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BAR, Curitiba, v. 8, n. 4, art. 4,
pp. 412-432, Oct./Dec. 2011



Fair Trade Practices in the Northwest Brazilian Amazon

Rafael D'Almeida Martins *

E-mail address: rdamartins@gmail.com

Universidade Estadual de Campinas – NEPAM/UNICAMP
Campinas, SP, Brazil.

* Corresponding author: Rafael D'Almeida Martins
NEPAM - Rua dos Flamboyants, 155, Cidade Universitária Zeferino Vaz, Campinas, SP, 13084-867, Brazil.

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Abstract

This paper describes and analyzes the **Arte Baniwa** project, a sustainable development project based on the production and commercialization of Baniwa indigenous basketwork with the support of the Instituto Socioambiental (ISA), a major NGO in Brazil. The project seeks to enhance the value of the Baniwa basket-making tradition, increase production within the limits of the sustainable use of natural resources, generate income for indigenous producers and their political associations, and train indigenous leadership in the skills of business management. The methodology encompasses a literature review on fair trade and builds upon ethnographic and participative research methods. The narrative and analysis of the case study comprise a framework that is two-fold: first, it looks at existing inter-organizational tiers between actors and identifies the presence of two different logics within the project; second, it encompasses the reality of many emerging fair trade initiatives in Brazil which harness market forces to pursue local sustainable development. The paper argues that ISA has acted as a boundary organization by communicating, translating and mediating between traditional (indigenous) knowledge and Western culture. By doing so, it was able to mobilize the project's capacity to promote sustainable development.

Key words: fair trade; sustainable development; Baniwa; basket-making; Northwest Amazon.

Introduction

Contextualizing fair trade in Brazil is not an easy task due to the few scientific assessments and the lack of adequate data collection for a detailed analysis of the sector (Wilkinson & Mascarenhas, 2007). Nevertheless, some **fair trade**⁽¹⁾ initiatives are being multiplied throughout the country, especially during the last few decades. Increasing attention is being given to ethnic products containing cultural and symbolic representations, which adopt new functionality in the urban centers as pieces of art, design or simply decoration (Renard, 2003). Indeed, there have been efforts towards the creation of an enabling environment for the implementation of fair trade practices in Brazil in order to foster local development and promote social inclusion (C. L. França, 2003). Although geographically dispersed and diffused in terms the involvement of civil society, these initiatives are part of a broader movement that seeks to provide access to the market, income generation, and opportunities for poor communities in different regions of the world (Raynolds, 2000).

Since 1997, the basketry produced by the Baniwa people⁽²⁾ has been commercialized under the development of sustainable economic practices in the Rio Negro River Basin, of the Northwest Brazilian Amazon in Brazil (Figure 1). Baskets are part of a very ancient Baniwa tradition. For several generations, the Baniwa people have sold their hand-made baskets at local markets to purchase goods (*e.g.* clothes, tools, gear, etc) that they need to support their livelihood. About a decade ago, they created an entirely new form of organization to commercialize these baskets, through a sustainable development project called **Arte Baniwa**, which had the support of the Socio-Environmental Institute (Instituto Socioambiental, known by its acronym in Portuguese **ISA**), a major non-governmental organization (NGO) in Brazil (Wright, 2009). These new practices encompass the sustainable production and commercialization of the traditional Baniwa *arumã*⁽³⁾ baskets in markets that acknowledge cultural and environmental heritage as part of a broader strategy to assert indigenous collective rights (Bresler & Oliveira, 2002, p. 53).



Figure 1. Northwest Brazilian Amazon.

Bacia do Rio Içana, Alto Rio Negro, região onde vive o povo baniwa. Source: A Casa - Casa-Museu do Objeto Brasileiro. (2002). Mapa da região da Cabeça do Cachorro, Amazonas. *Encontro Design Artesanato – Beto Ricardo*, 6. Retrieved 11 November 2010, from <http://www.acasa.org.br/objeto/MF-00868/EV41>

Based on that, the objectives of this paper are two-fold. First, it seeks to describe and analyze the Arte Baniwa⁽⁴⁾ project, discussing its contribution and potential for the development of fair trade in Brazil. Second, it intends to uncover the conditions for political and economic success of these types of experiences. In order to do so, the analysis of the main findings of the research have been driven by the overall question concerning the structure of interaction between the actors of the project that made the Baniwa traditional knowledge comfortably mesh with the Western fair trade movement through sustainable development practices. This paper argues that the presence of ISA acting as a boundary organization has been crucial for the success of the **Arte Baniwa** project.

The paper is divided into two main sections: the first part contextualizes the discussion in terms of fair trade origin and its development in Brazil. The second presents a brief description of the Arte Baniwa history and the analysis of its successes and limitations.

Approach and Methods

This paper is the result of a second round of research, interviews and data collection about the **Arte Baniwa** project and the sustainable economic practices in the Northwest Brazilian Amazon. The case study analyzed, presented benefits from, and builds upon four field visits undertaken during 2004-2006.

The methodology applied in this paper has a narrative focus and the case study embodies a qualitative research supported by participative observation and ethnographic methods (Yin, 2009). Ethnography as a research method contributes to qualitative research by deepening the analysis of social structures and interactions. It reflects a holistic and dialectic analysis of culture, meaning that culture is not seen as a mere reflex of the structural forces of society, but as a system of mediation of meanings between the social structures and human activity. It also acknowledges the dynamic of social actors' involvement in the process of changing social structures (Geertz, 1973; Selltiz, Wrightsman, & Cook, 1976).

The rationale for applying ethnography as a research method in this research is based upon the recognition that context is crucial to qualitative observations and analyses. In this sense, cultural practices from other societal organization such as the Baniwa people can only be understood by studying the context in which these practices take place. By learning and understanding the local values, behavior, practices, and lifestyle of a particular group or society it is possible to avoid taking cultural practices out of context.

Despite critiques in specific disciplines (*e.g.* Anthropology), ethnography has been applied for decades in several research fields, including health and organizational studies (Van Maanen, 1988). According to Alcadipani (2010) the use of these methods and approaches are providing ways for a comprehensive understanding of organizations and management practices. For Geertz (1973, 1983) the use of an ethnographical approach allows the researcher to search out and analyze symbolic forms - words, images, institutions, and behaviors. In doing so, it is possible to describe and analyze the web of significance which people intertwine within the cultural context, and these webs of significance can only be communicated to others by describing the situation and its context (Geertz, 1983). This is relevant when considered the traditional knowledge of the indigenous people located in the Northwest Brazilian Amazon applied to their habitat, livelihood, and economic activities.

In this article, the economic practices in the Northwest Brazilian Amazon are analyzed in light of the concept of sustainable development, which broadly means creating and maintaining options for renewable and prosperous social and economic development (Folke *et al.*, 2002). Sustaining this capacity requires understanding and managing interrelations among social, economic, and ecological components across temporal and spatial scales (Kates *et al.*, 2001). In this sense, the development practices proposed by Sen (1989) introduced the focus on the expansion of people's capabilities as a process of emancipation from necessities that constrain the realization of human freedom. Nussbaum and Sen (1993) argue that development overcomes the economic domain *strictu sensu*. According to this approach the lack of capacities is not limited to the privation of the economic means, but reflects the freedom of individuals and communities to choose between many ways of living.

These conceptual approaches are important for the analysis concerning the practices of production and commercialization within the **Arte Baniwa** project as its commercial, political and economic dimensions overlap other dimensions (social, cultural and environmental). It is also

important to consider the different scales of the project and its main actors that are considered in light of the rights of indigenous people, also one of the main aims of the **Arte Baniwa** project.

Origin and Development of Fair Trade: a Review of Concept and International Movement

The fair trade movement critiques conventional production, trade and consumption relations, seeking to create more equal and democratic relationships to link consumers in the global North with marginalized producers in the global South (Raynolds, 2002; Raynolds, Murray, & Wilkinson, 2007; Renard, 2003). Fair trade operates under a different set of values and principles than traditional trade, putting people, their well-being and preservation of the natural environment before the pursuit of profit (Raynolds, 2000). This concept has been broadened to encompass

the commercial practice that promotes a sustainable development, allowing the producers who are in a situation of disadvantage, to access competitive markets under conditions that secure fair remuneration for their products and education for the consumers, seeking to alleviate poverty through transparent partnerships between the agents involved in the trade process, being them producers, laborers, sellers/traders or consumers (Watkins & Fowler, 2002, p. 32).

For the equity and the protection of the environment, scale of production fits into other principles that are not merely economic (*e.g.* social, ecological, and cultural) even when they contradict the traditional models of economic growth (Santos & Rodríguez-Garavito, 2006). It seeks to build different partnerships between producers and consumers. These initiatives create and refer to spaces of social activity between the State and the market that have also been recognized as places of production and income distribution. It is considered an additional economic space in which the principles of equity, welfare and sustainable development can prevail (G. C. França, 2002, p. 2).

The origin of the fair trade practices dates back to 1960s when American and European organizations linked with grassroots movements started to sell products made by small producers who were suffering from poverty and commercial isolation due to (dictatorial) political regimes and restrictions on their access to markets for their products. These organizations slowly attracted supporters and initiated a movement to articulate and discuss the possibilities for scaling up alternative forms of commerce in order to help those small producers in the developing and less developed countries. The rationale for this movement was to provide the means to overcome the uneven conditions faced by these producers (Moore, 2004).

In this sense, the movement of individuals, organizations, and partnerships aimed to find markets for products. The products were mainly handicrafts, coffee and sometimes tea, to be sold in the North by creating a parallel circuit to mainstream the distribution of these products through networks of specialty stores managed as cooperatives and staffed by volunteers and militants. According to Renard (2003) these organizations offer an alternative way of doing business that improves the living conditions of the poor in developing countries and changes the unequal structures of international trade.

The result was a slow but continuous process of evolution, harmonization and construction of concepts, principles and instruments for cooperation among these different groups of organizations and practitioners, which prevails until today. An important milestone for the fair trade movement is the alternative forms of trade that first appeared in collaborative form at the end of the 1980s, namely the International Federation for Alternative Trade (IFAT).

In 1990, a European association of 12 big importers of ethnic products was created and named as the European Fair Trade Association (EFTA). A few years later, in 1994, the Network of European World Shops (NEWS!) was also created. In the same year, but in the United States, the Fair Trade Federation (FTF) was launched as an organization representing around a hundred traders that were

selling products under the fair trade label in the U.S. and Canada. Today, after more than a decade of experience, the Fair Trade Labelling Organization International (FLO), IFAT, NEWS!, EFTA form a group called FINE, created in 1998, whose objective is not only the exchange of concepts, principles and common practices but also to set standards and certification for the fair trade movement (Sampaio & Flores, 2002, pp. 20-21). In this sense, FINE is considered to be an informal association of the four main fair trade networks operating in different regions of the world.

In Europe, fair trade is mainly structured in networks of shops (so called world shops) and traders (importers and exporters). The first group aggregates consumers and retailers, responsible for acknowledging the value of the products. The second group refers to foreign trade operators that organize the South-North trade. According to Watkins and Fowler (2002), today many of these actors have a voice in the international fair trade debate, with significant participation in setting up new trade rules.

In terms of definitions, there have been many and varied attempts to define fair trade over time (Goodman, 2004; Raynolds, 2000, 2002; Raynolds *et al.*, 2007; Raynolds & Long, 2007; Renard, 2003). However, FINE has developed a widely accepted definition that considers fair trade as a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect, which seeks greater equity in international trade. According to FINE, it contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights for, marginalized producers and workers, especially in the South. The goals of fair trade are generally defined as:

1. To improve the livelihoods and well-being of producers by improving market access, strengthening producer organizations, paying a better price and providing continuity in the trading relationship;
2. To promote development opportunities for disadvantaged producers, especially women and indigenous people, and to protect children from exploitation in the production process;
3. To raise awareness among consumers of the negative effects on producers of international trade so that they exercise their purchasing power positively;
4. To set an example of partnership in trade through dialogue, transparency and respect;
5. To campaign for changes in the rules and practices of conventional international trade;
6. To protect human rights by promoting social justice, sound environmental practices and economic security.

Tallontire (2000) brought a historical perspective to demonstrate the evolution of the fair trade movement (Table 1). From mid-1950s to early 1970s, NGOs began selling goods produced by people with whom they were working on development and relief projects. From 1970s to late 1980s, these organizations began to look for new sets of producers. These were typically groups of producers organized collectively or based in countries that explicitly challenged the prevailing economic order. The messages to consumers were frequently politically motivated; their purchase was seen as an expression of solidarity with group of producers or producing countries. In the 1990s, these organizations started to look at consumer needs and new ways to balance these needs with those of the producers. Consumer marketing, product development and product quality all became important concerns marking increased commercial awareness.

Table 1

Evolution of Fair Trade Movement

Period	Characteristic	Location
1950s-1970s	Goods sold as outcome of development and relief projects	USA and Europe
1970s-1980s	Search for new producers from the South that were challenging authoritarian regimes	Africa and Latin America
1990s-today	Adoption of market-oriented strategies such as consumer marketing, product development and product quality	Africa, Asia, Latin America, Eastern European Countries

Note. Source: The author based on Tallontire, A. (2000). Partnerships in fair trade: reflections from a case study of Cafedirect. *Development in Practice*, 10(2), 166-177. doi: 10.1080/09614520050010205; Raynolds, L. T., & Long, M. A. (2007). Fair/alternative trade: historical and empirical dimensions. In L. T. Raynolds, D. L. Murray, & J. Wilkinson (Eds.), *Fair trade: the challenges of transforming globalization* (pp. 15-32). New York: Routledge.

Fair Trade in Brazil: Small Farmers and Civil Society

Fair trade initiatives in Brazil began in the early 1970s, strongly attached to the work of grassroots and community-based organizations supported by European church-based organizations working on capacity-building issues and empowerment of small farmers. Nevertheless, it was the initiative of the **fair juice**, an experimental project by the Fairtrade Labelling Organization (FLO) involving orange producers from the South of Brazil (Paranavaí-PR) that introduced the practice of fair trade in the country. The project involved the commerce of orange juice produced by a company called Citrus S/A to Switzerland, Austria and Germany. The result of the experience was positive in economic terms and fostered significant social improvements; such as work-force regularization and the elimination of child labor, among other important social advances, which were basic conditions to become a member of the FLO certification system.

Based on the origins and evolution of the fair trade movement, the development of these practices in Brazil has initially followed the classic pathway of the Southern producers that are encouraged to pursue the standards of the Northern consumers in order to get a 'fair' compensation for their products. In this sense, the participation in the fair trade movement implies knowledge of business management, ranging from simple accounting techniques to the sustainable use and conservation of natural resources. Usually, these tasks are far beyond the capabilities of many local communities if they are intending to get involved in exporting their products and becoming part of the international trade. These different capabilities demand efforts in areas that are not directly linked to the production and commercialization of the products, such as education and capacity building. Therefore, the development of the fair trade movement in Brazil was hindered by the context of the country, marked by deep and historical inequalities, lack of public services and adequate public policies in many rural areas. The result was that many of the interested communities could not participate, as they could not fit into the foreign trade standards.

In order to overcome these barriers, a group of organizations joined together under the name of Brazilian Forum for Solidary Trade (FACES do Brasil) in 2001. This group of more than 1000 organizations was composed by civil society organizations (*e.g.* NGOs), producers, representatives from ministries and State governments, trade unions and corporations. The idea was to start a wide debate across different sectors that would be able to support the construction and implementation of a fair trade system in the Brazil. This fair trade system was envisioned as an instrument to promote and enhance local sustainable development initiatives based on the principles of social inclusion (C. L. França, 2003, pp. 6-7).

After years of discussion and consultation with its participating members, this group has elaborated a proposal for a National Fair Trade System (Sistema Nacional de Comércio Justo e Solidário) that was delivered to the Brazilian national government in 2008. This document establishes regulations, mechanisms, and sources of funding in order that fair trade can be the focus of specific public policies from different levels of government in the future. At this moment, this proposal is being evaluated and discussed by the Brazilian Ministry of Labor.

The Arte Baniwa: Actors, Organization and Results

Background

For decades indigenous people in the Northwest Brazilian Amazon have been part of a typical and highly unfair trading mechanism called *aviamento*: an arrangement in which they have to buy the goods that are needed to support their livelihood on credit and at inflated prices. This exploitative system is mostly controlled by the river merchants that operate within this region of the country (Figure 1). As currency in these communities is scarce, the Baniwa people were accustomed to pay for these goods by selling or exchanging their basketwork (Wright, 2009). As a result of the low value offered for their products (basketwork) by the petty merchants – that are called *patrão* (patron) – and the inflated prices that are charged for food, clothing and different types of gear, many Baniwa individuals lived in perpetual debt to the merchants.

The *aviamento* system and practice is still widespread in the Northwest Brazilian Amazon and exists in many similar forms throughout Brazil and South America. Although it undermines the development and well-being of the communities, its primary function is to secure the supply of goods in remote areas of these regions as means of bridging the gap between the traditional indigenous livelihood and the market-based economy in which many of these communities are becoming part in the recent years.

For almost one hundred years, the Baniwa people had been exchanging their basketry in the remoteness of the Northwest Brazilian Amazon. However, in recent decades, their condition had been worsening due to several reasons. The practice of exchanging baskets for second-hand clothing began many decades ago with the Catholic mission. Later on it started to be practiced with the *patrão* through the *aviamento* system. As a result, the prices and values of the Baniwa basketwork have decreased considerably, with a disregard for their indigenous cultural importance and representation. However, even under these unfair schemes of exchange and trade, the Baniwa baskets have had an important presence in the regional markets of the Northwest Brazilian Amazon since the 1970s (Wright, 2009). According to the interviews undertaken, this situation has been seen as one of the main barriers to the Baniwa community's social and economic development.

In 1992, trying to change this situation, a group of Baniwa artisans⁽⁵⁾ called for the leaders of their representative organization, the Indigenous Organization of the Içana Basin (OIBI) to take collective action about this problem. This group of Baniwa demanded that their leader should try to find alternatives to overcome these historical barriers and bypass these existing unfair trading networks. In this context, it is important to highlight that until then there were only few examples of social mobilization in the indigenous territory of the Northwest Brazilian Amazon.

As the context matters for the understanding of these processes, Brazil had approved its current Federal Constitution in 1988 after more than 20 years of non-democratic regimes (military dictatorship). The newly adopted Constitution gave special emphasis to human rights and introduced a number of new policy frameworks such as indigenous people's rights. Following this important milestone and institutional environment, there was a **boom** of indigenous civic engagement, especially in the Amazon region where different indigenous communities reside in vast areas of country. This movement was part of the struggle to demarcate the various indigenous territories, which still today

represents an immense area of the State of Amazonas (AM) in Brazil. It was also the main concern and motivation of the recently created indigenous organizations such as the Federation of Indigenous Organizations of the Rio Negro (FOIRN)⁽⁶⁾ that was established in 1987 with massive support from ISA and other important civil society organizations dedicated to support the indigenous people and their rights.

Under the guidance of FOIRN, each one of the 23 indigenous groups located across the Negro River region has created their own representative association to become members of FOIRN. One of these member organizations was OIBI, founded in 1992 by senior Baniwa leaders. By that time, ISA and its partners had already carried out local assessments and surveys within all the indigenous communities residing in the Northwest Brazilian Amazon. The idea for mapping these communities was to get to know the different groups better and be able to select particular groups for pilot development projects in consultation with local leaders. ISA also coordinated the entire operation for the demarcation of the indigenous areas with FOIRN.

According to Wright (2009) it was by that time that ISA started the discussions with FOIRN about which type of sustainable development projects would be possible to implement in this Amazon region. The main concern of these organizations was to accommodate projects that could generate economic resources with which the Baniwa people would be able maintain their traditional livelihood.

Following these conversations, several initiatives and projects were piloted in the region involving different Baniwa communities. These projects were mainly focused on education (*e.g.* indigenous schools) and income generation (*e.g.* handicrafts and indigenous artwork). As the Baniwa people had many years of experience in doing their traditional basketry work, projects aiming at handicrafts and artwork were most welcomed by the communities.

Basketwork takes a central position in the Baniwa people lifestyle. *Arumã* utensils such as *tipiti* (a cassava/yuca paste masher), sieves and straw baskets - made with varied designs and different sizes - are essential pieces of the traditional Baniwa culture. Since the indigenous artisans did not have any bargaining power to negotiate their basketwork with prospective buyers due to the distance that separates these communities from the larger urban centers, they decided that OIBI itself would be responsible for trading their products. The *aviamento* system was also an important barrier that had to be considered as these communities were embedded within and virtually imprisoned by such an unfair scheme.

It is important to consider the moment of intense social organization that these communities were experiencing as many Baniwa groups and their leaders were mobilized for the process of indigenous land demarcation. For that reason, leaders and the indigenous representative organizations could neither dedicate much time to the problem of the Baniwa artisans nor find a solution for this problem in the short term. Despite that, OIBI made a few meager attempts to sell the Baniwa baskets to small local shops and to the few tourists that that visited the region. However, this led to a continued deterioration these groups' livelihood over the years.

Still during the indigenous land demarcation, OIBI made the first comprehensive effort to sell the Baniwa baskets in 1994 at an indigenous fair in Manaus, capital of the State of Amazonas (AM). During this event, the OIBI was able to make contact with a big company and the Baniwa artisans received their first order of 5.000 *urutus*⁽⁷⁾. However, despite the promising prospects of this attempt, the poor quality of the baskets was one of the main factors for the lack of success of this initiative.

Data collected during the fieldwork has shown that the poor quality of the baskets (and other Baniwa products in general) was directly linked to the *aviamento* system as the artisans had no incentives to produce high quality baskets. On the other hand, the bad quality of the baskets undermined the potential for partnerships as well as the possibility for better prices for these products in the future.

The demarcation of the indigenous territory in the region ended in 1997. By then, many indigenous communities had to stop mining activities since the new regulation in place imposed severe

restrictions on the newly demarcated indigenous lands⁽⁸⁾. The lack of economic activities and development strategies for indigenous people fostered the migration of many indigenous people to urban centers located in the Northwest Brazilian Amazon, resulting not only in social exclusion and urban poverty, but also in diminished opportunities for the occupation and development of the indigenous territory traditionally occupied by the Baniwa people.

Main actors and their roles and responsibilities

After several unstructured initiatives to sell the Baniwa products, the **Arte Baniwa** project officially began in 1998 by trying to create infrastructure and operational conditions to enable the commercialization of Baniwa products. The project was also trying to strengthen OIBI institutional capacity as a strategy to empower indigenous communities and their representative organizations (Bresler & Oliveira, 2002; Martins & Unterstell, 2009).

When the project started, it was decided that each partner of the **Arte Baniwa** would play a different role (see Table 2 for a summary of these roles and responsibilities). For instance, OIBI was responsible for the mobilization of interested Baniwa artisans, the organization of annual workshops, and the coordination of the logistics and quality control of the products. It was also responsible for the administration and finance of the project. FOIRN, as the federation of the indigenous representative organizations, was chosen to provide the political and institutional support for OIBI and had an important operational role in the initial phase of the project as OIBI and the Baniwa artisans did not have the necessary infrastructure to run the project. ISA was responsible for providing technical support to OIBI and the Baniwa artisans as well as for coordinating contacts with consumer markets outside of the Northwest Brazilian Amazon. In specific terms, it was helping OIBI identify potential buyers and stores, and supporting OIBI in developing pricing policies and selling conditions through the development of a business plan. ISA was also coordinating fundraising activities with international donors to provide the necessary funding for the project's main activities (Martins & Unterstell, 2009).

In this sense, ISA can be considered a key actor in the project, deserving of some background information. The origin of ISA dates back to 1970s when there was a Brazilian NGO named Centro Ecumênico de Documentação e Informação (CEDI). More than a NGO, it was also a network of social and environmental projects linked to the Protestant churches in Brazil. Their most important project was called the **Indigenous People in Brazil** (*Povos Indígenas no Brasil*) which was aimed at documenting the situation of indigenous groups across the country. In the late 1980s, members of CEDI decided to create a new organization. This new organization was named Instituto Socioambiental (ISA) and gathered internationally-known researchers and activists whose projects were mainly funded by European organizations and other major donor organizations⁽⁹⁾ interested in supporting indigenous rights and community development in Brazil and other Latin American countries (Wright, 2009).

It is also important to note that the leadership of OIBI in the whole process went beyond any expectation. Since its inception, the **Arte Baniwa** project has become a national initiative with prospective contacts in Austria and The Netherlands, among others, that opened real possibilities for future exports of Baniwa baskets. The project has been able to demonstrate its social and ecological sustainability. Today, it is estimated that 20% of the Baniwa population in the Northwest Brazilian Amazon is directly or indirectly participating in it (Wright, 2009).

The production of baskets and other Baniwa products

Besides producing *arumã* utensils for self-use, the Baniwa people have been able to commercialize their excess production of baskets. In this sense, one of the leading principles of the **Arte Baniwa** project is to preserve the harmony between the basketwork on a commercial scale with the rest of the Baniwa community-based activities. Following their traditional culture, the basketwork production needs to be combined with the rest of the Baniwa way of living that includes time for hunting, fishing and practicing subsistence agriculture.

In general, the Baniwa people spend significant time in the basket production. In terms of the distribution of labor, the Baniwa men are deeply engaged in the hand-making basket activity in the majority of the communities, although there are some women that do it as well. Participative observations have revealed that it takes between 2 up to 3 days to produce a medium-sized basket (Wright, 2009). The balance between the traditional indigenous lifestyle and the basketwork for commercial purposes is encouraged by OIBI, for whom the idea of the project is to not disturb the indigenous life inside the communities. In this sense, the artisan is the one who is supposed to determine when and how much he is going to produce⁽¹⁰⁾.

The commercialization of Baniwa products

Since the beginning of the project, the disjointed attempts at commercializing the Baniwa products have been replaced by a more structured way to find market opportunities for the emerging **Arte Baniwa**. One of the first potential outlets identified was an annual flower fair called ExpoFlora that is held every year in Holambra, in the state of São Paulo (SP). The idea was to sell the Baniwa baskets as flower-holders, a unique decorative piece for homes and offices. A large order of baskets was placed by different participants of the fair, and 200 Baniwa artisans were mobilized to produce hundreds of baskets in a short period of time. However, problems with the shipping of the products from the Northwest Brazilian Amazon to the State of São Paulo (SP) and the lack of any institutional sponsorship at the fair resulted in poor sales and revenues, disappointing the artisans after the hard work. As a result, many of the participant artisans abandoned the project, suspicious of its real potential and credibility (Martins & Unterstell, 2009; Unterstell & Martins, 2004; Wright, 2009).

Although this was an important setback, the search for commercial partners for the **Arte Baniwa** project continued and resulted in the identification of one of the major furniture and home decoration stores in Brazil, called Tok & Stok, as a potential outlet. With the intermediation of ISA, the store decided to buy all the Baniwa products that had not been sold at the ExpoFlora fair in order to minimize the losses. In addition, Tok & Stok placed an order for more baskets, paying three times more than the artisans were used to receiving for their work in the local markets of the Northwest Brazilian Amazon. With these two actions, Tok & Stok thus became a privileged partner and outlet of the **Arte Baniwa** project.

The evolution of the project was followed by contacts with a major Brazilian retailer possessing the largest network of supermarkets in the country. The partnership with this chain, the Pão de Açúcar Group, was responsible not only for giving great visibility to the Baniwa products, but also for introducing the element of competitive pricing to the project, as the company had more strict commercial policies than the other buyers and partners of the project. This partnership with the Pão de Açúcar Group was only possible because there were long discussions between the company and the project (Unterstell & Martins, 2004).

These important landmarks were responsible for increases in the basket production covering the period between the late 1990s and 2005, when the fieldwork and data collection for this paper was performed. The success of the **Arte Baniwa** project has obviously benefited the indigenous organization OIBI, the Baniwa communities affiliated with the project, and the ISA. For the ISA as a NGO that defends the indigenous rights, it was important to demonstrate the feasibility of this type of project by showing that these initiatives can be sustainable in social, economic and ecological ways. The **Arte Baniwa** is recognized as a sustainable development project, thus materializing its belief in the interdependence between biodiversity and socio-diversity (Unterstell & Martins, 2004).

Despite the initial difficulties of establishing connections with market agents, the **Arte Baniwa** project has been passing through periods of growth and public recognition. The number of artisans involved has grown from the initial 20 to more than 120 over the years. The total number of baskets commercialized rose to more than 10,000 per year, as well as a doubling of the revenues distributed to the Baniwa artisans during the period (late 1990s-2005).

The local economy of the Northwest Brazilian Amazon is still unable to consume and absorb the production of Baniwa basketwork. The local shops are still embedded in the perverse logic of paying low prices for the local products, reserving the profits for the river merchants (*patrão*). Even though it is difficult to change this situation, small sales were made to some local stores. Usually, the baskets sold in the local markets are those that do not meet the quality standards established by the **Arte Baniwa** project (Unterstell & Martins, 2004).

Between Fair Trade and Sustainable Development: Understanding the Boundaries

After the narrative that contextualized the **Arte Baniwa** in terms of its history, organization and development, the analysis of the case study is two-fold. First, the inter-organizational relationships between the main actors within the project are analyzed. The presence of two different logics that create tensions within project are identified and discussed. In order to moderate these tensions, it is argued that the ISA has to act as a **boundary organization** (Cash *et al.*, 2003; Guston, 2000, 2001).

The second aspect of the analyses encompasses some characteristics of many fair trade experiences that grow in Brazil embedded in a broader movement that seeks to generate income and provide development alternatives to traditional communities building on the work of local-based initiatives led by community-based organizations with support from national and international NGOs.

The presence of different logics and the need for boundary organizations

It is possible to identify the presence of two different logics within the **Arte Baniwa** project. The first one is marked by the hegemony of the market and the principles that it follows. For the purpose of this paper, this logic is being called instrumental. The other logic that was possible to identify is based on shared visions and values, fair compensation for the products and co-responsibility between the actors involved in the project. It is called solidary. This solidary logic contributes to the construction of equal relationships in the social economy (C. L. França, 2003; G. C. França, 2001, 2003; Santos & Rodríguez-Garavito, 2006).

As it has been argued above, ISA is an essential actor with the project. It is responsible for promoting the dialogue between the two logics: instrumental and solidary. On one side, there is the conventional consumer market composed of powerful retailing groups: large commercial chains that use structured marketing activities and whose principles are usually low costs and high profits. On the other side, there are the consumers and shops interested in products that encompass the ethnic, cultural and social complexity of communities such as the Baniwa people from the Northwest Brazilian Amazon. Different from usual technical advisors, experts or consultants, ISA has become an intermediary interface between these two different realities (instrumental and solidary). Thus, ISA uses its technical and institutional capacity to articulate different actors in order to achieve fair trade and sustainable development goals. It connects the indigenous communities located in the Northwest Brazilian Amazon with important urban centers such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro where there are prospects for business activities, as well as potential consumers and buyers for the Baniwa products.

Empirical evidence collected during the fieldwork showed that ISA plays a double role. First, it acts as a mediator absorbing the tension between the **market** (*e.g.* retailers, conventional consumers, and local intermediaries) and the Baniwa community (*e.g.* OIBI, FOIRN, Baniwa artisans). Second, it is also a mechanism through which new solidary relationships encourage market agents to understand and apply concepts of social justice, indigenous rights, and social and cultural respect. This new way to look at producers and put into practice business activities are at the base of the fair trade movement. The tensions that result from the dispute between the two different logics are mediated and processed by the ISA in a constructive way. By doing so, the NGO can empower the indigenous communities and build their capacities to deal with the external world, made up of market agents (see Table 2).

Table 2

Actors and Their Roles within the Project

Actors	Roles and responsibilities
Instituto Socioambiental (ISA)	Communication, translation and mediation of different knowledge systems acting as a boundary organization. Dialogue between the traditional Baniwa people and the retailers, international donors
Indigenous Organization of the Rio Negro (FOIRN)	Political support and guidance in the beginning of the project
Indigenous Organization of the Içana Basin (OIBI)	Leadership, steering, coordination and mobilization of different types of capitals (social, political, financial, cultural and environmental)
International donors (many over the years; see Unterstell & Martins, 2004 for a complete list)	Seed funding for the project
Commercial partners (mainly Tok & Stok and Pão de Açúcar)	Commercial partnership based on differentiated patterns of relationships in order to encompass the traditional knowledge and livelihood
Local shops and river merchants	Exploitative <i>aviamento</i> mechanism; main reason for needing to search for economic alternatives and sustainable development

Note. Source: The author. Based on Unterstell, N., & Martins, R. D. A. (2004, July). Project arte Baniwa: possibilities for the development of the fair trade in Brazil. *Proceedings of the International Conference of the International Society for Third Sector Research*, Toronto, Canadá, 6; Wright, R. M. (2009). The art of being crente: the baniwa protestant ethic and the spirit of sustainable development. *Identities: global studies in culture and power*, 16(2), 202-226. doi: 10.1080/10702890902739410; Martins, R. D. A., & Unterstell, N. (2009). Comércio justo, saberes locais e articulação de atores: lições do projeto arte Baniwa no Brasil. *Administração Pública & Governança Social*, 1(4), 44-64.

As a contribution to the literature and a new approach for the analyses of fair trade experiences and its organizations, this paper proposes the metaphor of the ISA being considered a **boundary organization**. The concept of boundary organization was developed by Guston (2000) and others based on the field of science, technology and policy studies. Boundary organizations have been defined as an organization **between politics and science**. Several authors have begun to demonstrate that these institutions, which are neither laboratories nor conventional political organizations, are increasingly prevalent features of the institutional landscape of modern society and play key roles in managing the interactions between science and politics, economics, and culture (Guston, 2000, 2001; Miller, 2001).

For the purpose of this paper, boundary organizations refer to those organizations, social arrangements, and networks that increasingly mediate the tensions between the agents and institutions of **market** and the local (*e.g.* rural, traditional, indigenous) communities. In this sense, Cash *et al.* (2003) recognize the capacity for mobilizing and using science and technology as an essential component of strategies for promoting sustainable development. Using examples from diverse contexts, the authors argue that efforts have been made in the last century to enhance such capacity by developing many activities and social technologies, such as providing more efficient cooking stoves for burning biomass in Africa. Boundary organizations are able to link knowledge to action through a dynamic and synergistic relationship. In order to be effective, it is necessary to manage the boundaries between knowledge and action in ways that simultaneously enhance the credibility and legitimacy of the dialogue in which they are part. Cash *et al.* (2003) characterized the three functions that contributed most to what they called **boundary management** (see Table 3).

Table 3

Boundary Management

Function	Characteristics
Communication	Active, iterative and inclusive communication between experts and practitioners from ISA and the Baniwa community proved crucial to combining traditional and Western cultures
Translation	Linking knowledge to action requires not only open channels of communication but also that participants understand each other under a set of common values (fair trade, sustainable development, etc.)
Mediation	Translation can facilitate information flow between the actors when they are divided by different languages, usages, and histories. Mobilizing different knowledge requires active mediation of those conflicts

Note. Source: The author after Cash, D. W., Clark, W. C., Alcock, F., Dickson, N. M., Eckley, N., Guston, D. H., Jäger, J., & Mitchell, R. B. (2003). Knowledge systems for sustainable development. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*, 100(14), 8086-8091. doi: 10.1073/pnas.1231332100

Building on the boundary management approach, the **Arte Baniwa** project challenges the usual market agents that are interested in participating in such initiative by supporting the fair trade and sustainable development principles, following the same pathway that the American and European organizations did in the 1950s, 60s and 70s (Tallontire, 2000). Thus, it pressures these companies to account for the unique and symbolic values available in the Baniwa basketwork. Also, it not only highlights the social and cultural diversity, but also the sustainable use of natural resources available in the Northwest Brazilian Amazon. The project exemplifies the potential of sustainable development practices in the Amazon region and, more broadly, the livelihood of the indigenous people located in that particular area.

Lessons for sustainable development and fair trade in Brazil

After the 1990s, the interest in studying local sustainable development increased in Brazil and in Latin American countries as a result of economic globalization, unpopular and unsuccessful neoliberal policies, and the decentralization of governance structures in different sectors. Some recent analyses in Brazil point to the local level as a privileged space for experimentation and alternative development even when considering its limitations in terms of potential for large scale transformations (Martins & Caldas, 2009; Martins, Vaz, & Caldas, 2010; Santos & Rodríguez-Garavito, 2006). One of the key messages arising from the empirical evidence is that the local level provides an opportunity for the actors to mobilize different forms of resources (*e.g.* financial, human, technical, and natural) and capital (*e.g.* social, cultural, and political) that are important elements for promoting sustainable development practices (Kates *et al.*, 2001; Lehtonen, 2004; Martins *et al.*, 2010).

The most recent fair trade experiences in Brazil began in the late 1990s and early 2000s. For this reason, many can be considered either in early stages of implementation or still in the maturation period. This fact constitutes a major limitation for a comprehensive analysis of these initiatives and of the sector as a whole. Previous research that focused on local development practices and social economy enterprises highlighted the need of time (*e.g.* years, maybe more than a decade) for the analysis of these experiences. This is due to the social and economic maturation process. Only after this period is it possible to assess if the initiatives can generate convincing results (Lehtonen, 2004; Martins *et al.*, 2010; Martins & Caldas, 2009; Santos & Rodríguez-Garavito, 2006). If the analysis is carried out too early, it is difficult to have a deep understanding of particular aspects, as the social dynamics within these initiatives take time to develop and preliminary analysis can be misleading.

Another subject that deserves attention is that in a country with continental dimensions like those in Brazil, there are significant regional differences that cannot be underestimated. In this sense,

although dissemination is necessary and encouraged, replication of experiences embedded in specific contexts can have different developments and results in other locations.

However, based on evidence from the **Arte Baniwa** project, it is possible to draw some lessons that are not often addressed in the current literature regarding fair trade and sustainable development practices. Building on what different authors have been discussing about these experiences in Brazil (*i.e.* Bresler & Oliveira, 2002; G. C. França, 2002, 2003; Martins & Caldas, 2009; Martins *et al.*, 2010; Martins & Unterstell, 2009; Tiburcio & Valente, 2007; Unterstell & Martins, 2004; Vieira & Maia, 2009; Wilkinson & Mascarenhas, 2007; Wright, 2009) this paper seeks to provide a contribution to literature by adding an additional set of conditions that are relevant to promote not only good results, but also fair trade and sustainable development practices in the country.

As one of the most important lessons, securing regular funding and support to cover major expenses during the initial phases of the project appeared as being an important feature that needs to be taken into account when developing projects like the **Arte Baniwa**. Otherwise, there is the risk of demobilizing the community in the short term as substantial results usually take some time to materialize as discussed above. In this direction, although with some setbacks during the first years, the **Arte Baniwa** project was able to have several donors and funding partners during various phases of its implementation, including public and international organizations (Unterstell & Martins, 2004; Wright, 2009). As important as financial resources, political and institutional support are also essential. In the case of the **Arte Baniwa**, the support of the indigenous organizations (*i.e.* OIBI and its federation FOIRN) was crucial for legitimate the project and its main actors with the Baniwa artisans and their communities.

Another lesson that can be mentioned is the presence of organizations that do not only provide technical assistance, but also are able to perform the **boundary management** between different actors, values, interests, and knowledge (Cash *et al.*, 2003). These **boundary organizations** are much more than institutional partners of these projects. They have to be able to play different roles according to each of the project's stakeholders. For this reason, they are able to exercise several capacities in various arenas. When dealing with distinct contexts, products, and cultures, like in the case of the **Arte Baniwa**, the complexity of this role increases considerably.

As a consequence, a network perspective is often argued to be the best approach to manage complexity and address complex situations where diverse actors from differing sectors come together to share resources and knowledge (Kickert, Klijn, & Koppenjan, 1997). In this sense, Weber and Khademian (2008) suggested that any effort to effectively manage complex problems will require effort to draw on a broad range of knowledge from the technical to the local and from within the network or without. New knowledge must also be developed to address the complexities and to serve as a premise for cooperation, not command and control (Brown, 2009). The Table 4 summarizes the main lessons of the **Arte Baniwa** project for fair trade and sustainable development initiatives that are not often addressed in the literature concerning these experiences in Brazil.

Table 4

Main Lessons of the Arte Baniwa Project

Conditions	Contribution
Financial, political, and institutional support	Provide the conditions for the implementation of the project and support the community mobilization during the maturation period of the initiatives; legitimate the project and its main actors with community members and other important stakeholders
Boundary management and boundary organizations	Mediate between the different tensions, values, cultures, interests, and expectations; translate different knowledge, contexts, and values to the main actors; avoid conflicts and other setbacks; empower and build the capacity of disadvantaged communities
Network approach	Manage the complexity of fair trade and sustainable development projects; navigate between various stakeholders that have different backgrounds, contexts, knowledge, and values; promote coordination and cooperation, going beyond command and control practices

Note. Source: The author after Kickert, W. J. M., Klijn, E.-H., & Koppenjan, J. F. M. (Eds.). (1997). *Managing complex networks*. London: SAGE Publications Inc.; Cash, D. W., Clark, W. C., Alcock, F., Dickson, N. M., Eckley, N., Guston, D. H., Jäger, J., & Mitchell, R. B. (2003). Knowledge systems for sustainable development. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*, 100(14), 8086-8091. doi: 10.1073/pnas.1231332100; Weber, E. P., & Khademian, A. M. (2008). Wicked problems, knowledge challenges, and collaborative capacity builders in network settings. *Public Administration Review*, 68(2), 334-349. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-6210.2007.00866.x; Martins, R. D. A., & Unterstell, N. (2009). Comércio justo, saberes locais e articulação de atores: lições do projeto arte Baniwa no Brasil. *Administração Pública & Governança Social*, 1(4), 44-64; Wright, R. M. (2009). The art of being crente: the baniwa protestant ethic and the spirit of sustainable development. *Identities: global studies in culture and power*, 16(2), 202-226. doi: 10.1080/10702890902739410; Martins, R. D. A., Vaz, J. C., & Caldas, E. L. (2010). A gestão do desenvolvimento local no Brasil: (des)articulação de atores, instrumentos e território. *Revista de Administração Pública*, 44(3), 559-590. doi: 10.1590/S0034-76122010000300002

Conclusion

There are many possibilities of thinking about the development of fair trade and sustainable development led by traditional and indigenous communities in Brazil. In this direction, this paper did not consider all the questions related to fair trade, such as the certification of products (see for instance Vieira & Maia, 2009 in this journal). On the other hand, it has shown that looking at the interaction between actors through the case study methodology and use of ethnography and participative observation can provide a useful and robust approach for analyzing fair trade experiences in this particular context such as in the case of the **Arte Baniwa** from the Northwest Brazilian Amazon. This analytical framework illustrated how particular roles and practices are performed by different social actors and identified the tension between the two logics that operate within the project. However, this case study also has many limitations, as it did not attempt to consider the whole fair trade sector in Brazil and its main actors and stakeholders. In this sense, it does not allow further generalizations or a comprehensive analysis of many of these initiatives.

There are many sustainable development experiences led by community organizations throughout Brazil that are not connected to each other. This fact undermines the broad dissemination of concepts and practices. Typically, this lack of coordination between initiatives restricts access to markets and hinders the socio-economic impacts of these experiences. This paper has shown that the **Arte Baniwa** has managed to overcome some these barriers with the presence of ISA acting as a boundary organization. By communicating, translating and mediating between traditional knowledge,

different values, cultures and market agents, ISA managed to mobilize its capacity to promote a sustainable development initiative.

In the initial phase of the diffusion and practice of fair trade in Brazil, the work of civil society organizations and NGOs was essential for providing a pathway for future advances. The dialogue and trust built in the relationships between these organizations and the communities allowed them to coordinate efforts and act as intermediary and boundary organizations both on the demand and supply side. They are also able to advocate politically on the concept of sustainable development and movement of fair trade.

The existing tension between the market (instrumental) and the co-responsible relationships between producers and buyers (solidary) is one of the most critical aspects that these experiences have to face. In this particular case study, these tensions were mediated by ISA performing what have been called the boundary management (Cash *et al.*, 2003). It allowed the construction of what was defined as a space between the market and the State, with no intentions to substitute the traditional economic development or to accept it (G. C. França, 2002). It was about articulating different types of knowledge, at several levels, and being able to mediate between interests and goals of the different logics.

Despite the good results obtained so far, the project still needs to consider a number of issues. A primary aspect is that an important share of ethnic and fair trade products worldwide are consumed in foreign markets, mainly in developed countries (*e.g.* Europe, USA, Canada and Australia), showing a strong influence of earlier pioneer experiences in fair trade. However, local and regional markets offer potential opportunities for the future and are important for consideration of the distribution and commercialization of these products. They can contribute to reduce internal inequalities and create opportunities for social inclusion and poverty alleviation. There is also the need for a legal framework to support these initiatives. The lack of an adequate legal and institutional framework can be challenging to both national and foreign initiatives as the tax and accounting systems in Brazil are often too complicated to be understood and applied by the communities and their organizations. It leads to the fact that many experiences cannot grow in scale or operate in the formal market.

A second aspect that should be considered and that will require further investigation and research is to what extent these boundary organizations that mediate between different actors, values, knowledge and interests create a new pattern of dependency for the communities. In the case of the **Arte Baniwa** project, this dependence is not very clear at the moment although it is possible to argue that ISA had an important position and presence that many times made it difficult to differentiate between its different roles and responsibilities. On the other hand, it is clear that ISA was able to build the capacity of the indigenous organizations over the years through the project and its other activities. It is also clear that if there is another pattern of dependency, it is completely different from the one present in the *aviamento* system. Although these patterns of dependency are very important for the development and future of these experiences, it was not the purpose of this paper to investigate these particular relationships between the actors. In this sense, specific research is needed in order to uncover these relationships within the **Arte Baniwa** and other initiatives.

The analysis of fair trade and sustainable development practices demands an open view of the whole process to acknowledge not only the context that matters but also the value of non-economic results such as empowerment, rights and knowledge. Usually these experiences do not fit into conventional business and economic models. However, it is important to look at the diversity of experiences to identify issues that could guide the intervention of civil society, communities and the government in its different levels to promote sustainable forms of development for marginalized and excluded groups. The **Arte Baniwa** case study provides insights on the network of actors and their roles to implement such initiatives.

Received 13 January 2010; received in revised form 7 January 2011.

Acknowledgements

The author is indebted to Natalie Unterstell for conducting the fieldwork, collecting data, and providing insights in earlier versions of the manuscript. This paper draws extensively on earlier work that have well-documented the Arte Baniwa project. It has also benefitted from discussions with participants of the 6th International Conference of the International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR), First National Conference on Public Administration and Governance (EnAPG), and the 4th International Meeting of the Iberoamerican Academy of Management as well as from comments received from anonymous reviewers. The author acknowledges the financial support received from the Brazilian Federal Agency for Support and Evaluation of Graduate Education (CAPES). Although the fieldwork received support from the Instituto Socioambiental (ISA), the ideas and arguments presented in the paper are the responsibility of the author and do not represent institutional positions.

Notes

¹ It is a form of empowerment of workers, producers and farmers who are in disadvantage or have been excluded from traditional trade (C. L. França, 2003).

² The Baniwa people is an *Aruak* group whose settlements are spread along the Içana and Aiary River Basins, branches of the Negro River in the Northwest Amazon (Brazil, Colombia and Venezuela). In Brazil, they are about 12.000 people and inhabit a vast area (100.000 km²) in the so-called **Dog's head** in the State of Amazonas (AM) (see Figure 1). The specific Baniwa communities analyzed in this paper are located along the Içana River Basin. Patterns of settlement are based on a political and territorial division of consanguine groups, resulting in the appropriation of distinct micro-ecosystems, which means access to food resources.

³ It is a vegetal fiber, *genus Ischnosiphon*, which is used by various riverside and indigenous populations in the Amazon region to create utensils that are used in the subsistence agriculture for the cultivation of manioc. There are various types of utensils such as baskets, strainers, fans, and manioc presses.

⁴ **Arte Baniwa** is the brand that identifies a sustainable development project launched in 1998 based on production and commercialization of basketwork, which are produced by the Baniwa people from the Northwest Brazilian Amazon. The project receives the assistance of the Instituto Socioambiental (ISA), a major NGO in Brazil.

⁵ These first actions were only possible because of the financial support received from international donor organizations, such as the Interchurch Organization for Development Co-operation (ICCO).

⁶ Founded in 1987, at the time of the struggle for land regularization, FOIRN was guided by the rights-based approach. It has been guided by the recognition of collective territorial and cultural rights of indigenous peoples as crucial to the fulfillment of their human rights. Today FOIRN has more than 60 member associations, which represent 23 indigenous people spread over 700 communities situated along the Negro River Basin.

⁷ *Urutu* is a basket made of *arumã* fiber, used to separate *cassava* and to store flour, *beiju* and clothing.

⁸ FOIRN had tried economic activities based on the extraction of natural resources but they were stopped shortly after initiating, due to the lack of legal framework for mining activities in indigenous territories.

⁹ Part of the financial support was received from ICCO, Horizont 3000, Friends of the Earth, The Embassy of Denmark, Fundação Nacional de Saúde (FUNASA), Rainforest Foundation (Norway), Ministry of Environment (Brazil - FNMA/MMA/PPG7).

¹⁰ It was highlighted by OIBI's directors (André Fernando, Irineu Laureano Rodrigues and Mário Farias) during interviews conducted in May 2004.

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