

SUSTAINABLE AMAZON PLAN AND UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT¹

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Introduction

The Sustainable Amazon Plan (PAS) was unveiled by the Brazilian Government as the main benchmark for a new model of economic development for the Amazon - one that could encourage economic growth, meet the principle demands of the local population and break with previous models. In this article, we shall analyse the latter aspect, stressing the relationship between the PAS and the idea of sustainable development and programmes linked to the national axes of integration and development (ENIDs).

We would surmise that positivist and neo-positivist conceptions about development appear in all developmental plans in Brazil. In the specific case of the PAS, in addition to the theoretical hallmarks common to previous plans, what is striking is the call for a so-called sustainable development model, the cornerstones of which were cemented against the backdrop of the changes to the world economy from the 1970s.

There are two major lines of thought as regards interpreting economic development in the Amazon. On the one hand, those explicitly referenced in positivist and neo-positivist conceptions, albeit to a greater or lesser degree. They can be found in texts by governments and authors whose main reference is liberalism or Keynesianism. It is believed that these views do not allow for the real meaning and the outer appearance of phenomena to be distinguished from each other. On the other hand, you have the interpretations that are chiefly based on the Critique of Political Economy and Political Geography. This article follows the latter school of thought.

It is important to stress dialectic logic within the Marxist framework and how it differs from formal logic. In accordance with Lefèbvre (1995), formal logic fits positivism well, bearing in mind that it is important to understand the relationships between phenomena for this approach, although not necessarily their causes.

As the positivist and neo-positivist conceptions were deemed inadequate, historical and dialectic materialism have been taken as a general reference for the research that culminated in this article. To be more specific, the relevance of the theory of uneven geographic development (SMITH, 1988; HARVEY, 2004; 2006; 2010) must be stressed,

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namely as concerns analysing the socio-spatial changes in the Amazon stemming from developmentalist plans.

After this introduction, we shall demonstrate the origin of the idea of sustainable development, how it was institutionalised and the factors that helped it be taken up by large corporate groups. We shall then focus on some of the changes in the Amazon, highlighting the transition from policies based on the “frontier economy” paradigm (BECKER, 2010) towards policies based around the idea of sustainable development (BRUNDTLAND, 1991). This is followed by an analysis of the PAS in the light of the preceding considerations. Lastly, we shall present some general aspects of the theory of uneven geographic development and provide information that may contribute to an understanding the socio-spatial inequalities in the Amazon.

The idea of sustainable development and how it has been rolled out

The notion of sustainable development, currently pursued by a number of governments, companies and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), can trace its origins to the Conference on the Human Environment hosted by the United Nations (UN) in Stockholm (Sweden) in 1972. Since then, dozens of meetings have been held and various treaties relating to environmental issues have been set up. The events in Table 1 are of greatest importance.

Table 1. International events related to the idea of sustainable development

Year	Events/results
1972	Conference on the Human Environment, in Stockholm (Sweden): set up by United Nations' Development Programme (UNDP).
1983	The UN creates the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), which is responsible for studies on the possibilities of cooperation between countries and appropriate ways for the international community to address environmental issues.
1987	Presentation of the WCED report “Our Common Future”. According to this text, Sustainable Development is the way to meet the “needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (BRUNDTLAND, 1991, p. 9).
1992	World Conference on Environment and Development (Rio-92): approval of the “Agenda 21” document, containing guidelines related to environmental and economic problems, conservation, waste management and strengthening Social Organisations.
1997	Kyoto Protocol: industrialised countries commit to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2012.
2002	Johannesburg Sustainable Development Summit ((Rio+10): Millennium Declaration with 18 goals and 48 indicators on the use of nature; public-private partnerships recommended as a means of encouraging environmental preservation.
2005	Launch of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, based on UN conventions on the climate, biodiversity, desertification of wetland areas; Kyoto Treaty, establishing the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and certified emissions reductions (CERs)
2012	United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20): Rio-92 principles reaffirmed; commission formed to study alternative means of financing sustainable development from 2014; studies and agreements to establish universal sustainable development goals from 2015; commission formed to suggest alternative means of measuring sustainable economic growth.

Sources: Brundtland (1991); Almeida (2007); Ivanova (2012); United Nations (2012).

As can be seen in Table 1, the idea of consolidated sustainable development was suggested by the WCED in 1987. In its report, the commission also concluded that multinational companies have a decisive role in order for sustainable development to be viable, “especially as developing countries may depend more on foreign social capital” (BRUNDTLAND, 1991, p. 20). Following this assessment, on the whole policies that adhere to market relations were put forward as means of ensuring this sustainability at successive conferences and in ensuing agreements related to environmental issues.

In line with WCED assessments, which were endorsed at Rio-92, Rio+10 and Rio+20 conferences, a number of governments and major companies took up the notion of sustainable development. For governments, it is a means of trying to meet international agreements and address increasing internal and external pressures in terms of minimizing degradation of the environment. For companies, it represents a new alternative to generating profit, and a way of appearing to be socially responsible.

Among other influences arising from the idea of sustainable development are the notions of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and eco-efficiency. CSR is related to the claim of respecting labour rights and the communities where companies are active whilst also protecting the environment (ALMEIDA, 2007). Eco-efficiency is itself based on the objective of “producing more and better whilst using natural resources less” (ALMEIDA, 2007, p. 107). There is in turn a progressive uptake of these concepts by governments and companies through instruments such as the UN Global Compact, ISO Standard 14000, which was drawn up to certify environmental performance, and the Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI). According to Almeida (2007, p. 144), the latter “was the first indicator formulated to identify the ability of companies to create long-term value for shareholders through managing opportunities and economic, environmental and social risks”.

Faced with the issues presented in this topic, one can conclude that “the re-emergence of the market economy, of neo-liberal policies in the 1980s, with which sustainability is associated, clearly marks a watershed for environmental policy” (REDCLIFT, 2006, p. 51). Moreover, it is clear that this situation was also manifest in Brazil’s environmental policies. However, in addition to these elements, in the specific case of the PAS, the economic development plans that have been instituted in the Amazon since the 1980s require analysis. We shall endeavour to do this in the next section.

Brazilian amazon: from poles and frontier economy to Ecological-Economic Zoning (ZEE)

Stemming from the 2nd National Development Plan (II PND, 1975 - 1979), the 2nd Amazon Development Plan (II PDA) and the Program of Agro-Livestock and Agro-Mineral Poles for Amazonia (POLAMAZÔNIA) were set up. According to the government, these would be the basis for an “Amazon development model” (SUDAM, 1976).

From a theoretical point of view, the 2nd PDA and POLAMAZÔNIA were principally founded on the theory of comparative advantages, the theory of growth poles and the theory of export basis. Furthermore and implicitly, they were also based on the

paradigm of the frontier economy, which presupposes “infinite economic growth and prosperity, based on the exploitation of natural resources also perceived as being infinite” (BECKER, 2010, p. 225).

The notion of the frontier economy is also examined by Castro (2007), Rego (2002) and Silva (2007). For Castro (2007), the impetus towards the frontier economy arose from the demand for agricultural products for the internal market and exports of primary products. Rego (2002) stresses the objectives of exporting capital and control of strategic raw materials by monopolistic capital, and the political interests of the military dictatorship governments in Brazil. Silva (2007) takes the same line:

The need to accumulate capital on the border leads to geographical expansion of productive, mercantile and financial capital. Therefore, a territorialisation of capital emerges that can meet the demands of the techno-productive base that has been set up there. In this way, investment in transport, communications, cities and general service infrastructure occurs, in the form of fixed capital (p. 295).

Santos (1986) deals specifically with the biggest programme under the 2nd PDA, the Grande Carajás Programme (PGC) and finds that “this was the consequence of the Amazon region being part of a country on the outer ring of the world economy, and stood until the 1960s as one of the last frontiers for development of mining” (p. 295). Also on the PGC, Almeida (1995) concludes that the Federal Government demarcated this “supposedly homogenous space, set up for administrative, financial and fiscal purposes, yet the interests of the peoples living in the region were neglected” (p. 23).

Despite the government’s intentions, as stipulated in the 2nd PND and the 2nd PDA, several policies had to be cut short due to the fiscal crisis that engulfed the Brazilian State at the end of the 1980s. Adding to this dynamic, the following decade saw Brazil start to adopt neoliberal policies and be definitively incorporated in the changes related to globalisation¹.

A number of legal instruments related to the environment in Brazil emerged at the same time as neoliberalism was making headway. The notion of sustainable development as proposed by the WCED is stipulated in the Federal Constitution of 1988. It also established the right to an “ecologically balanced environment” and it gave the government and society as a whole “the duty of protecting it and preserving it for both the present and future generations” (BRASIL, 2007, p.143). The Defence of the Legal Amazon Ecosystem Complex Programme (Decree 96.944/88) was put in place the same year and in 1991, the Legal Amazon Zoning Programme was established (DEL PRETTE; MATTEO, 2006; BRASIL, 2010).

In 1992, the Tropical Forests Protection Pilot Programme was set up in Brazil (PPG-7). One of its main objectives was to demonstrate that it is possible for economic development and protection of the environment to co-exist. The World Bank was responsible for administering the *Rainforest Trust Fund*, for choosing donors and, together with the Brazilian Government, for organising working meetings for the programme (BRASIL, 1996).

Referring to the changes in the Amazon from the 1980s, Becker (2010) finds that a “techno-ecological vector” started to become consolidated at this time. It manifested itself in conservation projects linked to environmental awareness and others linked to retaining value. In the author’s view, this vector “has acted in a way that has transformed the Amazon into a frontier of the new paradigm of sustainable development” (BECKER, 2010, p. 241).

Furthermore, in the 1990s a new phase of capitalist accumulation began in the Amazon. It arose “from a new type of relationship between agriculture and industry and the global economy, export-orientated, with transnational companies playing a significant role” (RIVERO; COONEY, 2011, p. 320). In addition to this, several government initiatives related to the notion of sustainable development were marred by “dubious motives, objectives and applications; conflicts in the methodological guidelines and institutional and federal conflicts” (COSTA, 2008, p. 248). The Sustainable Amazon Plan (PAS) and the Legal Amazon Ecological-Economic Macro zoning (MacroZEE) are two examples of this, as can be seen in the following section.

Sustainable Amazon Plan (PAS): new elements for uneven development

In order to understand the possibilities and limits of the PAS, it is fundamental that the following elements be considered, as a minimum requirement: 1 – institutionalised notion of sustainable development; 2 – importance of the Amazon to Brazil and the world; 3 – consequences of the developmentalist plans implemented in the Amazon up to the 1980s; 4 – inclusion of the Amazon in the so-called “competitive insertion model” from the second half of the 1990s. In this topic we analyse the PAS and the MacroZEE considering the last element.

The first initiative to include the Brazilian Amazon in the “competitive insertion model” came via Decree 1.541/95 of 27 June 1995, which established the National Council of the Legal Amazon. The accompanying text to the aforementioned decree stresses the results of the Rio-92 Conference and concludes that it is key that the Amazon be integrated more with other regions and the global market. As in the 2nd PDA, Decree 1.541/95 mentions taking advantage of the Amazon’s comparative advantages based on its territorial size, geographic position, and availability and diversification of basic resources (BRAZIL, 1995).

The policies indicated for the Amazon under Decree 1.541/95 fall within the Pluriannual Plan 1996–1999 (*Brasil em Ação Programme*), and the Pluriannual 2000-2003 Plan (*Avança Brasil Programme*). In both, the National Axes of Integration and Development (ENID) were presented as new benchmarks for spatial planning in Brazil, which should be established based on projects deemed strategic in terms of stimulating economic growth.

Three out of a total of ten national axes are directly connected to the Amazon: Araguaia-Tocantins, Madeira-Amazonas and the Arco Norte. Of particular note among the main projects in the Amazon linked to the axes policy are: 1 - construction of the Araguaia-Tocantins axis waterway; 2 - restoration of the Belém-Brasília highways; 3 - conclusion of the Northern Brazil railway (FERRONORTE), covering the states of

Mato Grosso do Sul, Mato Grosso and Tocantins; 4 - paving the BR 401, between Boa Vista (RR) and Bonfim (RR), on the border with Guyana; 5 - recovery work on the BR 317, between Rio Branco (AC) and Assis Brasil (AC), on the border with Peru; 6 - construction of the Santo Antônio and Jirau hydroelectric power plants on the River Madeira and Belo Monte, on the River Xingu (BRASIL, 2000; BRASIL, 2012). The government expected that these projects would allow the Amazon to play a strategic role in consolidating infrastructure in order to bring certain points in Brazil and in South America closer together. Comparing the *Brasil em Ação* and *Avança Brasil* programmes, Becker (2006) finds that:

Whereas in the first PPA, the projects were selected on the basis of the demands of the state governments and the interests of the Union, in the second, the strategy of the ENID was based on national logistical objectives without taking into account regional strategies for integration in the national productive structure and the global economy (p. 133).

Taking the same line as Becker (2006), Serra and Fernández (2004) stress that:

The axes, in truth, repeat the logic of the past development model, insofar as a large part of their success is predicated on road infrastructure. In other words, the competitiveness of national and international markets essentially depends on the ability to transport considerable volumes of goods over long distances quickly and effectively (p. 123).

To the extent that the Brazilian Government decided that the integration axes would be the backbone of the so-called new “competitive insertion model”, practically all other developmentalist programmes now play second fiddle to the axes. This is what has happened to the PAS.

Despite being launched in 2008, the PAS was the result of a process that began on 9 May 2003, which is when the Cooperation Agreement between the Federal Government and the governors (of the states) of the Legal Amazon was signed. Its objectives are to consolidate a model of sustainable development, to fight against environmental degradation processes and to draw up guidelines for spatial planning and environmental management (BRASIL, 2008). According to the Brazilian Government, the PAS shall enable the territorial rights of traditional peoples and communities to be guaranteed, promote cooperation and shared management of spatial planning policies at the three levels of government and integrate spatial planning policies with sustainable development policies (BRASIL, 2008).

Decree 7.378/2010, which established the Legal Amazon Ecological-Economic Macro zoning (MacroZEE), complements the PAS. According to the government, this should speed up the transition from the previous model towards a model of sustainable development, thus contributing towards harmony between productive activities and environmental conservation policies (BRASIL, 2010).

The MacroZEE was defined as an instrument to guide the formulation and the spatialisation of public development, spatial planning and environment policies. According to the government, *network territories*, *frontier territories* and *zone territories* should be consolidated.

The *network territories* include the Amazon-Caribbean linking corridor, the coastal capitals, mining and other productive chains, the Pará – Tocantins – Maranhão junction, the Araguaia – Tocantins axis, the agri-industrial complex and the logistical poles linking to the Pacific. The *frontier territories* are part of the agri-forestry and livestock frontier and the expansion fronts. Lastly, the *zoning territories* include what is designated as the heart of the forest and the Mato Grosso Pantanal (BRASIL, 2010).

Of the MacroZEE's ten territorial management units, only those belonging to the *zoning territories* are prioritised as the ecological part of the zoning. The *network territories* and the *frontier territories* are in fact virtually a continuation of major projects that began in the 1980s, which are now linked to the ENIDs.

Therefore, the PAS and the MacroZEE do not break with the idea of concentrating major productive undertakings in a few areas, which are chosen on the back of the strategies of various capitalist groups. Moreover, as they follow the notion of sustainable development, they favour the commercialisation of nature and reinforce new inequalities, such as those related to the possibilities of using nature and the so-called environmental services.

Nevertheless, it must be recognised that some areas directly involved in mining and agribusiness in the Amazon have witnessed annual economic growth above the Brazilian average, at least from the second half of the 1990s. These include, among others, the municipalities of Parauapebas, Canaã dos Carajás and Marabá in Pará state, and the municipality of Açailândia, in Maranhão state. Furthermore, if we take factors such as income distribution, education and access to essential public services, most of the municipalities, including those with higher rates of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), are still in a precarious situation, as can be corroborated by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics - IBGE (2010) and the Federation of Industries of the State of Rio de Janeiro - FIRJAN (2012).

There is no sign that the PAS and the MacroZEE can reverse the picture of socio-spatial inequalities in the Amazon. It is nevertheless important that this trend be monitored systematically and that forecasts are made that step beyond mere appearances. In this regard, one way of contributing to research can be found in the theory of uneven geographic development, a presentation of which follows.

Marxism and the Theory of Uneven Geographic Development

Lefèbvre (2000) is the main starting point for the theory of uneven geographic development. In addition to incorporating central aspects of analyses of production of goods (MARX, 1985), this author examines other means of production, including natural and environmental. Hence, his key idea that each society produces its own space, being influenced by factors such as the division of labour, production relations and family

patterns. Lefèbvre (2000) stresses that there are multiple social spaces within capitalism which interlock with and overlap each other. One indication in this regard is the fact that the global space encompasses the national, the regional and the local.

For Soja (1993, p. 62), “Lefèbvre has become the most important spatial theorist in western Marxism”, and one of his main contributions has been to highlight that spatiality in capitalism is characterised by the “production and reproduction peculiar to an uneven geographic development by means of simultaneous trends towards homogenisation, fragmentation and hierarchisation” (SOJA, 1993, p.65).

Soja (1993) identifies important attempts to explain “the empirical effects of uneven geographic development” (p. 66). With this in mind, Soja highlights David Harvey and Neil Smith.

For Harvey (2006, p. 143), “Marx’s political vision and theory have been shattered by the lack of elaboration, in his thinking, of a systematic and especially geographic and spatial dimension”. Based on this understanding, arising from what he calls historical-geographical materialism, he suggests the construction of a “historical geography of capitalism” (HARVEY, 2006). In addition to this, the author states:

The ability of both capital and the labour force to move swiftly and at low cost from place to place depends on the creation of physical and social infrastructures that are fixed, secure and, to a great extent, unchangeable. The ability to dominate the space implies the production of space (HARVEY, 2006, p. 147).

On the relationship between production of space and economic crisis, Harvey (2004) finds that “the production and reconfiguration of spatial relationships offer a strong means of attenuating, if not resolving, the trend of crises to form within capitalism” (p. 78). To this end, he stresses that “it was mainly through spatial and temporal relocation that the fordist accumulation system addressed the problem of super-accumulation during the long post-war period of growth” (HARVEY, 2010, p. 173).

Despite sharing some of Harvey’s ideas (2004; 2006; 2010), Smith (1988) revisits Marx in order to discover “general patterns and processes that give rise to the geographic inequalities of capitalist development” (p. 10). He assumes that Marx did not leave a systematised elaboration of this topic, but there are hints in Marx that allow for the theory of uneven geographic development to be elaborated.

Smith (1988) stresses the central position of labour for Marx and concludes that “the universalisation of paid labour and, with it, value, leads inflexibly to the emancipation of social relations and institutions of any absolute inherited space” (SMITH, 1988, p. 132). He finds that in contemporary capitalism the notion of relative space is fundamental, insofar as the geographic distances and the time for the rotation of capital tend to be tempered by the degree of development of transport and communication systems.

According to Smith (1988), with the evolution of capitalism, the increased demand for added value is seen in the tying up of capital in infrastructures and machinery, albeit in a geographically differentiated manner. This leads to different ways in which crises

manifest themselves and to the fact that “uneven development is the concrete manifestation of the production of space under capitalism” (SMITH, 1988, p. 130).

One important question in Smith’s work (1988) is rescuing the concept of nature for Marx. The author stresses that, for Marx, labour transforms material and man, and that this is the central element in a dialectical relationship between nature and society. Marx concludes that one can speak of a “production of nature” and, as a logical consequence of this movement, the production of space.

On the meaning of nature for Marx, we believe that Smith’s analyses (1988) can be complemented. With this in mind, the contributions of Foster (2011) and Foladori (1997; 2001) are relevant. According to Foster (2011), “from the outset, Marx’s notion of the alienation of human labour has been connected to an understanding of the alienation of human beings with regard to nature” (FOSTER, 2011, p. 23).ⁱⁱ

Meanwhile, Foladori (1997) stresses Marx’s writings on social metabolism and on the dual concept of wealth. For the author, the concept of social metabolism is the basis of dialectic materialism, as it emphasises the relationship between external nature and human society. In this case, “the action of transforming external nature forms the process of work, and its effect on internal nature manifests itself in the way in which social production relationships are forged” (FOLADORI, 2001, p. 106). As for the dual concept of wealth, based on the dimensions of use value and exchange value, he deems it important as it allows us to understand that “nature is only valued in capitalism if it can be exchanged for another good” (FOLADORI, 2001, p. 110).

He finds that the theory of uneven geographic development allows us to get to the nub of the so-called developmentalist plans. For instance, the theory provides more clarity on how capitalist accumulation and economic crises influence governments in how they form their development “models”. In the specific case of the Amazon, it also helps us understand why governments chose specific theories to construct the so-called “Amazon development model”, and how the region slotted into the national “competitive insertion” model.

As for the so-called sustainable development model, which is mainly expressed in the PAS, it can also be interpreted using this theoretical approach. We shall focus on a number of points in this regard under the final considerations.

Final considerations

According to the Brazilian Government, the Sustainable Amazon Plan (PAS) is the main benchmark for a new economic development model for the Amazon. However, faced with the institutionalised notion of sustainable development and the way the PAS has effectively been made subordinate to the ENIDs, there are more signs of continuity than there are breaks from the previous models.

It is not by chance that the MacroZEE territorial units are practically subordinate to the ENIDs. These in turn are mainly orientated towards projects linked to mining and agribusiness where the focus is foreign markets. Against this backdrop, the needs of the major undertakings imply fixed productive and distribution structures in points deemed to be strategic.

Furthermore, roads, railways, ports and hydroelectric power stations that are in the planning or construction phase seem to be effective enclaves for certain Amazonian communities, who practically have no benefit from these structures. One of the consequences of this dynamic is that it does not break with the trend towards consolidating only a few economic poles, which co-exist with areas that are effectively excluded, which, at best, serve as support points for some poles. Therefore, instead of breaking with this trend, the tendency towards uneven geographic development that started under previous plans becomes more entrenched.

Benchmarking the PAS for sustainable development does not imply changes, for a number of basic reasons. The main one is that from the outset this concept has essentially been linked to the opportunities for providing the most value for capital from new ways of exploiting nature and the so-called environmental services. However, the peoples of most of the Amazon still face insurmountable barriers to using mineral and forest resources autonomously.

In the case of environmental services, the involvement of some of the so-called traditional peoples and indigenous tribes in programmes to supposedly protect nature has taken place subordinately to capitalist groups, who control the resources and securities negotiated on the stock market. In some cases, the companies try to obtain gains by appropriating certain areas of land, as Vale S.A. does, for example.

With a view to generating more profit from its forestry business, Vale seeks to add value to the forestry reserve areas under its responsibility by quantifying and pricing CO₂ capture and storage. An outcome of this policy was the creation of the Vale Forestry Carbon Project (Projeto Carbono do Vale Florestar), which trades carbon credits on stock exchanges (VALE, 2013). Linked to this project, Vale uses as a reference in its trading the carbon efficient index (ICO₂) and the leadership index of the carbon disclosure project (CDLI), and was the first mining company in Brazil to join the São Paulo stock exchange's corporate sustainability index (ISE) (VALE, 2011).

For Vale S.A., the indexes related to environmental sustainability and social responsibility, as well as the certification of products and services as environmentally friendly and socially just, are important insofar as "sustainability issues are receiving increasing attention from investors for the financial success of companies in the long term" (VALE, 2011, p. 7).

On the pretext of acting on the basis of the notion of sustainable development, the major groups present in the Amazon prioritise financial speculation and constructing a corporate image, as they need to appear environmentally and socially friendly so as to generate more profit. The points made by Marx and later developed by Smith (1988), Foster (2011) and Foladori (1997; 2001) on the significance of nature in capitalism, and on how production from nature is linked to new forms of economic and social inequality, have proved themselves to be topical.

Notes

ⁱ The hegemonic view of the meaning of globalisation is voiced by neoliberal authors and the World Bank (2003). In this institution's view, the countries with the greatest likelihood of success in this new phase are those that adopt neoliberal policies and take advantage of their comparative advantages in terms of their labour force.

ⁱⁱ For Foster (2011), Marx in a certain way pre-empted the current notion of "sustainable development" as he stated the importance of current generations producing whilst respecting future generations, although he considered this situation impossible in capitalism.

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SUSTAINABLE AMAZON PLAN AND UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT

Resumo: Analisam-se neste artigo o Plano Amazônia Sustentável e suas relações com programas de governo voltados para acelerar o crescimento econômico do Brasil. Inicialmente, discute-se como foi institucionalizada a noção de desenvolvimento sustentável e sua adoção por governos, empresas e organizações não governamentais. Em seguida analisam-se transformações na Amazônia a partir da década de 1980, e a importância da região para a economia brasileira e para a economia mundial na fase da globalização. Por fim, apresenta-se o Plano Amazônia Sustentável. Argumenta-se que este plano está subordinado à dinâmica de acumulação de capital, e que a infraestrutura criada pelo governo em nome do desenvolvimento sustentável é voltada prioritariamente para grandes projetos – fato que representa uma continuidade em relação aos modelos anteriores de desenvolvimento. Neste quadro, a exploração dos recursos naturais e os chamados serviços ambientais beneficiam principalmente grandes grupos capitalistas e aprofundam um padrão de desenvolvimento desigual.

Palavras-chave: Desenvolvimento Sustentável; Amazônia; Desenvolvimento Desigual.

Abstract: This paper is an analysis of the Sustainable Amazon Region Plan as well as its connections governmental policies and programs designed to foster economic growth in Brazil. First of all, a discussion is presented concerning the institutionalization of the notion of “sustainable development” and its adoption by governments, companies and non-governmental organizations. In a second moment the changings in the Amazon region from the 1980 decade is studied in addition to the importance of the region to Brazilian economy and also to world economy in a time of globalization. Finally, the Sustainable Amazon Region Plan is presented. It is argued that this plan is subject to the dynamics of capital accumulation, and also that the infrastructure designed by the government for the goal of sustainable development is aimed primarily at large scale projects – fact which implies continuity of the model adopted within this policy with previous models of development plans or policies. In such a scenario, the exploration of natural resources and of the so-called ‘environmental services’ continue to favor the profit of mighty wealthy capitalist companies and economic groups, and deepen a pattern of uneven development.

Keywords: Sustainable development; Amazon Region; Uneven development.

Resumen: Se analiza en este artículo el Plan Amazonia Sostenible y sus relaciones con programas de gobierno direccionados a acelerar el crecimiento económico de Brasil. Inicialmente se discute como fue institucionalizada la noción de desarrollo sostenible y su

adopción por gobiernos, empresas y organizaciones no gubernamentales. En seguida, se analizan los cambios en la Amazonia desde de la década de 1980, y la importancia de la región para la economía brasilera y para la economía mundial en la fase de globalización. Por último, se presenta el Plan Amazonia Sostenible. Se argumenta que este plan está sujeto a la dinámica de acumulación de capital, y que la infraestructura creada por el gobierno en nombre del desarrollo sostenible es direccionada prioritariamente para grandes proyectos – un hecho que representa una continuidad en relación a los modelos anteriores de desarrollo. En este contexto, la explotación de los recursos naturales y los llamados servicios ambientales benefician principalmente grandes grupos capitalistas, y profundizan un patrón de desarrollo desigual.

Palabras clave: Desarrollo Sostenible; Amazonia; Desarrollo desigual.
