

Community Involvement in Forest Management: the case of the Upper Jurua Extractive Reserve *

z.w.de

Mauro Almeida
Campinas State University
National Council of Rubber Tappers/Advisor
Brazil

ABSTRACT

In this paper I present the Upper Jurua Extractive Reserve as an example of the concept and practice of Extractive Reserves. I also argue that non-governmental grass-root organizations such as the National Council of Rubber Tappers must perform an independent role in planning and managing such reserves, alongside with governmental agencies but not dependent upon them.

INTRODUCTION

The National Council of Rubber Tappers is an association of rubber tappers, nut gatherers and other extractive workers from all Brazilian Amazon, founded in 1985 to represent the interests of forest dwellers towards the society and government. It should be reminded that the NCRT is not a trade union, although most of its members are also trade union militants. The 31 Members of the NCRT are elected in county meetings of rubber tappers and meet periodically; a board of directors is elected in a general assembly each two years. One main task of the NCRT is to propose specific policies to secure forest inhabitants the right to benefit from progress while preserving for the whole society the natural resources that they traditionally have managed in a balanced way. As the foremost example of such policies, the NCRT has proposed since 1985 the establishment of Extractive Reserves in forest areas occupied by forest workers. Less known perhaps is that the NCRT also demands that local communities actually manage such reserves.

Before I comment in further detail on the Upper Jurua Extractive Reserve let me add some general points. The NCRT proposes a development scenario based on the improvement of their extractive, low-capital forest economy, and the development of skills necessary for the forest population to manage the transition to an efficient forest economy. This is necessarily a long-term strategy. Rubber tappers in the NCRT object to an immediate substitution of the traditional forest economy by a

*Paper presented at the Workshop on Community Involvement in Forest Management
Dempasar, 15 May 1990. (WWF INTERNATIONAL)

capital-and-labour intensive economy of an agricultural, ranching style. They advocate instead that the continuous forests forming traditional rubber estates, Brazil nut groves etc. should be converted into public territories destined by law to be granted, through use concessions, to traditional extractive population, subject to management plans approved by the local communities. They also propose the modernization of the forest life by means of the introduction of appropriate education, health services and cooperative systems. Finally, they include as a medium-term target the development of new sustained extractive and non-extractive activities. Rubber tappers are aware that this strategy may not yield short-term profits as high as timber extraction might yield. But they think that if somebody must be prepared to plan ahead for the welfare of future generations, rubber tappers may well perform this role, since it coincides with their own short-term interest of keeping their forest life style while benefiting from the advantages of progress.

SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION: SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS OF THE UPPER JURUA VALLEY

River Jurua runs parallel to the Purus river, both of them crossing the State of Acre from the andean foothills towards the Amazon river. The Purus valley, where the State's capital Rio Branco is localized, has been made famous by the struggle of the rubber tappers of Xapuri against the deforestation conducted by cattle ranchers. The Purus valley is reached by roads and daily flights. The Jurua valley, 600 km at west, is still reached only by water and two weekly flights (Map 1). While in the Purus valley the autonomous rubber tappers resist against deforestation, in the Jurua valley the rubber tappers are still subject to the traditional system of debt bondage to trade posts.

Roughly half of the Acre State population of rubber tappers (of an official total of 25,000 workers, supporting a population of 100,000 people) lives in the Upper Jurua Valley (that is, the Jurua Valley comprised within the State of Acre). The comments which follow refer to river Tejo, one affluent of the Jurua river which I know since 1982 when I spent there one initial year doing fieldwork. Rubber tappers were bound to a system called "aviamento" (advancing) under which everything they needed to buy had to be bought at the trade post, and all the rubber produced had to be delivered at this same trade post, all transactions being done on credit and settled once a year. The whole river Tejo was divided among about twelve minor trade posts, all of them subordinated to a single trading house at Cruzeiro do Sul, the county seat (see Map 2). at a week distance downriver. Since rubber tappers are nearly all illiterate and transactions were done without receipts, accounts could be manipulated at the manager's will and it come as no surprise that most rubber tappers were chronically indebted. Police used to be called on by patrons to coerce rubber tappers who violated the traditional rules or to repress itinerant boat traders.

River Tejo population numbered around 500 families. One of the minor rubber estates, called Riozinho, had 25 clearings ("colocacoes", the name for the traditional forest settlements), 70 houses distributed among them, and around 400 people living in a total forest area of about 30,000 ha. The 25 settlements (each being an approximately circular area with a central clearing from which radial trails projected in loops in all directions) were evenly spread along the Riozinho stream and along secondary rivulets. This pattern was typical for the whole river Tejo, although the Riozinho seringal could be characterized as more densely populated and as of higher productivity than the other river Tejo seringais (between 600 to 700 kgs. rubber average per year/family; yields per family ranging between 300 kgs. to 1,800 kgs.) (Map 3) AN TABLE I)

Rubber tappers collected not only rubber, but also a variety of forest itens for their own use, including a number of palm tree fruits used for food. They also grew gardens from which they obtained the basic manioc meal staple. In addition to this, they hunted and fished. Using an average of 300-400 ha per family, gardens averaged less than 1 ha including gardens several stages (ALMEIDA 1988, 1990).

No schools or health services were available. Child birth was was a risk for any woman and infantile mortality was very high, being treated with prayers by older healers. Malaria and hepatitis were common causes of death, and snake bites crippled or killed many for absolute lack of treatment except traditional ones, the nearest medical help being at one week downstream river travel (if the rubber tapper got the boat and fuel from the local patron). The only education available was provided by some wives of rubber tappers who gave lessons to children, sometimes at improvised classrooms attended by dozens children on an irregular basis. Priests did a yearly visit to in order to marry and baptism people.

Since 1981, the traditional patrons were moving ahead of the traditional system. Since the forest estate was sold in 1980 to a Sao Paulo company, regional patrons started to rent river Tejo for three year periods but were having problems to collect debts, a difficulty which was compounded by the soaring inflation rate. Although supported by the generous subsidies given to them until 1984, the patrons were not willing to fulfill the duties expected from them under the traditional clientelistic system, such as long-term credit and support in case of disease. Situation deteriorated and in 1986 Tejo rubber tappers, led by Chico Ginu, revolted against Cameli Brothers & Co. which sent an armed debt-collecting expedition which took forcibly from the rubber tapper's own houses itens as rubber, milk cows, sewing machines and small diesel motors which power the cassava meal mills.

Logging was a better alternative for the traditional patrons, while the distant owners of land titles awaited for the land prices to rise once the Acre-Pacific road started to materialize.

Tejo river was not only famous for its record of 300 tons rubber

a year, but also for its reserves of mahogany and other high-value species. Surveys started in 1986 by helicopter and on land to assess the feasibility of immediate extraction, while rubber tappers were contacted for future wage work. The company who conducted these surveys (Cameli & Brothers) had a record of predatory logging at the neighbouring river Amonia, for which it had been prosecuted by FUNAI (under the initiative of Antonio Macedo).

THE BEGGINING OF THE UPPER JURUA EXTRACTIVE RESERVE PROJECT

In January 1988 the governor of State of Acre announced the creation of the so-called Extractive Settlement Project of Sao Luis do Remanso in an area of 23,000 ha previously earmarked for agricultural settlement, situated at 6 hours from Rio Branco, surrounded by ranches and without any community organization.

In February 1988, the National Council of Rubber Tappers incorporated Antonio Macedo to start full time work at the upper Jurua. This invitation by Chico Mendes was fully supported by the whole board of directors present. It is worth mentioning that the incorporation of Antonio Macedo as a full-time NCRT staff was made possible by funds managed for the first time autonomously by the organization.

Macedo is a brilliant and dynamic individual, a self-taught leader who has a record of having being a rubber tapper himself as a young boy and of having founded dozens of Indian cooperatives while working for FUNAI (the Brazilian Indian Affairs Agency). He moved on fast in the task assigned to him by the Rubber Tapper's Council.

Between May and June he conducted a survey of river Tejo (MACEDO & MANAITA 1988). He contacted Chico Ginu and others local leaders and organized meetings attended by hundreds of rubber tappers. In these not only the local problems were discussed and recorded, but also solutions were devised.

I will give an example example of topics discussed. The main patron, Cameli & Brothers Co. (on a leasing contract with Consulmar Ltda, the Sao Paulo-based company which bought doubtful titles to river Tejo in 1980), operated a rubber business along river Tejo with the support of subsidized one-year loans granted by the local Bank of Brazil agency. These loans, invested in merchandise to advance to the rubber tappers, were guaranteed by the anticipated production of river Tejo rubber tappers. Each "knife" was worth 400 kgs. rubber value. The agreement of rubber tappers was not seen as necessary, although the transaction was the basis for forcing all rubber yield to be delivered to the trade post. This situation, once discussed, led naturally to a question: why could not rubber tappers get directly financed by the bank?

Other subject of heated discussion since years was the payment of the yearly "rent" in kind for the right to use the rubber trails. Since these were opened and maintained by the rubber tappers themselves at a heavy cost in labour and equipment, the rubber tappers wondered why should they pay for keeping the rubber estates in a working condition.

Plans for logging river Tejo were discussed, and also other problems more of an internal nature such as the use of dogs in hunting, the overtapping of rubber trees, use of palm-trees (*Jessenia pataua*, etc), conflicts over garden invasion by pigs and other issues. Of course all these problems had been the subject of many local discussions before (MELO 1983. 1987), but it was the first time that rubber tappers had external advice and support about possible solutions.

THE UPPER JURUA EXTRACTIVE RESERVE PROJECT: THE FIRST YEAR

In July-August Macedo prepared a draft of a first Plan of Community Development for the Upper Jurua, on the basis of his survey and of local meetings and discussions mainly within river Tejo. We wrote together in August the "Project Upper Jurua Extractive Reserve" after the National Council of Rubber Tappers, meeting at Ariquemes (Rondonia), approved the idea of submitting the project to the National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES), after a suggestion of the economist Adir Gianninni, then at the Secretary of Planning of State of Acre. The project was presented by the Government of Acre as a proof of the "present government perspective of finding development alternatives which do not bring damage to the nature and to the inhabitants of the region".

Our original project was sent to BNDES with an added general section named "Extractive Settlement Project" (Projeto de Assentamento Extrativista) signed by Acre's Government, and a second part which reproduced the NCRT proposal, and a final appendix containing Macedo and Renilza's survey of Tejo. In what follows I will refer to the sections elaborated by the NCRT.

The project described the NCRT as a "non-party civil association formed by leaders of trade unions, associations and social movements of amazonian rubber tappers; being a non-profit organization; aiming to represent the interests of rubber tappers and other extractive workers; having as goals to propose, develop and execute economic, social and cultural projects for the protection of the environment and the development of the extractive economy; and having also as a goal to prepare human resources for the defense of the forest and of the man of Amazonia" (CNS 1988).

I will quote from the Project:

"This project aims to improve the quality of life at the rubber

estates through actions directed to health and education. It also aims to increase income by means of actions in the area of commercialization of extractive products. To attain this end it will be necessary to break the chain of commercial patrons and middlemen (...) and also to improve transportation, with an emphasis on cooperative solutions. In a latter phase, this project aims at the introduction of alternative technologies based on the sustained management of natural resources and on appropriate processing solutions" (Government of the State of Acre/National Council of Rubber Tappers 1988).

As specific targets the project proposed for the first year:

- a. To implant at Cruzeiro do Sul an administrative/communications infrastructure to support the rubber tapper's movement at the Upper Jurua Valley
- b. To create a first Extractive Reserve at River Tejo.
- c. To initiate a Health Project at River Tejo
- d. To initiate an Educational Project at River Tejo
- f. To initiate a network of cooperatives at River Tejo.
- g. To start the research to alternative extractive technologies.

At December 1988 the BNDES approved funding for itens a and f only, that is to say, the implantation of a cooperative system at river Tejo and administrative support at Cruzeiro do Sul, with a budget of CR\$70,000.00 (US\$35,000.00). The budget included a cooperative seat with storehouse and boats at Cruzeiro do Sul; a set of 12 cooperative sheds at river Tejo, 7 small boats, animal convoys, opening of forest trails and training of community managers. A first meeting took place at the mouth of river Tejo at January 1989 with the attendance of the community-nominated managers. At this meeting the participants decided to create the Association of Rubber Tappers of river Tejo; selected the localization of the cooperative posts on the basis of maps and census by Chico Ginu; revised and reduced costs and proposed another budget; established rules for management and general supervision of the project. The conclusions of this meeting are contained in "Regulations for Community Managers" including a map of river Tejo Extractive Reserve.

Let me review rapidly what was achieved in the first year (January 1989-January 1989) (MACEDO & MELO 1989). The Cruzeiro office was created, being the seat of the regional branch of the National Council of Rubber Tappers. The Association of Rubber Tappers of River Tejo was officially established, with Francisco Melo ("Chico Ginu") as President, with its own bank account and seat at Cruzeiro do Sul. Both the NCRT and the Association of Rubber Tappers of River Tejo own their own 14 tons boat. The

projected 12 cooperative storehouses were built, with two major posts with facilities for community meetings. Each cooperative post has its own 1 ton boat powered by diesel motor (totalling 19 boats, half of them built inside river Tejo). Using saved budget to invest in working capital, the cooperative managed to supply rubber tappers with basic itens (fuel, tools and equipment, salt, ammunition, etc.). This meant the end of the monopoly/monopsony system in the whole area. The payment of "rent" was interrupted. Plans for logging were discontinued; prices were lowered as a result of the competition; independent boat traders benefited by the free river transit. Although the educational and health plans obtained no funding this first year, the rubber tappers started to discuss and plan ahead. This has cost not more than \$70,000.00 including contributions by the National Bank for Economic and Social Development (US\$ 35,000.00), and additional contributions by the National Council of Rubber Tappers for staff and administration (US\$10,000.00), and donations of the larger 14 ton boats and communication systems by other sources.

INSTITUTIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

We could sum up the above achievements as ^{being} of a social nature. Another important achievement was the official establishment of the Extractive Reserve of Upper Jurua. The NCRT was not only injecting human and financial resources at the local level, but was channelling pressure at the institutional level (mainly at federal government) towards the legalization of this ambitious project. This strategy was successfull. The "Upper Jurua Extractive Reserve Project" succeeded to create a network of support which led to the first official Extractive Reserve, and also to a legal definition on the concept of Extractive Reserve.

The Upper Jurua Extractive Reserve served as the first example of a NCRT project featuring the following characteristics:

a. Environmental Criteria:

The area contain whole river basins and is bounded by clear, natural boundaries comprising all headwaters of the rivers included. It has an area of 506,000 ha of continuous forests. Professor Keith Brown of Campinas State University writes in a report that the are presents the largest known diversity in Brazil for some typical rainforest groups. He also states that there is a great number of rare, primitiv of endangered species. He assessed th global value of the genetic patrimony as being "very high" (+9 in a scale of 10). (This should be compared with the "Extractive Settlement Project of Sao Luis do Remanso" with 23,000 ha.) One important feature of the Upper Jurua Extractive Reserve is that is has boundaries with several Indigenous communities (Kampa at west, Jaminawa-Arara at North, Kashinawa at west, and Kampa/Kashinawa at south). It also has boundaries with the National Park of Serra do Divisor. In this way, the Upper Jurua Extractive Reserve not only preserves 506,000 ha, but establishes a much bigger are of continuous forest preservation.

b. Social criteria:

The area of the reserve has a stable population of rubber tappers (documented since 1905). Satellite images show that this stable occupation does not affect the nature of the forest. There is a local community organized, with legitimate and honest leadership. This local organization was centered at two major places: the Restauracao and the Rio Bage. It involved kinship networks and also local trade union representatives.

c. Urgency criteria

Road projects for the area and projects for illegal timber extraction made imminent the risk of destruction of the forest resources as exemplified by the case of Rondonia. Violence against rubber tappers and lack of basic human rights such as freedom to trade demanded also immediate action.

It can be said that the establishments of such general criteria for selection of priorities was one positive result of the project. These three arguments were extensively documented, thanks to an inquest established by the Procuradoria Geral da Republica (General Attorneys of the Republic) at the request of the NCRT. This inquest produced 7 volumes of reports and 7 volumes of evidence obtained by teams of biologists, anthropologists, lawyers and technical staff from Embrapa (an official Brazilian agency for Agronomic Research), Campinas State University (under an agreement of technical cooperation with the NCRT), Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFF), and also Brazilian Anthropological Association and National Research Council. The Brazilian Environment Agency, IBAMA, had an essential role in the legal implementation of the project. It established a work team with the participation of IBAMA staff, plus NCRT representatives, INCRA (the land agency) representatives and IEA (the Institute for Amazonian Studies). The procedure of producing good evidence and a technically sound version of the NCRT proposal, subject to its supervision in all stages, can also be taken as exemplary for further actions.

IMPLEMENTING THE UPPER JURUA EXTRACTIVE RESERVE: NEXT STEPS

Some of the main social targets and the main environmental target of the project were attained in the first year, with a very little expenditure of money. Let me explain now what the situation is. A decree of January 1990 defines Extractive Reserves as "territorial spaces destined to self-sustainable use and conservation of renewable natural resources by extractivist population". The decree also says that "the self-sustainable exploitation and conservation of natural resources will be regulated by a contract of use concessions. This contract will

include a management plan. This means that, in order that the Extractive Reserve is fully established as initially intended, the following steps are in order:

- a. The environmental agency (IBAMA) to which the Extractive Reserves are linked must sign the contract of use concession. The NCRT proposes that the use concession be granted to the local community of rubber tappers (in this case, the Association of Rubber Tappers of Upper Jurua, to replace the former Association of Rubber Tappers of River Tejo). This step involves solving pending land issues. It also involves the elaboration of a Management Plan, now under discussion.
- b. Realization of census of families in the whole Upper Jurua Extractive Reserve (including river Tejo), and issuing titles of use authorization to individual families. This task should be realized again by the Association of Rubber Tappers (as part of a contract with IBAMA and with adequate technical help).
- c. Establishment of the Upper Jurua Extractive Reserve Regulations (with must respect the general Management Plan).

These steps are under discussion. New government has not taken a position on the signing of use concession contracts. There is lack of collaboration by the land agency to regularize the titles and provide for indemnizations when justified.

At the local level, rubber tappers discuss the regulations needed. Current proposals stress already existing extraction rules not only for rubber trees, but also for palm trees etc.; interdict commercial logging; regulate hunting (rubber tappers were divided about whether or not interdict completely dogs, or allow dogs for domestic, non-hunting purposes); regulate fishing in rivers (size of nets), lakes (interdiction of young Giga paraimas) and streams (interdiction of fishing parties using dams and poisoning). Management plans and regulations also foresee improvements. One is planting or protecting valuable species in abandoned garden sites (management of regrowth forests); to diversify and intensify the agriculture in forest gardens (management of "colonies"); include processing units for agricultural products aiming at local consumption (sugar, rice, manioc meal, tobacco); breeding of forest fauna (tapir, paca) for alimentary ends.

All the above are proposals made by the community. What is necessary is that the local Association of Rubber Tappers and the National Council of Rubber Tappers have their role in actual management respected and recongnized. This will ensure that the idea of an Extractive Reserve will not be just another scheme.

PRESENT GOALS FOR THE UPPER JURUA EXTRACTIVE RESERVE

Presently the coordination of the project at Cruzeiro do Sul has established a number of goals and is trying to get funding and

technical support for each, as follows:

a. A new survey to be done in July-August, led by Macedo and Chico Ginu. This survey should ideally include a team of especialistas (botanist, anthropologist, doctor, agronomist). The expected results are not only to collect adequate information to formulate in details the specific projects below, but also to contact and register all rubber tappers in the wider area of Upper Jurua Extractive Reserve.

b. Community Development:

1. Education Plan.

First Year: This requires a technical staff of supervisors, equipment for 12 forest schools (including adequate books), and the training of monitors recruited in the community.

Second Year: An additional 12 forest schools with requirements as above.

Implantation of a technical school, with facilities for practical training of forest managers (cooperatives, processing units, carpentry, motor repairs and spare parts, agronomy and forestry). (A first proposal for the first year is available on request.)

2. Health Plan (2 years)

First Year: Installation of a network of 12 health posts. This requires a technical staff to supervision and training; equipment for health posts; training of health agents; transportation (equipped boats).

Second year: Beginning of a plan for prevention of endemic diseases, water quality etc.

(Project available on request)

3. Consolidation and Expansion of Cooperative (2 years)

This requires the expansion of the cooperative network to cover the Upper Jurua Extractive Reserve area and not only river Tejo. This requires also technical staff to ~~make~~^{MAKE} this larger cooperative ^{into} a working concern. Another need is of an efficient communication system (radio), and additional working capital to expand the production.

(Project available on request. Funds urgently needed.)

c. Research and Development (5-10 years)

1. Diversification of extractive production

Economic Botany, Fitochemistry, Processing and Markets.

(A project proposal by the State University of Campinas is available.)

2. Management of old garden sites (forestry) and management of current garden sites (agronomy).

3. Fauna management

4. Implantation of processing units

(Preliminary project to agricultural processing available)

d. Forest Enciclopedia of Rubber Tappers (2 years)

This requires a team of rubber tappers, an anthropologist, and ethnobotanists etc. The result should present the "state of the art" of rubber tappers's knowledge of the forest.

f. Infrastructure

This requires the strenghtening of the Cruzeiro do Sul "Forest People's Office"; including communication facilities both with the wider world and with the forest communities; adequate staff and equipment.

(Project available on request).

FINAL REMARKS

The Upper Jurua Extractive Reserve Project may seem ambitious, and it certainly is. Extractive Reserves are now under general attention. They must prove that they can work. They must show results in short term; not only social/environmental results, but also economical results. They compete with state sponsored projects in Acre which are oriented either to agricultural colonization (under the land agency) or to the so-called sustainable timbering. (conducted by the agroforestry agency). Costs are not so high as technical support is difficult under the requirements set by rubber tappers: the respect to the right of local people to manage their forests on their own.

To sum up, this requires from the organizations who want to support the rubber tapper's projects: the support of the concept of Extractive Reserves (selection features); the support to the role of local communities im the implementation of Extractive Reserves; the support of the role of wider ngo's associations such as the National Council of Rubber Tappers in policy making. In other words, not only specific development costs, but also organizational costs are an essential parts of the success of the proposal.

.....
Addresses:

CONSELHO NACIONAL DOS SERINGUEIROS-Central Office
Julio Barbosa (President)
Travessa Thaumaturgo de Azevedo 51
Rio Branco - Acre 69900
Brazil
Tel. (068)2241352

CONSELHO NACIONAL DOS SERINGUEIROS-Jurua Office
Antonio Macedo (Regional Coordinator)
Rua 28 de Setembro 72B
Cruzeiro do Sul - Acre 69980
Brazil
Tel. (068) 322 2942

MAURO ALMEIDA (Advisor)
~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

Avenida Higienopolis 983
Sao Paulo SP Tel (011) 825 5544

REFERENCES:

ALMEIDA, Mauro. "Rubber Estates and Labour Control in Contemporary Amazon". Paper presented at the Latin American History Seminar, L.S.E., 1984.

ALMEIDA, Mauro. "Rubber Tappers Forest Settlements: Social Organization, Economy and Natural Resources Management". Sao Paulo, datilografado, 1990.

ALMEIDA, Mauro. "As Colocacoes como Forma Social, Sistema Tecnologico e Unidade de Recursos Naturais". Paper presented at the Rio Branco Seminar on Environment, January 1988.

CONSELHO NACIONAL DOS SERINGUEIROS. Estatutos. Rio Branco, 1988.

GOVERNO DO ESTADO DO ACRE. "Projeto de Assentamento Extrativista" e CONSELHO NACIONAL DOS SERINGUEIROS "Sub-projeto Alto Jurua; Projeto Reservas Extrativistas do Alto Jurua". Rio Branco, August 1988.

MACEDO, Antonio L.B. e MANAITA, Renilza. "Levantamento da Situacao Atual dos Seringueiros do Rio Tejo". Rio Branco, datilografado, s.d.(1988).

MACEDO, A. and Melo, F.B. Relatorio de Atuacao do Conselho Nacional dos Seringueiros no vale do Jurua de Abril/88 a Julho/89. Rio Branco, 1989.

MELO, Antonio B. ("Chico Ginu"). Speech at a rubber tapper's meeting at Seringal Riozinho da Restauracao, settlement Tacaratu, December 1983.

MELO, Antonio B. ("Chico Ginu"). Speech at a rubber tapper's meeting at Seringal Riozinho da Restauracao, settlement Tacaratu, at August 1987.