

FASE's Commitment to a Sustainable and Democratic Amazon

Wednesday 20 February 2008, by [FASE](#) (Date first published: 4 May 2007).

Contents

- [I. Introduction: FASE against](#)
- [II. The political reason \(...\)](#)
- [III. The future of the Amazon](#)
- [IV. On the big issues and \(...\)](#)
- [V. On the commitments and \(...\)](#)

Table of Contents:

I. Introduction: FASE against the challenges of a new era of exploitation of the Amazon

1.1. The historical legitimacy of FASE and their partners

1.2. The worsening dispute over the destiny of the Amazon

II. The political reason for the debate

Planetary solidarity

III. The future of the Amazon as a national political challenge

IV. On the big issues and challenges facing the Amazon

V. On the commitments and contribution of FASE

This text systematizes the FASE experience while operating in the Amazon and aims to contribute to the debate and the creation of diagnostics, views, and collective proposals of sustainable and democratic alternatives for the region, together with our partners.

I. Introduction: FASE against the challenges of a new era of exploitation of the Amazon

1.1. The historical legitimacy of FASE and their partners

One of FASE's most established presences, of four decades, is in the state of Pará. During all these years, FASE grew and matured together with the people and social groups with which it works and with its valuable partners, both Brazilian and international. As active agents of processes of change, together, we think Amazon when we think Brazil.

Our presence in the Brazilian Amazon is also marked by a significant continuity of technicians, as

well as work areas and our philosophy of social intervention. We can say that FASE would not be what it is today without this presence in the Amazon, which has profoundly marked the organization. This presence, (which did not occur solely during times of maximum territorial coverage, with teams operating in different parts of Pará, Mato Grosso, Maranhão, and Manaus), has resulted in the existence of a national program, specific to the Amazon, because there was the will to go beyond the local limits. Moreover, in conjunction with the integrating and systemic direction of our intervention, FASE tried to put aside the due consequences of national character from the Amazon issue. More recently, in the process of the World Social Forum, we incorporated the implications of pan-Amazonic character in this set of problems into our operations.

FASE's coming of age as a regional and national subject, in the Amazon and of the Amazon, is due in part to the perception that the diverse fronts of our social intervention can not be thought about and made viable in a surefire way: a) the political-social-economic-cultural-environmental organization began to organize under the banner of unity, because we realized that it was useless to think of it without introducing dimensions of gender, of the diversity of the people and of minorities, without joining and strictly connecting the political-organizational dimension to the development strategies and actions. b) intervention in public, urban, and rural policies, on work and income, on ecological production and agriculture, on territorial environmental management appealing to the interdisciplinary of knowledge and social practices; c) our criticism of the developmentalist ideology and of its folding over, the "sustainable development" under the aegis of the market, has led us to contest the competence and the capacity of the dominant market to lead us (take us) to a Brazil and a society that are sustainable; d) local intervention joining together with other levels of intervention, even international; e) more than all of this, the understanding that we are beginning to have that our projects are pieces that make up a process of and for another development led us to point out the importance of building new national alliances and acting nationally, necessary aspects to carry out our regional programs to the fullest extent.

From this story and this vision comes an original methodology. This gives FASE the responsibility of offering this experience to a greater project, the responsibility of reaffirming our historical commitment to the defense of a Brazilian Amazon that is sustainable and democratic against the new period of exploitation in the region, which begins now, and of sharing this experience with organizations representing Amazon society in our neighboring countries, as our critical contribution to the integration that is being built by governments and peoples of the region.

The fight for a sustainable and democratic Amazon that shows solidarity, already counts among its forces a wide variety of social movements, associations, cooperatives, and civil society organizations, such as the Brazilian Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (ABONG-Amazon), the National Council of Rubber Tappers (CNS), the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon (COIAB), the Federations of Farm Workers (FETAGs), the Federations of Family Farm Workers (FETRAFs), the National Movement of Fishermen (MONAPE), the popular urban movements, of women, of Quilombolas, of NGOs, social pastorals, Via Campesina, etc. These organizations and social movements are joined together in networks and forums like the National Agro-Ecological Articulation (ANA-Amazon), the Eastern Amazon Forum (FAOR), the Western Amazon Forum (FAOC), the Mato Grossonian Forum of Environment and Development (FORMAD), the Forum of Women of the Pará Amazon (FMAP), the National Forum of Urban Reform (FNUR), the State Forums of Solidarity Economy (organized in every state and affiliate of the Brazilian Forum of Solidarity Economy), and the Amazon Workers Group (GTA).

In the ring of public opinion, for interests which are counter to the socio-environmental worries of these social movements and NGOs to prevail, some sectors of the media systematically ignore the existence of this organized network of Amazon civil society, especially the democratic and popular camp of this society, seeking to mix up the opposition camp to deforestation and the predatory

exploitation of the Amazon with the actions of disreputable institutions, among which are the NGOs serving groups of foreign economies and acting against national interests. For those sectors interested in establishing political and ideological confusion, the existence of a set of Brazilian organizations, committed to Brazilian sovereignty over the Amazon, rooted in regional society, with strong grass roots at local level, and gifted with a profound socio-environmental consciousness, can only represent an obstacle to be overcome. Meanwhile, even these sectors can not ignore the legitimacy of FASE and their partners, as political subjects and politically relevant speakers at the regional and national levels!

1.2. The worsening dispute over the destiny of the Amazon

At the beginning of 2007, signs that the national Amazon issue was being put once more in the order of the day multiplied, with all of the hallmarks of a dispute among powerful interests and local political subjects, national and international, with all of the necessary elements to turn into a political and ideological fight without barracks.

This statement is not surprising if we consider that around the Amazon's destiny one of the most important battles among the rich countries and the countries of the south is being waged, in a war that will decide where the burden will fall for each country, in the inevitable allocation of the costs of the environmental crisis and the catastrophic changes in the world's climate.

The most powerful Governments, defending unsustainable production and consumption standards with enormous financial, military, and technological resources at their disposal, will not give up on their intention of controlling the Amazon, trying to reproduce, at the cost of our countries, the current unsustainable standards of existence and the practices of five-hundred years of expropriation of riches and energy resources in the countries of South America. In this scenario full of challenges and threats, Brazil has to face the dilemmas that are answered in a distinct manner by at least four political camps, at this historical crossroads for the Amazon. 1) The camp committed to the liberal strategy that wholly renounces a national project for Brazil and the defense of the Brazilian Amazon as a Brazilian heritage; 2) The developmentalist political camp which recognizes the importance of an active and planning presence of the Government in the region, but which does not hesitate to reproduce the unsustainable standards of production and consumption of the countries in the North and sees the peoples of the Amazon subjects to their expansionist projects of occupation of the agricultural and mining fronts; 3) A heterogeneous camp of economic and political interests that, under the banner of nationalism, seeks to guarantee their own private interests (in this camp are joined groups from the extreme right, politicians and congressmen from the north in a dispute for control of public funds, economic groups interested in keeping and increasing areas for exploitation, etc.) 4) A counter-hegemony political camp which, in the context of a world in crisis, advocates a sustainable Brazil of solidarity, committed to exercising national sovereignty with responsibility and solidarity, and to defending the social-biodiverse heritage which the Amazon offers Brazil, in harmony with the greater challenge of Mankind's survival on this threatened planet.

Brazil is already being hit by the reactions of the planet's chief governments with the release, at the beginning of February of 2007, in Paris of the UN's Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, showing that global warming is one step away from becoming irreversible. Since then, Brazil, considered to be the fifth largest global emitter of carbon dioxide due to deforestation, went back to being the target of international criticism coming from those who think that the country is not putting forth enough effort to guarantee the preservation of the Amazon. Meanwhile, here in Brazil, those defending the Amazon development at any price are not ashamed to use arguments such as "Brazil only emits 6% of the gasses that cause the green house effect" (Jornal do Brasil, 1/28/2007) or to say that the rich countries have already destroyed their forests and now want to stop Brazil from doing the same in order to become a developed country. The total nonsense before the environmental issue can even be seen in the spokespeople of intellectual standing like

economist Carlos Lessa, former president of BNDES, whose proposal for the region is the deforestation of at least 300 million hectares : "the Amazon is the greatest mineral province in America and has an enormous potential for hydroelectric generation and granaries. The Rio Madeira power plants are capable of generating the same amount of energy as Itaipu. And at the same time, to build a network of waterways and open an area of 300 million hectares of lands for planting, not only in Brazil, but also in Bolivia and Peru. Bio-energy is the frontier of the future. Foodstuffs are of the present, which demonstrates the larger strategy of occupying the Amazon" (source: Gazeta Mercantil, 2/2/2007) .

Evidently the political projects being disputed in the Amazon do not clearly show up in everyday life and, for this very reason, in the heated moments of disputes, the foggy ideology that covers the discourse and the practices of some of the subjects present grows. This is how the strange nationalism of the representatives (in the political institutions and in the means of communication), of the traditionally economic groups associated with the large international corporations and with the process of productive and financial globalization, who suddenly present themselves as frightened of the "foreign invasion" and the threat of NGOs "controlled by foreigners," is explained. On the other hand, we are already used to hearing the litany of spokespeople for the timber companies, cattle farmers, agribusiness and other economic groups that are dedicated to the predatory exploitation of the region, to whom the social movements, NGOs and all of the other sectors committed to finding sustainable and democratic alternatives for the region do not pass for more than "enemies of development" of the Amazon.

At the beginning of President Lula's second term, the important changes on the national scene and the new perspectives that opened up in the fight among projects disputing the Amazon must be recognized. The recently launched Accelerated Growth Plan (PAC) represents a move away from the neo-liberal position of denying the role of the Government in the economy. With the PAC, even in the opinion of the economists who most criticized the economic policy of the first term of the current president, the "invisible hand of the market" will be substituted for the "visible hand of the Government," which will once again have a decisive role "in planning, in defining priorities, and in articulating private and public sectors" . The PAC positively foresees important urban infrastructure projects, overall in the areas of basic sanitation and housing, whose importance was already recognized by the National Forum of Urban Reform (FNUR), and projects like paving the Trans-Amazon Highway" (BR 230), serving the forgotten survivors of colonization from the time of the military dictatorship. Altogether, with the other large investments in Amazon infrastructure on the horizon, it is clear that, in the PAC, some of the main issues regarding the development model for the region are condensed. Among these is the creation of three projects of high socio-environmental impact - the hydroelectric plants of Belo Monte, Pará, and Santo Antonio and Jirau, on the Madeira River, in Rondonia, whose environmental impact reports still have not been approved and have been the target of action by the Public Ministry . In the area of transport, the paving of part of the BR 163 in the state of Pará is particularly notable, linking Cuiabá to Santarém, and of the Trans-Amazon Highway (BR 230), serving the soy producers of the mid-west, and secondly, the leaseholders and other current occupants. We can not forget that the PAC covers a good part of the infrastructure projects in South America, provided for in the Regional Infrastructure Integration of South America (IIRSA) plan.

It is worthwhile, at this point, to discuss the industrial development model that will benefit from this energy production. The supposed national-developmentalists continue to defend energy intensive projects of commodities production which, until now, have involved the Brazilian Government in subsidies for multinational aluminum companies and others with inexpensive energy, as was the case with Tucuruí. We defend giving value to local alternatives, sustainable diversification of energy sources, inexpensive energy for the people of the region, and the end of favorable treatment for the multinationals.

According to the National Institute of Socio-Economic Studies (INESC), the PAC does not provide for "good breaks to protect, in particular, the most vulnerable segments of the population. We believe that the indigenous, Quilombola, riverside and family farmers, and peasants populations will directly suffer the impact of the scheduled projects". The PAC does not consider that the carrying out of the infrastructure projects will provoke population concentrations in areas deprived of urban infrastructure, creating urban-environmental conflicts. And so, PAC represents an extremely complex challenge for the NGOs and social movements that operate in the region, because an upswing in economic growth corresponds to the aspirations of wide sectors of the Amazon's population. The PAC may come to represent an opportunity for an upswing in growth based on the opening of the internal market and on an increase in social integration, but may also be the gravedigger for a project that assures to the regional population their place in an authentic regional development, which is based on the specifications of the region and the sustainable use of its resources, and not on an inappropriate model for the Amazonic ecosystem. Unfortunately, their main advice just as much as the environmental policy and dominant economies have led us to doubt that the first alternative will prevail.

II. The political reason for the debate

Recently FASE published a document entitled "Agribusiness and monocultures: FASE diagnostics and proposals for debate with partners." The political reasons of the debate pointed to in this document are wholly pertinent to the present reflection on the future of the Amazon and, for this reason, we reproduce them in this text.

The development model dominant in Brazil and internationally is based on a mode of production and consumption that requires more and more the extraction of natural resources, of more and more consumed products, spilling the garbage of production and consumption into the environment. A country is built on the interaction of a population with the territory where they live. And this interaction happens in economic, political, cultural, and social activities. The social construction of Brazilian territory, as it is being entrenched in these last few decades, mortgages the future by creating environmentally unsustainable situations and risks through the reinforcement of social and interregional inequality and inequality among countries.

The following are at stake:

- a) the possibility of keeping and broadening democracy and strengthening its institutions, in a Brazilian Amazon territory divided between economic interests that operate on the limits or outside of legality, and seek to keep and extend their power and, on the other hand, ever more concentrated economic interests, in the country and in the city, in a territory hegemonized by a sole production model that denies and destroys bio- and social-diversity, which are both impeding, because of their space occupation strategies, the maintenance of the region's oldest occupants in their spaces of life and reproduction, and accelerating wild urbanization;
- b) the possibility of the Amazon territory to bear a sustainable development strategy that assures the preservation of the region's natural resources, through sustainable use and management of its bio-diversity and, at the same time, guaranteeing the survival and reproduction of its rural and forest population: indigenous tribes, Quilombolas, and other traditional populations (rubber tappers, riverside farmers, chestnut pickers), colonies, and small rural farmers.
- c) the possibility of assuring the right to fair, democratic, and sustainable cities, with access to dignified housing, public goods and services that are adequate to socio-spatial and cultural realities, giving value to local knowledge and practices; where industries and services develop, transform, and

commercialize Amazonian products and raw materials, guaranteeing local and regional markets and supplying jobs.

d) the possibility of the territory thus allowing for, in the future, supplying the population with quality farming and ranching and agro-extractivism, guaranteeing water (and water of quality in the necessary quantities), and contributing to the maintenance of the forest and of the routine rains with effect on the rest of the country and part of the Americas;

e) the possibility of meeting economic, social, cultural, and environmental Human Rights (ESCHRs). Without having any other place for the residents of the urban periphery, peasants, agro-extract workers, and indigenous tribes to develop their life and reproduction projects and, around them having multiple services and activities, the remaining alternative would be to reduce them to a welfare condition, for humanitarian purposes.

FASE, as an organization historically aimed at supporting underprivileged social segments and/or those excluded from access to citizenship and dignified life conditions, can not excuse itself. Through FASE's social and educational intervention, which prioritizes the political subjects as protagonists, they have learned that the struggle of social groups with which it works for land, agro-ecology and agro-extracting, artisanal fishing, economic solidarity, water, energy, sanitation, and housing, questions the current limits of democracy, the development model, justice, and the fulfillment of human rights. Working with this population leads us to confront these issues head on.

Planetary solidarity

We need to add a determinant to the set of political reasons founded in international solidarity. From the moment in which the results of the last IPCC report had just confirmed changes in the climate over the last 50 years that were provoked by Human Beings, Brazil can not diminish its responsibilities in the un-postponable struggle for the planet's preservation and for the survival of the human species. According to the Brazilian physicist Paulo Artaxo (USP), member of the IPCC, "in all of history we have never come so close to a problem of this size. World Wars I and II are insignificant compared to this. And there is no body to make decisions in this area, not even the UN. We are facing extremely serious difficulties". Faced with the terrifying consequences of increases in global temperature and sea-level, as well as the melting of icebergs in many parts of the world, we can not tolerate a selfish and inconsequent attitude when dealing with the problem of the Amazon, with the deforestation and its contribution to the greenhouse effect, whose only concern is that of finding arguments, paying no heed to how fallacious these arguments may be, in order to justify rapid advances in the exploitation of the Amazon's riches, even if they are at the cost of the forest's very survival and the survival of future generations. Moreover, the stupidity of this attitude is seen even when we opt for a stricter adherence to the exclusive defense of national Brazilian interests. If we consider the fact that global warming can drastically impact the Amazon, and that it may undergo an increase in temperature greater than the global average which, together with increasing deforestation and regardless of whether rainfall decreases or not, will lead to the transformation of part of the largest tropical forest in the world into savannah, it is clear that Brazil must adopt a cooperative attitude in the search for shared solutions with those Governments that are able to effectively contribute when confronting climate change and other environmental phenomena that threaten us.

III. The future of the Amazon as a national political challenge

In an interview to Antonio Polito , Eric Hobsbawm analyses the process of globalization , highlighting, among other aspects, three that we feel are important for us to think about the Amazon

as a national, Brazilian problem. They are:

- The fact that globalization is not a universal process that behaves in the same way in all fields of human activity. This being the case, in opposition to the historical tendency of globalization in the areas of technology, communications, and economics, there is a different movement regarding politics, where globalization would be limited by the existence of Governments and governmental power.
- Globalization would not only consist of the creation of a global economy, but would also mean removing technical obstacles from the organization of production (and not just from trade) on a transnational scale.
- One of globalization's central problems would be that the technical process of globalization requires an elevated degree of standardization and homogenization. Thus, one of the major problems of the 21st Century will be to define what the maximum level of homogeneity will be, besides which there will be an aversive reaction, and to what point will this process be compatible with the world's present diversity.

Apart from social and cultural diversity, positive factors from our point of view, Hobswan does not ignore the contradiction between the supposed ability of globalization to guarantee a tendentially equal access to products and a world marked by inequality and diversity.

All of these elements closely concern the discussion of the Amazon problem, since they are able to shed light on the international context governing the destinies of some of our dearest presuppositions, such as:

- The Brazilian Amazon as an integral and unseparable part of a sustainable and democratic Brazilian national project;
- The search for a regional development model that consists of an endogenous proposal and that takes environmental specifics and the social and cultural diversity of the Amazon into account;
- The refusal of the reductive homogenization of the Amazon's social diversity.

In the case of Brazil, the disproportion between the economic and political dimensions of globalization was deepened by the political choices of the Collor and Fernando Henrique Cardoso governments, which drastically reduced the chances for autonomous national political decisions, putting national social goals at the mercy of the "markets," (that is, the financial investors, and international currency trade, duly represented by the IMF), including in those goals the ability to lessen social and regional inequalities. The Lula government has taken some steps towards reverting this trend without putting the entrenchment clause of their fidelity to the "contracts" that establish the international financial systems hegemony in check and without questioning the primary export model.

In a broad foreign subordination context, an apparent distinction can be made in relation to the problem of national Brazilian sovereignty over the Amazon. That was what happened when the Brazilian government followed IMF and international equity finance guidelines to the letter, proving the government incapable of not only promoting economic growth that could surpass the mediocrity of years past or defining active industrial policies for the country, but also, more than anything, defining a new development project for Brazil and the Amazon. There could not even be hope that there would be, at this point, greater conflicts regarding Brazilian national sovereignty over the Amazon. The low profile of the Government's presence in the Amazon was reinforced by the fact that, with the fiscal adjustment of years past, the central government significantly reduced their

instruments of intervention. In the case of the Amazon, a paltry percentage of the environmental projects in the Government's budget was carried out, even though it can not be denied that Lula's administration has increased the presence of the Government through their interventions in the fight against deforestation, by creating numerous protected areas and inspection and environmental control operations. The PAC may once again take up Government intervention in the Amazon by broadening and consolidating socio-environmental intervention, but unfortunately, this tendency is reverting with the emergence of new conflicts of interests. Overall, the hefty investments in infrastructure proposed by the PAC for the Amazon are aimed at globally entrenching the current development model, which is inappropriate for the region, and as has already been mentioned, risks unleashing uncontrollable processes of territorial occupation and exploitation. Interventions and mechanisms that could compensate for the big projects and ensure that the coming tragedy will not happen are not provided for in the PAC. Other sources of government financing are still sustaining predatory policies of exploration, as is the case with soy, cattle and, where the forest management Law applies, of the logging industries, with all of the questions that it raises.

Regardless of the way in which the Brazilian Government deals with the Amazon issue, the source of the fears regarding international coveting of the Amazon can not be disregarded as a product of the fantasies of ultranationalist sectors or of militarists interested in inventing foreign enemies to better justify their domestic role in a post coldwar context. The declarations of global personalities reinforcing the care that must be taken when dealing with the issue are well known. Al Gore, the former US Vice President and defeated candidate to succeed Clinton: "Contrary to what the Brazilians think, the Amazon is not theirs, but all of ours." Mikhail Gorbachev: "Brazil should delegate part of its rights over the Amazon to competent international organizations." And the late François Mitterand declared in '89, when he was President of France: "Brazil needs to accept a relative sovereignty over the Amazon."

Our sovereignty is seen in the current picture of globalization with unipolar military hegemony of the American "Empire," from which we will hardly be able to escape, and which surely already constitutes an unbearable experience, even for the heads of such powers as Russia and France. Yet, it would be convenient to consolidate our understanding and fears regarding possible limitations on Brazil's national sovereignty over the Amazon, which may eventually be imposed by the dominant powers. It is clear that there is a range of possible situations between full sovereignty and extreme cases, such as the current limits imposed over Iraq's sovereignty.

As for Brazilian Government's national sovereignty over the Brazilian Amazon, it seems that there is a lesson to be learned from these international episodes. National sovereignty is just as defensible as it is better for the legitimacy of the Government in question to have it, in the national public opinion as much as the international. Interventions which we vehemently oppose, such as those that happened in Iraq, Somalia, Columbia, etc., are inseparable from the contexts of loss of control and legitimacy of the respective Governments. In the case of the Amazon, we can not avoid a careful analysis of the country's image abroad, where Brazil and Brazilians are oftentimes, in the mind of the average person on the street, associated with the irresponsible burning of the rainforest. The inability of the Brazilian government to take up a position of leadership in the defense of a sustainable future for the Amazon and to assume the initiative, the frequent submission to predatory interests of dominant, local and transnational, regional groups, along with the resistance to discuss the rainforest issue in international meetings that follow Conventions on the climate and biodiversity, all the above generates uncertainty in relation to the Brazilian government's ability to affirm itself in an international context as a legitimate holder of national sovereignty over the Amazon.

In this context, the consolidation of the Amazon's integration into Brazil fundamentally goes to the strengthening of societal ties among the regional actors, especially those in the democratic and

popular camps, and their contemporaries at the national level. However, it is worthwhile to inquire about the material bases, concrete interests, and founding of alliances that may make solid national unity around the Amazon problem viable, and whose first element will always be a strong sense of belonging to the Brazilian nation on the part of the Brazilian Amazon's own people. These ties will not take hold and consolidate without first overcoming two erroneous proposals: 1. One that sees the Amazon as an empty space to be occupied and as a peripheral area to be exploited by the capitalism of the Southeast-South, supported by the "central power;" 2. One that sees it as a viable regional development project isolated of the national and international division of work in an era of productive and trade globalization. We, however, identify with proposals that favor a reduction in how much the Brazilian national economy is opened abroad.

IV. On the big issues and challenges facing the Amazon

The region's "development is characterized by operations, projects and policies imposed from outside by the central power together with international powerful economic interests and agencies, and locally, with the private regional interests that create volatile wealth and precarious and temporary jobs in the region which are, therefore, a destabilizing force. The list is long. Just during the last few decades we can talk about mining (manganese from Serra do Navio; cassiterite in the Amazon and the states of Rondônia/Mato Grosso; gold from Pará, Roraima, and Mato Grosso; diamonds from Rondônia), the hydroelectric/mineral/steel complex (the Carajás complex), the agro-industry of tree plantations for tree-based charcoals and paper cellulose (the Jarí Project), the thousands of loggers that are advancing on various fronts of the Amazon and leaving a trail of destruction and unemployment in the hundreds of towns and cities around them, the rare earths in the Northwestern Brazilian Amazon, the extensive livestock farming, the export of wild animals and decorative fish, the extraction of wood and essences (rosewood), industrial fishing in the Amazon estuary and the Atlantic coast, the Duty-Free Zone of Manaus, and the colonization of Pará, Mato Grosso, and Rondônia. Most recently we have seen advances on the agricultural front with the expansion of soy production: in the grasslands of Mato Grosso, Maranhão and Tocantins, in the rainforest transition areas in Paragominas, the south of Pará, Santarém, Rondônia, Humaitá and Roraima. This expansion is being accompanied by the construction of waterways and highways.

Other initiatives are perhaps more connected to strategies of regional integration: gas exploration in Urucu; the construction and paving of an Interstate linking Manaus to Roraima; energy brought from Venezuela; hydroelectric projects with regional purposes (Curua-Uná, Balbina, and Samuel); and fruit harvesting in Pará (coconut, palm oil, etc.). It is worth noting, however, that because they come from the same origin, because they have been or are being implemented without any public debate, and because they do not, in a general way, take the specific environment of the Amazon into account, positively, they contribute little (when they do not clearly indicate and even in a caricature-like and inappropriate way) to shows us their path of development.

The big Amazon projects are planned and thought of in order to play a part within the expansion of national and international capital. In general they are subject to analyses, research, legislation, and a plethora of arguments on their socio-economic importance which determine the development of regions defined labelled as abandoned or isolated. The ideological elaboration separates businesses from the related environmental and social problems. They do not deny the problems, however, they put the burden of responsibility on the Government, other productive sectors, or the population itself. For example, in the case of the Port of Cargill, in Santarém, PA, it is as if it had nothing to do with incentivating soy monoculture, the concentration of lands, water contamination, soil degradation, and deforestation. All of this must be the problem of some of the soy farmers or bad farming. In the case of the pig-iron steel complex, in Carajás, their defense was that illegal charcoal,

deforestation, and slave labor in charcoal plants are not problems of the pig-iron manufacturers. The charcoal producers or farmers that cut down the woods to turn it into charcoal are the ones who should be responsible. They avoid talking about the causes and effects of large projects. They try to separate the responsibility. This practice confuses society, masks reality, and weakens an organized reaction from the affected populations.

Most of these undertakings are only carried out because the region contains natural resources - renewable and non-renewable. Two questions arise: 1) should they be exploited or not? - there are opinions favoring non-exploitation or minimal exploitation in the name of preserving the region, preservation that would bring with it greater benefits; 2) if they are exploited, what would be the conditions? They should not be grassroots contradictory at the heart of both attitudes, unless by traditional conservationists. Guiding criteria may be defined and altogether taken into account, in order to take position regarding these projects:

- a) That projects be object of wide debate by regional society;
- b) That they should not be clearly contradictory to the Amazon's socio-environmental reality. It is the case of soy, in our opinion:
- c) That possible alternatives be taken into account;
- d) That projects be analyzed from an integrated and systematic perspective;
- e) That projects bring resources for re-investment in the region;
- f) That projects be placed within regional development strategies;
- g) That social and environmental conditions should not be subordinated to the so-called "economic imperatives;"
- h) That projects contribute to driving the areas of science and technology in the region;
- i) That principles of environmental justice (be it from a regional, national or international point of view) be respected and applied;
- j) That work and jobs be generated;
- k) That projects necessarily incorporate a high percentage of local workforce;
- l) That projects incorporate productive social projects to meet new demands brought by that these same projects;

Let it be noted that we are not deluding ourselves, because these are the very criteria that would be the object of controversy. Their use supposes the acquisition of a solid domain of technical, economic, social and environmental information, and the support of weighted sectors of the population to be able to develop a strong political operation.

But, more than using existing projects and political intentions as a jumpstart, it is about building a genuine proposal, from the inside out, that can offset the dominant proposals. It is not that this one has already gathered the necessary force to substitute them, but rather to reinforce our argument, showing other possibilities. The jumping off point is two-fold and complementary: 1) the potentialities offered by the Amazon as a biome preserved in large part that no other economic strength or dominating political strategy will value; but more than this, without strategies that

involve the local population, the maintenance and use of this potential is impossible, which brings us to our second point - 2) the Amazon population, not as a non-differentiated mass, but as multiple expressions, histories, and survival and reproduction strategies.

An alternative proposal can not ignore the region's enormous potential, currently being in large part exploited in a predatory manner without real knowledge about the true wealth extracted and generated: water; biological and genetic resources, wood, minerals and rare lands; agricultural areas disseminated in the region capable of ensuring a full regional food supply; energy potential, hydroelectricity, gas, biomass; fishing, fruit, essence, and other forest resources; phytogenetic plant resources coming from the traditional agriculture of the river valley and the inland; eco-tourism; culture; field research. Looking at this potential, and not to the projects, forces us to formulate proposals, not so much for effective generalization of their implementation, evidently, but more to affirm the potential and direction of another political, economical and social project.

The region's potential should be explored in such a way as to leave most of the profits in the region, allowing firstly to, at the same time developing public social policies that lessen the region's dramatic urban problems, and building endogenous development bases through massive investment in education, research and technology. Secondly, and also parallel to the first, investment obligations in the region's urban activities (industrial and service) be inherent to new undertakings and projects.

As for the population, they are in an extremely diverse territory. Fully conserved areas, national forests, areas of sustainable use, marine and forest extract reserves, indigenous lands, settlements, areas of colonization, Quilombola lands, sustainably managed forest areas, innumerable areas of long-held riverbank and agro-extract lands, migrant settlements of the last few decades, lakes, floodlands, rivers and paranás managed by riverside dwellers, metropolitan areas, small and médium-sized cities, "company towns" , mining cities, river cities, agricultural towns. Specifically, traditional populations (indigenous, Quilombola, riverside dwellers, extractors, etc.) represent a huge cultural wealth and a priceless heritage for Brazil. They should not be seen as survivors from the past because they are continually adapting and, given the conditions, they are totally skilled to be central to the construction of an Amazonian project. They also should not be thought of without thinking of their connection to the cities of the Amazon. The proximity and sensitivity of a large part of the inhabitants of the Amazonian cities with their surroundings is still significant.

In these conditions, any sustainable development project for the Amazon begins with the varied ecosystems within its space, the different forms of occupations and the uses of its territory and its peoples and population. Many attributes are given to them, from this perspective:

a) Of extraction / production, keeping in mind first the supplying of the local and regional markets, guaranteeing food and nutritional security for the region, and secondly, the national and international market; moreover, providing markets with other forest products;

b) Of maintenance (preservation and management) of ecosystems and their biological wealth, in charge of regional and global equilibrium of climate (rainfall, carbon absorption) and of part of the world's safety, in the long-term (maintenance of the world's largest stock of plant and biogenetics and of water). Today we hear about environmental public service, which is distinct from the market's notion;

c) Of maintenance of their cultures, of their ways of life, and their forms of relation to the environment, in a dynamic understanding of these societies and social groups, not based on folklore, aimed at recognizing the importance of preservation of the multiplicity of cultures and peoples for

humanity;

d) Of the production of indispensable knowledge for the development of science and technology appropriate to the Amazon;

e) Of maintenance of landscapes, lifestyles and cultural expressions that value the touristic potential of the region and the image of Brazil;

f) Of humanization of the urban centers, based on their new production, extraction, and tourism strategies, providing new activities to the cities, based on the potential exploration of the Amazon;

g) Of the questioning (because they were not largely overtaken by the dominant consumption model, maybe they can help) of values and ethics – pointing out ways to reach the necessary revision of the dominant western civilization model, that entrenches the environmental and human crisis (wars, fundamentalisms, xenophobia) and that is becoming imperative.

It is worthwhile to note the fact that today over 70% of the Amazon population lives in cities. The reality of the cities in the region must be understood, on the one hand historically, as a result of conflicts and processes of expropriation that led in good part to the rural populations relocation to the cities, and on the other hand, of the action of large private and government projects, national and international, to build cities to support their activities. Thus, it is necessary to understand them as a current part of the territorial dynamics, in a national context of growing territorial productive specialization.

It is not about just stating the growing urban weight of the region, but of proposing alternatives of regional placement in the national and international division of labor that make the aspirations of the Amazon's urban populations viable to the point of reaching standards of consumption compatible with the fulfillment of their economic, social, cultural, and environmental human rights. Access to these rights requires a strong emphasis put on production aimed at regional consumption. It also goes not only to developing new relationships between cities and the country, through new ways of cooperating and dividing agro-extract work, but also through facing the processes of metropolitan regression .

V. On the commitments and contribution of FASE

FASE's commitments throughout the four decades of its presence in the Amazon have been concentrated on the defense of the interests of the region's traditional populations (extractors, riverside dwellers, artisanal fishers) and the family farmers who came with the migratory flows stemming from the governmental policy of the "Big Projects", while in the urban areas FASE's focus has been on the defense and organization of the industrial workers (Manaus, Sao Luis, and Belém) and of the popular masses expelled from the fields and looking in the urban centers for the means to survive, in most cases having been stripped of their most elementary rights of human life, be it food, work, education, habitat, and basic sanitation.

From the beginning, this action has had its counterpoint in the implementation of the Amazon's "Big Projects," be it in the opening of the Trans-Amazon highway, in the building of the Tucuruí dam caused by the implantation of the aluminum industry (Barcarena / Sao Luis) and the Carajás complex, be it currently in the form of the PAC and what it has to do with the region. The dialect of this dynamics has contributed to the accumulation of a critical sense in the organization together with the determination of the causes of human rights violations (in the broadest sense of ESCEHR), perpetrated indiscriminately in social-environmental terms. Such rights violations have been historically practiced since the "discovery" of Brazil and have newly intensified in the last decades of

the last century and at the beginning of the new millennium. On behalf of Human Rights defense as much as in the name of Social-Environmental Justice (since up to today the region and its peoples have been exploited to serve foreign interests in detriment to themselves and their humanity), FASE is deeply committed to the construction of a new, genuinely Brazilian proposal, that comes from the people of the rainforest and benefits Brazil and the planet to which it belongs. This proposal at its core has been described fairly clearly in the previous pages of this document when speaking of great trials and challenges.

Accepting these challenges and keeping them on track for the region, FASE reaffirms its historical commitments to:

1. The struggle for Agrarian Reform and land regularization. In the long years of work in the Amazon FASE has acted in many areas of agrarian conflict and in the dispute surrounding territorial zoning. We renew this commitment, in light of the concept of sustainability, that connects the issue of the ways of appropriating land to its uses and management of the necessary natural resources to agricultural production, to give value to the rural space and to the genetic and phylogenetic resources, from the perspective of democratization of the land and conservation and management of the natural resources. We thus affirm the need to intersect rainforest policies, agrarian and agricultural, guaranteeing the relationship between recognition of traditional rights of land possession and use, agrarian reform, social-environmental sustainability, and gender equity. We had a wonderful development experience in the municipality of Gurupá with conditions of replicability, from the methodological point of view adopted in territorial ordering, which has been instituting technical-political-legal references. In the Gurupá municipality, work is done joining together the social-cultural diversity of the ecosystems to the peasant segments and the standards of local land use with the concept of including various modalities (mosaic) of land regularization agro-extractor settlement project, remaining Quilombola area, concession of real use rights, extractor reserve, sustainable development reserve, etc.

2. The struggle for Urban Reform. A pioneer in the problematization of the urban Amazon issue, FASE of the Amazon has, in partnership with members of public federal universities, social movements and the region's NGOs, developed a useful project joining collective subjects in view of the construction of the Urban Amazon Platform, with the purpose of qualifying the regional intervention in national debates and urban politics, aiming for this to be incorporated into the regional diversities and specificities. FASE has also developed an ongoing project of leadership and public management training aimed at building and/or improving instruments favoring social control, as well as being included in the constitution of Forums on Urban Reform. This collectively-built process has already resulted in the creation of the Western Amazon Forum - FAOC, of the Observatory of Amazonian Public Policies, Knowledge and Social Movement - COMOVA, in the elaboration of a first draft of the Amazon Urban Platform, to carry out research on the urban region and is already preparing to hold the 1st Conference of Amazon Cities and the State Meeting of Cities, in Pará. Finally, it is necessary to register the development of the demonstrative project done in Belterra, a town located in the West of Pará, along the BR-163 interstate, better known as the Cuiabá-Santarém, geared towards building the mechanisms of management and planning democratization, besides the instruments of social control.

3. The guarantee of Food Security. FASE has developed important projects in the Amazon that look at the components of food security, which is agricultural food production, based in rural family farming. The initiative of joining production, marketing, and more recently, the manufacturing of products has been significant, and is based on the incentive of associative and cooperative forms, in Pará as well as in Mato Grosso. One of the important characteristics of these initiatives is that they make the creation of work opportunities and income appropriation possible as well as improving the offer of foods, playing an important part in local / regional dynamics. These experiences show that

we need to widen our approach to food security, joining together access, availability, supply, and food quality, investing at the municipal/micro-regional level.

4. Fair Trade and Solidarity. The consolidation of the regional market circuits is one way of promoting economic activities on a more egalitarian basis, increasing the offer of foods that make up the diversity of consumption habits. The market-related issues emerge as the main determinant of the possibilities of successful or failing initiatives of agricultural food production support. Here, problems arise relative to the peasants own organization, but overall, the role that municipal administrations can play (individually or in consortium in the micro-region) in the “construction of markets.” We are talking here of the so-called institutional market, that encompasses the purchase of foods by public administration to be used in programs and public bodies (school lunches, hospital supply, etc.) with the purpose of favoring small and mid-sized undertakings, as well as the role of the administrators in negotiating with the large economic agents that participate in regional circuits, as an integral and indispensable part of the public regulation of agricultural food markets. In the conception of food security, the supply can not be reduced to a traditional view as if the problem were “distribution of agricultural production.” To speak of supply policies includes programs for reducing the distance between producer and consumer, programs of defense and promotion of food consumption like popular restaurants, school lunches, etc., and the management of public supply equipment like markets, a food promotion known as “sacolão,” decentralization of supply warehouses, etc. This is the view that should guide public policies in the municipal and micro-regional area.

5. Sustainable Consumption. Combining the debate with the propositions surrounding the right to a sustainable city and city management with rights to food security is an innovative perspective and could guarantee an interesting point of reflection for the building of a country-city unit. We have consumer movements in Brazil and ties built in a significant way, in some experiences, that join consumers and producers. It is necessary to strengthen the incipient movement of Amazonian consumers, to operate in the field of food education, through their organizations, in the inspection of food commerce and including on their agenda defense of ecological agriculture.

6. Consolidation of Agro-ecology in the Amazon, starting with the accumulated experience of the beginning of agro-ecology in Baixo Tocantins, Northeast Paraense and Gurupá, Pará, and Southeastern Mato-Grosso. We recognize the knowledge and traditional practices of management and conservation of natural resources developed by traditional populations, indigenous and Quilombola, as elements of agro-ecologic construction in the Amazon and, therefore, constituting an agro-ecologic movement that starts with the National Agro-Ecologic Articulation (ANA). This issue brings to light the inter-relatedness of the guarantee of consumer health, environmental preservation, defense of agriculture based on the technological standard spread by agro-ecology, and the resistance to the growing monopolization of seed production by multinationals. The incorporation of the gender approach, from the perspective of working the production systems and with the political commitment of defending women’s rights, allows for a new area of debate and new political-pedagogic practices for ecological agriculture.

7. Protection of the traditional Knowledge associated to biodiversity. Associated to the erosion of natural and genetic resource brought by the process of destruction and privatization of the knowledge and life, are the cultural erosion and erosion of popular rights that historically have been the guardians of these resources. It is necessary to include this new right in the agenda for debating the Agrarian and Environmental Reform. We should revolt against the privatization of life’s knowledge and fight for the rights of farmers and traditional peoples, starting with indigenous tribes, as part of the struggle for sovereignty and food security.

Regarding FASE’s social intervention in the near future, FASE takes on the following commitments:

- Support socially-based actions of the Brazilian Amazon society (indigenous peoples, extractors, Quilombolas, family farmers, artisanal fishers, etc.), in developing the diverse sub-regions, and anchored in social, economic and environmental sustainability. Promote actions appropriate to the diversity of the Amazonian biomes that are more and more directed towards agro-ecologic principles, geared towards sustainable and communal exploration of rainforest resources, loggers or non-loggers, and for the agro-extractor production. The concrete action of this FASE commitment means, in 2007 and in the coming years, the strengthening, promotion and expression of Amazonian networks connected to the Alliance of Forest Peoples, in their NGOs Forums and Social Movements, like the FAOR and the FAOC, and in the national networks in the areas of agro-ecology and economic solidarity. To give strength to this global action, FASE in will push the territories of the Amazon Estuary and Low Tocantins in its Amazon program towards sustainable and democratic development, placing at their disposition the experience of an inter-disciplinary team made up of park rangers, agronomists, sociologists, educators, and researchers, based on this dynamics.
- Give priority to the treatment of the urban dimension and an integrated treatment within Amazon reality.
- Intensify educational action in raising the awareness of Equal Gender and Race Rights as well as Environmental Justice. Along these lines, FASE intends to intensify the "IN THE FOREST THERE ARE RIGHTS - ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN THE AMAZON" campaign, promoting moments to form and demand of rights. Moreover, FASE will continue to implement the Dema Fund as one of the most expressive parts of Environmental Justice, stimulating its unfolding in other regions of the Amazon.
- Plead, in partnership with the Amazonian and other networks and regional and national forums, before the state and national governments, for the accelerated implementation of the Agrarian Reform appropriate for the Amazon region, encouraging the solution to land issues, the reduction of judicial action in the region, the radicalization of democracy in all of the mechanisms of participation and promotion of a policy of incentives, favoring the popular initiatives and the social technologies in evolution in the region;
- Put the principles of Pan-Amazonic international solidarity on the agenda, translating them in defense of just terms and of reparation of rights in international accords, be they in trade, infrastructure or research.
- Seek a permanent integration of the Amazon population with the neighboring countries and their organizations in defense of the Amazonian biome and its social-diversity while at the same time defending the country's sovereignty over the Brazilian Amazon.

The topics that FASE works with are the jumping off point of the entity to think and act in the Brazilian Amazon territory and do not cover the whole of the major questions and challenges for the region. A permanent effort to reflect and synthesize what can be contributed to consolidate alternative thinking on the Amazon imposes itself so that, together with everyone that seeks to construct other projects for the region, we can make it a vanguard of another development model.