



Amazon
Unresolved social, political and cultural problems

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Introduction

Armadilla is a social cooperative committed primarily to international cooperation. (www.armadilla.coop)

It also carries out training and information activities on the topics of the 2030 agenda proposed by the United Nations, for the defense of human rights and for the achievement of the 17 objectives for sustainable human development: <https://www.unric.org/it/agenda-2030>

In this context, these Notebooks want to contribute to disseminating information, critical analysis and possible answers to the priority problems that are faced among the students and the public opinion that Armadilla addresses. The collection of all the Notebooks from 2015 to the present can be found at: <http://armadilla.coop/quaderni/>

In this Notebook we propose a reflection on what is happening in the Amazon.

"We are all concerned about the vast fires that have developed in the Amazon. We pray that, with everyone's commitment, they will be tamed as soon as possible. That forest lung is vital for our planet." Thus Pope Francis turned to the faithful and pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square to attend the recital of the Angelus on Sunday 25 August. Theme considered so important that the Pope convened a Special Synod on the Amazon for the month of October. **Un invito a realizzare anche in questa regione quanto proposto nell'enciclica "Laudato si'" per l'intero pianeta. Il testo integrale di questa enciclica si può leggere nel seguente sito:**

(<http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/encyclicals/documents/papafrancesco20150524enciclica-laudato-si.html>),

Humanity is urged to consider the good of people and not exploitation of existing resources on the planet as a priority: "Among the social components of global change include the employment effects of some technological innovations, social exclusion, the inequality in the availability and consumption of energy and other services, social fragmentation, increased violence and the rise of new forms of social aggression, drug trafficking and the growing consumption of drugs among the youngest, the loss of identity. They are signs, among others, that show how the growth of the last two centuries has not meant in all its aspects a true integral progress and an improvement in the quality of life. Some of these signs are at the same time symptoms of a real degradation social, of a silent rupture of the bonds of integration and social communion ... "

This also concerns the indigenous and recently immigrated peoples, who live in the Amazon, marginalized and oppressed actors but also historically and politically relevant subjects.

Chico Mendes, trade unionist of rubber gatherers (seringueiros), killed in 1988 in Brazil, said that "ecology without social struggle is gardening",

focusing on the fact that the Amazon is not only a planetary environmental problem but also, especially for the people who live in that territory, an unresolved social, political and cultural issue. **Davi Kopenawa, an Indian Yanomami from the state of Roraima** has repeatedly denounced the invasion of land by gold diggers (garimpeiros) and the risk of genocide that the natives are running:

"The rivers, the fish, the forest are asking for help, but the government does not know how to listen. It says that indio dies of hunger if the garimpos are closed. then we will starve. We Yanomami have preserved the forest for centuries and we want to continue living free. We want our land (Urihi) to live "

What are the political, economic, cultural causes that make the theme complex and therefore need careful analysis that cannot be reduced to slogans or propaganda discourses (whatever position you want to defend)?

How to respect the rightly claimed national sovereignties and the need to preserve a heritage that belongs to all humanity? What human development is possible in this region?

How to make the need for economic productivity and that of preserving the ecological balance in the Amazon sustainable? What are the positions of the indigenous peoples and of the forest alliance populations and of the international associations that defend their rights? What is the role of international cooperation and of the different partners involved in these processes? These are the main points we will try to answer.



1. The territory and its fragility

The Amazon rainforest covers an area of over 6 million km² including the Amazon basin and part of the Orinoco basin. Nine countries share this immense territory, which is also called Panamazonia: Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, Venezuela, and French Guiana. More than half belong to Brazil and, therefore, its government plays a priority role in the local geopolitics. **The national states of this region have the problem of how to combine the right need for national sovereignty and the exploitation of the riches of this territory for the local populations and that of ecological sustainability of a fragile**

area with strong impact for the global well-being of the planet. Over 80% of the original surface of the Amazon forest is still well preserved. But almost 20% has already been destroyed, with a tendency to increase this percentage.

If we do not immediately take steps to introduce more environmentally friendly resources and implement laws to protect it, our generation will witness the gradual disappearance of this priceless natural heritage. This region represents for our planet one of the greatest reserves of biodiversity (from 30 to 50% of the flora and fauna of the world), of fresh water (20% of non-frozen fresh water of the whole planet); it has more than a third of the primary forests of the planet and the role that this territory has for the global ecological balance cannot be ignored.

Currently, climate change and the increase in human interventions (deforestation, fires and changes in land use) are bringing the Amazon to a point of no return, with high rates of deforestation, forced displacement of population and pollution, putting at risk its ecosystems and putting pressure on local cultures. Heating of 4°C thresholds or 40% deforestation are "turning points" of the Amazon biome towards desertification, which means a transition to a generally irreversible new biological state. And it is worrying to find today between 15 and 20% of deforestation. **It is an ecologically rather uniform but very fragile tropical habitat. The forest cover defends a soil that has a superficial thickness of fertility; but when this protection is destroyed, the heavy rains and the heat of the sun destroy the fertile part of the soil and become a hard desert of clay and not very fertile gravel.** The tremendous growth of agricultural, mining and logging activities in the Amazon has not only damaged the ecological wealth of the region, its forest and its waters, but has also impoverished the social and cultural reality and caused a real ethnocide (destruction of indigenous cultures) prelude to total genocide (physical destruction of millions of indigenous people). Predatory economic choices have forced human development not "integral" or "inclusive" of the Amazon basin.

When the logic of the irrational exploitation of resources prevails and the greed for immediate and easy profit prevails, the land is freed and the great trees essential to the ecosystem are broken down. The vegetation and everything in it is set on fire. Impoverishing the soil, this practice not only accelerates the desertification process, but also reduces the life time of a land. And in turn it causes new fires and also forces peasants to move continuously in search of more fertile land.

In the region, deforestation is essentially aimed at converting forest areas into agricultural fields, mainly for soybean monoculture, and for breeding. Over a fifth of the Amazon rainforest has already been destroyed, and the rest is threatened. In ten years, the area of forest lost in the Amazon has reached between 415,000 and 587,000 km²; Most converted land is used to produce food for livestock. In Brazil, the Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Espaciais - INPE - produces data on deforestation every year. Their estimate is based on 100-220 images taken during the dry season by the Landsat satellite, and considers only the loss of the Amazon forest biome, not the loss of natural spaces or savannah in the forest.

According to INPE, the biome of the Amazonian forest, originally of 4.100.000 million km² in Brazil, was reduced to 3.403.000 km² in 2005, with a loss of 17.1%. The deforestation of

the Amazon forest threatens many animal species sensitive to environmental changes. Although sterile, most of the non-flooded Amazonian lands (mainland) are dotted with areas of red earth. The forest system is extremely sensitive to the slightest local change such as drought and deforestation. **The Amazon is not well suited to extensive agriculture and monoculture.** However, it has the resources necessary to feed the indigenous peoples who have respected and preserved it for centuries. Conflicting interests are conflicting between those who defend a "development" position, including the Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro who, in the name of national sovereignty, states that the riches that exist in this region (mines, extractivism, breeding and agriculture for export) they must be exploited for the well-being of the nation and not for foreign interests that would like international control. The recent history of Brazil (from the 1964 military coup) is characterized by this problem. Slogans who imposed consequent policies have been conjugated: "Integrar para não entregar" (Integrating not to deliver), or "Terra sem homens, para homens sem terra" to encourage emigration from the Northeast to the Amazon of the poor peasants. For this reason transamazonia roads have been opened, which have allowed the invasion of indigenous lands, allowing a new colonization based on the exploitation of timber and mineral resources and, as far as possible, of soy monoculture and cattle breeding. On the other hand, there are many international entities that are worried about the global problem of climate change and planetary environmental sustainability and how important the control of sustainability in the Amazon is in this sense. When environmental activists denounced that Amazonian breeders, encouraged by Bolsonaro's rhetoric, set fire to the forest to make land to be exploited, the president accused them of starting fires to discredit his policy. The President admitted that he had no evidence against NGOs, but added that his was "a sensation". French President Emmanuel Macron stated at the G7 meeting in August 2019, that non-compliance with international agreements on the environment and on climate change can lead to the cancellation of the recent treaty on free trade between the European Union and Mercosur (of which Brazil is the most important country). British Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced an "international crisis", while German Chancellor Angela Merkel spoke of "a serious emergency for the whole world".

The Brazilian government replies by denouncing an attack on national sovereignty and international economic interests that want to repeat colonial models overtaken by history.

2. The population

In the nine countries that make up the Panamanian region there is the presence of about three million indigenous people, who represent almost 390 different peoples and nationalities. Today, one million people live in the Amazon forest area. And the forest is the largest territory in the world where populations live, many of which have never come into contact with the so-called "external world". 98% of the indigenous territories recognized as such are located in the Amazon.

The people of Amazonia have suffered the consequences of European colonial expansion in the course of their history. Due to the spread of infectious diseases first introduced by Europeans, it is estimated that less than a third of the five million indigenous people in the region a century after the Conquest. From the late nineteenth century it was economic interests that caused the most serious damage to the cultures of Amazonia. To be able to exploit the territories of the forest (intensive agriculture with consequent deforestation, mining industry), the natives were killed, or forced to retreat to more internal areas, or pushed into reserves. Cases of cohabitation with the settlers are more rare. If in 1900 the tribes of the Amazon forest were 230, in 1957 only a little more than half had survived. The most recent migratory movements within the Amazon region are characterized, above all, by the transfer of the natives from their territories of origin to the cities. Currently between 70 and 80% of the population of Panamazônia resides in the cities. Many of these indigenous people have no documents or are irregular, refugees, inhabitants of river banks or belong to other categories of vulnerable people. Consequently, a xenophobic and criminalizing attitude towards migrants and refugees is growing throughout the Amazon. This, at the same time, favors the exploitation of the Amazonian populations, victims of the change in the values of the world economy, on the basis of which gain is more important than human dignity.

As the Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff writes, it is necessary to dispel the stereotypical image of the native seen, copying Rousseau, as "Good savage": *"The native described as wild and genuinely natural, therefore in perfect harmony with nature. by non-cultural but natural criteria. Which would be a sort of biological rest in the face of nature, in a perfect passive adaptation to the rhythms and logic of nature. This "ecologization" of the natives is the fruit of the urban imagination, tired by the excess of "technicalization" and "artificialization" of life. What we can say is that the Amazonian natives are human like any other human being and, as such, they are always interacting with the environment. Research is increasingly verifying the interplay between natives and nature. They condition each other. Relationships are not "natural" but cultural, like ours, in an intricate fabric of reciprocity. Perhaps the natives have something unique that sets them apart from modern man: they feel and see nature as part of their society and culture, as an extension of their personal and social body. It is not, as for modern people, a mute and neutral object. Nature speaks and the indigenous understands his voice and his message. Nature belongs to society and society belongs to nature. They always adapt to each other and in the process of mutual adaptation. That's why they are much more integrated than us. We have much to learn from the relationship they maintain with nature"*. On the border between Peru, Brazil and Bolivia lives the highest concentration of "isolated" tribes on the planet. They know no borders and cross the border between the three countries in their nomadic routes. They are the Isconahua, the Matsigenka, the Matsés, the Mashco-Piro, the Mastanahua, the Murunahua (or Chitonahua), the Nanti, the Sapanawa and the Nahua - and many others with an unknown name. Not much is known about them. But we know that they refuse contact, often as a result of terrible violence and diseases brought from outside that they have suffered in the past. Some chose isolation after surviving the rubber boom, during which thousands of natives were enslaved and murdered. Many have fled to the more remote areas of Amazonia and have been

avoiding prolonged contact ever since. On the rare occasions when they have been sighted or when someone has met them, they have made explicit their desire to be left alone. Sometimes they react aggressively, to defend their territory, or they leave signals in the forest to warn the outside and suggest them to stay away. These isolated tribes are not backward and primitive relics of a distant past. They are our contemporaries, and constitute an important part of human diversity. They are almost all nomads and move between their territories according to the changing seasons, in small family groups. In the rainy season, when water levels are high, those who do not normally use canoes live far from rivers, in the heart of the forest. During the dry season, some camp on the beaches to fish and collect turtle eggs. Some live in communal houses, and in addition to hunting and gathering, they plant crops in forest clearings. Others, like the Mashco-Piro, are hunter-gatherers able to quickly build camps and abandon them with equal speed. There are many external groups that are trying to force contact in the Contacted Frontier region. For example, some missionaries, linked to seven Protestant Societies, want to evangelize and civilize the tribes because they consider them to be pagan and primitive. Some scholars ask that these tribes be contacted by force because they believe that isolated populations “cannot survive in the long term”.

Other strangers involved in

illicit activities such as drug trafficking shoot natives, and even massacred entire villages. Indigenous peoples are the best custodians of their environments and consequently their lands are rich in resources. The timber that comes from their forests is extremely profitable. And so are the gases, minerals and oil that lie beneath their feet. These threats have a domino effect in the region, as Indians are forced to flee by abandoning their vegetable gardens and hunting grounds. For example, in Brazil, a Sapanawa group recently established contact following a massacre of their elders by a group of strangers. The people killed were so many that they could not bury them all and their bodies were eaten by vultures. Indigenous and indigenous associations oppose the attempts of outsiders to contact isolated peoples and are opposed to any forced social and cultural integration in the nation state. Contact is almost always deadly for these tribes. Those who enter the territories of uncontacted tribes deny them the right of self-extermination and entire populations are wiped out by diseases such as influenza and measles, to which they have no immune defenses. The Matis of Brazil recall the devastating impact of the first contact. The first contact with the Matis in the Javari valley, in Brazil, took place in 1978 and quickly killed more than half of the tribe. They stopped practicing their ceremonies and, like many indigenous people who suffer from the trauma of first contact, stopped having children. In 1983 only 87 Matis remained. Today, those who survived the destruction have regrouped, but suffer from diseases introduced from the outside such as malaria and hepatitis. In the early 1980s, oil exploration conducted by Shell forced the isolated Nahua tribe into contact. Within a few years, nearly half of the tribe's members died. Since then the survivors suffer from various diseases, such as tuberculosis and hepatitis B, and have received very little help from the government. The problems do not end after the contact. Sometimes governments try to forcibly assimilate indigenous peoples into the dominant culture by sedentarising and

integrating them. Officials believe the tribes should "modernize". But the fact that these companies are not industrialized does not mean that they are not already part of the modern world and that they do not have the same right as any other company to choose how to live. At the base of this, however, there is often the goal of freeing indigenous lands to exploit their resources. The Amazon is inhabited by societies that share many cultural traits, but whose languages are characterized by great diversity.

There are about 330 languages existing in the Amazon, almost half of which have less than 500 people talking to them. Meanwhile, only the Guajiro language is spoken by many people (about 300,000). Of the 330 languages, fifty are isolated languages, while the rest belong to about 25 families of different languages. It is this distribution of many small languages, historically unrelated to each other, that makes the Amazon one of the richest language regions in the world.

Of the 25 language families mentioned above, the following six are the main ones:

Tupian: composed of 70-80 languages. The languages belonging to the largest subgroup, tupi-guarani, are spoken in almost the entire northern half of South America.

Macro-Jê: composed of 30-40 spoken languages, mostly in the south-east of the region, with some anomalous values closer to the basin. These languages have many vowels and few consonants.

Cariban: composed of 40-50 languages. Mostly they are found in the extreme north of South America, with some anomalous values closer to the basin.

Arawakan: composed of 70-80 languages. They are grouped in the south, west and north-west of the region.

Pano: composed of 30-40 languages, especially in the south and south-west of the region.

Tukanoan: composed of 20-30 languages, which are mainly spoken in the southern half of Colombia.

The peoples living in the savannahs and in the southern Atlantic forests, such as the Guarani and the Kaingang, and in the arid northeastern interior, such as the Pataxo Hã Hã Hãe and the Tupinambá, were among the first to come into contact with European settlers who landed in Brazil in 1500.

Despite the centuries of contact with the ever-expanding neighboring societies, in most cases these peoples have proudly maintained their language and customs, despite the theft and massive occupation of their lands. The most numerous people in Brazil today is that of the Guarani, which has 51,000 individuals. However, little is left of the ancestral territory: over the last 100 years, the Guarani have been robbed of much of their land to make room for a vast network of livestock and soybean and sugar cane plantations. Today many communities live crowded in overcrowded reserves, while others are camped under plastic tarps on the edges of the freeways.

The Yanomami are the people with the largest territory. The 19,000 members of the tribe live in relative isolation and occupy 9.4 million hectares in northern Amazonia.

Their territory is also invaded by gold and diamond seekers (garimpeiros). The largest tribe of the Brazilian Amazon is that of the Tikuna, composed of 40,000 individuals. The Makuxi (19,000 people) and the Wapixana (10,000 people) live between Brazil and Guyana). Today

many of the Amazonian peoples are reduced to less than 1000 individuals. The Akuntsu, for example, are only five, while the Awá are 450.

3. Problems and conflicts

The Amazon is at the peak of a period of dramatic transformations due to climate change. Global warming could reduce rainfall in eastern Amazonia by more than 20%, simultaneously increasing the overall temperature of the entire region by more than 2 ° C, perhaps even 8 ° C, by the end of the century if we aren't able to make drastic reductions of gas emissions for greenhouse effect needed to avoid dangerous climate change. The most severe droughts will occur in eastern Amazonia and, together with the warming trend, could be reinforced by the large-scale deterioration of the rainforests of this region, which are replaced by semi-arid vegetation, similar to that found in the savannah. The stabilization of the global climate is necessary to preserve the Amazon forest. In the next 15-25 years, many of the changes currently taking place in the Amazon could lead to a wide conversion and to the degradation of the Amazonian forests, far beyond the decay of the end of the century, foreseen for the forest by some models.

Current trends in the expansion of agriculture and livestock, fires, drought and illegal logging could cause 55% of the Amazon rain forest to disappear or be severely damaged by 2030. The severe and widespread degradation of the forest could be accelerated due to the synergistic influence of some vicious circles of feedback existing between and within the ecosystems and the climate of the Amazon region. If the Amazon rainforest were to reach its point of no return, the prospects for conservation of the Amazon rain forest would decrease enormously, while the region's loss of biodiversity and greenhouse gas emissions would increase. **The critical point of ecological non-return will be reached when the native forests, which offer resistance to fires, will be degraded into easily ignitable shrubs due to repeated damage due to drought, cutting activity or combustion.** The critical point of climate non-return is reached when deforestation, fumes, sea surface temperature anomalies, such as El Niño episodes, and global warming itself inhibit rainfall on a regional scale. This point of climate non-return is perpetuated by itself automatically, as it favors the degradation and combustion of forests, which in turn reduce the emission of water vapor and increase that of fumes in the atmosphere, two actions that reduce rainfall . Precipitation inhibition due to deforestation seems to become stronger when logging exceeds 30%. Every year in the dry season (July-October) the satellites detect many fires in the Amazon basin. In 2019 we are at 79,000 "fire points" in the Brazilian territory alone, almost double compared to last year and 15% more than the average since 2013. This year the rain was just below the average, yet the number of fires is on the rise. Similar situations are occurring in Bolivia. 99% of these fires have a malicious human origin. Satellite photos show that the edge areas of the forest, on the border with cultivated fields and pastures or areas used by man (and often deforested in very recent times), burn. Fires are one of the "tools" of deforestation, which means replacing the forest with pastures for farming or intensive cultivation, especially soya. **The Amazon is important for the planet due to its symbolic and exemplary**

impact on the ecology of the world. It is not the "lung of the world" because between 50 and 70% of the oxygen on Earth is produced by the photosynthesis of algae in the oceans. The rest from grasslands, cultivated fields and forests. According to the European Copernicus service, the main problem for the ecological balance is the fires that this year, in the Amazon alone, they have already produced 230 million tons of CO₂. Increasing CO₂ means aggravating global warming, which makes other fires likely, creating a permanent vicious circle. Moreover, if fires and deforestation will affect 25% -40% of the forest (for now we are around 15%), the ecosystem will no longer be able to regulate its climate and could turn into a savannah (like it was already 55 million years ago), releasing huge amounts of CO₂ into the atmosphere and endangering millions of animal and plant species, most of which are unknown, including 25% of the medicinal plants that humanity uses for the manufacture of all kinds of drugs. Not to mention the problems it can cause to people who depend on the forest for access to food and water that risk disappearing in a gradual genocide. The president of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro, encouraged in words and deeds the elimination of the forest for productive purposes, removed funds for monitoring and environmental protection (-20% according to the New York Times) and loosened controls over illegalities. However, deforestation and fires are also rapid in the Bolivian Amazon (especially due to mining).

The EU-Mercosur trade agreement facilitates the importation of another 100,000 tons of beef per year from South America to Europe and is the subject of a question at Coldiretti's European Parliament, which fears unfair competition against Italian meat. Animals in Italy are not bred on land taken from primary forests, however they are often fed with soy from South America, responsible for deforestation (especially chicken, pork and processed meats). A study showed that the EU was indirectly responsible for 9 million hectares of deforestation in the world in the period 1990-2008 through the consumption of products obtained through deforestation (soy, meat, palm oil). **What to do?** The most effective actions are the collective and political ones. We need to organize ourselves and press for changes in food habits, import mechanisms, and align public spending with the real value of things: what is destined for environmental cooperation? How much instead to support the domestic consumption of products responsible for deforestation? The first step (not necessary enough) is on a personal level - accepting the challenge of complexity and trying to understand where it comes from and what the consequences of what we consume have.

In the Foreign Policy magazine, Harvard political scientist and lecturer Stephen Walt tried to answer some questions about the future of the Amazon forest, who will save it? Such as? And how far will we go to avoid his end? They seem very abstract questions, but they are not: only the countries where the Amazon forest is found can actually do something, but the problems of the Amazon forest concern the whole planet. If these countries stop caring, what will others do? Can they afford to stand and watch, knowing that the end of the Amazon forest would have disastrous consequences all over the world? Walt's article starts from an imaginary scenario:

We are in 2025. The president of the United States - Gavin Newsom, current governor of California, democratic and environmentalist - sends a message to Brazil: "You have a week to stop the

deforestation of the Amazon, then we will establish a naval blockade and we will begin to bombard sensitive infrastructures ". It has reached that point after a worrying report by the United Nations, according to which it lacks little when the damage to the Amazon forest will be irreversible, with serious consequences for the whole planet. China disagrees to intervene, but the United States heads a coalition of countries and takes the initiative. Brazil is naturally offered an alternative: to stop destructive activities in the Amazon and to accept international aid to cover lost earnings.

Faced with a scenario of continuous devastation, which could lead to very serious consequences for hundreds of millions of people around the world, wouldn't it be right for the international community to intervene? Maybe yes, but it wouldn't be a simple thing. One of the fundamental elements of the current global equilibrium, recalls Walt, is the concept of state sovereignty: that for which national states, within their borders, can do what they want, therefore also cutting down the trees of a unique and very important forest. Of course, there are several exceptions to this principle: the same countries can decide on limitations of their sovereignty by giving powers to international organizations or by accepting aid interventions from the international community, which in turn can intervene to sanction violations of international laws and in extreme cases even authorize military attacks, when there are very serious fears of an imminent danger. The same international funds for the protection of the Amazon can be considered, simplifying a bit, a form of foreign intervention. The fact that recently Norway and Germany have communicated the cut of their financing to the Brazilian fund for the safeguard of the Amazon forest can be interpreted as a form of pressure to the Brazilian government to return to the road of environmental protection.

In addition to this, however, it is difficult to imagine that there are ways to force Brazil to protect the Amazon: each country has the government that its citizens choose, and it resists very tenaciously to attempts to limit its sovereignty. Just think of the discussions in recent years in Italy on relations with the European Union. The legal tools to intervene would also be there, says Walt, which cites studies and analysis that the UN Security Council would have the possibility of using military force against countries that threaten the stability of the world due to their inactivity in the fight against climate changes. Again, doing so might seem fair, and allowed by international standards, but it would be very complicated. It is not difficult to understand why. Let's take a moment off Brazil: is it conceivable that the international community will seriously threaten the United States or China to start polluting less? The countries that have the greatest impact on the world climate, recalls Walt, are not those like Brazil, but the most rich and militarily powerful in the world. China, the United States, India and Russia are all nuclear powers and are the main producers of greenhouse gases in the world. "Threatening one of these powers with sanctions would serve no purpose, and threatening them with serious military intervention is completely unrealistic," says Walt, but even threatening a militarily weaker country like Brazil would be unrealistic, because no country in the world would accept establishing a similar precedent and the United Nations would not allow it. In the starting scenario, the use of force would be decided

by the United States outside of international institutions: a thing not impossible, given the precedents, but which for now exists only in "Imaginary scenarios. The alternatives, however, what are they? Diplomatic attempts to convince Brazil would probably have no effect. Economic sanctions would probably lead to a huge growth of nationalism and risk not having the desired effect. And Brazil on the other hand could argue as several developing countries already do: during the twentieth century you are you enriched polluting the world, and now we should pay the consequences? Even the economic incentives for countries that have to make sacrifices to guarantee environmental protection could work in the short term but create distortions in the long run, with countries that could "create" problems in order to receive economic contributions to solve them. "These are all conjectures: I have only begun to think about these implications and these dilemmas," concludes Walt. "But I think I know this: **in a world of sovereign states, each of them will continue to do what they think is best to protect their interests. If the actions of a state endanger the future of all others, the chances of confrontation and conflict increase enormously. This does not make the use of force inevitable, but to avoid it we will need continuous, energetic and very creative efforts**».

4. Actors in the Amazon

Many and composite are the stakeholders with interests in the Panamazonic territory: the national states and their apparatuses; local development banks, agricultural, timber and mining companies, local and international civil society entities, churches, research institutes, indigenous, indigenous and environmental associations, trade unions, etc.

We have already mentioned the conflict between national states that claim total sovereignty over their territory and the request for international legislation for ecological preservation and sustainability.

In Brazil the state body Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente and dos Recursos Naturais Renováveis (Ibama) is the body for the defense of the environment: (<https://www.ibama.gov.br/>)

The Fundação Nacional do Índio - FUNAI is the state body for the defense of the rights of indigenous peoples (<http://www.funai.gov.br/>).

Historically it has not played this role positively and has often been denounced as an ally of the invaders of the native lands.

The Brazilian Constitution, of 1988, in article 231 states that "*They are lands traditionally occupied by the Indians those inhabited in a permanent character, those used for their productive activities, those essential for the preservation of the environmental resources necessary for their well-being and their reproduction physical and cultural, according to their uses, customs and traditions*".

Principles consistent with the international conventions that Brazil has signed (Convention 169 of the OIT and UN Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples) that you can consult on the sites:

<http://www.gfbv.it/3dossier/diritto/ilo169-conv-it.html>

<http://www.ethnorema.it/pdf/numero%203/09.%20DOCUMENTI.pdf>

In addition to these state entities, there are numerous entities that are most involved in defending the rights of local populations (indigenous and small producers) both in the region and internationally.

La Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica - **COICA** - (www.coica.org.ec) is an indigenous organization that brings together the major indigenous federations of the various states and works for the promotion, protection and security of indigenous peoples and territories by defending their ways of life, social, spiritual and cultural principles and values.

The indigenous organizations of the Brazilian Amazon are federated into the Coordenação das Organizações Indígenas by Amazônia Brasileira - **COIAB** - (<https://coiab.org.br/>) which is part of the National Articulation of Indigenous Peoples - **APIB** - (<http://apib.info/>)

The Fórum Brasileiro de ONGs and Movimentos Sociais para o Meio Ambiente e o Desenvolvimento coordinates the major entities that deal with environmental protection and sustainable development in the country (<https://fboms.org.br>)

The Indigenous Missionary Conselho - **CIMI** - is the organ of the Catholic Church that deals with policies for the Indians (<https://cimi.org.br/>)

L' Instituto Socioambiental (**ISA**)

is a Brazilian civil society organization that has been working for decades to raise awareness of environmental and indigenous issues and to defend human rights (<https://www.socioambiental.org/pt-br/o-isa>).

L'Operação Amazônia Nativa - **OPAN** - for 50 years working in defense of the rights of the Indians and their territories (<https://amazonianativa.org.br/>).

In Ecuador the natives are organized in the Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas of Ecuador, **CONAIE**, which has its regional bodies: CONFENIAE, ECUARUNARI, CONAICE (<https://conaie.org/>).

In Peru there is the Confederación de Nacionalidades Amazónicas del Perú - **CONAP** - (<http://www.conap.org.pe>).

In Bolivia La Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia - **CIDOB** - (<http://www.apcbolivia.org/org/cidob.aspx>)

In Colombia there is the Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia - **ONIC** - (<https://www.onic.org.co/>).

On an international level, there are many NGOs that collaborate with indigenous peoples and with Amazonian environmental organizations. These include the following: **Survival** (<https://www.survival.it/>) which works to prevent the extermination of indigenous peoples and offer them a stage from which to turn to the world to denounce the genocidal violence, slavery and racism they suffer every day. By putting pressure on those in power it helps to defend the lives, lands and future of peoples who should have the same rights as other contemporary societies.

The **WWF** (<http://amazonia.wwf.it/>)

who has been working to safeguard the Amazon for over 40 years. It aims to protect the precious river system of the forest, counteracting the construction of dams that do not meet sustainability criteria; combat deforestation point to the ambitious goal of "zero net deforestation". Increase protected areas and involve local communities and indigenous peoples in this mission. **The Alliance for Climate Italy non-profit organization** is an association of European Municipalities and Local Authorities, which has engaged in a partnership with the Indigenous People of the Rainforests with the common goal of safeguarding the global climate. (<http://www.climatealliance.it/chi-siamo/popoli-indigeni/>)

5. Special Synod of the Catholic Church on the Amazon

On October 15, 2017, Pope Francis convened a Special Synod for the Pan-Amazon region, indicating that the main objective is to "find new ways to evangelize that portion of God's people, especially indigenous people, often forget and without the prospect of a peaceful future, also because of the crisis of the Amazon forest, a lung of fundamental importance for our planet".

The preparatory document, "Amazonia: New Paths for the Church and for an Integral Ecology" can be read in the integra at the following site:

<http://www.sinodoamazonico.va/content/sinodoamazonico/it/documenti/documentopreparatorio-del-sinodo-per-l-amazzonia.html>

The Synod of Amazonia is a great ecclesial, civil and ecological project that seeks to overcome the boundaries and redefine the pastoral lines, adapting them to contemporary times.

Social justice and the rights of these peoples are a priority indication of Pope Francis who reiterated: "The essential problem is how to reconcile the right to develop, including social and cultural, with the protection of the characteristics of the indigenous and their territories". Although the theme refers to a specific region, such as the Panamazonia, the proposed reflections go beyond the geographical territory, as they cover the entire Church and refer to the future of the planet.

"Today the Church has the historic opportunity to clearly differentiate itself from the new colonizing powers by listening to the Amazonian peoples in order to be able to exercise its prophetic role in a transparent way", reads the introduction to the 130-page text which consists of three parts.

The first is "The voice of the Amazon", which aims to present the reality of the territory of the Panamanian region and its peoples.

And it starts from life and its relationship with the water of the great rivers that flow like veins of the flora and fauna of the territory, as a source of its peoples, its cultures and its spiritual expressions, the life and cultures of thousands of indigenous communities, peasants, Afro-descendants, populations living on the banks of rivers. «The Amazon River is like an artery of the continent and of the world, flowing like veins of the flora and fauna of the territory, as a source of its peoples, its cultures and its spiritual expressions. Water is a

source of life, but also a connection between its various manifestations of life, in which everything is connected ", as we read in Laudato sii, quoted extensively throughout the document:" The river does not separate us, it unites us, helps us to live together in different cultures and languages ». The Instrumentum laboris thus recognizes that "we owe the aboriginal communities the care and cultivation of Amazonia for thousands of years".

Indeed, indigenous peoples have "ancestral wisdom", a lifestyle where everything is connected: they have a sense of the link to transcendence and nature, to the community and to the family.

They have a perspective on life that affects both education and health, both at work and on their religiosity. A life threatened however by the destruction and environmental exploitation, by the systematic violation of the fundamental human rights of the original peoples, such as the right to the territory, to self-determination, to the delimitation of the territories. Threat that derives from economic and political interests of the dominant sectors of today's society, in particular mining companies, causing climate change due to deforestation that is leading the Amazon to a point of no return, with forced migration of population and pollution, which puts the entire ecosystem is at risk.

This is what is described in the second part: "Integral ecology: the cry of the earth and of the poor" and is then gathered in the third and last part which focuses on the challenges and hopes for a Church with an Amazonian face. In this way - we read in the introduction - "listening to peoples and the earth by a Church called to be ever more synodal, begins by coming into contact with the contrasting reality of the Amazon, full of life and wisdom. Continue with the cry provoked by the deforestation

and from the extractive destruction that requires an integral ecological conversion. And it ends with the encounter with cultures that inspire new paths, challenges and hopes of a Church that wants to be Samaritan and prophetic through pastoral conversion ". Amazonia is a region with a rich biodiversity; it is multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious, a mirror of all humanity which, in defense of life, requires structural and personal changes of all human beings, states and the Church ... Listening to indigenous peoples and all the communities that live in the Amazon, as the first interlocutors of this Synod, are of vital importance also for the universal Church. To do this we need to get closer to them. **We want to know: how do they imagine the "peaceful future" and the "good living" of future generations? How can we collaborate in the construction of a world capable of breaking with the structures that kill life and with the mentality of colonization to build networks of solidarity and inter-culturality?**

And above all, what is the particular mission of the Church today in the face of this reality?

The Preparatory Document is divided into three parts that correspond to the "see, judge (discern) and act" method. At the end of the text, questions are presented that allow you to enter into dialogue and progressively approach the reality and desire for a "culture of encounter" within the region ... Today, however, the richness of the Amazonian forest and rivers is it finds itself threatened by the great economic interests that are concentrated in different points of the territory. These interests cause, among other things, the intensification of the indiscriminate devastation of the forest, the contamination of rivers,

lakes and tributaries (due to the uncontrolled use of agro-toxic products, oil spills, legal and illegal mining, dispersion of derivatives of the drug production).

Added to this is drug trafficking, which, added to what has been said, jeopardizes the survival of the peoples who depend on the animal and plant resources of these territories ...

In addition to the threats that emerge from within their cultures, indigenous peoples have suffered strong external threats since the first contacts with the colonizers. Against these threats the indigenous peoples and the Amazon communities organize themselves, fighting for the defense of their existence and their cultures, their territories and their rights, and the life of the universe and of the entire creation. The most vulnerable, however, are isolated peoples who do not have instruments of dialogue and negotiation with external agents who invade their territories. Some "non-indigenous" find it difficult to understand the different way of being indigenous and, many times, they do not respect the difference of which the other is a carrier ... "Society tends to despise them, not recognizing their difference. Their social situation is marked by exclusion and poverty ". However, as Pope Francis pointed out, "their vision of the cosmos, their wisdom have much to teach us that we do not belong to their culture. All the efforts we make to improve the lives of the Amazon people will always be a few ». In recent years, indigenous peoples have begun to write their history and to describe more precisely their cultures, habits, traditions and knowledge. They have written on the teachings received from their ancestors, parents and grandparents, teachings that represent personal and collective memories. Today, being indigenous is defined not only by ethnicity. It also refers to the ability to maintain this identity without isolating oneself from the surrounding societies with which one interacts. Faced with this process of integration, indigenous organizations arise that seek to deepen the history of their peoples, to direct their struggle for autonomy and self-determination: "It is right to recognize that there are initiatives of hope that arise from your own realities local and your organizations and try to ensure that the original peoples and communities are the guardians of the forests, and that the resources produced by their conservation return to the benefit of your families, to improve your living conditions, health and the education of your communities ". Nevertheless, no initiative can ignore the fact that the relationship of belonging and participation that those who live in the Amazon establishes with creation is part of their identity and contrasts with a mercantilist vision of the goods of creation ... The prevailing culture of consumption and waste transforms the planet in a large landfill. The Pope denounces this model of development as anonymous, suffocating, without a mother; obsessed only with consumption and the idols of money and power. New ideological colonialisms are imposed, masked by the myth of progress, which destroy their own cultural identities. Francis exhorts to defend the cultures and to regain possession of the heritage that comes from ancestral wisdom, which proposes a harmonious relationship between nature and the Creator, and expresses clearly that "the defense of the earth has no other purpose than the defense of life".

It must be considered holy land: "This is not an orphan land! He has a Mother! " On the other hand, the threat against the Amazon territories "also comes from the perversion of certain policies that promote the" conservation "of nature without taking into account the human being and, concretely, you Amazonian brothers (and sisters) who inhabit it" . The orientation of Pope Francis is clear: "I believe that the essential problem is how to reconcile the right to development, including the social and cultural, with the protection of the characteristics of the natives and their territories. [...] In this sense the right to prior and informed consent should always prevail ". At the same time, indigenous populations, peasant populations and other sectors of the population, in the Amazon as well as nationally in each country, have been building political processes that have oriented their work agendas into a perspective that is attentive to the human rights of peoples. The situation of the right to the territory of the indigenous peoples in Panamazzonia revolves around a constant problem, that of the failure to regularize the land and the failure to recognize their ancestral and collective property. Thus also the territory has been deprived of a complete, connected interpretation to the cultural aspect and world view of each indigenous people or community. Protecting indigenous peoples and their territories is a fundamental ethical requirement and a fundamental commitment to human rights. For the Church, this is transformed into a moral imperative consistent with Laudato sii's vision of integral ecology. For the indigenous peoples of the Amazon, "good living" exists when one lives in communion with others, with the world, with surrounding beings and with the Creator. The indigenous peoples, in fact, live within the house that God himself created and gave them as a gift: the Earth. Their different spiritualities and beliefs lead them to live a communion with the earth, water, trees, animals, with day and night. The old sages, called without distinction - among other things - payés, mestres, wayanga or chamanes, have at heart the harmony of the people between themselves and with the cosmos. All of them "are a living memory of the mission that God has entrusted to all of us: taking care of the Common House" ... The Encyclical Laudato si '(cf. nos. 216ss) invites us to an ecological conversion that requires a lifestyle new. The reference horizon is represented by the other. Global solidarity must be practiced and individualism must be overcome, opening new paths of freedom, truth and beauty. The conversion demands to free us from the obsession of consumption. Buying is a moral act, not just an economic one. Ecological conversion means assuming the mysticism of interconnection and interdependence of all creation. Gratuitousness can only impose itself in our behavior when we understand that life is a gift of God. Embracing life in community solidarity requires a change of heart. This new paradigm opens up prospects for personal and social transformation. Joy and peace are possible when we are not obsessed with consumption. It is something that Western cultures can, and perhaps must, learn from traditional Amazonian cultures, as well as from other territories and communities on the planet.

6. International cooperation in the Amazon

The international cooperation that promotes environmental conservation has taken **the 2030 Agenda as a strategic reference and in particular objective 15: "Protect, restore and**

promote a sustainable use of the terrestrial ecosystem, sustainable forest management, combating desertification, halting and reverse land degradation, halting biodiversity loss".E queste le mete proposte:

15.1. guarantee, in 2020, the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of freshwater ecosystems and their services (in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and arid areas) in line with the obligations deriving from international agreements ;

15.2. by 2020, to promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests, increase forestry and reforestation as a percentage at a global level;

15.3. start, by 2020, an effective fight against desertification, restoring degraded land and soils, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, striving to achieve a neutral degradation of the terrestrial world;

15.4. in 2030 guarantee the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity, to improve their capacity to provide services that are essential for sustainable development;

15.5. act urgently and significantly to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, stop biodiversity loss, and in 2020 protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species;

15.6. to ensure fair and equitable sharing of the benefits deriving from the use of genetic resources and to promote adequate access to these;

15.7. take urgent measures to end poaching and trafficking in protected flora and fauna species, and address both the demand and supply of illegal wildlife products;

15.8. adopt by 2020 measures to prevent the introduction - and significantly to reduce - the impact of invasive alien species on terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems by controlling or eradicating priority species;

15.9. in 2020, integrate ecosystems and biodiversity values into national and local planning, as well as development processes and poverty reduction strategies;

15.a. significantly increase and mobilize all sources of financial resources, conserving them and using them in a lasting way in favor of biodiversity and ecosystems;

15.b. mobilize significantly resources from all sources and at all levels to finance sustainable forest management, providing appropriate incentives to developing countries to promote sustainable forest management, including conservation and reforestation,

15.c. strengthen global support for efforts to combat poaching and trafficking in protected species, including increasing the capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities; as an engine of cultural, social and economic development of the beneficiary populations.

In recent years, projects focusing on environmental protection related to socio-economic development and protection of rights have grown exponentially, working on the sustainable use of natural resources.

New partnerships with indigenous and environmentalist organizations that allow the realization of projects in defense of the rights of these populations and of activities that allow sustainable development that preserves the natural ecological balance.

The denunciation and information campaigns that many NGOs are carrying out also seek to influence political decision makers and the business world so that behaviors are adopted that are not only not harmful but support the right to land of local communities.

The danger of land grabbing (land grabbing in English) responds to interests economic and political sovereign and entrepreneurial powers that take place above the needs, rights and hopes of local communities. The hoarding becomes more and more an extraction process of competitive natural resources in the face of scarce resources in a finite planet and in deep transformation due to climate change. In this process human rights and the right to land of local peasant communities and indigenous peoples are worth less and are overtaken by nationalistic interests and large private economic actors who advocate unsustainable and profoundly inhuman and unjust progress.

Italian cooperation has been present in the Amazon for decades. We mention the historic commitment of the MLAL and Terra Nuova NGOs with the indigenous peoples, the enhancement of their languages and cultures and in support of their struggle for self-determination. In the Brazilian Amazon a great project for fire prevention and reforestation of vulnerable areas has been underway for years.

To positively consolidate the attention to this region, on the basis of what has been analyzed, some recommendations were made by the NGOs addressed to the Italian Government and Parliament for:

- proactively participate in the negotiation of the binding UN Treaty on business and human rights and strengthen the national plan on business and ethical and social responsibility;
- reconsider the abstention, implement and apply the UN Declaration for the rights of peasants both in Italy and in the poor countries of the world;
- work with the European Commission to eliminate the articles of commercial and investment treaties that provide for the resolution of disputes between investors and the state;
- commit the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) and Cassa Depositi e Prestiti (CDP) to support peasant agriculture in poor countries, creating two special programs: one in support of human rights defenders, and one for support victims of abuse to have access to a fair trial to uphold their rights. Finally, both AICS and CDP should adopt criteria and an action plan to concretely apply the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights on operations conducted by Italian companies with public funding.