

Disputed Territory

by World Rainforest Movement
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The green economy versus community-based economies. A story of the peoples of the Atlantic Forest in southern Brazil.

We are re-launching this recent video produced by the World Rainforest Movement, which is now available in four languages; English, Spanish, French and Portuguese. It tells about the impacts of REDD+ and the 'green economy' projects for forest peoples, as well as their struggle against such projects to reclaim their territory.

The video is available at www.wrm.org.uy

The United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed 21 March as the International Day of Forests. By proposing this new international day, the UN is trying to raise awareness about the importance of all types of forests. However, the UN should raise awareness in the first place about the fact that forests around the world are increasingly disputed territories.

In this dispute there are two clear sides. On the one hand the around 300 million of people who depend directly on forests. These forest communities not only depend on forest for their survival but also play a fundamental role in the conservation of these forests. On the other hand the big transnational companies, for which forests are simply a source of profits, obtained by the extraction of commodities or by the substitution of forests with industrial monocultures. Since a couple of years, forests communities are facing another threat that is disputing their lands: REDD projects and other related 'solutions' to the climate crisis, proposed in the context of the 'Green Economy'.

A clear example of this dispute is what happens in the Atlantic Forest in Brazil. 500 years ago, the Atlantic Forest covered the entire Brazilian coastline, but is now seriously endangered. However, in the state of Parari, a vast area of this Forest still survives. This is the largest area of the Atlantic Forest in the world and it is home to a number of different traditional communities; the Caiararas, the Quilombolas and the indigenous Guarani.

The ways of life of all three populations are closely tied to the Atlantic Forest. Most of them do not have legal title to the land they occupy or the forests they use. How have these communities traditionally coexisted with the Atlantic Forest?

Fifty years ago, ranchers began moving into the area, clearing the forest and taking over the land to raise water buffalos. In the 1990s, projects arrived, including REDD+, that form part of the so-called Green Economy. What has been their experience with this kind of projects?

In 2003, with the help of the Landless Workers Movement (MST), the community of Rio Pequeno occupied a ranch. What happens when communities organize and regain control over their land?

In 2012, the WRM visited a number of traditional communities in the area searching their answers to these questions. The result is this video, now available in four languages. We invite you to watch it, share it and/or use it in your work with

communities also facing the dispute of their territories with REDD and "green economy" projects in general.