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The formation of the Brazilian environmental movement

Angela Alonso, Valeriano Costa and Débora Maciel

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Angela Alonso is a professor in the Department of Sociology of the University of São Paulo and coordinator of the Environmental Conflicts Area at CEBRAP. Valeriano Costa is a professor in the Department of Political Sciences of the University of Campinas and researcher of the Environmental Conflicts Area at CEBRAP. Débora Maciel is a professor of Sociology of Law School of UNIFIEO and researcher of the Environmental Conflicts Area at CEBRAP.

Summary

Relying on a conceptual synthesis provided by the Political Processes Theory, this paper explains the formation of the Brazilian environmental movement from the 1970s to the 1990s. The authors argue that this formation process went through three political opportunity structures – redemocratisation, constituent assembly and Rio 92 – in that each of them provided opportunities for increasing environmental mobilisation as well as forcing isolated environmental groups to answer problems of coordination of collective action, regarding mobilising strategies and frames. Agreements on these points made durable coalitions among environmental groups possible. The answer to these challenges provided the steps for building an environmental movement's identity.

Keywords: Brazilian environmental movement, political opportunity structure, micromobilisation contexts, collective identity, framing processes and mobilising strategies.

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Preface: DRC working paper series on citizens, science and mobilisation

Rapid advances in science and technology are accompanied by changing forms of public engagement, with implications for citizenship. There is evidence both of apparent crises of public confidence in science, linked to the emergence of new risks, uncertainties and threats thrown up by science, technology and its application. At the same time, certain local knowledge is being re-worked as citizen science, in which the public conducts research and engages critically with expert perspectives on scientific and technological issues.

The Citizens and Science Programme of the Citizenship DRC has been exploring emergent engagements between citizens and public issues involving science, and the processes of rights-claiming and participation involved. This inquiry has moved beyond institutionally-orchestrated attempts at public participation in science to look at more spontaneous forms of citizen mobilisation and activism around scientific and technological issues. Across a diversity of issues and contexts and drawing together perspectives from social movement theory and science studies, the Programme has asked:

- Who mobilises and who does not, and why?
- What are the patterns of experience, profiles and identities of activists?
- Within what spaces do debates about science and policy take place, and what processes of inclusion and exclusion exist?
- What forms of knowledge – including values, perceptions and experiences – frame these public engagements and movements?
- How are activist networks constituted, and what diverse forms do they take?
- How do science and scientists become enrolled in these networks?

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1 Introduction

In July 1982, close to the Foz do Iguaçu waterfalls in Guaira, a city in the southern part of Brazil, 3,000 people participated in an indigenous funeral ritual as a protest against the construction of an hydroelectric power plant dam in the Paraná River. This power plant dam would be located in the southern region of the country and would destroy fauna and flora living in the Seven Falls National Park. One newspaper described this protest in the following way: 'Demonstrators stopped seven times along the march and followed the melancholy beat of a drum, carrying a tree seedling and a white flag with a tear-shaped petal in the middle, in addition to a banner that read "Seven Falls will live"' (*O Estado de São Paulo*, 25 July 1982). This march was called 'Good-Bye Seven Falls' and lasted three days. Artists, natural scientists and journalists took part in this event. A network of environmental associations from many regions of the country organised this demonstration.[1]

This episode reveals some of the main features of the Brazilian environmental movement. It is hard not to agree that the description of the above march can be included in the same kind of phenomena called 'new social movements' (NSMs), especially given the presence of non-material grievances and the use of symbolic forms of mobilisation. The problem with this interpretation is that at the time, Brazil lacked the European structural features usually associated with NSMs as described in the literature, including the existence of a new middle class and a consolidated democracy (Offe 1985). At the time, Brazil was under an authoritarian regime and still going through a process of industrialisation and urbanisation, through which the new middle class would be formed.

Therefore, to explain the rise of an environmental movement in Brazil in such context requires a different set of conceptual tools.

2 Main analytical dimensions of environmental movements

Environmental mobilisations have been extensively researched over the last few decades as part of a broad class of social movements. There are competing perspectives and interpretations, each of which emphasise different analytical dimensions. On the one hand, some underline political opportunities and mobilising structures (Political Process); on the other hand, symbolic and cognitive features and collective identity building processes are highlighted (NSMs).

Recently, some of the scholars that use a Political Process approach have produced a synthesis between these perspectives, which takes into account the different dimensions that each school tends to focus on. Diani (1995) argues that social movements are informal organisations that, to be alive, depend on activists sharing experiences as well as on mobilising resources and strategies. Diani even redefines social movements in order to include both symbolic and material dimensions as central features of the phenomenon: 'Social movements are defined as networks of informal interactions between a plurality of

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[1] Mape (Ecological Art and Thinking Movement) and Center of Studies of Paraíba Valley, from São Paulo; Coonatura, from Rio; Southern Association for the Protection of the Natural Environment, from Rio Grande do Sul; and Association of Environmental Defense and Education and Association of the Agronomist Engineers, from Paraná, took part in the event (Urban 2001).

individuals, groups and/or organisations, engaged in political or cultural conflicts, on the basis of shared collective identities' (Diani 1995: 13). Similar work in this direction can be found in a collective project on European environmental movements (Rootes 2003). These analyses concentrate on the transformations of environmental activism over the last two decades by simultaneously considering the political opportunity structures in which environmental movements emerge, the protest forms they use, as well as the frames and identities created by activists during their mobilisation. Gamson (1982) adds to these dimensions the concept of micro-mobilisation contexts in order to describe the micro-social level in which activists interact and build collective identities.

Increasingly, studies in this field have been focusing on the political opportunities and on the strategies activists use to mobilise groups. These strategies are then linked to the initial connection between activists in micro-mobilisation contexts, in which collective identities are created, and to the frames they use to mobilise.

In this paper, we adopt these new perspectives for analysing social movements. We blend a variety of concepts – political opportunity structure, micro-mobilisation contexts, collective identity formation, framing processes and mobilising strategies – in order to explain why the Brazilian environmental movement emerged when and as it did, how activists gathered in groups and networks, and which frames and strategies they constructed in order to mobilise.

Political opportunity structure theory (POS) describes the 'consistent – but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national – dimensions of the political struggle that encourage people to engage in contentious politics' (Tarrow 1998: 20). This concept is usually used to explain the emergence of social movements. Political process theory posits that social movements usually emerge when changes in political opportunities increase the possibilities for social groups to mobilise by opening up existing channels for making claims or creating new ones. This can happen in three main ways. First, political and administrative institutions can become more open to claims from civil society, due to crises in the coalition of the political elite. Second, the forms of political interaction between the state and social movements can change; for instance in the reduction on the level of repression towards mobilisations. Third, potential allies can emerge, such as other social movements, political parties, media, and dissident elites (Kriesi 1995). These factors increase the possibilities of unsatisfied social groups to express their demands in the public arena. In situations where many groups organise themselves to express their grievances, a cycle of protests arises (Tarrow 1983).[2]

POS is used here to understand the particular features of the Brazilian political context in which the environmental movement was formed. Being a middle-range concept, POS makes possible the understanding of the context in which activism takes place, especially at the national political level, which

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[2]   Tarrow (1983: 36) defines them as 'sequences of escalating collective action that are of greater frequency and intensity than normal, that spread throughout various sectors and regions of society and that involve both new techniques of protest and new forms of organisation which, in combination with traditional organisational infrastructures, determine the widening and dynamics of the cycle.'

NSMs theories frequently neglect (Kriesi 1995). It also allows us to bring into our analysis the micro-dimensions of activism that macro-structural analyses usually do not capture, such as the local contexts where mobilisation first arises.

It is within these micro-contexts of social interaction that common citizens become environmental activists. Socioeconomic extraction is not enough to explain why people mobilise around specific issues. Activism arises from micro-mobilisation contexts, such as educational and professional institutions, cultural groups, friendship and neighbourhood networks, in which activists live their everyday lives and engage with others (Mueller 1992: 10). The connection among activists is, first of all, a socio-cultural and personal interaction, in which common interpretations, affective ties and communitarian loyalties are built, as well as a sense of membership to the same group (Gamson 1992; Taylor and Whittier 1992). Specific groups achieve a collective identity from the common experiences activists had before being engaged in social movements. As Jasper (1997) argues, 'Collective identity consists of perceptions of group distinctiveness, boundaries, and interests, for something closer to a community' (Jasper 1997: 86). Hence, it is the process of identity building that brings together isolated citizens into a collective. Following this rationale, we have reconstructed contexts of micro-mobilisation in order to understand how distinctive environmental groups' identities appeared.

Besides building a collective group identity, activists interpret their context, even the most stable features of POS, based on their experiences and perceptions. Snow and Benford (1992) shed some light on the agency involved in this process by redefining the concept of frame alignment. Collective action depends on the activists' ability to build shared interpretations concerning their context. This process occurs through frame production. Frames work as a cognitive mechanism that questions a given social situation, seen before as non-problematic; assigns blame to groups or authorities for being the cause of such situation, and points out strategies – recognised by activists as feasible – to solve the problems (Gamson 1992; Snow 1986; Snow and Benford 1992). Social movements make use of frames to indicate problems and attract activists, thus transforming grievances into collective action. In this sense, frames are guides for collective action (Snow 1986: 464). In our case, frame alignment is the mechanism groups used to shape some elements of Brazilian social reality into environmental problems. Distinctive frames, specific to groups of activists with particular experiences, competed to become the frame of the whole movement. Here we identify these frames, the different ways they incorporate scientific knowledge, as well as their ties with variations in POSs.

Besides taking advantage of political opportunities and building identities and frames, social movements require organisational bases and strategies to support mobilisation. Since social movements are not institutionally based, activists have to make existing channels suitable to their purposes, or even create them, in order to construct collective action (Tilly 1978). In order to mobilise they need mobilising strategies. These range from long-term bases of activism, such as associations, parties, trusts, and public institutions; to informal strategies of action, such as protest events, networks and campaigns (Kriesi 1995: 152) and more subtle forms, such as the use of technical expertise and scientific knowledge. Mobilising

structures are the concrete ways solidarity and collective identities are built (Diani 1995). In order to understand the formation of the Brazilian environmental movement we need to consider the structured and fluid dimensions of collective action.

Therefore, all of these dimensions – political opportunity structure, collective identity, micro-mobilisation contexts, framing processes and mobilising strategies – configure a social movement. We do not consider social movements to be monolithic entities. Rather, social movements are seen as networks of different activist groups that mobilise for different purposes in specific settings, and only circumstantially become connected with one another (Diani 1995). Groups follow their own particular mobilising routines, interacting intensively only when crucial issues appear on the public agenda. In specific POSs, ties may be strengthened among different groups and joint mobilisation can arise, especially when there is challenge from the opposition, or when there is a possibility to introduce issues on the public agenda. Throughout this process, common frames and mobilising strategies are built and an 'identity of movement' emerges (Jasper 1997). This does not mean that their original identities as autonomous groups disappear, but that groups become aware that to make their position stronger, they have to overcome disagreements and present themselves publicly as a unified 'movement'.

The strength of a movement's cohesion depends on the dynamics of the POS. In the Brazilian case, and this is the main argument of this paper, cohesion became particularly visible in three POSs, all of them connected to cycles of protests in which the movement succeeded in putting environmental issues on the public agenda. These included the re-democratisation process, the Constituent Assembly in 1986 (in charge of writing a new Constitution), and the UN Conference on Environmental and Development, Rio 1992. In each of these POSs, disparate and independent Brazilian environmental groups had to face common dilemmas regarding their frames and mobilising strategies. In order to act together, they had to solve them collectively.

To explain the way these processes took place, we examined the contexts in which the environmental movement created their main links. The methodology used was to select the contexts were alliances and connections developed among environmental groups, for instance through campaigns and protest events, even when it was a conflictive process. For this, we have selected the most important groups in the environmental movement formation process. We have identified 11 of these groups: FBCN (Brazilian Foundation for the Conservation of Nature); Agapan (the Southern Association for the Protection of the Natural Environment); Mape (The Art and Ecological Thinking Movement); APPN (The São Paulo Association for Natural Protection); Oikos – Friends of the Earth; PV (Green Party); Funatura (For Nature Foundation); SOS Mata Atlântica; Greenpeace-Brazil; WWF-Brazil and ISA (Socio-environmental Institute). The research was based mainly on secondary sources: documents from the associations' archives and sites, from the press and from databases at CEBRAP's Environmental Conflicts Area on

environmental mobilisation.[3] The research covered the years from the beginning of the 1970s to early 1990s and has been complemented with interviews to the leaders of the selected associations.

Although many authors (Viola 1987; Antuniassi 1989; Pádua 1991) have already linked the appearance of the environmental movement with the re-democratisation process, the ties between each particular context and mobilisation have not yet been analysed. In fact, the formation process of the Brazilian environmental movement has not been the focus of systematic studies. Therefore, our goal in the next sections will be to investigate the connections among POSs, strategies and frames in order to explain the movement's internal dynamics.

3 Formation of environmental groups (1970–1985)

3.1 Political opportunity structure of re-democratisation

The formation of an environmental movement in Brazil was only possible due to the arrival of a new political opportunity structure in the late 1970s. At this time, the authoritarian regime, which ruled the country since 1964, began to fall apart and a re-democratisation process began.

The emergence of environmental protests during the authoritarian regime was possible thanks to a number of particular features of the Brazilian dictatorship. Despite being politically and administratively highly centralised, and of repressing any opposition,[4] the authoritarian regime maintained certain democratic elements (Linz 1973). The state of rights was preserved in principle. Electoral competition was also maintained, although limited to two official parties: the Arena (National Renewal Alliance), composed of military regime supporters from civil society, and the MDB (Brazilian Democratic Movement), a grouping of the moderate opposition (Kinzo 1988). Minimal democratic elements provided room for the formation of local, philanthropic and professional associations and, also provided the space for local collective protests to take place, even before the regime crisis.

Opportunities for mobilisation increased towards the end of the 1970s. At that time, a regime crisis within the governing coalition took place. The more moderate faction won, bringing back some democratic institutions. At that moment, channels for political mobilisation were created. Political manifestation was no longer banned in 1978 and the censorship on media was removed. In 1979, leftist activists, exiled from the beginning of the regime, were given amnesty. A number of them returned immediately to participate in political activities in the country. In the same year, the right to create new parties was given, resulting in the creation of many new leftwing parties that involved former social movement activists that were under the MDB's umbrella (Kinzo 1988; Sallum Jr 1996).

The last outcome of this process was the sequence of the MDB's electoral victories: for national representatives (1974), local mayors (1978), and state governments (1982). In the last election,

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3   We surveyed four national newspapers: *O Estado de São Paulo, Folha de São Paulo, O Globo, Jornal do Brasil,* building up the database of environmental mobilisations in Brazil (1994-2001).

4   Institutional Act number 5, the Law of National Security and the Law of Media had forbidden any public demonstration or political meeting against the political order.

10 governors of the opposition were elected, including a victory in the three most important states: São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais. These victories were a cornerstone, and worked as a demonstration effect to all kinds of disgruntled social groups, which were encouraged by this to publicly and collectively express their grievances. Social movements started to get organised, building up a cycle of protest (Tarrow 1983: 36–9). Although the authoritarian regime was still in power and controlled the political system, by controlling presidential elections, from 1983 onwards this 'controlled opening was hit by the processes of democratization of society, mainly by the union movement and middle class organizations' (Sallum Jr 1996: 42).

Four dimensions of this POS are crucial in order to understand the emergence of environmental protests in Brazil during the 1970s.

First, changes took place in the style of political interaction between the state and social movements. Since the mid 1970s, formal alterations in the legal-political elements of the regime, such as amnesty for political prisoners, the return of a state that respects rights; freedom of the press and the possibility of launching political candidates and making public demonstrations, provided openings for the emergence of environmental protests.

Second, environmental activists found a cycle of protests on the rise. Hence they were able to rely on the potential support of already organised allies such as traditional institutions, like the Catholic Church, the renowned Brazilian Bar Association, and the MDB. They also counted on many sectors of civil society – workers, middle-class liberal professionals, civil servants, and residents from the peripheral areas of large urban centres – that had previously organised themselves as social movements.

The third dimension was the increasing permeability of political and administrative institutions to civil society's claims, including environmental grievances. During the re-democratisation process, bureaucratic structures were created in this field, such as the Special Secretariat for the Environment (1973), and specific legislation was created to regulate the use of the natural environment, especially regarding nature reserves. This legal-bureaucratic structure not only provided activists with new political space and new mobilising structures to voice their claims but also opened new career opportunities within government.

Finally, an international environmental agenda was being constructed. The organisation of large environmental associations at an international scale – Friends of the Earth (1967) and Greenpeace (1971) – and green political parties – New Zealand (1972), Great Britain (1973), Germany (1979), France (1982) – offered organisational models and mobilising strategies for Brazilian activists concerned with the environment. Furthermore, the coalition between international environmental protection agencies created after World War II (United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); The International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN); World Wildlife Fund (WWF)) plus American and European civil environmental associations resulted in a call for a meeting on the matter at the UN in

1972. By participating in the Stockholm Conference, even if defending an anti-environmental position, the Brazilian state put the environment on the public sphere, opening up to a *national* discussion on environmental issues in Brazil.

Together, these dimensions of the POS of the re-democratisation process allowed the formation of environmental groups that became the backbone of the Brazilian movement in the 1980s.

3.2 Micro-mobilisation contexts and the formation of collective identities

Although the social basis of all Brazilian environmental groups that were created in the 1970s and 1980s could be described as 'middle class' (Antuniassi 1989), social position does not explain mobilisation by itself, since most of all political mobilisation at that time involved activists from middle class background. In order to understand the mobilisation of environmental groups, we need to look at the particular micro-mobilisation contexts in which each group was formed. The different social and political experiences shared by their members gave peculiar features to each group and defined distinct styles of environmental activism (Diani 1995).

We will now describe these contexts of social experience, in which activists started interacting and collective identities were built. We take into account the professional background of members; their connections to the political elite and state bureaucracy, as well as their contact with other political and cultural movements.

The origin of the Brazilian environmental activism was a conservationist group. This pioneering association was the FBCN (Brazilian Foundation for the Conservation of Nature), founded in 1958 in Rio de Janeiro, the capital of the country at the time. The majority of its members had a background in scientific disciplines, especially agronomy, agricultural engineering and natural sciences and got involved on environmental issues for professional reasons. Many were civil servants who maintained ties with the Brazilian political elite. This closeness to the state made them more inclined to lobbying instead of public demonstrations as a strategy for mobilisation. The fact that they were employees of the state made them work as an interest group, seeking to directly influence state decisions, without buildings alliances with parties or social movements. Before and during the military regime, this strategy was very successful: the FBCN influenced the creation of laws, structures and environmental policies, and its members rose to important positions in the area. The careers of FBCN's members were intermingled with the setting up of Brazil's own environmental bureaucracy, giving the FBCN an appearance of a parallel governmental organisation until the 1970s.[5]

Throughout the 1970s, other groups sprouted and began connecting environmental issues with political debates.

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[5] FBCN´s members had, from the 1950s to the 1970s, positions, even leadership positions, in most of the governmental bureaus engaged with environmental questions, such as the Federal Forest Council, the Ministry of Agriculture's Forest Service, the National Park for Itatiaia Conservation, the National Museum, and the Department of Research on Forest and Natural Conservation of the IBDF (the Brazilian Institute for Forest Development) (Urban 1998).

Agapan (the Southern Association for the Protection of the Natural Environment), founded in 1971 in Porto Alegre, is in its origins very similar to FBCN. It also began as an initiative of natural science researchers with technical and professional interest in ecological matters; and many of them had previous experience in local conservationist associations. During the beginning of the 1970s, Agapan, like FBCN, worked on setting up the government's environmental bureaucracy, influencing the development of legislation, and implementing public environmental policies, but at a regional level.[6] Nevertheless, Agapan differed from the FBCN by using campaigns, lectures, and symbolic forms of demonstration as mobilising strategies. Agapan's most important mobilisation at the time was the National Campaign Against the Use of Agro-toxins, launched in 1972. Although the campaign started at the local level, it quickly reached a national audience, and Agapan's leader, Jose Lutzenberger, travelled around almost the whole country disseminating this idea (Bones and Hasse 2002). Through this kind of action, Agapan progressively came closer to the movement for re-democratisation, participating in politically-oriented collective events at the end of the 1970s.

Mape (The Art and Ecological Thinking Movement) was another group that emerged in São Paulo in 1973, consisting basically of artists, plus some journalists and writers, with ties to counter-cultural movements and concerned with urban pollution. Mape introduced expressive and symbolic mobilisation strategies, created by European NSMs, to the Brazilian environmental movement: artistic expressions, such as exhibitions, literary and poetic displays, and entertaining events. Its inaugural demonstration was a lonely parade: the Catalan painter Miguel Abellá walked around downtown São Paulo wearing an anti-gas mask and carrying a poster saying: 'This is my pacifist and solitary protest against cowardly environmental aggression' (*O Estado de São Paulo*, 8 September 1973). Its 'Ecological Crusades', a travelling artistic exhibition for gathering followers, toured the country. Being comprised of members with no technical expertise in the area kept Mape at a distance from public environmental positions and closer to civil society, including the movement for re-democratisation.

In addition, the APPN (The São Paulo Association for Natural Protection) was set up in 1976 in São Paulo. Its members were liberal professionals and small businessmen, with previous political and organisational experience. The APPN resulted from a communitarian reaction against governmental works that impacted on its members' residential area. The main campaign carried out by the APPN was against the building of an international airport in the Southwest region of São Paulo, where most of its activists lived. The protest was born locally. APPN mobilised residents in the neighbourhood potentially affected by the new airport. However, since the University of São Paulo is part of this neighbourhood, leftist intellectuals quickly joined the protest, forging connections with members of the MDB political party (Antuniassi 1989: 26). In doing that, the association engaged with the opposition to the military regime's 'model of development'. Consequently, the protest ended up reaching a national scale quite by accident, being adopted and supported by the movement for re-democratisation, and attracting

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[6]   The first municipal secretary of the environment was created in Porto Alegre, in 1976 (Bones and Hasse 2002).

intellectual, artistic and political activist groups. The APPN's mobilisation strategies were classical ones, using public protests, petitions, and open letters to the authorities. The APPN strengthened the previously weak links between environmental activism and the movement for re-democratisation.

In each one of these micro-mobilisation contexts, isolated individuals gathered together. In this way, small groups of environmental activists were created and particular environmental identities were built (Sainteny 1999). One, technical, based on professional links between natural scientists, previously connected with the state bureaucracy; the other, political, based on a humanistic background and with connections to the movement for re-democratisation. These micro-mobilisation contexts constructed distinct collective identities as 'environmentalists'.

3.3 Environmental frames

Diani (1995), in his research on the Italian environmental movement, identified two frames that are typical of environmental activism. On the one hand, the 'conservationist' frame that defines the environment as the untamed natural world and sees any intervention as a technical issue restricted to natural scientists expertise. This frame limits the debate around environmental issues to technical and scientific experts. The 'political ecology' frame, on the contrary, defines environmental problems as linked also to the urban world and emphasises its political and social dimensions. The causes of environmental degradation are ascribed to capitalist development and to modern lifestyle. A social and cultural critique of capitalist society underpins this discourse, thus putting environmental issues in the political arena. We discovered a similar picture when studying the Brazilian environmental movement. In our case, the variations of micro-mobilisation contexts and of perceptions of the political opportunity structure among Brazilian environmental groups in the 1970s and 1980s also led them to develop two main frames.

The FBCN disseminated classic conservationism across Brazil. The FBCN adopted a bio-centric approach to the relationship between society and nature. The environment is defined as wild nature, untouched and untouchable, to be preserved from destructive actions of social groups by setting up national parks and environmental reserves. This frame is grounded in a scientific approach: science is presented as the only way to approach environmental problems and natural scientists as the authorities for defining environmental problems and policies. Conservationism detaches environmental issues from any social dimension and presents it as apolitical: '[...] we were more concerned with saving animals and creating protected areas; [...] reserves should be maintained without use [...] by man [...] in order to protect biodiversity' (FBCN's member, interview, 12 August 2004).

Despite the fact that the political opportunity structure of re-democratisation and changes in the international context have forced the FBCN to incorporate 'management of natural resources' in forest areas already inhabited by traditional communities in its approach, the core of its conservationism has changed very little, keeping its focus on flora and fauna.

Another collective frame surfaced within the re-democratisation process: socio-environmentalism. All the environmental associations formed during the 1970s adopted it. This frame differs from the aforementioned in two ways.

First, the definition of environmental problems shifted from the natural to the social sciences. This meant an increasing concern with the relationship between social and natural processes. The scientific approach was balanced by humanism. Mape argued for the restoration of an 'original humanist ethic' with regards to nature, while Agapan's discourse mixed up natural and social sciences and demanded 'an ecological ethics, led by a unifying vision of the natural and social world' (Lutzenberger cited in Bones and Hasse 2002: 187).

Second, the idea of the environment was itself redefined: instead of referring to it as an untamed natural world, the new groups talk about the relationship between natural resources and social groups. The concerns of the new groups incorporated both social and environmental dimensions, neglected by the conservationists. However, social matters came into environmental problems in many ways. Agapan broached these as rural problems, such as agro-toxins, soil erosion, river contamination – 'By means of agricultural technology and medicine, we interfere, consciously, […] displacing the natural demographic equilibrium that existed for millions of years' (Lutzenberger 1977: 46). Mape incorporated social issues in terms of urban problems: 'The universe has an extraordinary harmony in which we are included, and I do not see it as limited just to flora and fauna [...]. Ecology has, I would say, an urban aspect, not usually referred to, that is degraded in the same way by human interferences' (Miguel Abellá's interview, Ceru's archives). The social dimensions also came into the debate in a more general way, in reference to the country's industrialisation process experienced during the 1970s. Mape criticised environmental deterioration caused by the expanding consumer society: '[...] patterns of uniform cultural-behaviour [...] the economies created in this way centralise more and more intensive capital, using rough technology, few workers and cause a disorganised exploration of natural resources. A slogan summarises this attitude: 'USE IT AND THROW IT OUT' (Peco Bulletin n°1, 1978). The APPN associates all these matters with the pattern of capitalism and the Brazilian state, combined in the 'Brazilian development model'.

> What we see nowadays is crazy economic growth wrongly called development, that violates nature in all directions (…) [and] man himself. (…) And this for a fraction of humanity that benefits from this material growth that has clothes, home and food.
>
> ('Do we reach the end?', APPN's manifesto, 1975)

As a consequence, the emphasis on technical solutions to environmental issues shifted to changes in lifestyle that had to be discussed in a public debate. The responsibility for the definition and discussion of this issue shifted from natural scientists to civil society and to the political arena. By doing this, the new groups associated environmental problems strongly with political matters. The point is clear in a joint manifesto from Agapan and APPN:

> We need a real democratic opening, citizenship participation, administrative decentralisation, real federalism and actual power division, and a maximum of self-sufficiency and self-governing.
>
> (Curitiba's Manifesto 1978, Ceru's archives)

The new frame, therefore, enhanced the indissolubility between nature and the lifestyle of social groups and pointed out the economical and political causes of environmental problems. That is why it is called socio-environmentalism.

Hence, by the end of the 1970s, Brazilian environmental groups had worked out two main ways of defining and solving environmental problems: the conservationist and the socio-environmentalist frame. These different frames become more predominant at different times, mainly depending on the public issue at stake and on activists' ability to link one or the other to elements available in the particular POS. Throughout the 1980s, socio-environmentalism became dominant, and was the driving force in the nationalisation of the environmental movement. This frame made the connection among independent protest groups formed around specific environmental issues during the late 1970s possible. And, most importantly, given its obvious connection to the re-democratisation discourse, the socio-environmentalism frame made it easy to forge connections between environmental groups and the movement for re-democratisation. It was in this way that a national environmental mobilisation surfaced in Brazil.

4 The formation of the Brazilian environmental movement

In gathering activists and building distinct collective identities, the environmental groups formed during the 1970s established the basis for a nationwide movement. But the formation of a cohesive social movement only happened when these groups began to coordinate their actions and collective action could effectively emerge. From its beginnings as a number of autonomous groups with distinct frames and forms of mobilisation, to its presentation as a unique social movement, the Brazilian environmental groups created during the 1970s went a long way.

A social movement is more than a group of isolated environmental groups. In order to achieve collective action, coordination between groups had to be organised. In our case, although the groups that emerged in the 1970s knew of each other, they were quite independent in their ideas and actions until later in the decade. In order to act as a social movement, these groups had to solve three successive problems of coordinating collective action. First, environmental groups had to create a network of groups from the fragile connections between them; second, they had to agree on common mobilising strategies; and, third, they needed to develop a frame that would allow the merge of their approaches. Each of these problems was solved during three decisive POSs: the re-democratisation process in the late 1970s, the Constituent Assembly in the mid-1980s, and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. In each of these POS, cycles of protests arose and the Brazilian environmental groups defined a minimum set of common patterns of thinking and acting. These choices configure the collective identity of the whole environmental movement.

4.1 Cycle of protests for re-democratisation (1970s)

The first coalition among Brazilian environmentalists took place in the midst of the political process related to re-democratisation, which began at the end of the 1970s.

The re-democratisation process fed a huge cycle of protests. Social groups, until that moment oblivious to the political arena, became organised and started to collectively and publicly voice their demands as social movements. Besides trade unions and popular movements, an important part of these mobilisations had as their social base a new urban middle class: university professors, civil servants, liberal professionals, lawyers, and students (Boschi 1989). These diverse movements joined the official opposition party, the MDB, in huge campaigns against the authoritarian regime, to discuss economic issues (Movement against Rising Prices in 1978), as well as to demand the re-democratisation of the country (Amnesty 1978–9; 'Direct Elections Now' 1984–5).[7] These mobilisations supported a national movement for the re-democratisation of the country.

Environmental issues became part of the public agenda in Brazil during these mobilisations. At the end of the 1970s, the preservation of nature and the notion of threatening lifestyles came up in the discourse of many middle class associations in the largest cities of the country. The issues were also presented in mobilisations of groups such as engineers specialised in sanitation, labour doctors, health professionals and professors, all of them concerned with pollution and the lack of urban infrastructure, both seen as perverse environmental effects of accelerated urbanisation and industrialisation. Most of them entered the state bureaucracy through their professional training and raised a scientific counter-discourse against conservationism.

Although somewhat tangential, the presence of environmental issues in the cycle of protests motivated the previously organised environmental groups to articulate a common intervention in the public debate. Thus, an environmental network came about under the form of joint campaigns. Since the central issue on the public agenda was the re-democratisation of the country, the incipient environmental network became mobilised especially around matters that could possibly be absorbed by the broader public debate. The result was the almost immediate politicisation of environmental problems and, consequently, the creation of connections between the environmental protests groups and the re-democratisation movement.

This link was possible due to the socio-environmentalist frame, which brought together social and environmental issues. Environmental problems were associated with the 'Brazilian development model' implemented by the authoritarian regime. This matched the emphasis of the re-democratisation movement on the Brazilian 'social problem', thus paving the way for an alliance. This was the inspiration for the first national protests organised by environmental groups hand-in-hand with the re-democratisation movement: the Campaign in Defence of the Amazon (1979), the Campaign Against the Use of Nuclear Energy (1980), and Good-Bye Seven Falls (1982).

The Campaign in Defence of the Amazon, which emerged at the end of 1978, opposed the federal government's plan to draw up contracts for the exploration of the Amazon Forest with international companies (Hochstetler and Keck 2005). The political connotation of this campaign was made clear from the beginning since the opposition party, the MDB, was also involved. Led by the APPN, and also

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[7] About those campaigns see Souza (2003); Kinzo (1988; 2001); Costa Couto (1998); Sallum Jr (1996).

including Agapan and Mape, the campaign became the Movement in Defence of the Amazon and was organised by means of local committees in over 18 states and in the Federal District. On January 15, 1979, a public act in São Paulo attracted close to 1,500 people and spawned the 'Open Letter to the Brazilian Nation' against the internationalisation of the Amazon, and defending the preservation of the lifestyle of traditional communities living in the area (Hochstetler and Keck 2005).

Another important coalition that used a similar style was the Campaign Against the Use of Nuclear Energy, which began in 1980. The same associations from the previous campaign were involved, backed by smaller, recently-formed, environmentalist groups – such as Oikos, Friends of Earth (1982) and Sap Ecology Group (1980). The issue attracted a larger spectrum of supporters from the re-democratisation movement: the student movement, popular social movements, cultural movements, scientists, politicians, artists and religious leaders. The most significant mobilisation was the march dubbed 'Burial of the Atomic Plants', in memory of Hiroshima's victims and regarding the Brazilian potential ones, which gathered approximately 1,200 people (Urban 2001).

The third campaign articulated by environmental groups was the aforementioned 'Good-Bye Seven Falls', led by Mape, and included Agapan, APPN and other smaller associations, like Sap Ecology and the Green Collective (1985), a group of counter-cultural artists and intellectuals from Rio de Janeiro's elite, exiled during the military regime.

In all these campaigns, the proximity with the re-democratisation movement facilitated the building of a network of environmental activism. Through this network, one can already see the outline of relatively durable connections between environmental groups.

These mobilisations motivated the creation of new associations. In 1985, the country had approximately 400 organised environmental groups (Viola 1992: 57). These groups held a debate on the best mobilising strategy to voice environmental demands. Each group presented its own solution.

Mape proposed a Brazilian environmental federation as a way to formalise a coalition among the various activist groups and also keep activism at the level of civil society. The fear of centralising the movement led Mape to prefer a looser network that limited its coordination to the regional level: the Permanent Assembly for the Defence of the Environment in São Paulo (Apedema), created in 1983.

The APPN, dedicated from its beginnings to the politicisation of environmental issues, discussed the coalition between the network of environmental associations, mobilised civil society groups, and the opposition party, the MDB. However, internal conflicts regarding the proposal to form a political party and launch green candidates resulted in the fragmentation of the association into small groups.

Meanwhile, Agapan adopted the strategy of launching its main activist, José Lutzenberger, as a national leader. In fact, this strategy worked better. The group succeeded in working as a broker among the diverse groups and achieving a central position in the network of environmental activism in the 1970s. The reason was twofold. First, Agapan's definition of the socio-environmental frame included all other movements' themes, ranging from strict natural protection, as in FBCN, to urban environmental matters, and counter-cultural issues. Second, Agapan combined the traditional mobilising strategies of

conservationist groups, such as lobbying and access to state bureaucracy, with public manifestations, preferred by other environmental groups. In this way, Agapan became the main broker of 1970s' environmental groups.

All these initiatives prompted the coordination between groups of activists that were working autonomously before. In the mid 1980s, the first stable coalition among environmental activists groups was created. The joint campaigns, and even the competition among groups, indicate the establishment of an environmental field, with its own leaders and agendas.

As a result of the re-democratisation cycle of protests, environmental groups also ended up with a dominant frame. The FBCN conservationists lost their hegemony in the definition of the Brazilian environmental agenda. The re-democratisation agenda helped the consolidation of a politicised approach to environmental issues: socio-environmentalism.

4.2 Cycle of protests for the Constituent Assembly (1980s)

The final period of re-democratisation, between 1984 and 1985, is the second POS relevant to understanding the formation of the Brazilian environmental movement. If in the previous POS we could see coalitions only on specific issues that allowed us to talk about an environmental movement, the perspective of a Constituent Assembly promoted the formation of more stable coalitions as a strategy for including environmental issues in the new Constitution.

This strengthening of the environmental network, however, gave rise to two problems regarding collective action. On one hand, in order not to fragment environmental demands, the different groups had to find common ground so as to set up minimum consensual points to compose the environmental agenda. On the other hand, the different groups had to consider which mobilising strategy should be chosen. This is because the re-democratisation process reached the point of general elections for a National Constituent Assembly, which forced the movement to choose between keeping its mobilisation at the civil society level or forming a political party in the institutional arena.

The first problem was solved by the simple combination of agendas. Since socio-environmentalism was part of almost all groups' discourse, except for FBCN, general agreement was possible. In fact, the discussion around the topics to be considered as part of an environmental agenda was postponed. It was only in the Rio-1992 cycle of mobilisation that it became an issue. The second problem, the mobilising strategy had to be faced immediately.

The new POS presented problems for the environmental groups in two rounds: in the discussions about the Constituent Assembly and in how this worked. At first, there were two forms of Constituent Assembly under debate. Social movements and left-wing parties, headed by the Workers' Party (PT) created in 1980, proposed an assembly elected with the exclusive purpose of elaborating a Constitution and open to direct participation by civil society. The moderate opposition, mainly the MDB, and dissident groups from the military regime proposed an Assembly elected through parties, which would work simultaneously as the representative house. During this debate, coalitions among environmental groups were formed around four different strategies.

First, with the end of the democratic transition and the demobilisation of civil society, some environmental activists opted to consolidate protest groups in specialised professional associations. They kept just a tangential relationship with the broader political process, mainly through lobbying. SOS Mata Atlântica was constituted in 1986 under this motto, combining activists from previous groupings, such as APPN and FBCN, besides attracting business groups that, until then, had not been involved in environmental issues. During the Constituent Assembly, SOS, FBCN, Agapan and other recently created conservationist associations preferred lobbying or supporting independent candidates for parties that included green proposals.

Second, those groups aiming at lifestyle changes, such as Mape and Sap Ecology, proposed to keep demonstrations at the civil society level and launch independent candidates, such as environmental movement's activists or supporters, but without any connection to political parties.

The third possibility was to launch or support candidates of the recently organised left-wing parties, and use nationwide campaigns as a way to diffuse their electoral platforms. Oikos, one of the APPN´s dissident groups, invested in this alternative.

The fourth option was to form a party as a channel for the political representation of the environmental movement. The Green Collective, a faction of Mape and smaller groups from the states of São Paulo and Santa Catarina, were in favour of a green party.

However, not all alternatives were feasible. The Congress Assembly format was chosen at the end of 1985. Independent candidates outside formal parties were banned. Therefore, the option of taking part in the Constituent Assembly process outside parties simply disappeared. There was no consensus on the two remaining possibilities. In fact, environmental groups took part in the elections for the Constituent Assembly divided between two mobilising strategies.

One coalition, headed by the Coletivo Verde, opted for the creation of the PV (Green Party) in January 1986, gathering isolated activists from small associations, especially from Rio de Janeiro (Zhouri 1992: 66). Since then, the PV led a small coalition that launched its own candidates.

Another strategy was to support candidates of several parties, as long as they were committed to a list of green proposals. As a result, another problem emerged: how to coordinate the broad set of themes present in the coalition? However, this did not become a big issue. In order to keep the focus on the strategy, the solution discovered was to aggregate socio-environmentalist and conservationist issues, with hints of counterculture, in a 'Green List'.[8] At the beginning of 1986, the Interstate Ecologist Coordination

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[8]   The Green List presented a juxtaposition of 18 subjects. Socio-environmentalist issues were related to the impact of environmental damage on the urban ('humanization and end of pollution in the cities – sanitation and garbage recycling') and rural (health problems caused by agro-toxins) style of life; working conditions, urban poverty and concerns of social groups living in forest areas, including indigenous people. Countercultural issues revolved around pacifism ('end of army industry'), democratisation of social relations ('end of racial, sexual, religious or ideological prejudice') and a plea for alternative styles of life. There were only two conservationist issues present: 'preservation of national fauna' and of Brazilian ecosystems. A fourth group of themes re-worked the re-democratisation movement agenda: decentralising political and economic systems, local power, democratisation of media, etc.

for the Constituent Assembly (CIEC) was created and was responsible for this first attempt at a nationwide coordination of the frames orienting the diverse environmental groups.

The second strategy was the one that succeeded. Fábio Feldmann, Oikos' main activist committed to the Green List, became the only candidate supported by environmental groups for election. In this sense, the electoral process regarding the Constituent Assembly consolidated the associative structure as the more efficient mobilising strategy for voicing the movement's demands. The creation of an environmental party, therefore, did not work.

Once the Constituent Assembly started working, between 1987 and 1988, environmental groups had to face another set of problems. Pressure from leftist sectors of the movement for re-democratisation made the Constituent Assembly operate without a preliminary agenda and with a decentralised structure of sub-commissions.[9] The absence of a previous structure made the Constituent Assembly more open towards the claims of protest and interest groups, which lobbied for the creation of sub-commissions on topics related to their agendas (Kinzo 2001). 'Popular Initiatives' were an important mechanism used by social movements to influence this process. Through this mechanism, organised groups and social movements, with the support of at least 30,000 signatures, could introduce an amendment for consideration by the Constituent Assembly, without the mediation of a representative.

Consequently, informal mobilising strategies, such as petitions and supporting bills, became more efficient means for pushing their agenda than the Green Party. Using these strategies, they also succeeded in obtaining the signatures required for 3 of the 83 Popular Initiatives accepted in the Constituent Assembly debate.[11] This kind of pressure, on top of Feldmann's proposals in Parliament, led to the formation of the sub-commission for 'Health, Social Security, and the Environment', under the jurisdiction of the Committee on Social Order. At the same time that this sub-commission was working, Feldmann consolidated himself as a broker between two arenas of environmental mobilisation: demonstrations of civil society and institutional negotiation in Congress. This mix of strategies resulted in the proposal for an exclusive chapter on the environment in the Constitution.

Nonetheless, a reactionary bloc of centre and right-wing representatives led by the President – what was called the 'Big Centre' – blocked the influence of organised civil society groups when the constitutional text was being elaborated. The Big Centre opposed the approval of many leftist legislation bills. In the environmental area, it blocked the prohibition of the use of nuclear energy and the criminalising of environmental damaging acts.

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[9]   The Constituent Assembly divided itself into eight big committees that were divided into 24 sub-committees. The sub-committees were responsible for the first drafts of the articles and chapters of the Constitution. These proposals were then evaluated and amended by the respective Committees. Following this, the proposals were passed on to the Integration Committee in charge of reconciling the different submissions. The first draft of the Constitution went to the plenary of the Constituent Assembly for two further rounds of debate and amendments (Souza 2003).

[11] 62,318 votes were collected for nuclear disarmament. The other two addressed indigenous matters (Brazilian Constitution, 1988, Title VIII (on Social Order); chapter VIII (on Indigenous People); articles 231 and 232.

These obstacles led environmental groups, even those excluded in the coalition that elected Feldmann, to converge once again and to form a national coalition that resulted in the broadening of alliances outside the movement. Under Feldmann's leadership, the National Front for Ecologic Action, a parliamentary bloc supporting environmental proposals, was created.[12] This was the peak of environmental mobilisation during the Constituent Assembly. The National Front's strategy was to apply direct pressure from environmental associations on representatives by promoting visits to conservation areas. In doing this, the National Front got support from liberal and even conservative representatives around some issues, effectively included in the chapter on the environment of the 1988 Constitution. This coalition made the approval of protection measures for the Amazon forest, the Atlantic Rain Forest, Pantanal and the coastline, as well as protection of the genetic diversity of the country possible. Ecologic management of species and ecosystems, environmental education and environmental impact assessment for economic activities, including the location of nuclear plants, was also obtained (*O Estado de São Paulo*, 26 May 1988).

Mobilisation around the Constituent Assembly had important outcomes for the Brazilian environmental movement formation process.

Regarding mobilising strategies, the Constituent Assembly indicated a common solution for the problem of coordinating environmental collective action: associations were sanctioned as the most efficient basis for mobilisation. This was the case for a number of reasons. First, the electoral process and the Big Centre blocking process during the Constituent Assembly showed the limitations of acting through just one specific party and the advantages of being able to form alliances with many of them. Second, the Constitution itself created the possibility of law suits. This powerful legal tool made it possible for environmental organisations to access institutional channels without being a political party. Third, the fact that during the process of the Constituent Assembly they were more influential as 'environmentalists' rather than as professional politicians made all activists reconsider the symbolic power of their technical and scientific expertise. From then on, they systematically used it as a very efficient mobilising strategy for legitimating their claims in the political arena. This was the first step in the professionalisation of environmental associations in the late 1980s, such as the SOS Mata Atlântica.

Another impact of the Constituent Assembly on environmental activism concerns the frames of collective action. The chapter on the environment in the Constitution was achieved through compromise on some of the issues at stake. The National Front for Ecologic Action opted for items on the Green List that were more agreeable to non-environmental representatives, many of which were right-wing politicians. The social or counter-cultural issues, previously at the top of the Green List, were rejected,

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[12]   The Front, created in June 1987, was composed of 71 representatives from environmental associations, and included 9 senators and 82 representatives linked to left-wing and centre-left parties (Hochstetler and Keck 2005).

while the conservationist demands, such as the protection of ecosystems, were approved. The same change took place with environmental groups' agendas. The socio-environmental frame's dominance, which had become prominent during the re-democratisation process, and which focused on the damaging effects of capitalist development and on the lifestyles of the middle and lower classes, fell apart. Conversely, conservationist issues went from being marginal in the re-democratisation process, to being central to the environmental movement's agenda after the promulgation of the Constitution.

In short, the POS of the Constituent Assembly was decisive in advancing the formation of the environmental movement. In this process, environmental groups had to consolidate ties and agree on certain issues in order to act together. The existence of a common enemy and the need to find allies was crucial in overcoming previous fragmentation among autonomous groups. The Big Centre forced the environmental groups to put aside differences and act side by side, which in turn gave them the capacity to be influential in the legal regulation of environmental questions. At least momentarily, they transcended their identities as separate groups to find a common identity as an environmental 'movement':

> [...] it was a great moment when there was true union [among environmental groups] in favour of progress in the Constitution. [...] In a way, the divergences were overcome and we made it.
>
> (Oikos' member, interview, 6 September 2004)

As a result, the previously independent groups ended up as a relatively stable national coalition. In this sense, the POS of the Constituent Assembly forced the consolidation and nationalisation of the network of environmental activism that had emerged from the re-democratisation process.

4.3 Cycle of protests in Rio-1992

The UN's decision to hold the second 'World Conference on the Environment and Development' in Brazil in 1992 altered, once again, the POS for the network of Brazilian environmental activists. It became another decisive event in its nationalisation, consolidating the path for a Brazilian environmental movement.

Rio-1992 was as crucial as the Constituent Assembly for the formation of the environmental movement. Still, each event brought different dilemmas to the movement. The Constituent Assembly raised the question of mobilising strategies: what mobilising strategies should be given priority in order to coordinate collective action? The options were to mobilise as a political party or as associations, which resulted in the ratification of the latter strategy. The agenda of Rio-1992, in contrast, forced a debate on the content of environmental frames and led the movement to reflect on its own agenda.

The agenda of the UN Conference linked, in two ways, environmental issues with the problem of development – a central problem during the process of re-democratisation. On the one hand, it proposed the notion of sustainable development: new technology and rational management methods of natural resources were presented as the way to conciliate development and environmental preservation – an alternative to the idea of 'nature reserves'. On the other hand, the notion of biodiversity was introduced, which is concerned with preserving forms of life and genetic heritage under risk of disappearing. The Conference thus revived the socio-environmentalism frame, dominant in the 1970s, and questioned conservationism, which had gained the upper hand since the Constituent Assembly.

Besides this, Rio-1992 took place at a time when the Brazilian POS was particularly unfavourable to the environmental movement. The Alliances with leftist groups during the cycle of protests for re-democratisation and during the Constituent Assembly had increased activists' expectations of getting jobs in the environmental state bureaucracy. However, the victory of the right-wing candidate in the presidential elections in 1989 thwarted this possibility. With no access to the state, and the democratic regime under way, environmental groups of the 1980s either disappeared or professionalised their associations, giving them a business-like appearance. Hence, Rio-1992 took place in a context in which the movement was removed from the political arena and with low lobbying capacity.

The government attempted to build an alliance with the environmental network by inviting José Lutzenberger, Agapan's founder, to be Special Secretary of the Environment.[14] Lutzenberger, however, had lost his status as a movement leader in the previous decade. He had left Agapan and was only marginally involved in mobilisations regarding the Constituent Assembly, thus loosing all connections with more established groups and with no ties with the new ones. With no support from the movement and no experience in party politics, Lutzenberger was unable to remain in the political arena. He was distant from the decision-making process on the preparations for the Conference, and was actually dismissed before it began. As a result, the doors of the national environmental bureaucracy remained closed to activists during preparations for the Conference.

In spite of the distance of environmental groups with the Brazilian government, the participative format of the Conference led motivated environmental groups to organise coalitions between associations as a form of coordinating collective action, and seeking supporters in other civil society groups. Activist networks were formed with this goal at two points in time: prior to and during the Conference.

During the preparations for Rio-1992, coalitions formed during the Constituent Assembly took the lead in the national coordination of the movement. The National Front for Ecologic Action, led by SOS

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[14]   The Special Secretariat of the Environment (Sema) had been created in 1973. Its first secretary had been a conservationist from FBCN, Paulo Nogueira Neto. Before Sema, the main state organisation for environmental issues was the Brazilian Institute for Forest Development (IBDF), which had been run by conservationists since 1967. Both were partially replaced by the Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Natural and Renewable Resources, created in 1989. Only in 1995 was a formal environmental ministry instituted: the Ministry of Environment, Fluvial Resources and Legal Amazonia.

Mata Atlântica, regrouped the conservationist groups while the PV launched the movement Pro-Rio 1992, with a socio-environmental outlook, including Labour Party's members, local community groups, popular social movements and even business groups.[15]

Much the same as with the Constituent Assembly, none of the coalitions were able to articulate the range of issues the different organisations represented. This can be understood if we observe the limited scope of their frames: the National Front was circumscribed to conservationist associations, while Pro-Rio did not transcend the limits of socio-environmentalism. Such split agendas did not match the UN's agenda for Rio-1992, systematised in the Brundtland Report (1987),[16] which included both frames. It was the new POS that compelled environmental groups to seek allies that were capable of complementing their agenda, even outside the movement. Another reason to pursue this strategy was the need for allies in order to have more impact on the public debate.

SOS Mata Atlântica adopted a strategy very much in accordance with the new POS. It formed a new national coalition between environmental associations and other social movements that, until then, had not been involved in the environmental sphere, but 'whose struggles had direct implications on the environment' (Invitation letter cited in Santos 1994). This is how the 'Brazilian Forum on NGOs and Social Movements for the Environment and Development' came about in 1990. Some 1,100 associations developed a national network. Half of them were groups and movements without previous environmental activism: popular movements (119), trade unions (84), professional associations (81), religious organisations (42), neighbourhood (34), indigenous (34), feminists (33), students (32) and cultural groups (22); as well as health associations(17), African-Brazilian (14), children (9), Aids (6) and homosexual groups (2), and, even, clubs (8) (Landim 1993: 66–7). From then on, the Forum on NGOs became the focal point and the main mobilising structure of the environmental movement during the Conference.

The Forum's broad network opened up the debate on the agenda of the movement and the frames that would orient their collective action. The Green List created for the Constituent Assembly relied on a number of issues related to specific groups, but actually emphasised the social dimensions of environmental problems. The political process during the Constituent Assembly, nevertheless, reversed this dominance, bringing back the conservationist frame, although it broadened its meaning in order to include indigenous populations living in areas to be protected.

The network organised by SOS Mata Atlântica continued to widen the conservationist frame during Rio-1992. Some of the allied social movements brought with them socio-environmental frames and agendas. On the one hand, these groups denounced social inequality, especially the living conditions of economically subordinated social groups and the unfair distribution of environmental risks. On the other,

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[15]   The Pro-Rio coalition included PV and PT activists, Pró-Floresta da Tijuca Movement, Famerj (Federation of Residents Associations from Rio de Janeiro State); association for support of popular movements, such as Iser, Fase and Ibase, and a number of entrepreneur leaders (Santos 1994). The National Front for Ecologic Action grouped 71 associations engaged in environmental questions, such as FBCN and SOS Mata Atlântica, and 9 Senators and 82 federal representatives from many parties (*Jornal da tarde*, 6 September 1987).

[16]   The Brundtland Report (World Commission for Development and Environment of the United Nations) is the official preliminary document for the Rio-1992, made public in 1987.

they criticised the 'global' economic development model, particularly the hierarchy between industrialised and non-industrialised countries, and they claimed for a radical new paradigm of modernisation: 'the sustainable development' model, an issue included in the Conference proposal.

The revival of the socio-environmental frame was enough to maintain the alliances constructed by the movement with other groups in civil society. However, it did not mean the return of its dominance. SOS, lead coordinator of environmental groups, orchestrated a unification of the two frames, originally opposites. This came about through the dilution of both frames.

On the one side, the socio-environmentalist frame was diversified, and moved closer to conservationism. The concept of sustainable development was compatible with both the defence of environmental protection and socio-economic development. The macro-economic dimension of environmental problems was kept, but the emphasis on urban issues, typical of socio-environmentalism in the 1970s, was redirected to living conditions of social groups interacting with the natural environment either in the countryside, such as indigenous groups, or in the forest, such as extractive groups.

The conservationist frame was also redefined by substituting the idea of ecosystem for that of biodiversity. The notion of biodiversity included not only protecting the habitat of animal and vegetable species, but also social groups living in forest areas, as long as they had lifestyles with 'low environmental impact'. In this way, the genetic and cultural heritage of indigenous communities and traditional populations, such as extractive groups, became the aim of environmental preservation and forests, a typical issue of classic conservationism, the site of biodiversity. This inclusion of non-urban dimensions in the socio-environmental agenda was the main difference between the reformulated conservationist frame and the conservationist tradition.

In this way, socio-environmental and conservationist frames went through a diversification and conciliation process. This movement of unification had two consequences for the environmental movement.

First, a common frame for the entire movement arose for the first time. Notions of sustainable development and biodiversity allowed groups with diverging agendas to give their own focus to the same categories, generating a discursive agreement. A new frame came about: neo-conservationism. Incorporating local social issues, characteristic of the socio-environmental agenda, and global matters, of the green agenda, neo-conservationism became the common language between environmental groups, ranging from the pioneers of the 1970s to those newcomers in the 1990s. Thus the new frame consolidated coalitions between environmental groups that until then had been merely strategic.

Besides being a discursive coalition, the influence of neo-conservationism was shown in one of the outcomes of Rio-1992: Agenda 21 (1992).[17] In this document, global environmental issues concerning the conservationist agenda, such as forest protection (Chapter 11) and biological diversity (Chapter 15), merged with socio-environmental issues, such as the preservation of local livelihoods, making them into

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[17]   Agenda 21 (1992) is a document that makes recommendations on the control of human impacts on the environment. This document identifies main environmental problems, and suggests the application of particular public policies to solve them. Since 1992, it has been adopted by more than 178 governments.

sustainable economic activities (Chapter 3). Agenda 21 also stressed participatory decision-making processes as the best approach to planning and implementing environmental policies. This model required large national and international environmental associations to coordinate with smaller local organisations. In doing so, links were strengthened between environmental associations at all levels.

Neo-conservationism included in its frame the protection of communities living in conservation areas. In this way, it incorporated part of the environmental agenda of environmental groups of the 1970s. However, the political nature of the socio-environmental frame was replaced by a technical approach, formulated by new environmental experts of the professional associations of the 1990s. Agenda 21 also stressed the importance of technology and scientific knowledge as crucial tools for political decision-making process on environmental issues (Chapter 35). Thus, professionalised neo-conservationist associations, especially SOS Mata Atlântica, specialised in the production of knowledge on specific ecosystems, which increased their potential influence on public policies in this area. Besides this, neo-conservationism displaced the centrality of urban environmental issues, which was the main preoccupation of the socio-environmental groups of the 1970s, to focus on the countryside. Urban environmental issues, such as sanitation and air pollution became secondary matters. The lifestyle of the urban middle classes was no longer the main focus of activism. This was clear in the concentrated efforts of large environmental associations, such as SOS and the ISA,[18] in forest areas in the 1990s. Therefore, changes in the Brazilian environmental movement's position paved the way towards the removal of environmental issues from the political arena.

Neo-conservationism became hegemonic not only because it managed to give cohesion to the movement, but because it was more compatible with the new international environmental POS. In the meantime, the Amazon had become an international environmental symbol, channelling resources and public attention to protected areas. This opened up the Brazilian environmental agenda to international campaigns, such as the one on genetically modified organisms, in alliance with large international conservationist associations, such as Greenpeace and the WWF. The internationalisation of the Brazilian environmental network made it possible to bring in large volumes of resources to manage newly protected areas by professional environmental associations, such as SOS Mata Atlântica and ISA.

The second effect on the environmental movement of the mobilisation cycle at Rio-1992 was the creation of a new mobilising strategy. Networks of associations replaced the autonomous groups of the 1970s and 1980s. Environmental networks, as relatively long-lasting coalitions among associations, became the main way to coordinate the movement and the preferred channel for expressing environmental demands in the 1990s. Networks gave a new structure to the movement in three ways:

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[18]   The socio-environmental Institute (ISA) was created in 1994, grouping the Cedi (Ecumenic Center of Documentation and Information)´s Program of Indigenous People, from São Paulo; the NDI (Indigenous Right Group), from Brasília); and a couple of SOS Mata Atlântica´s former activists (ISA member, interview, 31 August 2004).

[20]   We are by now doing empirical research on the 1990s, in order to complete the reconstitution of all phases of the Brazilian environment movement. We are looking for the main associations and environmental networks born after Rio-1992; reconstructing the environmental mobilisations raised from 1992 to now and, finally, surveying the activists, in order to reconstruct typical environmental trajectories.

networks were now the basis for large campaigns; they became the main way to obtain international and governmental grants; and they were the channel for lobbying and pressuring the formulation and implementation of environmental public policies. Through these networks, Brazilian environmental activists extended their actions and specialised in particular areas and issues, dividing work between coalitions and associations – such as networks in Mata Atlântica (Network of Mata Atlântica NGOs, 1992), Pantanal (Aguapé – Pantanal Network of Environmental Educational, 2002), Cerrado (Cerrado Network of NGOs, 1992) and the Amazon (GTA – Amazonic Working Group, 1992). A decentralised, polycentric and horizontal structure emerged out of this mobilising strategy. Although there was a low degree of institutionalisation and cooperation and agreements were the main ways of working, networks became a very stable organisational format, maintaining the diversity of groups in one movement.

The networks did not, however, transcend associations. Environmental associations became a hub of teaching and learning technical expertise on environmental issues. In this way, associations support a new model of activism, professional and specialised, as well as a new relationship with the state, as consultants and services providers. Scientific knowledge became the most important tool activists manipulated in order to be heard by state bureaucracy and civil society as a whole.

In this new context, the environmental agenda became restrictive and not compatible with broader political agendas. The networks of professional associations emerged, at the time, as the main form of structuring the movement, reducing the importance of other alternative organisational structures, such as parties:

> [...] it is impossible to organise a party and work on the issues, it is either one, or the other. [...]. This marriage does not work [...].

> (Oikos member, interview, 6 September 2004)

Thus, the POS of Rio-1992 was the third step in the formation of the environmental movement. A new mobilising strategy, networks, was adopted and, the problem of coordination between groups' distinctive frames into a collective one, was momentarily resolved. The outcome of this was the consolidation of a national environmental movement.[20]

5 Conclusion

In this article we aimed to explain the formation of the Brazilian environmental movement by using a particular set of concepts: political opportunity structure, micro-mobilisation contexts, collective identity, framing processes and mobilising strategies. This approach shed light simultaneously on political-institutional dimensions as well as on the strategic and symbolic features of collective action – an approach not yet used in the Brazilian literature. It also allowed us to create a dialogue between similar cases in different contexts.

We argued here that the formation of the Brazilian environmental movement was defined in relation to three POSs: re-democratisation, the Constituent Assembly and Rio 1992. These POSs provided

opportunities for mounting environmental mobilisation and forced the different groups to search for answers to the problems of coordination of collective action, especially regarding mobilising strategies and frames. Agreement on these issues made possible the creation of durable coalitions between different environmental groups. In this sense, the answer to these questions formed the stages that built the identity of the environmental movement.

The concept of POS helped us to define the specific features of different contexts, which affected the construction of the movement's identity. Although the relationship between the environmental movement and its specific context had already been studied in the Brazilian literature (Viola 1987; Antuniassi 1989), no one had, until now, described systematically the way each context has conditioned the symbolic and strategic choices of environmental activists.

We argued here that the three POSs were decisive to the movement formation, since they brought to the fore activists' problems concerning the coordination of collective action. The re-democratisation POS created incentives for independent environmental groups to get organised in the context of a huge cycle of protests. In this way, it was decisive in converting individuals sympathetic to the environmental cause into activists. The other two POSs, the Constituent Assembly and Rio 1992, raised questions environmental groups had to face in order to come together into an overall movement. During the Constituent Assembly POS, a decision about mobilising strategies had to be made. At this time, the groups opted for a network of associations, instead of parties, as the best way to present their claims in the public sphere. Rio 1992´s POS, in addition, forced the coalition of associations to broaden the meaning of their particular frames in order to merge them into one that could be shared by the whole movement. Hence, the concept of POS has helped us describe the emergence of an environmental movement in Brazil and the process by which it became a consolidated national movement.

The notion of micro-mobilisation contexts, on the other hand, helped identify the ways in which individual engagement emerged as well as how links between isolated activists were consolidated, in order to form environmental groups. Studies affiliated with NSM approach explain mobilisation by activists' social extraction. The notion of micro-mobilisation contexts shows that members did not gather because of their middle class extraction, but because they had experienced similar social and political experiences. The main features that compelled individuals to build collective identities as environmentalist were professional background and ties with either bureaucratic elites or with other social movements and parties.

In addition, frame alignment theory allowed us to link the changes in the way the movement conceptualised environmental problems with changes in POSs. By using this notion, we oppose the mainstream interpretation in Brazil which sees values as the main cause for mobilisation (Viola 1987). Our study confirms Snow and Benford´s (1992) analysis on framing processes during cycles of protests. The dynamic and interactive quality of frames of collective action is clear during the formation process of the Brazilian environmental movement. The frames created by each group were continuously transformed during the movement's formation process, especially by the broadening of their meaning. Changes in frames were required by the different strategies used by agents. The convergence between two initially

independent frames – socio-environmentalist and neo-conservationist – was the process that made feasible the coordination of a variety of environmental groups with different agendas. The new frame, neo-conservationism, constructed an interpretation of environmental problems that was shared by all environmental activists.

This process is similar to the one described in the literature on European cases. Diani (1995) argues that in Italy, the 1990s were a time of consolidation of environmental frames after a conflictive period between them. Rootes (2003) points out that this consolidation went together with a de-politicalisation and de-radicalisation of environmental frames. The same process took place in Brazil. The conciliation between frames was possible due to the rising importance of scientific knowledge and a decline in the use of a political approach in the formulation of environmental problems.

Mobilising strategies was another tool used to understand the Brazilian environmental movement. This tool allowed us to identify the more long-lasting strategies the movement adopted to organise itself for political action, such as associations, parties and networks. It also allowed us to map the more punctual mobilisation strategies, such as demonstrations, electoral candidatures and lobbies. The key point here is that strategies changed in response to changes in the POS.

We also found similarities between the Brazilian and European processes of formation of environmental movements. Most European environmental movements ended up bureaucratising and professionalising their associations. As a consequence of this, the use of direct activism as a mobilisation strategy, especially public demonstrations, are in decline, while lobbying is on the rise (Rootes 2003). In Brazil, the movement also moved from politically-oriented activism, mainly public protests, to a preference for lobbying through professional associations, usually based on scientific expertise.[21]

The process of formation of the Brazilian environmental was long. For two decades, isolated groups built a national network of activism. Through a very conflict-ridden process, common frames and mobilising strategies were defined. This was possible because the movement solved its problems of coordination within a framework of collective action. Thematic networks have come to be the main mobilising strategy while neo-conservationism has become the dominant frame. The final outcome of this formation process was the consolidation of the social movement's identity (Jasper 1997).

However, this does not imply an absence of differences and conflicts between groups in terms of their frames and strategies. Various groups were able to overcome disagreements during crucial moments in order to present themselves publicly as a strong and large coalition instead of as a fragmentary web of autonomous groups. In fact, we can conceptualise the Brazilian environmental movement on two levels. First, it can be analysed as obeying their internal dynamics, as autonomous groups with particular agendas and strategies. Secondly, it can be seen as a solid network during critical situations. In the second case, all internal problems are put aside in the name of a core set of common agreements around environmental issues and on the ways to push it forward. This is what makes the Brazilian environmental network a social movement.

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[21] These are our preliminary conclusions from other research on environmental mobilisations in Brazil from 1992 until 2001, this research is ongoing.

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