasília and Assis Brasil', where a logging scheme is beginning. After this, she argued that one could work at the same time with various products, such as 'wood, *açaí*, *Brasil* nut, and oils'. However, this idea of a multiple-use logging area does not seem to be a realistic possibility, according to the review by Fearnside (2017), who argues this to be a myth, and based on what I heard and saw when visiting the COOMFLONA logging sites in FLONA *Tapajós*. Rather, such discourses of 'everything is possible' remind more of a neoliberal fantasy, where it is understood that there would not be competing paradigms. This kind of approach can be overtly technical, lacking a view of the impact of power relations in forest usage.

Such a viewpoint can support and even legitimize a wide range of production systems within conservation units, without considering that some of them are illegal, and that there is already ample scientific evidence that they are not sustainable (see e.g. the analysis and references in Fearnside, 2017; Freris & Laschefski, 2001; Laschefski, 2003a, 2003b). These logging schemes, and research that promotes their expansion instead of being open to alternatives, is bound to generate problems, and may be a form of hiding a motive to extend the economic system that is most powerful, or eyeing for the resources: such as logging and ranching.

Conclusion

Given the rising pressure to expand logging schemes inside multiple-use conservation areas, based on the argument that this could be done 'sustainably' through communitarian cooperative

structures, it is likely that these conservation units will face increased forest degradation and deforestation soon. Indigenous Territories appear to be more secure areas in general in terms of protection than extractive reserves or similar areas, where the impulse to put development before protection is gaining traction, as people are beginning to observe the new comparatively higher returns that they can get if they log the forests that they should be protecting through their living and non-wood extractive activities in these forests. In the areas analysed here, in Acre and Western Pará of the Brazilian Amazon, logging schemes are advancing rapidly, and are being promulgated by the environmental authorities as well as many community leaders, although there are also important dissenting voices. Conflicts around these schemes are on the rise. They revolve around claims of corruption, unearned concentration of proceeds to few hands, and resistance due to the legacy of indigenous and rubber-tapper activists' cosmologies and ontologies, where forests' value is seen as being higher spiritually, culturally, and/or for livelihoods, when not based on logging.

Notes

1. http://www.semeia.org.br/en/protected-areas-in-brazil_ingles.pdf (accessed 5 April 2018).
2. *Gestão de Florestas Públicas, em atendimento ao disposto na Lei 11.284, de 3 de março de 2006*. See e.g. <https://www.norad.no/en/front/thematic-areas/climate-change-and-environment/oslo-redd-exchange/oslo-redd-exchange-2013/speakers/tasso-rezende-de-azevedo>.
3. http://www.mma.gov.br/estruturas/168/_publicacao/168_publicacao30012009112141.pdf.
4. <http://www.mma.gov.br/florestas/programa-para-a-prote%C3%A7%C3%A3o-das-florestas-tropicais>.
5. <https://apublica.org/2016/05/encontrei-um-quadro-catastrofico-revela-ex-superintendente-do-incra-em-santarem/> (accessed 5 April 2018).
6. <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ambiente/2018/02/indios-tentam-fechar-megagarimpo-ilegal-que-polui-rio-no-para.shtml> (accessed 5 April 2018).
7. <https://terrasindigenas.org.br/pt-br/terras-indigenas/4176>.
8. <https://terrasindigenas.org.br/pt-br/terras-indigenas/4178>.
9. <https://www.greenpeace.org/international/press-release/15589/greenpeace-international-to-not-renew-fsc-membership/>.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

Markus Kröger is an Associate Professor in Development Studies, Faculty of Social Science, and Member of the Helsinki Institute of Sustainability Science, University of Helsinki. The research of *Markus Kröger* has focused on the political economy of development and natural resource extraction, especially in Latin America, India, and the Arctic. He is the author of *Contentious agency and natural resource politics*, and a host of articles on forest policy, global forestry, Brazilian political economy, Latin American environmental politics, mining, and social movement outcomes. He is currently studying the political economies of deforestation and the conflicts related to industrial forestry.

ORCID

Markus Kröger  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7324-4549>

References

- Fearnside, P. (2017). Deforestation of the Brazilian Amazon. In H. Shugart (Ed.), *Oxford research encyclopedia of environmental science*. New York: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from <http://environmentalscience.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199389414.001.0001/acrefore-9780199389414-e-102>
- Freris, N., & Laschefski, K. (2001). Seeing the wood from the trees. *The Ecologist*, 31(6), 40–43.
- IMAFLORA. (2018). *Relatório de Avaliação de Manejo Florestal para: Mil Madeiras Preciosas Ltda. em Itacoatiara - AM* [Evaluation report of the logging plan for Mil Madeiras Preciosas Co. in Itacoatiara]. Retrieved from http://www.imaflora.org/downloads/resumos_publicos/5a9fdf88c0271_MilCERFLORFMaval17public.pdf
- Jaramillo-Giraldo, C., Soares Filho, B., Ribeiro, S. M. C., & Gonçalves, R. C. (2017). Is it possible to make rubber extraction ecologically and economically viable in the Amazon? The Southern Acre and Chico Mendes Reserve case study. *Ecological Economics*, 134, 186–197. doi:10.1016/j.ecolecon.2016.12.035
- Kageyama, P. (2000). Uso e conservação de florestas tropicais: Qual a paradigma? [The use and conservation of tropical forests: what is the paradigm?]. In S. Watanabe (Ed.), *Anais do V Simpósio de Ecossistemas Brasileiros: Conservação, Universidade Federal de Espírito Santo, Vitória, ES, October 10–15* (Vol. IV, Publ. ACIESP No. 109-IV, pp. 72–82). São Paulo: Academia de Ciências do Estado de São Paulo (ACIESP).
- Laschefski, K. (2003a). Políticas públicas para um desenvolvimento sustentável na Amazônia. O papel da “vocaç o florestal” [Public policies for a sustainable development in the Amazon. The role of the “forestry vocation”]. *Boletim Rede Amaz nia*, 2(1), 83–95.
- Laschefski, Klemens. (2003b). *Manejo Florestal Sustentavel: As Implicaç es da nova Pol tica Florestal para a Amaz nia* [Sustainable logging plans: Implications for a new forest policy for the Amazon]. Retrieved from <https://www.scribd.com/document/89581389/LASCHEFSKI-Amazonia-Manejo-Para-Quem>
- Nepstad, D., Schwartzman, S., Bamberger, B., Santilli, M., Ray, D., Schlesinger, P., ... Rolla, A. (2006). Inhibition of Amazon deforestation and fire by parks and indigenous lands. *Conservation Biology*, 20(1), 65–73.
- Observat rio das UCs. (2015, June 5). *IMAFLORA 20 anos: Como tudo come ou na Floresta Nacional do Tapaj s* [IMAFLORA 20 years: How all started in the National Forest of Tapaj s]. Retrieved from <http://www.oeco.org.br/reportagens/29164-imaflora-20-anos-como-tudo-comecou-na-floresta-nacional-do-tapajos/>
- Weisman, A. (2008). *The world without us*. New York: Macmillan.
- Wohlleben, P. (2016). *The hidden life of trees: What they feel, how they communicate—Discoveries from a secret world*. Vancouver: Greystone Books.
- Zhour, A. (1998). *Trees and people. An anthropology of British campaigners for the Amazon rainforest*. Department of Sociology. Essex: University of Essex.