

2015

**Public Participation and
Climate Governance
Working Paper Series**

**Forests and Climate Change: Strategies and
Challenges for Brazilian Civil Society Organizations
between 2005 and 2010**

Ana Leonardo Nassar de Oliveira, University of Brasilia

Series Editors:

Katherine Lofts (CISDL),
Sébastien Duyck (University of
Lapland), and Sébastien Jodoin
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Centre for International Sustainable Development Law
Chancellor Day Hall
3644 Peel Street, Montreal (Quebec), H3A 1W9 Canada
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Northern Institute for Environmental and Minority Law
Arctic Centre, University of Lapland
P.O. Box 122
FIN-96101 Rovaniemi, Finland
www.arcticcentre.org/EN/RESEARCH/NIEM

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1 Introduction

Since the 1980s, the climate change debate has gained increasing relevance in the national and international political agendas. This process has been fueled by the continuous publication of technical studies on the subject and the organization of conferences involving several sectors, leading to increased public awareness on the potential impacts of climate change.

The quest to solve the climate change problem mobilizes representatives from governments, universities, private companies and civil society organizations (CSOs). In this context, several CSOs have been active in demanding urgent greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction measures and support for adaptation projects in vulnerable communities.

Brazilian CSOs have played a remarkable role in the debate regarding forests and climate change. They have participated in the definition of national and international policies, campaigned to mobilize public opinion, led academic research on these topics and even acted as consultants to the Brazilian government.

This paper¹ aims to contribute to a broader discussion on the participation of CSOs in the development of national and international policies on forests and climate change, reinforcing the importance of public participation in climate governance. This paper does not discuss the extent of these organizations' influence. It seeks to understand the strategies they adopted in trying to expand their influence, as well as the opportunities and challenges faced during the implementation of said strategies, thus exploring their role in the construction of national and international climate change regimes.

This paper is divided into three parts. The first part describes how discussions on forests and climate change evolved in Brazil and internationally between 2005 and 2010,² as well as the perceived changes in the Brazilian government's and the CSOs' positions on these topics during this period. The second part explains the strategies adopted by a group of 10 Brazilian CSOs in order to influence these discussions. The final section features an analysis of these strategies, along with a discussion on how the choices made by the CSOs are directly related to the surrounding political context.

¹ This paper is based on a master's thesis on political science presented by the author at the University of Brasilia, in April 2012. For the full thesis, see: A.L.N. de Oliveira, *Ação coletiva na redução de emissões de carbono por desmatamento e degradação: a atuação de organizações da sociedade civil brasileiras entre 2005 e 2010* (University of Brasilia, 2012).

² The timeframe covered by this paper is 2005-2010. In 2005, two important milestones occurred: i) the inclusion of GHG emission reductions from deforestation and forest degradation in the UNFCCC official agenda, and ii) the Brazilian government's successful efforts in reducing deforestation in the Amazon. The research on which this paper was based started in mid-2010; therefore this paper only covers the strategies implemented from 2005 until the end of 2010.

2 An Integrated Approach to Forests and Climate Change

Brazil is one of the key players in the forests and climate change debate due to its abundance of natural resources and the Amazon's importance in maintaining regional and global climate stability and biodiversity.³ The Amazon is one of the most relevant biomes in this discussion, as it contains the largest block of continuous tropical vegetation in the world, with 80% of the region still preserved. According to the Second National GHG Emissions Inventory in 2005, 77% of Brazilian GHG emissions were generated by land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF).⁴ From 2005 to 2010, deforestation of the Amazon accounted for more than half of total emissions from that source in Brazil.⁵

Internationally, forest protection is discussed under the framework of different conventions such as the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the International Tropical Timber Agreement and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Without the existence of a dedicated international legal framework, the UNFCCC became the main negotiation forum for forests.

From 1995 to 1997, forests gained attention under the UNFCCC negotiations for the creation of a global agreement. These negotiations became formalized as the Kyoto Protocol (or "the Protocol"), which established GHG emission reduction targets for industrialized countries. Forests serve a double function within the realm of climate change, greatly contributing to the stability of global carbon emissions:⁶ as forests are carbon sinks, increased forested area leads to greater removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and storage as biomass; conversely, deforestation contributes to the release of GHGs.⁷

During the Protocol's negotiation, the Brazilian government showed strong resistance to international regulation of the use and protection of forests, considering it an affront to the country's sovereignty.⁸ Many agree that behind this position was the government's inability to control and

³ E. Viola, *A Globalização da Política Ambiental no Brasil: 1990-1998* (Paper delivered at the XXI International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, 24-26 September 1998), found at: <<http://lasa.international.pitt.edu/LASA98/Viola.pdf>> at 9.

⁴ *Inventário Brasileiro de Emissões Antrópicas por Fontes e Remoções por Sumidouros de Gases de Efeito Estufa não Controlados pelo Protocolo de Montreal – Parte 2*, found at: Ministério da Ciência e Tecnologia (MCT) <www.mct.gov.br/upd_blob/0214/214061.pdf> at 40.

⁵ CGEE, IPAM & SAE, *REDD no Brasil: um enfoque amazônico. Fundamentos, critérios e estruturas institucionais para um regime nacional de Redução de Emissões por Desmatamento e Degradação Florestal* (Centro de Gestão e Estudos Estratégicos, 2011) at 25.

⁶ V. Bosetti and R. Lubowski (eds.), *Deforestation and Climate Change. Reducing Carbon Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation* (Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2010) at 1.

⁷ F.V. de Carvalho, *A posição brasileira nas negociações internacionais sobre florestas e clima (1997-2010)*, doctorate thesis in international relations (Institute of International Relations of the University of Brasília, 2010) at 18.

⁸ *Ibid* at 29.

monitor deforestation.⁹ This motivation is suggested by Brazil reaching its deforestation peak in 1995, the highest annual rate since the government started to monitor annual deforestation in 1988.¹⁰

Contrary to the government's views, it became clear to a group of Brazilian environmental CSOs that connecting forests and climate change would be an opportunity to increase awareness of forests and biodiversity protection while raising funds for new projects. These organizations were skeptical about the CBD's effectiveness and its ability to deliver additional resources and foster political support for forest protection.

The Kyoto Protocol was signed in 1997, establishing quantitative targets to limit and reduce GHG emissions, as well as flexible mechanisms to help countries achieve their targets by 2012. These mechanisms were to potentially include forests, but there was disagreement over this topic due to scientific uncertainties on the role of forests in mitigation.¹¹ At the end of the Protocol's negotiation, Brazil was successful in achieving several of its objectives, including keeping primary forest deforestation out of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). The CDM allows industrialized countries to meet part of their emission reduction targets through emission reduction projects in developing countries.¹²

Throughout this period, Brazilian CSOs demanded greater opportunities to participate in defining the country's climate change policies, with special attention to links with forest conservation. The government continued to resist discussing forests within the international climate change context, insisting that it was a primarily domestic issue. From 1996 to 1999, the Brazilian government defined its position on the Kyoto Protocol unilaterally, without the participation of state governments, private sector or NGOs. Then in 2000, the Brazilian Forum on Climate Change was established, with the intention to create a space for public participation.¹³

As of 2003, the Brazilian government began a transition from a position characterized by vetoes and resistance to a more proactive and flexible stance in regards to forests and climate change. This process was strongly influenced by the domestic political context, where a series of governmental measures to control and monitor deforestation resulted in a significant reduction of deforestation in Brazil from 2005 onwards, triggering a significant reduction in GHG emissions from that source.¹⁴

From 2003 to 2004, an area of 27,772 m² was deforested in the Amazon, the second highest deforestation rate in the Brazilian history. However, between 2004 and 2005, there was a 31.5%

⁹ E. Viola, 'O regime internacional de mudança climática e o Brasil' 17 *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais* (2002), 25, at 39.

¹⁰ *Taxas anuais do desmatamento - 1988 até 2013*, found at: Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Espaciais (INPE) <http://www.obt.inpe.br/prodes/prodes_1988_2013.htm>.

¹¹ Interview of C. Rittl by the author (22 July 2011) in Brasília, DF, Brazil. At the time of this interview, Rittl was the climate change and energy coordinator at WWF-Brazil.

¹² CDM, found at: CDM-Home <<http://cdm.unfccc.int>>.

¹³ E. Viola, n. 9 above, at 38.

¹⁴ E. Viola, 'A Política Climática Global e o Brasil: 2005-2010' 2 *Revista Tempo do Mundo* (2010), 81, at 92.

decrease in deforestation rates compared to the previous period.¹⁵ The Brazilian Ministry of Environment (MMA) announced this information in 2005, at the same time as the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) 11 was underway in Montreal. Tasso Azevedo, the director of the National Program on Forests at the time, said that this announcement had direct repercussions on Brazil's international position on forests and climate change, since the negotiators had gone to Montreal with a conservative position and changed it during the event.¹⁶ This discussion would extend into the next COPs, yet it was framed under the guise of a new framework, known as REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation), which started being formulated in 2003.

The regulatory process for forestry activities eligible under the CDM mechanism was finalized in 2003 during COP 9, where consensus was reached regarding the inclusion of forest sinks under the CDM, and a best practices guide on LULUCF was published.¹⁷ At the same conference, a group of researchers from the Amazon Environmental Research Institute (IPAM) and the Socio-Environmental Institute (ISA), two of the Brazilian CSOs analyzed in this paper, in partnership with other organizations, presented the first technical proposal to address the issue of deforestation under the UNFCCC.¹⁸ This proposal recommended creating a mechanism by which projects avoiding deforestation would be eligible to receive economic incentives and generate carbon credits.¹⁹

This recommendation laid the foundation for a wider discussion about the REDD mechanism, which would provide positive incentives to developing countries for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, conservation and/or enhancement of forest carbon stocks, and sustainable management of forests.²⁰ REDD was introduced to the UNFCCC negotiations in 2005, during COP 11, by a proposal submitted by the Coalition of Tropical Nations and supported by Brazil. Thereafter, REDD became the main reference in the discussion of forests and climate change.

¹⁵ INPE, n. 10 above.

¹⁶ Interview of T. Azevedo by the author (30 August 2011) in Brasília, DF, Brazil. Azevedo was the director of the National Program on Forests from February 2003 to June 2006 and director of the Brazilian Forest Service from June 2006 to April 2009, both positions linked to the Brazilian Ministry of Environment (MMA).

¹⁷ F. V. De Carvalho, n. 7 above, at 126

¹⁸ M. Santilli, P. Moutinho, S. Schwartzman, D. Nepstad, L. Curran and C. Nobre, 'Tropical deforestation and the Kyoto Protocol: a new proposal' (Paper delivered at the COP-9 in Milan, 1-12 December 2003).

¹⁹ *Vitae Civilis na COP-9/ Dez 2003*, found at: Vitae Civilis

<<http://vitaecivilis.org/vc2012/index.php/temas/clima/contribuicoes-do-vitae-civilis-ao-debate/vitae-civilis-na-cop-9-dez-2003>>.

²⁰ *The UN-REDD Programme Strategy 2011-2015*, found at: UNEP <

<http://www.unep.org/forests/Portals/142/docs/UN-REDD%20Programme%20Strategy.pdf>>.

3 Strategies and Targets

This section presents the strategies adopted by 10 Brazilian CSOs to influence national and international discussions on forests and climate change from 2005 to 2010. The following organizations are included in this analysis:

- Amazon Environmental Research Institute (IPAM)
- Amazon Institute of People and the Environment (Imazon)
- Amazon Working Group (GTA)
- Conservation International Brazil (CI Brazil)
- Friends of the Earth - Brazilian Amazon
- Greenpeace Brazil
- Socio-Environmental Institute (ISA)
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
- Vitae Civilis - Institute for Development, Environment and Peace
- WWF-Brazil

These organizations are united by the view that forests should be considered in national and international climate change policies, even if the organizations' technical and methodological approaches might differ.²¹ In addition, their strategies prioritized discussions involving the Amazon biome, due to its relevance in environmental politics.

The strategies adopted by these CSOs were comprised of combinations of different activities to reach their objectives. These activities varied greatly, since they were implemented in different political contexts and at different points in the negotiation processes at the domestic and international levels.

3.1. Moving towards an international climate change regime

One of the main strategies adopted by CSOs was to observe, participate in and monitor the international negotiations on forests and climate change through attendance in relevant events, direct contact with Brazilian and foreign negotiators, and elaboration of studies to support the decision-making processes. Through their participation in international negotiations, especially at the UNFCCC conferences, CSOs tried to influence negotiators by presenting their views on the issues under discussion; track the negotiations results; and disseminate them to other stakeholders. They also supported indigenous leaders and traditional communities in the COPs and interim meetings, indirectly representing them or supporting their direct participation. Paulo Moutinho from IPAM stated that 'since

²¹ In particular, the organizations have i) participated in at least one UNFCCC conference and one meeting or event promoted by the Brazilian federal government on forests and climate change and ii) made official written or oral statements on forests and climate change, either individually or as a member of a coalition.

2000, in all COPs, IPAM brings a representative from indigenous peoples, a rubber tapper and a small producer from the Amazon region.²²

All organizations established direct contact with Brazilian negotiators with the goal of influencing the country's position regarding forests and climate. This contact was made in Brazil, during the preparation for international conferences, as well as during the actual UNFCCC COPs. Fernanda Carvalho from TNC said that, ideally, civil society would be consulted on any proposal under discussion, but this is not common practice. Thus, it was crucial to take advantage of 'hallway conversations' and build good relationships with negotiators in order to access the proposals under negotiation and share civil society's views about them.²³

Another activity to strengthen the contact with negotiators occurred through the organization of side events during the COPs. Side events promote discussions and bring in experts to present new information and clarifications that may contribute to the ongoing negotiations. Furthermore, interested CSOs formally submitted information to the UNFCCC Secretariat on matters requested by country members. These submissions are not distributed as official documents, but are made available on the UNFCCC Secretariat website.²⁴

Some organizations took part in the COPs as members of the official Brazilian delegation, which granted them access to preparatory meetings and enabled direct contact with Brazilian negotiators. Paulo Prado, from CI Brazil, said that as a member of the Brazilian delegation, he had access to closed-door meetings and could contact negotiators to discuss different positions.²⁵ The participation of Brazilian CSOs in the COPs has increased since the UNFCCC entered into force; while two CSOs were registered as observers or members of the Brazilian delegation at COP 1 (1995), over 26 were registered at COP 16 (2010).²⁶ The UNFCCC allows the participation of non-state actors through various formal and informal mechanisms,²⁷ although participation does not automatically guarantee influence on the outcome of negotiations.

²² Interview of P. Moutinho by the author (25 July 2011) in Brasília, DF, Brazil. At the time of this interview, Moutinho was the executive director of the Amazon Environmental Research Institute (IPAM).

²³ Interview of F. Carvalho by the author (02 June 2011) in Brasília, DF, Brazil. At the time of this interview, Carvalho was the climate change policy coordinator at TNC in Brazil.

²⁴ *Can NGOs provide submissions?*, found at: UNFCCC <http://unfccc.int/files/parties_and_observers/ngo/application/pdf/20060328_can_ngos_provide_submissions.pdf>.

²⁵ Interview of P. Prado by the author (13 October 2011) in Brasília, DF, Brazil. At the time of this interview, Prado was the environmental policy director of the Conservation International - Brazil.

²⁶ *Documents and Decisions*, found at: UNFCCC <<http://unfccc.int/documentation/documents/items/3595.php>>.

²⁷ For details of the UNFCCC rules, consult: Draft Rules of Procedure of the Conference of the Parties and its Subsidiary Bodies (UN Doc. FCCC/CP/1996/2, 22 May 1996).

3.2. Building domestic frameworks on forests and climate change

Another important strategy was to observe, monitor and participate in the development of national policies and legislation on forests and climate change. This strategy gained strength after the approval of the Bali Road Map during the UNFCCC COP 13²⁸ in 2007. As a result, parties were asked to explore emissions reduction options from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) in developing countries.²⁹ In this context, CSOs recognized that it was important for Brazil to prepare for this future scenario by developing a robust domestic policy framework on the topic.

CSOs contributed to the development of REDD policies at the national level by participating in working groups and meetings promoted by the Brazilian federal government. CSOs also developed proposals and studies that supported both the legislative and executive branches of federal and state governments. In 2008, the Climate Observatory – a coalition of CSOs created in 2002 to contribute to the development of public policies in Brazil related to climate change³⁰ – prepared a draft for a National Climate Change Policy, known as *Elements for Designing a Regulatory Framework on Climate Change in Brazil: Contributions by the Civil Society*.³¹ According to Carlos Rittl from WWF-Brazil, this proposal was developed in dialogue with legislators and lobbying appeared to be effective, since the enacted legislation contained numerous elements from the document.³²

As of 2005, the Brazilian federal government's position regarding the inclusion of forests under the climate change discussion became more positive, in part due to the leadership of the former Brazilian Minister of Environment, Marina Silva, who pushed for the development of strong public policies to tackle deforestation in Brazil.³³ Nevertheless, certain aspects of this discussion were met with resistance from other ministries, mainly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Science and Technology. These ministries opposed REDD market mechanisms, claiming that they could jeopardize the environmental integrity of the climate regime.³⁴

Within this context, organizations decided to put more effort into supporting the implementation of subnational REDD policies, as their success would be used to influence the federal government's position. Paulo Prado, from CI Brazil, explained that it can be more effective to work with the states in the first place, saying that 'the federal government is like a large ship, it takes longer to change

²⁸ The Bali Road Map consisted of a number of decisions that had to be made in order to reach a new climate change agreement in 2009 during the COP 15.

²⁹ Decision 2/CP.13, Reducing emissions from deforestation in developing countries: approaches to stimulate action (UN Doc. FCCC/CP/2007/6/Add.1*, 14 March 2008).

³⁰ *Observatório do Clima*, found at: Observatório do Clima <<http://www.oc.org.br>>.

³¹ *Elementos para Formulação de um Marco Regulatório em Mudanças Climáticas no Brasil: Contribuições da Sociedade Civil*, found at: Intranet GVCes <http://intranet.gvces.com.br/arquivos/Justificativa_PL_OC_r.pdf>.

³² C. Rittl, n. 11 above.

³³ F. V. De Carvalho, n. 7 above, at 164.

³⁴ *Ibid* at 105.

directions, so we use subnational states to put pressure on it.³⁵ CSOs then engaged different states, especially in the Amazon region, to show the potential benefits of a REDD mechanism and how to ensure that the benefits that reach their territories are fairly distributed. For instance, IPAM actively participated in the construction of REDD policies for the Brazilian states of Acre, Mato Grosso and Pará.³⁶

In addition to the engagement activities described above, some organizations also developed systems to monitor public policies regarding climate change and forests. Imazon developed the Deforestation Alert System (SAD), an independent system to monitor deforestation in the Amazon on a monthly basis.³⁷ Another notable project is the REDD Observatory, created by a group of CSOs and social movements in 2010 to monitor the process of development and implementation of public policies related to the REDD mechanism.

During this period, the broader political context helped bridge the distance between CSOs and the government. Due to its history of close proximity with social movements, the Lula administration (2003-2010) created new spaces in which CSO representatives could participate in the development of public policies. The existing personal relationships between members of the Brazilian federal government and CSO representatives led to closer ties between the state and civil society.³⁸ These organizations stated that being recognized as a source of qualified and credible information was one of the key factors for them to be called on by the government for consultations on strategic topics under negotiation.

3.3. Stakeholders engagement and capacity building

A third strategy adopted by the CSOs was to mobilize and promote capacity-building activities with respect to national and international negotiations on forests and climate change. This strategy focused on translating the complexity of these topics and making them accessible to the general public. Amongst the main targets of this strategy were media professionals, indigenous peoples, traditional communities and other CSOs.

Most organizations developed communication campaigns to raise awareness about climate change, synergies with forest conservation and potential impacts on people's lives. Cooperation with media outlets was critical in expanding the outreach of these campaigns. Newell highlighted the difficulty of translating the complexity of climate change into layman's terms, which is critical for a CSO to achieve its goals; these organizations believe that good media coverage is one of the keys to their success.³⁹

³⁵ P. Prado, n. 25 above.

³⁶ P. Moutinho, n. 22 above.

³⁷ Interview of B. Brito by the author (31 August 2011) by Skype. At the time of this interview, Brito was the climate change and energy coordinator at Imazon.

³⁸ C. Losekann, 'A participação da sociedade civil na formação da agenda ambiental durante o primeiro governo de Lula' *15 Ambient. soc.* (2012), 179 at 1.

³⁹ P. Newell, *Climate for Change: Non-State Actors and the Global Politics of the Greenhouse* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), at 125.

Sérgio Leitão, from Greenpeace Brazil, said that before COP 15 in 2009, the organization carried out a campaign to draw people's attention to the importance of the conference in order to pressure the Brazilian government into adopting a more proactive role in the event. Their aim was to 'desperately translate the climate change speech in a more friendly way for the population'.⁴⁰ Greenpeace started a series of awareness-raising activities a hundred days before the conference, drawing attention to the urgency of climate issues in different regions of Brazil.⁴¹

In addition to the campaigns, most CSOs developed training activities to widen and improve the knowledge of the population, media professionals and other CSOs about forests and climate change. André Ferretti, from the Climate Observatory, said that few institutions were able to monitor and dedicate staff to deal with issues related to climate change; therefore, it was important to empower other CSOs, increasing the number of organizations that participate actively in national and international negotiations.⁴² Vitae Civilis undertook a similar effort as they recognized the difficulties faced by some organizations in following complex climate change discussions.⁴³

Initiatives aimed at increasing the knowledge base of journalists were also noteworthy. These initiatives encouraged journalists to follow international negotiations in order to improve the quality and frequency of climate change-related articles, thus increasing the flow of information to the general public. In this sense, CSOs helped to make the complex and technical discussions more accessible. As Imazon's Brenda Brito described, 'in 2009, we had a huge local demand from the local and national press to translate what was happening and make the negotiations more tangible, as climate change was a very confusing topic for many people.'⁴⁴

Finally, another capacity-building effort was focused on riverine communities, indigenous peoples and traditional populations. These groups live in areas eligible for REDD projects and are potential beneficiaries of this mechanism. Capacity-building efforts sought to raise their awareness on the relationship between forest conservation and climate change, how these issues are being addressed in public policies and potential implications to their livelihoods. Moreover, these initiatives were aimed at preparing these groups for approaches by external stakeholders interested in the development of REDD projects, enabling them to identify and avoid any malicious offers from parties trying to keep for

⁴⁰ Interview of S. Leitão by the author (19 October 2011) in São Paulo, SP, Brazil. At the time of this interview, Leitão was the campaigns director at Greenpeace – Brazil.

⁴¹ *A 100 dias de decidir nosso futuro*, found at: Greenpeace Brasil
<<http://www.greenpeace.org/brasil/pt/Noticias/a-100-dias-de-decidir-nosso-fu/>>.

⁴² Interview of A. Ferretti by the author (22 September 2011) by Skype. At the time of this interview, Ferretti was the coordinator of the Climate Observatory.

⁴³ Interview of R.H. Born by the author (10 August 2011) by Skype. At the time of this interview, Rubens was the deputy executive coordinator of Vitae Civilis - Institute for Development, Environment and Peace.

⁴⁴ B. Brito, n. 37 above.

themselves benefits and resources that rightfully belong to locals, seeking to exploit their lack of knowledge.⁴⁵

3.4. Production and dissemination of specialized knowledge

The production and dissemination of specialized knowledge on forests and climate change was the fourth strategy adopted by CSOs, with a focus on finding solutions and alternatives to controversial issues. CSOs expanded their ability to influence the decision-making processes by being publicly recognized by their stakeholders as a reliable source of specialized and technical knowledge. As stated by Corell and Betsill:

[K]nowledge and information are a key source of power for NGOs in world politics. In international environmental negotiations NGO diplomats often use their specialized knowledge in the hope of modifying actions taken by state decision makers and/or altering how they define their interests.

Cornell and Betsill also affirmed that in highly complex topics, such as climate change, CSOs can go as far as helping negotiators better understand the nature of the challenges at stake and the policy alternatives to address them.⁴⁶

This strategy entailed the development of scientific research, publications, reports and brochures with information, inputs and recommendations to support decision-making processes on forests and climate change. In 2007, during the UNFCCC COP 13, IPAM, the Woods Hole Research Center and the Federal University of Minas Gerais launched the publication *The Costs and Benefits of Reducing Carbon Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation in the Brazilian Amazon*.⁴⁷ Another example was the *Casebook of REDD Projects in Latin America*, which was launched by TNC and Idesam during the UNFCCC COP 15 in 2009, to showcase the results and challenges of ongoing REDD pilot projects in Latin America.⁴⁸

Partnering with renowned research institutions such as universities or governmental institutes for the development of joint studies and publications was also part of this strategy. These partnerships gave CSOs a reach over a larger audience and added to their strategies a valuable scientific component. This strengthened their arguments since science is usually perceived as a non-political, neutral and legitimate voice.⁴⁹ Roberto Smeraldi, from Friends of the Earth - Brazilian Amazon, said that 'the alliance with the

⁴⁵ Interview of Roberto Smeraldi by the author (16 August 2011) in Brasília, DF, Brazil. At the time of this interview, Smeraldi was the director of the Friends of the Earth - Brazilian Amazon.

⁴⁶ M.M. Betsill and E. Corell, *NGO Diplomacy: the influence of nongovernmental organizations in international environmental negotiations* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2008), at 23.

⁴⁷ D. Nepstad *et al.*, *The costs and benefits of reducing carbon emissions from deforestation and degradation in the Brazilian Amazon* (Paper delivered at the UNFCCC COP 13 in Bali, Indonesia, 3-14 December 2007).

⁴⁸ *Casebook of REDD Projects in Latin America*, found at: Forest Trends <http://forest-trends.org/documents/files/doc_2531.pdf>.

⁴⁹ P. Newell, n. 39 above, at 40.

academic world was extremely important in Brazil,' increasing the ability to influence the government's position on certain issues.⁵⁰

Interestingly, the production and dissemination of knowledge are the central pillars of the previous strategies presented in this section. The knowledge produced and disseminated by these organizations was the basis for their dialogue with governments, congressmen and senators, indigenous peoples, and other stakeholders at the national and international levels. Paulo Moutinho, from IPAM, affirmed that 'the development and dissemination of scientific studies are critical; this knowledge gives us credibility to go beyond an ideological sphere and move to something more concrete and technical.'⁵¹

4 An Analysis of the Implemented Strategies

This section analyzes the strategies adopted by the CSOs to influence discussions on forests and climate change at the national and international levels from 2005 to 2010. The surrounding political context is an important factor when understanding CSOs' choices of strategies, as well as of the strategies' features. It is believed that 'activists do not choose goals, strategies, and tactics in a vacuum. Rather, the political context, conceptualized fairly broadly, sets the grievances, around which activists mobilize, advantaging some claims and disadvantaging others.'⁵²

This political context presents different opportunities and threats, neither of them objective categories, which vary according to how individuals perceive and construct them.⁵³ In order to spur collective action and mobilize an organization to develop a strategy, individuals must recognize these opportunities and threats as incentives. In this sense, the relationship between opportunities, threats and perceptions is dynamic, where 'perceptions are not only necessary for potential protestors to recognize opportunities, but in many cases perceptions can create opportunities.'⁵⁴

Furthermore, a crucial element in understanding CSOs' strategies is the interaction between their members, political allies and opponents within social networks. Von Bülow defines 'social networks' as both 'a precondition of collective action – because action is affected by actors' pre-existing networks – and as an outcome of collective action – because actors create new linkages that in turn constrain (or enable) future action'.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ R. Smeraldi, n. 45 above.

⁵¹ P. Moutinho, n. 22 above.

⁵² D.S. Meyer, 'Tending the Vineyard: Cultivating Political Process Research' 14 *Sociological Forum* (1999), 79, at 82.

⁵³ C. Tilly, 'Wise quacks', 14 *Sociological Forum* (1999), 55; D.S. Meyer, 'Tending the Vineyard: Cultivating Political Process Research', 14 *Sociological Forum* (1999), 79; J. Goodwin and J.M. Jasper, 'Caught in a Windling, Snarling Vine: The Structural Bias of Political Process Theory', 14 *Sociological Forum* (1999), 27; S. Tarrow, 'Paradigm Warriors: Regress and Progress in the Study of Contentious Politics', 14 *Sociological Forum* (1999), 71.

⁵⁴ J. Goodwin and J.M Jasper, n. 53 above, at 52.

⁵⁵ M. von Bülow, *Building Transnational Networks: Civil Society and the Politics of Trade in the Americas* (Cambridge University Press, 2010) at 7.

4.1 Cooperation over confrontation

The strategies adopted by the CSOs were predominantly cooperative, characterized by non-violent activities that prioritized dialogue with their target audiences, aimed at contributing with solutions, critical analysis and recommendations to the challenges presented. Confrontational strategies – whether violent or not, characterized by direct clash and opposition, disruptive criticisms and complaints – were rarely used by the organizations.

Most CSOs stated that they adopted cooperative strategies because this is how they traditionally deal with their political agendas. Carlos Rittl, from WWF-Brazil, explained that his organization prioritizes cooperative strategies, especially when dealing with complex issues, such as climate change, which requires a lot of dialogue. WWF-Brazil has prioritized strategies that mobilize and engage the public to pressure decision makers, adopting a more urgent tone when needed, but without any kind of confrontation or public embarrassment.⁵⁶

However, the CSOs emphasized that the adoption of cooperative strategies does not imply that CSOs are uncritical of governments. At times, in the absence of consensus between CSOs and government, it was important to pressure the government in an attempt to change its position. Fernanda Carvalho, from TNC, said that strategies that prioritize dialogue, even when there is disagreement, create greater possibilities for negotiation than confrontation. She stated that when someone focuses on confrontation, ‘the conversation becomes polarized, [and] you end up taking a position that often does not allow for negotiation.’ Nevertheless, Carvalho recognized the importance of confrontational strategies adopted by other organizations, highlighting the importance of working in coalitions in which each organization has a distinct role.⁵⁷

Thus, there is a perception of complementarity between strategies with different degrees of cooperation and confrontation that are directed to a common goal. Greenpeace's profile stands out from that of other CSOs, as it adopted strategies of direct action that involved greater confrontation. Such was the case of the invasion of a UNESCO event while former President Lula was on stage receiving an award during the COP 15 in 2009. Yet, even in the case of Greenpeace, the strategies employed vary according to the political context. Sergio Leitão, from Greenpeace Brazil, stated that they ‘try to balance those two things [cooperation and confrontation] considering them as doses of the same medicine, depending on the situation that you seek to influence’.⁵⁸

In this sense, the decision to adopt a more collaborative or more confrontational strategy largely depends on the political context that permeates these organizations. This context is characterized by structural factors, such as the existence of spaces for public participation, and non-structural factors, such as the government's position on a specific topic. Rubens Gomes, said that while the Amazon Working Group (GTA) ‘seeks solutions to protect forests and the rights of local populations, political

⁵⁶ C. Rittl, n. 11 above.

⁵⁷ F. Carvalho, n. 23 above.

⁵⁸ S. Leitão, n. 40 above.

circumstances will determine how our strategy will be conducted'.⁵⁹ The CSOs considered the domestic political context from 2005 to 2010 to be favourable to the development of cooperative strategies, due to a more progressive position by the Brazilian government on forests and climate change and the existence of ample room for the participation of civil society. In December 2009, Brazil approved its National Policy on Climate Change and voluntarily committed to reducing 36.1 to 38.9 % of its projected business as usual emissions by 2020.⁶⁰ The international political context was also perceived as positive due to important advances in the discussions on REDD and the official inclusion of the topic in the UNFCCC negotiations.

The relative degrees of cooperation and confrontation also depend on the perception of the audiences targeted by the strategies. Brenda Brito, from Imazon, explained that the perception of a strategy's level of cooperation 'will depend on who receives the news'. The development of a scientific study, for example, is not *a priori* a collaborative strategy just because it is nonviolent. In 2010, the Climate Observatory published a study⁶¹ arguing that changing the Brazilian Forest Code would negatively affect compliance with national GHG emissions reduction targets for deforestation and forest degradation. Brito explained that by exposing the risks of potential changes to the Forest Code, those who were in favour of changing the text would consider the study to be confrontational.⁶²

The organization's profile is also important in understanding the choice between cooperation and confrontation. Most strategies analyzed in this paper occurred within formal institutions or groups, with transparent agendas, recognized by their peers. The formal participation of these organizations in meetings convened by governments and international organizations helps explain why their strategies were characterized by cooperation, rather than by confrontation. At the same time, the cooperative nature of organizations was certainly attractive to governments; CSOs might have avoided confrontation as much as possible in order to keep these governmental doors open. Tarrow argues that confrontational strategies are usually employed by groups who lack regular access to institutions and who act on behalf of new or unaccepted claims. These groups consequently behave in a way that defies the authorities.⁶³

CSOs' representatives stressed that a good relationship with the government facilitated dialogue, allowing for the alignment of common positions. Tasso Azevedo was the director and founder

⁵⁹ Interview of R. Gomes by the author (26 August 2011) by Skype. At the time of this interview, Gomes was the president of the GTA.

⁶⁰ *Política Nacional sobre Mudança do Clima*, found at: Presidência da República, Casa Civil, Subchefia para Assuntos Jurídicos <http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2007-2010/2009/lei/l12187.htm>.

⁶¹ *Relatório técnico - potenciais impactos das alterações do Código Florestal Brasileiro na meta nacional de redução de emissões de gases de efeito estufa*, found at: WWF <http://assets.wwfbr.panda.org/downloads/relatorio_cfb_e_meta-versao_preliminar_observatorio_clima_doc.pdf>.

⁶² B. Brito, n. 37 above.

⁶³ S. Tarrow, *O poder em movimento: movimentos sociais e confronto político* (Editora Vozes, 2009), at 19.

of a CSO, the Institute for Agricultural and Forest Management and Certification (Imaflora), before joining the MMA in 2003. He said that the existence of personal relationships between governmental and civil society stakeholders was positive and that this network was often helpful. When there was a political crisis or harsher criticisms directed towards the government, he was able to get in direct touch with CSOs representatives for clarifications. Furthermore, when looking for allies for a campaign or strategy, he could count on his CSO network.⁶⁴

This alignment between civil society and the state raises questions regarding CSOs' autonomy. The proximity between CSOs and government representatives also raises questions about individuals - who sometimes hold public positions and sometimes work for CSOs - and how this proximity can influence the strategies adopted by civil society, potentially leading to a more cooperative approach. Márcio Santilli, from the ISA, stated that his organization has had members in the government; at times, it was difficult to know when these individuals were speaking for an institution (whether the government or the CSO) or for themselves.⁶⁵ One of the risks is that 'by entering into the state apparatus, social movements activists start to defend more moderate or even opposing positions to the movements'.⁶⁶

4.2 Collaboration between CSOs

CSOs prioritized the development of common strategies over individual ones, through formal and informal coalitions. Despite challenges – such as ensuring the participation of all organizations in coalitions, reaching consensus and mobilizing resources – CSOs preferred to develop collaborative work whenever possible, arguing that it facilitates the division of labor and increases their potential influence. As stated by Corell and Betsill, 'coordination among non-state actors is seen to enhance their influence by amplifying their voice and promoting greater efficiency in gathering and disseminating information.'⁶⁷

Representatives of the CSOs pointed out that the main advantage of working in collaboration with other CSOs was the division of tasks, allowing them to pool resources for the implementation of their strategies and thus complement their individual efforts. Social networks enable groups and organizations that individually have limited knowledge and influence to acquire an important political role when brought together.⁶⁸ Paulo Prado, from CI Brazil, said that every organization has different skills and 'by summing up [each one's expertise], the coalition has answers for everything'.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ T. Azevedo, n. 16 above.

⁶⁵ Interview of M. Santilli by the author (12 July 2011) in Brasília, DF, Brazil. At the time of this interview, Santilli was the coordinator of the Socio-Environmental Politics and Rights at the Socio-Environmental Institute (ISA).

⁶⁶ M. von Bülow and R. Abers, 'As transformações do estudo dos movimentos sociais: como estudar o ativismo através da fronteira entre Estado e sociedade?' 13 *Sociologias* (2011), at 18.

⁶⁷ M.M. Betsill and E. Corell, n. 46 above at 39.

⁶⁸ D. Della Porta and M. Diani, 'Movement Networks' in: D. Della Porta and M. Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction* (Blackwell, 1999), 110 at 112.

⁶⁹ P. Prado, n. 25 above.

The development of strategies in cooperation with other CSOs did not necessarily imply that the CSOs shared identical goals, but instead had similar objectives in one or more strategies. CSOs' representatives emphasized that they limited their cooperation to areas in which there was consensus, recognizing that disagreement is natural, since organizations have their own strategies to follow. Fernanda Carvalho, from TNC, said that it is 'very powerful' to work in coalitions but also very challenging because 'decisions have to be made by consensus and organizations have their own positions'.⁷⁰

In recent decades, Brazilian environmental CSOs have gone through an increase in professionalization, characterized by the recruitment of highly qualified professionals and the development of complex projects that require more technical and specialized knowledge.⁷¹ This increased specialization of CSOs in technical subjects resulted in greater differences in the approaches they advocated. Sergio Leitão, from Greenpeace Brazil, explained that nowadays it is more difficult to reach a consensus than it was in the 1980s and 1990s when all organizations worked on a more general level. He stated that 'it is as if we all had ceased to be general practitioners and became specialists in different areas', with organizations increasingly focusing on specific topics.⁷²

CSOs also reported that difficulties in reaching an agreement among the members of a coalition can lead to 'hollow consensus', in the words of Roberto Smeraldi, from Friends of the Earth - Brazilian Amazon.⁷³ Organizations emphasized that one must make concessions in order to reach common positions, but there are certain limits. In these cases, the positions adopted by coalitions may be vague to the point of being void of any political messages.

Other elements that often hindered cooperation between CSOs include disputes over methodological approaches to deal with forests and climate change, as well as competition for financial resources. Different technical approaches to certain problems not only make consensus difficult, but are also directly related to competition for resources. As an organization tries to demonstrate to funders the superiority of their approach, they indirectly crowd out other organizations' positions. Thus, scarce funding for projects and challenges for their financial survival can inflame differences, further hindering collaborative work.

4.3 Transnational paths

In defining their strategies, CSOs drew from their work on both domestic and international arenas, engaging in transnational collective actions to influence public policies on forests and climate change. These actions are understood as 'processes through which individuals, non-state groups, and/or

⁷⁰ F. Carvalho, n. 23 above.

⁷¹ K. Hochstetler and M.E. Keck, *Greening Brazil: Environmental Activism in State and Society* (Duke University Press, 2007), at 101.

⁷² S. Leitão, n. 40 above.

⁷³ R. Smeraldi, n. 45 above.

organizations mobilize jointly around issues, goals, and targets that link the domestic and international arenas'.⁷⁴

CSOs do not always operate on multiple spheres simultaneously; at a given time they prioritize a specific scale and decide on the duration and intensity of their strategies. These choices depend on the political contexts and activists' social networks. This interaction is dynamic, so CSOs' choices may change according to their perceptions of changes, opportunities and threats in the political context.⁷⁵ While the analyzed CSOs implemented strategies on both scales, they prioritized the domestic level.

International negotiations lost strength after COP 15, where negotiations fell short of reaching a global agreement to tackle climate change. In the same period, Brazil was able to advance much more domestically, by instituting its National Climate Change Policy. Within this context, CSOs decided to focus their efforts on internal political processes rather than on the discredited UNFCCC negotiations. Paulo Moutinho, from IPAM, stated that the prioritization of the domestic or international scale depends on the political atmosphere. Between 2000 and 2005, efforts were fairly balanced between the two arenas. Later, with the weakening of international negotiations, IPAM prioritized the national and Amazonian agendas. He explained that this is a dynamic process, attuned to the opportunities that arise, without predetermined planning.⁷⁶

Despite the importance of domestic initiatives during this period, CSOs affirmed it was crucial to remain active in both spheres since the decision-making processes in one sphere could have a direct impact on the other. For example, forests and biodiversity projects in Brazil depended largely on international resources, so CSOs should be aware of any discussions that could affect long-term fundraising. Sergio Leitão, from Greenpeace Brazil, used the metaphor of a seesaw to explain how the organization navigates between the national and international level: 'it is a game where you must operate in both directions', developing strategies that complement each other.⁷⁷

The importance of the national sphere goes beyond being the locus where most activities were implemented. CSOs explained that their domestic activity legitimizes their presence at the international level. Thus, while an international presence is relevant, it must draw from their activities at the domestic level, where their impact is greater and where social networks, opportunities and threats are closer to the CSOs' members.⁷⁸ Adriana Ramos, from ISA, explained that they work on a vertical strategy, firmly rooted on the ground and with an antenna facing the world, always looking first for the demands that

⁷⁴ M. von Bülow, n. 55 above, at 5.

⁷⁵ Ibid at 27.

⁷⁶ P. Moutinho, n. 22 above.

⁷⁷ S. Leitão, n. 40 above.

⁷⁸ S. Tarrow, *The new transnational activism* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), at 2.

arise at the domestic level. For her, it only makes sense to participate in international discussions if there is a local demand that needs to be addressed in that sphere.⁷⁹

Thus, CSOs operated dynamically in both spheres in order to achieve results for their strategies. Hochstetler and Keck affirm that ‘transnational and domestic actors and processes have been heavily intertwined in Brazilian environmental politics, to the point where neither can be understood without the other and often the two cannot even be distinguished.’⁸⁰ This interaction was seen, for instance, when CSOs ‘translated’ international negotiations for local stakeholders, such as local communities, media professionals and general public, in an attempt to show how seemingly distant global processes may affect day-to-day lives.

5 Conclusion

Climate change poses one of the greatest challenges faced by humanity in the twenty-first century. Solutions that result in the mitigation of future impacts and adaptation of vulnerable populations will require cooperation between governments, civil society organizations, universities, companies, and other relevant stakeholders. In this context, it is important to understand how different actors are positioning themselves in order to contribute towards building national and international policies to tackle climate change. This paper examined the strategies adopted by a group of Brazilian CSOs to influence the development of national and international policies on forests and climate change from 2005 to 2010.

As of 2005, cooperative strategies prevailed. CSOs perceived favourable national and international political contexts for these discussions, with increasing convergence between CSOs and the Brazilian federal government position. Meanwhile, forests were included in the UNFCCC official agenda. CSOs tended to adopt more cooperative strategies as new spaces for civil society participation opened up, further shaping the relationship between these actors.

The national and international political contexts not only influenced the strategies chosen by the CSO's, but also defined the level of effort put in each of these spheres. As the Brazilian political context changed, CSOs prioritized the development of strategies at the national level as they saw greater opportunities for influencing the domestic decision-making processes.

Moreover, collaboration between CSOs was an important feature of the adopted strategies. CSOs preferred to develop strategies in collaboration with other organizations, rather than individually. Collaboration strengthened their capacity to bargain and allowed them to combine organizational, human and financial resources. It also facilitated cooperation and information exchange, and thus increased the possibility of influencing decision makers.

⁷⁹ Interview of A. Ramos by the author (25 August 2011) in Brasília, DF, Brazil. At the time of this interview, Ramos was the Deputy Secretary Executive of the Socio-Environmental Institute (ISA).

⁸⁰ K. Hochstetler and M.E. Keck, n. 71 above, at 230.

From these observations, it was clear that the choices made by CSOs for specific strategies were not immutable. Rather, strategies changed as a result of specific political contexts and interactions with other social actors. Within this context, mechanisms for civil society participation at multiple levels of governance leveraged further opportunities for CSOs' influence in the construction of climate change regimes. Nevertheless, the existence of channels for public participation itself did not lead to the implementation of successful strategies by the CSOs, as their success also relied on their ability to use these channels strategically.

Other factors influenced the CSOs' choices of strategy and can serve as topics for future research. One such factor is the challenge of raising financial resources for the development of strategies, including funds to hire staff, purchase equipment and other expenses. In some cases, the need for financial resources may lead CSOs to adapt their strategies to fit into funders' expectations, leading to potential dilemmas about their autonomy.

In examining how CSOs interact with other actors for the construction of a more robust regime for forests and climate change, one aims to better understand the features and choices that define the complex exchanges between them. In this context, the existence of mechanisms and channels for public participation enables a more effective interaction between different sectors, allowing for the identification of solutions and alternatives to tackle important challenges. This ultimately contributes to making multi-sector governance more effective, benefiting national and international efforts to curb climate change.