

Institutional Development for Good Governance: the role of intermediary NGOs in Pará state, Amazonia

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The paper analyses the roles of intermediary NGOs for linkages between government and rural communities in carrying out socio-environmental development programs as a mean of institutional development for good governance. In particular, the paper focuses on the *Proambiente* program that was carried out in Pará State, Amazonia, Brazil. This program was the first experience of a socio-environmental development program in Brazilian Amazonia that took into account local communities' demands to link environmental conservation and small-scale family-based rural production. Methodologically, the research was based on qualitative analysis and used semi-structured interviews for data collection. The paper shows that NGOs as intermediaries between government and rural communities is a significant mechanism to promote the strengthening of the power of local communities, to create bridges between federal government and local communities; and to stimulate participatory processes by engaging rural communities' culture and knowledge in socio-environmental development program as *Proambiente*.

KEYWORDS: intermediary NGO; socio-environmental program; institutional development; rural communities; Amazonia.

Desenvolvimento Institucional para uma Boa Governança: o papel das ONGs intermediárias no estado do Pará, Amazônia

O artigo analisa o papel das ONGs intermediárias no estabelecimento de vínculos entre governo e comunidades rurais na implementação de programas de desenvolvimento socioambiental como uma forma de desenvolvimento institucional para a boa governança. Em particular, o artigo foca o programa Proambiente que foi desenvolvido no estado do Pará, Amazônia, Brasil. O Proambiente foi a primeira

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experiência de um programa socioambiental na Amazônia brasileira que levou em consideração as demandas das comunidades locais para relacionar conservação ambiental com pequena produção rural e familiar. Metodologicamente, a pesquisa foi baseada em análise qualitativa e se utilizou de entrevistas semiestruturadas para coleta de dados. O artigo demonstra que a ação das ONGs como intermediárias entre governo e comunidades rurais é um importante mecanismo para fortalecer o poder das comunidades locais, criar pontes entre o governo federal e essas comunidades, e estimular processos participativos para engajamento da cultura e do conhecimento das comunidades rurais em programas de desenvolvimento socioambientais a exemplo do Proambiente.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: ONG intermediária; programa socioambiental; desenvolvimento institucional; comunidades rurais; Amazônia.

Desarrollo Institucional para el Buen Gobierno: el papel de las ONG intermediarias en el estado de Pará, Amazonia

El artículo analiza el papel de las ONG intermediarias en el establecimiento de vínculos entre el gobierno y las comunidades rurales para implementar programas de desarrollo ambiental como una forma de desarrollo institucional para el buen gobierno. En particular, el artículo se centra en el programa *Proambiente* que se desarrolló en el estado de Pará, Amazonas, Brasil. El *Proambiente* fue la primera experiencia de un programa socio ambiental en la Amazonia brasileña, que tuvo en cuenta las demandas de las comunidades locales para relacionar la conservación del medio ambiente con la pequeña producción rural y familiar. Metodológicamente, la investigación se basó en el análisis cualitativo y se utilizó la entrevista semi-estructurada para la colección de datos. El artículo demuestra que el papel de las ONG como intermediarias entre el gobierno y las comunidades rurales es un mecanismo importante para fortalecer el poder de las comunidades locales, construir puentes entre el gobierno federal y las comunidades, e fomentar los procesos participativos en la cultura local y el conocimiento de las comunidades rurales en el desarrollo de programas de medio ambiente, como el *Proambiente*.

PALABRAS CLAVE: ONG intermediaria; programa socioambiental; desarrollo institucional; comunidades rurales; Amazonia.

1. Introduction

This paper aims to examine the roles of intermediary NGO (Non Governmental Organisations) in governmental programmes and local level communities. In spite of a variety meaning that NGO get in Brazil, this paper focuses only on intermediary NGO and its relationships with public sector to positively impact on community development. It explores partnership between government and NGOs to impact on poverty reduction, participatory development and environmental management and governance. The focus is on two NGO that acted as intermediaries in areas where a socio-environmental development programme was carried out. Particularly, the paper focuses on the *Proambiente* programme that was carried out between 2002 and 2010 in Pará State, Amazonia, Brazil. This programme was the first experience of a socio-environmental development programme in Brazilian Amazonia that took into account local communities desires to link environmental conservation and small-scale family-based production.

The *Proambiente* programme used North-East Pará Socio-Environmental Foundation (Fanep) in the pole of Rio Capim and Federation of Social and Education Assistance Agencies (Fase) in the pole Marajó as intermediaries NGO to link local population demands and federal government aims in developing rural communities under approach of “conservative production”.

The role of NGO through government programmes and policies is particularly important since they provide a realm in which society interacts constructively with the state (Whaites, 2000:127). The intermediary level provides a better understanding of practices that NGO have established through their dynamic interactions with socio-environmental development programme and local communities. The emphasis on these NGO’ aims is to identify the strategies that contribute to establish and strengthen their interactions to achieve local communities’ desires and empowerment, although any adopted strategies are always limited in their scope and outcomes.

Through a methodology involving three levels of qualitative and descriptive analysis (macro-, intermediary- and local-level), the broad research which this paper is derived describes the mechanisms of interaction between the federal government and the rural communities (Klewitz, Zeyen and Hansen, 2012). In this paper, the focus is only on the intermediary NGO for linkages between government and community in carrying out the *Proambiente* Programme. One of the paper goals is to emphasise the positive role that intermediary NGO may play in developing context although the paper’s authors recognises existence of a large criticism about NGO practices and actions specially in Latin America and Brazil. Using material from communities, the NGOs and the governmental sources, research was conducted in Brasília (capital of Brazil), Belém (capital of Pará state) and six rural communities (three communities located in the *município* of Soure and three located in the *município* of Concórdia do Pará), within Pará state.

This paper is divided into three sections aside this introduction and conclusion. The first section focuses on the areas of debate where NGO are emphasised as intermediary organisations. The second section introduces the FASE and FANEP as intermediary organisations in the *Proambiente*. The third section focuses on FANEP in its positive role as an intermediary organisation in supporting the *Proambiente* programme in the pole of Rio Capim.

2. Why the focus on intermediary NGO?

NGO are a key component of a civil society (Carrol, 1992; Hailey, 2001) and they have an important role as an intermediary at different stages of action. Although NGO have operated at all levels, the new model of service provision needs to operate within the government sector as a new model of service provision and scaling up can be achieved (Edwards and Hulme, 1997:15). Greater organisational constraints within government mean that only limited lessons can be learned from pilot projects implemented by NGO.

The debate is whether their role should be to strengthen and empower the civil society. Should they work on capacity building and institutional development for good governan-

ce or should they be more focused on the provision of specific services or resources (Hailey, 2001). As Clarke and Thomas (2006:418) point out, the scaling up of NGO activities and impacts can be attempted in different means of influence such as through national and international levels.

The intermediary NGO are capable of opening up channels of communication and participation to allow the local people a voice in the character of the project (White, 2000:145). However, the acceptance of legitimate NGO depends on their connections to, or usefulness for, local constituencies (Edwards and Hulme, 1997:16). Additionally, it is unclear if the interaction between local communities and government from participatory processes encouraged by NGO has successfully helped to build social cohesiveness for different social groups and interests (Vasconcellos Sobrinho, 2009). As Dagnino (2008) says, in most of participation arena state actors are only unwilling to share their decision-making power and some NGO accept circumscription of their roles and of their meaning of participation and in so doing contribute to state legitimating. The enhanced role of these NGO as representative organisations (Jordan and Tuijl, 2002:100)¹ from civil society has become interconnected with the state. For local people to become economically self-reliant, they are now increasingly dependent upon support from local communities in their social and political attempts to create and access meaningful links between the state and structures of local organizations (Jianchao and Enjiang, 2011). It means they can change the structures of governance in favour of democratisation and institutional accountability (Tendler, 1997; Fowler, 2002). The increasing dependency on NGOs to deliver development to act as an intermediary level suggests that a clear understanding of their role in the process of local participatory development is significant. However, Dagnino (2008) suggests that simultaneously relations between state, NGO and civil society are a perverse confluence. This is because NGO assure roles that in fact are government duties that in many times are not linked to a project for social structure changes. Rather, the government goal is to have NGO getting functions and responsibilities restricted to the implementation and execution of state public policies (Dagnino, 2008).

The human rights and development side, the NGOs have begun to look beyond their national borders and to take account of civil society counterparts in other countries (Bebbington and Farrington, 1997; Fowler, 2002). In this way, intermediary NGO strengthen sectors of civil society to become more potent political forces in their own right, engaging in policy actions to create a political space to make the interactive participation of the local communities possible. Bebbington and Farrington (1997:49), for example, identified that the links between NGO and government from studies across Africa, Asia and Latin America, have been useful to support agricultural technology development, empower local communities to achieve their desires and the dissemination of services in development management. However, the positive

¹ See more Jordan and Tuijl (2002:100). They argue that NGOs have manifested as a new political reality in the global realm since NGOs have come to mobilize, articulate and represent people's interests or concerns at different levels of decision making – locally, nationally and internationally.

view of Bebbington and Farrington (1997) on NGO actions hides possibilities to see them as a tool to reinforce state neoliberal projects and also to replace civil society in participatory arenas, particularly in Latin America and Brazil.

As Clarke and Thomas (2006:420) show, an alternative way of viewing NGO is in terms of their role in governance and particularly in good governance. As NGO gain increased centrality and acceptance in the development field, they have faced real opportunities for influencing policy and undertaking development actions on a much large scale (Clark, 1997:191) when they are in participatory arenas and/or contributing in carrying out development projects. Taking UNDP concept of good governance, it involves participation, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective, efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. Nevertheless, spaces open to civil society participation in public policies and power-sharing effectively still being challenges to be overcome in adopting good governance concept in Latin America.

In any case, intermediary NGO plays a key role to influence change amongst the poor and are often thought to bring with them a certain amount of autonomy and operational flexibility to develop encounters with state institutional structures (Clark, 1997:191).

Whaites (2000:128) argues that the term 'civil society' is widely used as a noun, and it is used here in this way to refer to a set of institutions and relationships that affect the balance of power between state and citizens in favour of the latter. However, this is not simply a zero-sum relation, where more power for citizens means automatically less for the state, and vice versa. Depending on the aims and performance of state institutions, their strength can contribute to what is thought of as civil society (Whaites, 2000; Lister, 2000).

There are several promising directions for analysis of the intersections between micro, intermediary, and macro, between meaning and structure, and between movements' internal words and their external contexts. However, the research focuses on the construction of a movement's organization and on strategies for interactions. It means that the role of an organisation depends on the reality where they act, the type of linkages that they have with the state and the level of relationship that contributes to strengthen the community (Lister, 2000; Gilchrist, 2004). Examinations of the relationships between state and the civil society that follows show the way in which the rural social movement and NGO engage with the state. Yet, this correlation is for mutually agreeable endeavours rather than simply opposing the state or to retain complete autonomy from it.

In Amazonia, rural social movement emerged during the 1980s to contest the policy of development implemented in the region during the dictatorship period. Key issues for the movement included rural infrastructure, distribution of land and access to credit. The rural social movement in the State of Pará and in Amazonia as a whole includes different types of peasants who live in diverse rural zones and have distinct cultural traditions, histories and modes of work and life. Since its emergence, rural social movement has changed its relationships with NGOs and state agencies. If on the one hand, social movements were efficient political mechanisms to revise traditional public policy for rural development; on the other hand the results achieved required new methods to deal with NGO and government policies. In this way, two examples of relationships between NGO and local communities are illustra-

ted in this paper to understand intermediary NGOs practices among the *Proambiente* for local level in Pará State (Amazonia). The focus on the NGO (Fanep and Fase) is on understanding the political space created by the Brazilian government, the new NGO roles and their impacts on communities at local level. It is argued that role of NGO and their practices in a specific local context are important to understand their practices as intermediaries and their impact on local people's livelihoods.

3. organisational practice at intermediary level between government and local level: the experience of Fase

3.1 Fase: profile and practices

The relationship between Fase and the Brazilian government reveals a range of interaction patterns. This NGO operates relatively autonomously in its interaction with some sectors of civil society that have opposite interests from the state. Both state and movement structures are constructed around ideological symbolic imperatives, as well as those of power and resources. Conversely, States and movements produce meanings such as identity and discourses within structural contexts (Whittier, 2002:292). For example, the background of Fase in Pará reveals a long-term relationship on the one hand with the social movements Federation of Agriculture Workers (Fetagri), Fase, Church Land Commission (CPT), Brazilian Bishop's National Confederation (CNBB) and on the other hand with scientific organisations such as Amazonian Environmental Research Institute (Ipam) and Brazilian Agricultural Research Institute (Embrapa). The interaction that arose between these organisations pressurized the Brazilian governments who often did not accept these organizations' legitimacy. The Fase has contributed technical and political support to strengthen civil society, which has had political implications. The trajectory of this NGO in Brazil is different from the route that is often identified in the vision of Western donor agencies to turn 'civil society' into a project rather than a process (Pearce, 2000:34). The different phases of the NGO process show the strategies used to straighten the civil society. Fase has a long history of supporting local people and social organisations in conflict situations in both urban and rural Brazil. However, Fase's work is not a linear process, on the contrary; the NGO's trajectory faces constant construction and reconstruction.

This organization has worked for a long time side-by-side with the small rural workers in Amazonia since the 60s. At that time, the Amazonian rural territory experienced different forms of negative impacts and there were different forms of opposition pressure too. (...) We supported the grassroots social movement (...). Actually, we have worked in a close relationship with both the government and small-scale rural workers, at an intermediary level. (...) In fact, we did not support top-down actions they are contrary to our interests. (NGO co-coordinator)

There are four broad phases of Fase practices. The first, in the 60s centred on rural community issues; during the military government it became part of the government opposition through its support of the worker unions and social movements in rural areas. In that moment, Fase main role was to assist rural and urban social movements to organise themselves to face dictatorship government for democracy. The second phase began with a focus on economic and social inequality through the 70s. One of the practices was support for rural and urban workers that were lobbying for political changes and to combat poverty and inequality. The earlier role of NGO growth, in the 1970s, particularly in Latin America, is attributed to, along with other factors to a theology of liberation in the Catholic and Protestant churches (Meyer, 2002:22). It was influenced by the consciousness-raising work of Paulo Freire. Left-learning professionals, who were under pressure from authoritarian and military regimes, began to use non-governmental organizations as a means of furthering their political goals. In fact, the earlier generations of NGO was often critical of their governments, and were different in form and nature from what later became the NGO sector or part of the NGO movement (Meyer, 2002).

In the 80s, seen as the third phase, Fase contributed to disseminate ideas of the democratic transition of Brazil through direct elections (*eleições diretas*) for president. In this decade, international public attention was drawn to the social and ecological costs of the Brazilian development strategy on Amazonia, especially after the murder of the rubber tapper Chico Mendes in 1988. A characteristic of this third phase was the support for local social movements. In this period, community organizations have achieved political power as a result of some of the organisations in the past and also for their close association with political parties or religious organisations.

In the fourth phase, from 1990 onwards, the role of the Fase was predominately centred on development educational methodologies for popular control and participative citizenry in rural and urban areas (Tura, 2000:31). Fase became more focused on issues such as: social and environmental development, support for movements of afro-descendents and indigenous women, and also campaigning against inequalities in general such as economics, social and cultural human right. Although keeping the focus on natural resource protection and sustainable development, it still maintained close relationships with social movements and local people such as peasants, fishermen, indigenous peoples and those of former slave backgrounds. It implies that the relationship with the state included protesting against the authorities' actions to influence state policy, mainly related to land struggles in rural Amazonia.

The practices of Fase at different levels range from the local level to the government level through social movements that are marked by tense relationships. The authoritarian characteristics of the Brazilian government were responsible for decades of opposition by the civil society against the state. Fase constructed a long-term connection with the social movement and left-wing parties against government policies.

The types of interaction between Fase, social movements and left-wing parties demonstrate a strong connection in terms of proposals for rural changes (Okry et al., 2011). Fase, the

left-wing parties and social movement network created in the past are now the motive of the relationship between the federal government and Fase to support family production in Pará. However, it is difficult to separate the cultural and material dimensions of this policy because the processes through which movements and their contexts shape each other are complicated as influence flows in both directions. As pointed out in the previous section, Dagnino (2008) advocates that concurrently relations between state and NGO may be a perverse confluence that imposes a governmental development project that is different than civil society demand. According to Oliveira (1999), some NGO try to replace social movements what is a dysfunction of them.

The participants in social movements constantly negotiate collective identities; political change can articulate the content and direction of these negotiations in the absence of significant internal change (Robnett, 2002:271). However, for example, between 2002 and 2008 Fase streamlined its interaction with the government to put into practice a policy development to focus on communities at local level. The *Proambiente* programme was an element of this interaction among a range of organisations that are involved at local level. Although other organisations and NGO are on an equal footing in the *Proambiente*, the recognised importance of Fase is the result of a long-term relationship with local communities' interests.

FASE worked 15 years here in the north-east of Pará and it was important to build and strengthen the agricultural union movement. During the long interaction with social movements, this organisation grew and changed its focus from grassroots organisations to work mainly on practices linked with public policies. (NGO co-coordinator)

Fase built a close relationship with local organisations, local government and local people from the north-east of Pará. It was an interactive process as part of continuing development involving many changes. For example, Fase strengthened the interactions of civil society and contributed to create Fanep to work at grassroots level in the north-east of Pará. After the creation of Fanep, Fase finished direct work in the north-east of Pará but all the infrastructures was adapted to sustain Fanep's work in other parts of the state.

Bebbington and partners (2008:3) suggest that 'NGO are only NGO in any politically meaningful sense of the term if they are offering alternatives to prevalent patterns, practices and ideas about development'. Banks and Hulme (2012) argue that NGO should move outside government solutions to deal with poverty to more politicised responses. Accordingly, NGO practices should work on changes in policy and redistributions of power which can address the systemic causes of inequality. However, the history of Fase and Brazilian government relationships shows that Fase has lost its main meaning that was built between 70s and 90s. From 2000s onwards Fase became so close to government that in some way has put it far from social movement as whole although much closer to local communities as it will be shown in the next sections.

3.2 Fase as an intermediary in the pole of Marajó

Fase was responsible for the programme actions in the pole of Marajó, which included fishing activities.

The pole of Marajó took part in the *Proambiente* programme at the request of local and national organisations that support the fishing industry. The government met the request of the civil society to incorporate Marajó Island as a pole in the programme. But there are some problems that need to be adjusted. (...) The *Proambiente* is an important programme that emerged after long debate between those organisation and individuals with interests and links with small agriculture development. It is modelled on agricultural activities and Marajó Island is mainly composed of the fishing industry (...). (Fase co-ordinator)

The interactions between Fase and local level communities were initially established with Marine Reserve of Extraction of Natural Vegetation (Resex) organisations that were working with local communities in the Marajó Island marine reserve. Although Fase has extensive experience with broader social movements and left-wing parties, the relationship with fishing resources production and cultural identity at local level has been more recent. The strategies to create the interaction with Marajó Island were established through the *Proambiente*. However, new strategies have to be created to find ways to impact the engagement of institutions on local communities.

3.3 Interaction with local communities

The Marajó field work research was undertaken with links from Fase and other organisations involved at local level, mainly with cultural and fisheries resources. The research identified that Resex was key in providing the contacts needed to interact at local level. Resex is an important support structure in the Marajó pole national marine reserve. Although Resex is a conservation area, it supports all of the population that lives in this area and supports the existing traditional fishing practices and ecological conditions despite of the diversity of the fishing activity involved, such as crab and molluscs fishing. "(...) It is a conservation reserve with 1,500 people living here. Fishing activity is diverse including prawns, crabs, and other things in our environment. As we live in an island, there are lots of rivers around the communities" (Resex and CNS member).

The creation of the reserve came about from pressure from local people and its relationship with the *Centro Nacional de Populações Tradicionais e Desenvolvimento Sustentável* (CNPT) (Traditional Populations and Sustainable Development National Centre) to manage the reserve area resources. Local communities did not have any relationship with Fase before its creation. Although the fishing industry is still rich in its diverse environments, it is seen as a complex task to manage in Marajó. It is important to recognise the role of local leaders and

the associations in the communities that they act in. “The marine reserve was created after some conflicts between local crab fishermen and fishermen from other *municípios*. For example, the fishermen from other localities acquired new skills to catch 700 crabs per day while local fishermen had a catch of 70 crabs per day” (Ibama Environmental Protection Officer).

In the sense of natural resource management, the relationship between Marajó communities and federal government started by conflicts to create the environmental protected area and to define this reserve spot. Fase was not present in that time in Marajó. After Resex creation Fase was involved by federal government to work in the area and to assist local communities to manage the *Proambiente*. Fase took a mediator role between local communities and federal government interests. If on the one hand Fase role brought a constructive and positive relationship between local communities and federal government to carry out a socio-environmental pattern for Resex management; on the other hand Fase blocked possibilities of local communities to face federal government to make new demands. In this case, Fase acted much more as state agent rather than civil society player.

Biological diversity and coral cover were reduced greatly in all areas of the Salgado zone compared to other fished or fully protected marine parks or reserve sites established by the national government. Presently, traditional management is not effective in protecting species diversity or ecological functions, which was probably never the intention of the fishermen. In spite of the existence of the *Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e Recursos Naturais Renováveis* (Ibama) (Brazilian Institute for the Government and Renewable Natural Resources) to protect the environment of this area, extractive practices have had an environmental impact on the marine ecosystem in the *município* of Soure. It means that Fase’ work was not as effective as federal government suppose to. “We have worked here [*município* of Soure] more with fishermen. Our work is mainly forest protection against deforestations and extraction and wood transport but I can say that our work in this area involved 70% or 80% with fishermen” (Environmental Protection Movement officer).

The role of Ibama as a governmental institution is to control fishing mechanisms and fishing stock according to current regulations. However, the official rules and norms contrast with the culture practices of the traditional fishermen that live in remote communities on the island.

In the past, IBAMA use to work with the environment protection and controlled the *terra de varzea*² deforestation, river pollution and unsustainable fishing activities. We had an educational programme to use resources in a sustainable way but this project finished when IBAMA stopped. At present, the Secretaria Executiva de Estado de Agricultura — SAGRI (Regional Secretary of Agriculture) is responsible for these issues. But the problem is that this organisation gives more attention to agriculture and ranching. In fact, as there are rivers everywhere, they think that the resources will never end. The majority of local fishing development here [Soure] is not professional. They need to pay the annual tax to the Capitania dos Portos (Marine Traffic Office) but they

² Land near the river subject to flooding.

don't pay it. They also need to register with the Departamento Geral de Pesca - RGP (General Fishing Department) located in Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente — IBAMA (Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources), and they don't know what it is. (Ibama Environment Protection Officer)

This area has one of the most elaborate cultural traditions concerning customs and rituals of life linked with the environment. However, the unsustainable fishing activity has affected all local people and agencies of the state. The conflict between governmental organizations and local fishing activity arises because some resource users are concerned that the management proposed by the national organizations will eventually lead to the total loss of access to, and control of the resource.

The fishermen have no rules to carry out their activity because they assume the fish will never finish. I think they need environmental education to learn the rules to develop this activity. They have the knowledge to carry out the activity but they have no knowledge about the law and rules that the fishery activity is involved in. (Ibama Environment Protection Officer)

There is a need to resolve conflicts concerning mechanisms of use and regulation, and a need to increase awareness of the expectations and management programmes among the national and local organizations. Many of the traditional forms of management are compatible with the policies of national organizations, but conflicts occur concerning enforcement and its benefits. To solve these conflicts, discussions are required between traditional and national fishing leaders to develop mutually acceptable policies that enhance and share management power. In this case, intermediary NGO as Fase has limited possibility to effectively play as a mediator of conflicts once it depends on discussion and agreements inside own civil society.

As a member of this organization, I have worked by side with the Pedral community and this is also the community where I live. Initially, we were working to strengthen the collective way of life in order to focus on political organisation. We have already created one community association to increase our capacity to get community development projects. We have great natural resources here in Pedral community such as fish and fruit but we are very poor because we do not have enough income, schools and hospitals. (CNS member)

These communities based on family groups are inter-connected for long generations and have close relationships with the island's environment ecosystem (Jianch and Enjiang, 2011). In the *município* of Soure, local people live on fishing activities; however they are also involved in other activities such as agricultural and extractive activities. For example, there are 24 families in the community of Pedral and of the 109 people there, 95% live off fishing.³

³ Interview with the Resex co-ordinator in Marajó island.

The communities are organised according to their cultural identity and knowledge resources that are linked with all practices around their livelihood. In communities situated on beach locations such as the community of Pesqueiro, they work with natural material to create exotic handmade furniture as a way to recycle natural material.

For the river-side communities in the areas of *terra de varzea* their predominant activities are collecting fruits, crabs and natural medicine.

Here in this community we live on fishing but we also live on regional fruit such as *cupuaçu*, *pupunha*, *bacuri*, *açaí*, and natural medicine that we get from the Amazonia forest such as *copaíba* and *andiroba*. We produce goods to eat and to sell (...) the income generated is to buy other things that we cannot produce here. (Pedral's community household)

Although the *Proambiente* is in a stagnant phase in the pole of Marajó, the local population is anxiously looking forward for the programme continuation. The first actions of Fase in carrying out the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)⁴ in this pole included working with fishermen and other organisations that are active at local level such as the CNS and Resex organisations.

If the *Proambiente* is to work with the fisherman, I have to say that it is a very complex relationship as they are used to working alone. They don't think in terms of environmental problems or regulations. For example, if they receive money to buy a boat, supply oil, etc, they will need a licence to fish and they don't know which institution is responsible for it. In fact, they never were concerned about the role of institutions that have worked with or that have been involved with the fishing industry. (Ibama Environmental Protection Officer)

The inclusion of Marajó Island into the *Proambiente* programme is in response to pressure from the national fishermen's unions that lobbied some sectors of civil society and NGO present at local level. However, the interviews in the *município* of Soure identifies that the *Proambiente* is not recognised by local fisherman and the *Colonia dos pescadores* (Fishermen's Union). Although sectors of fishing activity have certainly opened up to the programme, their understandings of its engagement are limited to individual credit access rather than being active participants in the programme action.

It is important that the federal government supports the fishing industry with financial support, however first they need educational policies because there are fishermen that receive money but they don't know the best way to use it. The financial policy for fishing rather than a sustainable support to develop this activity means it has been difficult to carry out. (Fishermen's Union coordinator)

⁴ The first phase of the programme in the pole of Marajó was carried out in the *município* of Soure with participation of social organisations and local people.

Individual credit for fishermen needs to be more sustainable too. The role of Fase to build an organisational capacity and/or support the local organisations should be the main aspect to be considered as strategies for the legitimacy of local level claims. Based on several cases studies, Edwards and Hulme (2000:60) argue that strengthening local initiatives and lobbying for policy change may be mutually reinforced. This was not the case in the FASE job once its work was concentrated on organisational capacity. According to Edwards and Hulme (2000) agencies only strengthen local initiatives and lobbying for policy change if they are sure that they are taking full advantage of such potential synergy.

Marajó pole is considered a very important addition in the *Proambiente's* actions because the local communities there are families of small-scale fishermen and they are very poor. However, they don't live in a collective way of life, unlike the North-east rural workers who have strong rights movements. It is difficult to solve issues as an individual. FASE have promoted workshops to encourage debate between them but it is still a challenge for us. (Fase co-ordinator)

This research suggests that the focus on fishermen in the governmental programme is a complex task to be considered since it requires stronger interaction between the programme and fishermen organisations. In these circumstances, the actions of the programme in pole of Marajó depend on encouraging processes of collective participation and decision making among programme members, NGO staff and local people. In this case, Fase has conducted a good job once it has organised local space for discussion and participatory decision-making for Resex management. However, more research is needed to explore such relationship and the conditions which encourage their development.

4. Organisational practices at intermediary level between government and local level: the experience of Fanep

4.1 Fanep: profile and practices

Fanep was created in 1997 to work in the north-east region of Pará State. The idea for the creation of Fanep came from people working at Fase. Fase was involved in the region for decades working at the policy level, particularly assisting local organisations to claim for democracy, participation and government financing for family-based rural-workers. However, this NGO decided to move out from this area and which then led to the creation of a new organisation to work directly at local level.

When FASE moved out of the region we had the idea to create a new organisation that could work directly with local people. FASE was acting mainly at the policy level. The idea was to build another organisation to follow the FASE mission but with direct commitment with the communities. FANEP is a small organisation composed by only 1 pole coordinator, six technicians and 17

field agents. This organisation sustains itself from projects and from the contributions of agricultural associations. (Fanep co-ordinator)

Fanep was created to act at local level, however the linkages that it has with Fase and other organisations of the federal government contributed to its inclusion in the *Proambiente* programme. To implement the programme actions, the Fanep worked as an intermediary NGO between national government, local people and local organisations in the pole of Rio Capim. The relationship between this NGO and government reveals a range of interaction patterns which NGO operate autonomously, with the international agencies' financial support and governmental funding. Fanep creation is linked on a series of factors. First, the long-term FASE's work on political capacity building that prepared local communities and organisations leaders. Second, leaders claims to have practical assistance to carry out socio-economic projects, especially under socio-environmental approach. Third, Fase's difficulties to work exclusively on governmental projects in the area where they operate a long time with different aim.

4.2 Fanep's work as an intermediary organisation in the pole of Rio Capim

Fanep's role as an intermediary organisation in the *Proambiente* was to carry out the programme from planning to execution. It was a challenge because it involved commitments to the state and also to local communities. This NGO was responsible for establishing direct interaction among government and communities. "(...) I have worked with grassroots community organizations for decades but now I have the big responsibility to identify the communities' demands that are to be included in the *Proambiente* programme" (Fanep co-ordinator).

The role of the Fanep at intermediary level was to carry out development planning that was composed of four strategies. Firstly, this required a diagnosis of the pole; secondly, to elaborate a plan according to its local base; thirdly, to create a social and environmental certificate plan; fourthly, to create incentives and to roll out a *Familiar Plano* (FP) (Family Plan) that is the basis on which to build the map of use of each Plano de Utilização da Unidade de Produção (PU).

A key factor affecting relationships between NGOs, villagers and government agencies was the perception of whose side they were expected to take in disputes. Characteristically, NGO are expected to be either pro-people or pro-government, making it very hard for NGO to play an impartial intermediary role to enable better relationships and mutual understanding between local people and Fanep staff.

I believe that the most important feature of an organisation is the type of commitment that the NGOs have established with local people during its relationship. Another thing is the type of pro-

posals that we offer to the community. If they identify that what we offer is of interest for them, it has a great chance of success. I believe this is the importance of the mutual trust between the NGOs and the community where they work. (Fanep co-ordinator)

One of the most difficult tasks for NGOs placed between government and local level communities is that this type of relationship is a heterogeneous one encompassing a wide range of groups with different ideological agendas (Fowler, 1997:20). The result is that NGOs do not always successfully pressurise local elites or local governments to change the status quo instead of maintaining it. As is argued by Brinkerhoff (2002:52), the benefits of a relationship at macro level are not without costs because many NGOs may lose their organisational identity through the process of accepting donor requests. This is the case which Fase supported creation of a new ONG in order to maintain its historical identity in the north-east of Pará. Fanep in its turn took advantage in coming from Fase experiences.

In order to qualify for more funding, Fanep had to send regular progress reports to the Ministry of the Environment. As most NGOs were not financially independent, every project is under pressure from the funding agencies with which they sign contracts. NGOs are required to carry out their programmes in a hurry and produce instant results to be suitable for their donors (White, 2000; Devas and Grant, 2003). The projects are often imposed on the people by NGOs with donor support.

4.3 NGO scaling up influence

The challenge for organizational processes is to act in response to upward pressures from funding agencies or federal government and downward pressures from community groups. NGOs may have on-the-ground contacts that enable an accurate understanding of the development context, and they can introduce this in-depth understanding into decision making (Brinkerhoff, 2002:49). The different structures and capabilities developed by the organizations are to maintain unity and integrity in response to the bureaucratic structures and the grassroots organisations and local people.

4.3.1 Project development: interaction at local level

The Fanep defined a project with aims and targets (frame 1) for working with local communities from the pole of Rio Capim. The project was to put community development into practice and required action by a number of organisations that were tied together like a chain between the resources provided and those intended to benefit from them.

Frame 1

Project: Participative Actions to Build Alternatives for Sustainable Agriculture and Environment (Agroambientais) for the Recuperation and Preservation of the Degraded Areas in the Pole of Rio Capim, Pará

| Aims | Targets |
|---|---|
| To implement sustainable experiences | To implement the agro-forestry system in 20 UFP (Units of Family Production). To install 4 solar radiator dryers systems to be followed by 20 UFP. To build up bird breeding places in 8 UFP. |
| To implement sustainable actions through participatory methods to recover the environment of 'legal reserves' and to protect areas of permanent preservation of environment (APP) | To recover 25 projects supported by FNO (Constitutional Fund for the Northern Region). To build up 80 bird breeding for bee-keeping in areas of APP. To implement 'natural medicine' projects in 8 UFP. To promote campaigns for 'environmental education' in each <i>município</i> with aim to reach 200 UFP. |
| To train community leaders, agro-forestry technicians, and other to be agent of the project and to develop activities to multiply the project actions | To carry out 8 mini-courses with 30 participants in each one. To exchange experiences between the <i>municípios</i> of the <i>pole</i> and also with people from different regions. |

Source: Field work research, 2009.

The project was a recognised scaling up to carry out large-scale research beyond individual communities through participatory techniques that led to the quality of information being negotiated. As a development project is a meeting ground where external institutionalised visions of development meet local social and cultural realities, it could be an opportunity to express people's knowledge and experiences of where they live. The Fanep, for example, mediated the relationship to establish meaningful participatory processes with local communities and had impacted on the relationship that these local NGO experience with the authoritative bodies that control their work. This is a positive role of a intermediary NGO may exert.

Although as Brinkerhoff (2002:49) argues, NGO have a flexibility that enables them to access a variety of players and gather information on those player's views and interests, the challenge is how they provide bridges between macro policies' interests and communities. How do NGO have the flexibility to manage the bureaucracy of the state in order to work at local level?

The NGO bureaucrats may become risk averse or reluctant to bear the costs of listening to their constituencies (Hulme and Edwards 1997:270). The Fanep members, for example,

had the challenge of articulating the views of local people such as villagers, union workers, and government staff, in the pole of Rio Capim.

After the failure of other NGOs in other poles of the *Proambiente* programme, we decided to work permanently in the Rio Capim pole with a qualified group of practitioners. Now we have carried out the phases of the programme activities with a permanent timeframe and will leave the Rio Capim pole only when the contract finishes. The FANEP has a good structure to carry on the projects to north-east where the NGO area of actions is. This place was built during the FASE activity here in the north-east of Pará. (Fanep co-ordinator)

The existence of the *Proambiente* was the result of the long-term change that emerged from bottom-up projects. The transformation from a grassroots project to a governmental programme is an important feature since it values the collective identity at local level. Collective identity is made up of sharing the cultural capital that members acquire through the deployment of knowledge within the movement and is used to constitute themselves in their own terms (Robnett, 2002:267). Through construction of collective identity processes, the social movement as sustained from grassroots organisations develops a shared cultural repertoire that is shaped by both internal and external factors.

However, pressure on short-term changes at local level was a barrier to the programme's success. As most NGOs were not financially independent, every project was under pressure from the funding agencies with which they signed contracts. As argued by Devas and Grant (2003:307) NGOs are always required to carry out their programmes in a hurry and produce instant results to be suitable for their donors. For example, although the Fanep NGO had received Government funding to deliver the project to the community, one of the problems was to carry out the action at local level because there was a disconnection between local people's practices and the rigid government bureaucracy.

We have successfully implemented the phases of the programme; however, as we had a problem with operational scheme management, our time has gone. Although we don't have much time to finish the 'community agreement' (*Acordo Comunitário*), it will finish at the end of this year. We have worked hard and intensively (...) we must finish according to the government schedule. (Fanep co-ordinator)

As an NGO's work is based on particular projects, the advocacy and institutional developmental role of NGO means that their legitimacy is weakened (Edwards and Hulme, 2000:45). In spite of Fanep having applied participatory methodologies to insure the local people's participation, they pressured to implement the 'community agreement' and to produce instant results. When the work involves participatory approaches it takes time. It is a slow process to have the agreement between all people implicated in the programme.

(...) we have two timescales. There is one in the scheme office and another in the field. The team that are on field work are responsible for workshops. The next one Will be held in Comunidade

do Galho, in the *município* of Concórdia do Pará with agriculturists from four *municípios*: Mãe do Rio, São Domingos do Capim, Irituia e Concórdia do Pará. (Fanep co-ordinator)

The acceptance of increasing amounts of donor funds, which usually come with complex requirements for project appraisal, reporting, evaluation and accounting, presents even large NGOs with problems. Fanep, for example, is an NGO that receives external funds for the promotion of other projects in *municípios* of north-east Pará.

We receive financial support from the Brazilian government to work in the pole of Rio Capim but we have support from other international and national development agencies too, such as Forestry World Centre — CRAF, and the American Centro Internacional de Pesquisa Florestal — CIFOR and others. (Fanep member)

Fanep holds a significant role in the process of participatory projects mainly to actively assist and facilitate communities in developing and enhancing their skills and knowledge. However, the difference between the agency and community environment is so great that it is unlikely that intermediary organizations can respond effectively to the demands of both. “The aim of the project is to introduce participative actions and capacity skills to reduce deforestation rates and CO² emissions. The introduction of sustainable alternatives for the agro-environment is met by the monitoring environmental services in the pole of Rio Capim” (Fanep — Padeq Project [Alternatives to Deforestation and Forest Burning Project] in the *pole* of Rio Capim).

A project setting was defined with considerable attention on environmental issues associated with agriculture practices in the development of environmental capacities on a federal and regional level, including both environmental authorities and civil society organisations.

The PADEQ project gave families incentives to use other systems of cultivation without burning the forest. The method enables families to work with a ‘forest planning system’ (*sistema de planejamento florestal*) to create a *capoeira* (secondary forest). The PADEQ forest planning system is a plan to use the forest for 10/15 years (...). It depends if each agriculturist is planning to use it. This project works very closely with the agriculturists. First of all, we have to do the initial diagnose of the area (...). (Fanep technician)

This NGO is acting through networks to support the development of federations of communities involved in forest protection, which had begun emerging in some pockets of the state. In its field area, it has been working with four municipalities communities.

4.4 Organisational culture: long-term change

In spite of the importance of the intermediary organisations that were engaged in the programme, the actions of local people such as small-scale family-base agriculturists were deter-

mined by their participation in an organisational culture that emphasises their position in society and politics at large. Therefore, the role of the intermediary organisational is significant in strengthening interactions by different types and levels of relationships (frame 2). However, they have to be aware that organisational attributes are a key cultural attribute to be considered in the process of their practices as intermediary organisations between the programme and local communities. A long-term relationship is required to debate issues of the needs and priorities of local people, mainly in areas where the investment in building organisational capacity is weak, such as in the pole of Marajó.

Frame 2
Type of linkages promoted by NGO intermediaries

| Level of Relationship | Fase | Fanep |
|--|--|--|
| Federal government | Ministry of Environment | Ministry of Environment |
| Social organisation | CSN (Rubber Tappers' National Council), Resex, Fishermen's Union | Union Workers |
| Local government | – | Environment Secretary |
| Local people (community leaders, households) | Through Resex practices | Communitarian agents, leaders and householders |

Source: Field work research (2009).

A particular challenge is thrown up where analysis is of NGO projects and the relationships between different organisations (Abouassi, 2012). Resources, political opportunities, and organisational strength are important determinants in creating a social movement culture that in turn creates collective identities (Robnett, 2002:267). If cultures of organisation matter, then the matrix of organisational cultures and their interactions, will contribute to explanations of the success or failure of particular development interventions. The Fanep project in the pole of Rio Capim was partially successful but some issues should be considered to avoid a short-term change process. The interactions among agencies with different interests and priorities will emerge in its interaction. The profile of the NGO, the interactions among different agencies, and the meanings prioritised by groups with each agency, should be put forward, particularly meanings regarding the purpose and the role of the organisation.

Fanep recognised the need for local participation to facilitate project implementation in order to support and expand their local production resources. Nevertheless, the local people still live economically, political, and socially marginalized by a power disparity between the centralised sources of support and family units of production's knowledge. The organisational culture must remain aware of the existence of power within society where the local level is part of the process (Bowers, 2001:32), in which values and meanings become dominant in a development project.

The prominence of the dynamics of interaction among diverse levels of interaction leads to the understanding that knowledge can be built or constructed but it involves decisions based on power (Mosse, 2001; Kothari, 2001). Knowledge creation can be manifested in interaction situations at local-level development discourse. However, as is argued by Kothari (2001:143), there are some articulations of power through participatory processes and in the wider context within which knowledge is produced or reproduced (Kothari, 2001:143). It implies that for an NGO to support local communities there is a need to emphasise local knowledge. The influence from the positivist tradition is disconnected with human or spiritual values. As is demonstrated by Bowers (2001), western values emerge from the Enlightenment, through the beliefs of high-status knowledge. The problem is that the cultural implications of this value avoid indigenous cultural traditions that obstruct 'progress' and embrace change as being inherently progressive in nature (Bowers, 2001:39).

5. Conclusion

This paper centred on the intermediary level of NGO that have linked with the government and local communities. It aimed to identify the type of practices of the intermediary organisations in the *Proambiente* and their contribution to establish and strengthen interactions with the programme and the local communities. The findings from analysis on organisations have demonstrated that they have helped interaction with the remote communities that were outside of basic services' access and programme actions.

The analysis of practices of the NGO Fase and Fanep demonstrated that the long-term construction of the *Proambiente* was an important characteristic that has influenced practices in local communities. This is a good example of the enactment interaction based on long-term relationships, which contributed to build an organisational culture to put pressure on the national government. The relationship between grassroots organisations and small-scale family-based agriculturists had influenced the creation of an organisational culture to demand improvement for local people's livelihoods in the most remote rural areas. A particular challenge is thrown up where analysis is of NGO projects and the relationships between different organisations.

In the examples of the Fanep in the pole of Rio Capim, the challenge was how to promote changes according to local people's priorities. Finding from this research demonstrated that the participatory approaches were carried out to access local people's knowledge. However, the fixed aim of the programme and the well structured topics emphasised through workshops, training and exercises in communities did not consider the diverse meanings of community in the poles. Community in a pole is considered as homogeneous. This study identified that the sense of community from the point of view of local people has a range of signifiers that represent dynamics of interaction. Although the structure of a community is organised according a cultural identity constructed for long generations, they maintain a dynamic interaction between them and with other organisations that support their priorities and claims for changes.

The conclusion that the analysis of the NGO as intermediaries between government and local communities brings is that the presence of intermediary NGO is fundamental from three

perspectives. Firstly, they promote the strengthening of the power of local communities, secondly, they create bridges between federal government and local communities; and thirdly, they promote participatory processes by engaging rural communities' culture and knowledge in the *Proambiente* design. However, once the programme started the NGO absorbed federal government structures, interests and priorities and did not properly take into account the diversity of the various communities' identities and their meanings and expectations of specific issues such as land, education and health. One could say that the participatory process carried by the NGOs in charge of the *Proambiente* was limited to making the environment the only priority to emerge from the rural peoples' involvement in the programme.

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