

The establishment of soy moratorium in Brazilian Amazon rainforest: Strategic environmental action to exploit opportunities in multiple fields

Silvio Eduardo Alvarez Candido* 

Abstract

The paper addresses how environmental movement organizations were able to establish the soy moratorium in the Brazilian Amazon. It combines the Strategic Action Fields (SAFs) perspective with ideas of social movement theory, addressing markets as cultural, political and historical constructions. Qualitative research was conducted using data from multiple sources. Debating with authors who conceptualized the political opportunity structures (POS) of markets, we demonstrate that these may be better understood as an ensemble of interconnected SAFs. In order to deal with closed POS in the Amazon, environmental organizations had to strategically shift the scale and internationalize their protests, identifying and taking advantage of openings in European sectors and companies and pressuring them into using their force to transform practices of major soy traders.

Keywords: soy moratorium, Amazon rainforest, strategic action fields, social movements, political opportunities.

* Universidade Federal de São Carlos, São Carlos, SP, Brasil.

El establecimiento de la moratoria de la soja en la Amazonía brasileña: acción ambiental estratégica para explorar oportunidades en múltiples campos

Resumen

El artículo aborda cómo las organizaciones del movimiento ambientalista lograron establecer una moratoria de la soja en la Amazonía brasileña. El estudio articuló la perspectiva de los Campos de Acción Estratégicos con los conceptos de la teoría de los movimientos sociales, abordando los mercados como construcciones culturales, políticas e históricas. Se llevó a cabo una investigación cualitativa utilizando datos de múltiples fuentes. Al debatir con autores que han conceptualizado las estructuras de oportunidades políticas de los mercados, demostramos que estas pueden comprenderse mejor como un conjunto de campos interconectados. Para hacer frente a la estructura de oportunidades cerradas en la Amazonía, los ambientalistas tuvieron que cambiar estratégicamente su escala de acción e internacionalizar sus protestas, identificando y aprovechando las aperturas en sectores y empresas en Europa y presionándolos para que usaran su peso para transformar las prácticas de los grandes *traders* de soja.

Palabras clave: moratoria de la soja, Amazonia, campos de acción estratégica, movimientos sociales, oportunidades políticas.

Introduction

In 2020, Brazil became the world's largest soybean producer and exporter. Since the 1970s, soy production has expanded through savannah areas and towards the Amazon rainforest, enabled by public policies aimed at further integrating the Mid-west and North regions into the national territory (Becker, 2001). In the 1990s, the opening and stabilization of the economy and the convergence between National interests and commodity production ratched this process up. Soybeans became mainly produced in relatively large and highly capitalized and mechanized farms and traded and processed nationally or abroad by large foreign multinationals, such as Cargill, Bunge and Archer Daniels Midland (ADM). Amaggi, a Brazilian family company whose heir, Blairo Maggi, had been Governor of the state of Mato Grosso and Minister of Agriculture, also rose as a major player in soy farming, processing and trading.

As soy production spread into the North of Brazil, movements engaged in the conservation of the Brazilian Amazon rainforest gained momentum (Hochstetler; Keck, 2007). Actors engaged in this process are heterogeneous, comprising a field divided into two major groups. The first is composed of grassroots organizations representing communities directly dependent on forest resources and impacted by deforestation, such as indigenous peoples, quilombolas and riverines. The second group comprised non-governmental organizations (NGOs) whose professional staff developed funded projects in the Amazon, including major national and international organizations that can be categorized in subgroups according to the degree they are engaged in supporting forest communities (Andrade; Sacomano Neto; Candido, 2022; Alonso; Costa; Maciel, 2007).

In the mid-1990s, the relatively independent developments of soy production and environmental movements collided due to federal government plans to invest in the infrastructure of the Amazon region. After almost two decades struggling against political and economic instabilities,

the Brazilian economy started recovering. During the governments of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995–2002), strategic plans were announced to resume investments in infrastructure. The idea was to address the high logistical costs to export agricultural commodities increasingly produced in the Midwest through the South of the country. To that end, roads and ports were to be built or renewed in the Amazon region, establishing what was called the “North Arch”. In 2003, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva assumed the presidency and was committed to continuing the developments in infrastructure which his predecessor was not able to deliver.

Expectations regarding the improvements in transportation infrastructure were received enthusiastically by the soy sector. Besides reducing logistical costs, the North Arch could enhance the expansion of soy to the North region. Environmentalists, on the other hand, severely criticized these initiatives, considering actions proposed to mitigate the environmental impacts of these investments insufficient to conciliate development with the conservation of the Amazon rainforest. Identifying the largest peaks of all time in official annual deforestation rates in 1995 and 2004 enhanced environmental criticisms.

Considering the power asymmetries involved in this controversy, we could say that environmental movements’ chances for success in opposing plans by one of the largest sectors in the Brazilian economy and by national governments were slim. Nevertheless, in 2006, they were able to establish the first voluntary zero-deforestation agreement established in the tropics, known as the Soy Moratorium (Gibbs *et al.*, 2015). Through this agreement, soy traders representing about 90% of the market agreed not to purchase soy grown in lands deforested after July 2006 or from farmers involved in denounces of slave labor and in grabbing indigenous lands. While many scholars consider the moratorium to be effective (Gibbs *et al.*, 2015, Lambin *et al.*, 2018), others point out that it had a small contribution to the overall control of Amazon deforestation in the following years and that its great repercussions somehow privatized the merits of the Brazilian environmental

policy (Nepstad *et al.*, 2014; Torres; Branford, 2017). What is clear, however, is that movements involved in the contention that originated the moratorium achieved their objective.

This paper addresses how environmental movement organizations were able to establish the soy moratorium. To this end, we combined the Strategic Action Fields (SAF) perspective (Fligstein; McAdam, 2012) with concepts from social movements theories, addressing markets as historical, cultural and political constructions.

Our study includes conceptual and empirical contributions. Conceptually, it contributes to discussing ideas from social movement studies in relation to the SAF perspective. In doing so, we attend calls of McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001) and of Fligstein and McAdam (2012) to translate ideas of social movements scholarship into other areas of social science research, making them less “movement centric”. Using insights developed by Fligstein and McAdam (2012), we revised the conceptualization of political opportunity structures (POS) of markets, developed by Schurman (2004), addressing it as a set of interconnected SAFs. Associating ideas presented by Soule (2009) and Tarrow (2005) with the idea of skilled social action from SAF perspective, we also examined how movements can transform markets by changing their scope of action and internationalizing protests to exploit openings in global production chains.

While numerous empirical studies have assessed the outcomes of the soy moratorium, few analyses have emphasized the political process that led to its establishment as those developed by Barbosa (2015) and Cardoso (2008). While we acknowledge and draw on these efforts, we consider they have important limitations and blind spots. Drawing on world system theory and the literature on resistance networks in globalized commodity chains, Barbosa (2015) overemphasizes objective aspects of the case, including material issues of the chains or concrete network connections. Cardoso (2008) draws mainly on the institutional theory of sociology of organizations, neglecting power relations and overemphasizing cooperation.

SAFs and POS of international markets

The SAF perspective was developed by Fligstein and McAdam (2012), leading authors of economic and organizational sociologies and social movement studies. While this approach was particularly applied in these areas, one of its major proposals is to create a general account of the dynamics of stability and change, transversal to different social settings. To this end, it assumes that modern societies are differentiated as a consequence of the social division of labor and organized in relatively autonomous arenas called SAFs (Fligstein; McAdam, 2012).

As other field approaches, this perspective explains regularities and transformations in action by considering positions *vis-à-vis* others (Martin, 2003). SAFs are meso-level social orders in which actors are attuned to one another, routinely cooperating and competing (Fligstein; McAdam, 2012). They entail shared understandings about (i) the purposes of the field; (ii) what is at stake; (iii) the positions each actor has, which are defined based on their resource endowments; (iv) and the rules governing legitimate action. Actors interpret the field based on cognitive frames and on their social skills, using them to induce cooperation with others. Strategies are conditioned by field positions, in which incumbents tend to reproduce SAFs and challengers tend to transform them. They also depend on the state of the fields, which may be of emergence, stability or crisis (Fligstein, 2013).

Fligstein and McAdam (2012) encourage attention to the interconnections between SAFs. These entail material and symbolic power relations, which are related to the degree of autonomy of each field. As fields themselves entail struggles, the relations among arenas involve dynamic interplay between actors occupying different positions in each arena. SAFs may be directly or indirectly connected. Direct connections depend on routine social interactions linking the SAFs. Indirect ones occur when fields are linked through an intermediate arena. Direct connections may be vertical,

with higher order fields encompassing lower order ones, or horizontal, involving separated bounded arenas.

The deployment of the SAF perspective in the assessment of markets and economic organizations is consistent with precepts of Polanyi's (2013) work, addressing markets as cultural, political and historical constructions that are inseparable from the States (Fligstein, 2001). Varied empirical analyses demonstrated that, besides States, other non-economic fields interfere with this construction. In the wake of the idea of double movement (Polanyi, 2013), a rich body of literature demonstrated that social movements may play an important role in establishing and transforming markets (Carneiro, 2007; Kungl; Hess, 2021; Husu, 2022; Candido; Sacomano Neto; Côrtes, 2022). Confronted by attacks of movements on the legitimacy of the means used to generate profits, market actors may incorporate their criticisms, moralizing businesses (King; Pearce, 2010).

The interference of movements in markets and organizations is usually unlikely due to power asymmetries. To explain how activists can sometimes be successful, the concept of a political opportunity structure (POS) has been deployed. POS refers to contextual and temporal dimensions that influence movements to challenge an established order and their chances to achieve their goals (Meyer, 2004). The concept was developed to address contention in national states but was adapted to deal with the multiplication of settings in which movements operate, including international and market contention (Schurman, 2004; Soule, 2009; Tarrow, 2005).

Schurman (2004) presented the most influential attempt to theorize POS related to markets and a comparison of the author's ideas with the SAF approach is relevant. Drawing on sociological institutionalism in organization studies and in social movements literature, the author proposed that movements confront an environment with specific economic and institutional relationships and conventional ways of doing things when they attempt to change markets. Four interrelated instances of opportunity

may be involved: the corporate culture; the industry; the nature of the goods and/or services; and the organizational field.

Corporate cultures are viewed as systems of meanings attached to norms and practices (Schurman, 2004). Culture may influence a movement's strategic decisions about which firm to target and may shape how firms perceive, interpret, and respond to a movement's demands. When a firm claims to embrace certain values, movements may be able to contest their legitimacy if they consider their practices and discourses to be decoupled.

This definition of corporate culture is incompatible with the SAF approach as it embraces a functionalist view of organizations, treating them as unitary. According to Fligstein and McAdam (2012, p. 64), bureaucratic organizations are specific kinds of SAFs, with formalized divisions of labor, structures of authority and codified boundaries. Organizations comprise subfields and individuals with their own interests and beliefs in dispute. These disputes entail power relations, so one may talk of "a" dominant organizational culture instead of "the" organizational culture.

The second dimension refers to the economic sector. Drawing on Fligstein (2001) and consistently with the SAF approach, Schurman (2004) claims that at this level firms compete according to certain conceptions of control and resource endowments that shape positions of power and stabilize markets, defining incumbents and challengers. Opportunities for movements arise in the context of disputes among actors. Movement efforts may converge with the strategies of challengers attempting to contest conventions. They may also contest deviant and immoral conducts, reaffirming conventions against specific actors. The more important brands are as business assets in the industry, the more vulnerable the industry will be to movement attacks.

The nature of the goods and services is also related by Schurman (2004) to opportunities. The degree to which products and services offend the moral sensibilities of people is directly related to the opportunities for mobilization and chances of success in contention. This definition overlaps with the previous dimension of the sector in the SAF approach. This is

because the treatment of a sector or an industry as a field usually implies that the products or services are relatively homogeneous, despite possibilities of differentiation (Fligstein; McAdam, 2012, p. 167-168).

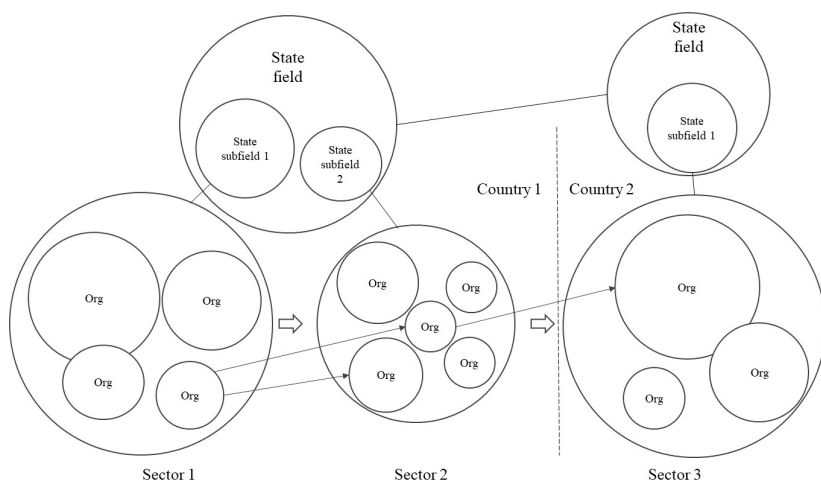
A final dimension theorized by Schurman (2004) is associated with the idea of organizational field (DiMaggio; Powell, 1983). Organizational fields entail “those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services or products” (DiMaggio; Powell 1983, p. 148). Schurman (2004) associates this dimension to commodity networks and their connections to the State, indicating that these interactions entail different opportunities. The author emphasizes that power relations based on dependencies may exist among suppliers and clients, claiming that to the “extent that a firm or industry has many economic ties with another firm or industry, it should be less willing to sacrifice that business relationship in the face of a social movement challenge” (p. 249). The author also indicates that an organizational field may have more or less support from States, depending on its political importance.

This conceptualization diverges from the SAF approach in important respects. As put by Fligstein and McAdam (2012, p. 167-168), the concept of field developed by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) is broader, encompassing actors from several sectors, and emphasizing concrete networks. SAFs are narrower, tending to converge with sectors in markets, and comprise not only networks but also the ways actors behave *vis-à-vis* others, based on intersubjective perceptions of their relative positions within fields and among fields. Instead of a commodity network, comprising firms actually transacting, the SAF approach addresses how ties are situated and transpose fields in which companies occupy specific positions, as represented in Figure 1. Opportunities depend on the interplay in each field and the interrelations of arenas.

By addressing States as an ensemble of fields instead of unitary entities, the SAF approach suggests that public authorities’ support to a sector is

mediated by disputes within the State, as different subfields within it may have political ties to different sectors and attribute diverse importance to them, thus complicating the identification of opportunities by movements. In international markets, economic fields will be related to different state fields (and their subfields) that maintain international relations.

Figure 1. Representation of structures of opportunity in international markets as an ensemble of fields



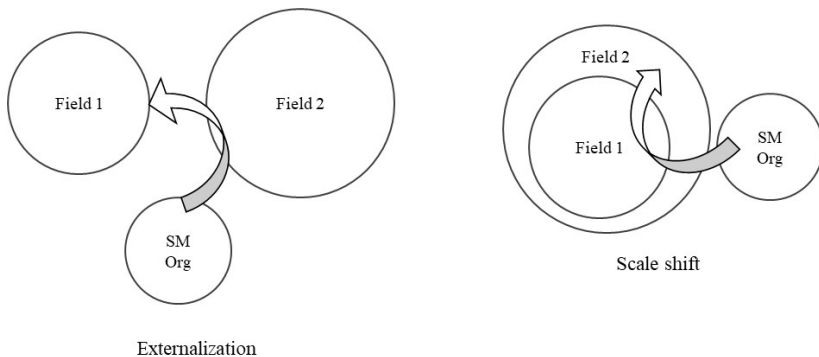
Source: Elaborated by the author.

All of these interconnected realms of market POS configure the complex environments in which social movements operate. To succeed, movements must recognize vulnerabilities and develop tactics to timely interfere at the right focal points (Soule, 2009). This is consistent with the concept of social skills, which constitute the micro-foundations of the SAFs approach (Fligstein; McAdam, 2012).

Social movements literature suggests relevant mechanisms regarding the identification of focal points in international markets. The ideas of

externalization and change of scope are of particular interest (Tarrow, 2005). Externalization is associated with the “boomerang pattern” described by Keck and Sikkink (1999). Bartley and Egels-Zandén (2016) and McAteer and Pulver (2009) adapted this model to market contention, studying market boomerangs. In these markets, movements dodged corporations/subsidiaries with closed POS in developing countries by holding protests against their headquarters, their investors or their customers in developed ones.

Figure 2. Externalization and scale shift in SAFs



Source: Elaborated by the author.

Scale shifts refer to changes in the number and level of coordinated actions, involving new actors, objects and broadened claims (Tarrow, 2005). Collaboration between social movement organizations operating at several levels is key in these cases. The collaboration between NGOs operating at a broader scope and local groups is important, as the first tend to concentrate resources and the second ones have more accurate information, experience “from the ground” and legitimacy (Temper, 2019).

Method

Qualitative research was developed to address the fluid and ambiguous political processes involved in the establishment of the moratorium. The study covered the period during which the soy economy and environmentalism independently took off, between the mid-1960s and 2010. Our focus was the period from 1999 and 2006, when these fields clashed due to their views and interests regarding the Amazon rainforest, and when the main events leading to the establishment of the soy moratorium occurred. A theoretically constructed case study was developed by reflexively deploying and integrating the concepts of SAFs approach and of social movements theory at multiple levels of analysis.

Data sources and gathering

The data gathered referred to three major arenas: the soy economy, the environmental movements and the dynamics of the contention between the two. To understand the dynamics of the different fields and subfields, it was necessary to gather data from diverse sources. We drew mostly on secondary sources, which are specified in Table 1. Three interviews were also conducted with key informants from the environmental movement.

Table 1. Secondary data sources

Spheres of the study	Timing	Sources
Soybean production	Origins and diffusion of soy production in Brazil	Cited secondary sources and studies FAOSTAT Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (PAM – IBGE)
	Outline of the supply chain in the 2000s and State regulation	Cited secondary sources and studies Sites of the companies Sites of the associations Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (PAM – IBGE) Ministry of Industry and Foreign Commerce of Brazil (MDIC) ABIOVE Statistics
Environmental field	Origins and diffusion	Cited secondary sources and studies Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (FASFIL – IBGE)
	Current configuration	Cited secondary sources and studies Institutional sites and reports
	State regulation	Cited secondary sources and studies National Institute of Spatial Research – INPE
Contention and soy moratorium	Dynamics of national contention	Cited secondary sources and studies Factiva News Database Corporate Affiliations Database (Lexis Nexis) Institutional reports Official reports and data
	Dynamics of international contention	Cited secondary sources and studies Factiva News Database Corporate Affiliations Database (Lexis Nexis) Broehl Jr (2008) - book Langert (2019) - book

Data analysis

The data gathered was gradually coded and organized using electronic spreadsheets. The codes referred to the timing of the developments, the fields and the social relations and interactions. This enabled continued and systematic reflection based on the theoretical approaches adopted. This procedure was conducted during the development of a narrative in which events were configured temporally and meaningfully. The strategy allowed us to connect data elements in a dynamic and coherent way, addressing the complexity of the story while contributing to explanatory purposes (Polkinghorne, 1995). The production of the narrative entailed a twofold process. First, a rough and more extensive narrative was produced. The next step was to transform it into a more concise story.

Findings

Regional contention

The infrastructure investments predicted by the Federal Government to establish the “North Arch” originated the conflicts that led to the development of the soy moratorium. Of particular interest were the announcements of the paving of BR-163 (the road connecting Cuiabá, in Mato Grosso, to Santarém, in Pará state) and of new investments in the port of Santarém. In 1999, port authorities launched the concession auction of a grain terminal which interested incumbent soy traders.

The Federal Public Ministry of the State of Pará (MPF-PA), led by a prosecutor historically engaged with environmental issues and the defense of the rights of forest communities, named Felício Pontes Júnior, contested the building of the terminal. He claimed that the auction could not occur without an environmental impact assessment and that the construction of the terminal would affect an archeological site. A judge accepted the claim, issuing an injunction in favor of the prosecution and the auction was canceled. Port authorities challenged the decision claiming that the

terminal would not affect the archeological site and that the license of the port was valid for the terminal.

The provisional decision of the judge was cancelled by higher level courts and the auction occurred in the same year. Cargill was the only company to bid for the contract and won the concession. MPF-PA contested the results, but port authorities and Cargill proceeded by constructing the port, which was concluded in April 2003. When the port was operating, MPF-PA suited Cargill and the port authorities again, also requiring an evaluation of the impacts of the port terminal demolition. In January 2004 the port was shut down, but soon reactivated due to a new revision of the decision by the federal court of Pará state.

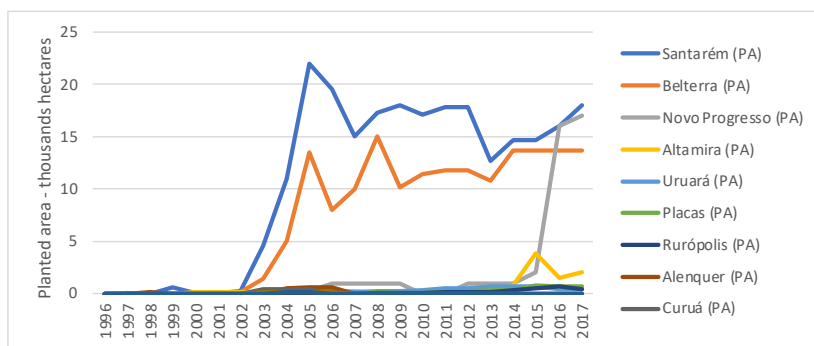
While in 2003 the port was operating, despite the stoppages and ongoing juridical conflicts, the construction of the road connecting Cuiabá to Santarém had not yet started. In this year, the leftist Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva assumed the presidency of Brazil claiming he would deliver what his predecessor did not. Lula appointed Marina Silva, a former grassroot activist of the Amazon region, as the Minister of the Environment. Marina promised to defeat rising deforestation and announced initiatives to protect the forest surrounding BR-163. In Mato Grosso, Blairo Maggi, one of the heirs of the Maggi family and owner of Amaggi, was elected Governor. In Pará, Simão Jatene, from the center-right PSDB, was reelected, favoring the reproduction of existing of the regional political context.

Cargill needed alternatives to make the port operational while the road was not paved. The increasing interest in soybeans production in Santarém and Belterra (Steward, 2007) was convenient for traders, who started purchasing the grain locally. As a result, a stark increase in the soy planted area was observed in these cities (Figure 3).

This rise in soy farming generated conflicts with local communities, who inhabited forest lands with a fragile tenure situation, enabling land grabbing. Some of the affected communities composed grassroots movement organizations. These included the *Sindicato dos Trabalhadores e Trabalhadoras*

Rurais de Santarém (STTR), a union that contributed to the formation of the Worker's Party in Santarém (Leroy, 1991), and other community associations comprising the *Federação das Associações de Moradores e Organizações Comunitárias de Santarém* (FAMCOS). Threatened by the expansion of soy and encouraged by the support of MPF-PA and by the rise of allies to power in the Federal Government, in 2003, these organizations launched a campaign against soy. They oriented communities to refuse to sell their lands to farmers, resisting attempts of disintegration (Steward, 2007).

Figure 3. Planted soy areas in cities nearby BR-163 in the State of Pará



Source: PAM/IBGE (2019)

On May 1, 2004, a Labor Day, they organized a seminar on the issue, inviting partners, including environmental NGOs and actors from progressive branches of the Catholic church. Cargill became the main target of the movement, as confronting soy farmers directly was too dangerous and local governments supported soy. The event was concluded with a march to Cargill port. Participants estimate that about 800 people, some of whom held small wood hammers symbolizing the demolition of the port, participated. Greenpeace joined the protest and five of its activists climbed the port to fix a sign saying “Cargill, door of destruction” and paint the words “Get

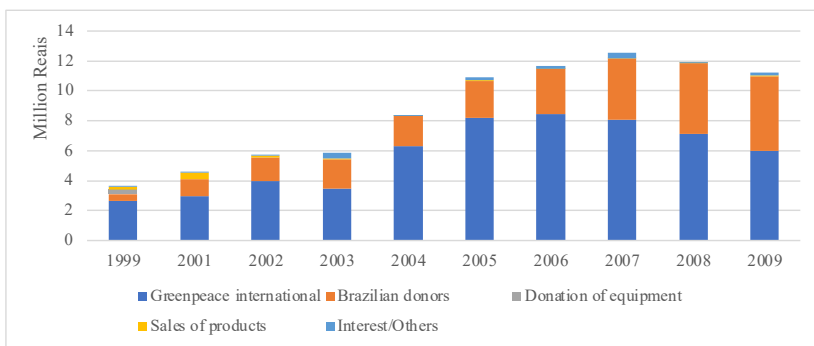
out” on its roof. These were violently repressed by the company’s private security agents and ended up arrested. After imprisonment, the rest of the activists marched to the front of the police station to protest the arrest.

Subsequent juridical actions deployed by MPF-PA and local protests also ended up frustrated, despite reasonable repercussions. Cargill insistently used its juridical resources to contest unfavorable court decisions and continued to operate. After strong repressions, local movements retreated local demonstrations.

Scaling up and externalizing contention

The inefficacy of local attempts led environmentalists to develop novel strategies. Greenpeace decided to launch a campaign about soy in the Amazon. As indicated in Figure 4, the initiative was favored by an agreement of the Brazil branch with Greenpeace International, established in 1999, to make the Brazilian portion of the Amazon a global priority of the organization, enabling coordinated actions and the acquisition of international resources (Greenpeace, 2000).

Figure 4. Composition of Greenpeace Brasil budget - 1999-2009



Source: Developed by the author based on institutional reports

In 2005, the NGO developed several actions against soy in the Brazilian Amazon. It released the documentary called “Soy: in the name of progresa”, denouncing how the soy rush was generating increased deforestation and violence against forest communities. It also awarded Blairo Maggi with the “Golden Chainsaw” (*Motoserra de Ouro*), conferred to personalities who were most engaged in destroying the forest. In March 2006, activists protested in an illegally deforested farm with a huge flag written “100% Crime”, which was destructed by the farm owner’s pickup truck.

These actions were part of a broader strategy involving an investigation about the soy production chain. On April 6, 2006, Greenpeace released a report called “Eating Up the Amazon” in English and in Portuguese (Greenpeace, 2006). The 64-page document was introduced with a presentation of the “key facts” in four columns entitled: The Scene, the Crime, The Criminals, Partners in Crime. The first two refer to the illegal deforestation of the Amazon and “related crimes”, such as slave labor and violence against local communities, committed by soy producers under the Presidency of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. The criminals were the US-based traders ADM, Bunge and Cargill, which controlled “more than three-quarters of the soya crushing capacity in Europe that supplies soya meal and oil to the animal feed market” (Greenpeace, 2006, p. 5). Cargill was said to lead the process, while Bunge and ADM were “following the leader”. Finally, European companies, which demanded increasing amounts of the Brazilian soy mainly to produce livestock meals, and their customers, including fast-food and supermarket companies in Europe, were the “Partners in crime”.

The report was particularly critical of McDonald’s. It denounced contradictions of its policy committing not to buy beef from deforested areas and its actual purchase of cooked chicken used for McNuggets made out of poultry fed with the soy sourced in the Amazon region. It tracked the soy produced in the states of Rondônia, Mato Grosso, Pará and transported from Santarém port to Cargill’s Liverpool terminal, onward to a facility

owned by a Cargill subsidiary called Sun Valley near Hereford, England. It ironized that McDonald's named Cargill its supplier of the year in 2005.

The launch of the report was followed by Greenpeace demonstrations in Europe and in Brazil. On the next day of the report release, Greenpeace blocked ships loaded with soy coming from the Amazon in the ports of Amsterdam and Ghent. In England, McDonald's restaurants were plastered with images of Ronald McDonald wielding a chainsaw and activists in chicken costumes protesting in multiple stores. In the following weeks, smaller or greater demonstrations occurred in other countries. On April 9th, for example, the relation of soy and the deforestation of the Amazon was addressed in demonstrations occurring simultaneously in 70 countries against GMOs. On May 19, Greenpeace used one of its ships to block the Cargill port in Santarém and activists climbed the roof of the port. They were attacked by the guards at the terminal with water jets and twelve activists end up arrested.

Cargill is one of the largest private and family companies in the world and was called the "invisible giant" because of its very discreet style (Kneen, 2012). Facing the protests, the company claimed it could not be held responsible for resolving the complex problem of deforestation. Regarding its presence in Santarém, it claimed that its arrival had boosted the local economy of a very underdeveloped region. Its representatives also referred to a project developed with The Nature Conservancy to stimulate the sustainable soy production in the region.

The repercussions of Greenpeace protests at McDonald's

McDonald's has one of the most famous brands in the world and has a long experience with attacks by social movements. By 2006, the firm was suffering with movements associating its brand to unhealthy foods and to epidemic obesity in the United States.

A chapter of Langert's (2019) book about his experience in the sustainability area of the company provides a good idea of how Greenpeace's actions reverberated at McDonald's. Before protests, Greenpeace contacted McDonald's Europe Corporate Affairs, but the head of the area who had just assumed the position decided not to dialogue. When protests spread, the European presidency of the company became directly involved. Karen van Bergen, a political scientist, the chief of staff of the presidency and former head of corporate affairs, took on the issue. In the United States, Robert Langert, who had just become the head of corporate responsibility and sustainability, was in charge.

As soy in the Brazilian Amazon was not on the radar of the team of anticipatory issues of the corporation, van Bergen and Langert had to research about it to decide what to do. To confirm if Greenpeace's claims were credible, Langert contacted partners in Conservation International and WWF. Despite McDonald's demand accounted for an infimal percentage of the soy purchased by Europe from Brazil, both actors decided to do something about it.

To negotiate with Greenpeace, they needed authorization from their superiors. In the European branch, van Bergen was readily supported by Denis Hennequin, a president of McDonald's Europe known for his success in adapting the products and services of the firm to the European context. In the United States, the situation was more complicated. Langert (2019) claims that Greenpeace "lacked credibility as far as the average American business executive was concerned" and that he "knew that no one at our home office would believe Greenpeace latest claims" (Langert, 2019, p. 173). The superior of Langert was Jack Daily, the vice president of Corporate Affairs, a veteran in the company considered as an "obstacle to overcome" (p. 177). Langert claims that Van Bergen was bold in convincing him to negotiate. She used the support of Hennequin in Europe to leverage her position, signaling she would involve her superior in the dispute to pressure Daily.

The negotiation involved various meetings in the following weeks. Thomas Henningsen, the head of the Amazon Campaign in Europe, and Paulo Adario, a senior activist of Greenpeace Brazil, represented Greenpeace. They clearly demonstrated that their intention was to engage Cargill through McDonald's, as Cargill was invisible to consumers, it did not have shareholders, and McDonald's had a "history of good steps" (Langert, 2019, p. 175). Greenpeace wanted McDonald's to commit to three things: zero-deforestation, respect for indigenous people's rights and no slavery. They also had proposals regarding how existing public data and remote sense technology could be used to monitor these commitments.

The response to Greenpeace's demands depended on negotiations with diverse areas of the company. As put by Langert (2019),

The lines of authority and decision-making within McDonald's are confusing, with many hands stirring the pot. I often thought a couple dozen people could say 'yes', but if one said 'no', decision-making slowed to a crawl. [...] To me, getting decisions made was the most frustrating part of my job (p. 175).

Particularly important was the support of the European and Global supply chain areas. Van Bergen was able to successfully mobilize Francesca Debiase, the chief supply chain officer Europe, an enthusiast of sustainability, who had a key role in the agreement. Keith Kenny, the head of the poultry supply chain, was also involved. Later, Frank Muscheto, the global chief supply chain officer, had to be convinced. Langert claims that the effective arguments were the existence of a previous commitment from the corporation not to buy beef from rainforest areas and the support of Debiase to the expansion of this commitment to soy. His approval came with the condition that McDonald's should not directly assume the costs of the change, working to engage its suppliers.

It was necessary to define how exactly to pressure Cargill to change its practices. Van Bergen was bold again, defending that more companies

besides McDonald's and Cargill should become involved. McDonald's position should be leveraged through the mobilization of other large European companies purchasing Brazilian soy indirectly. Carrefour, Nestle, Tesco, Ahold, Marks and Spencer, Waitrose, Sainsbury and Asda were mobilized by McDonald's Europe actors, composing a larger soy working group. Companies in this group bought soy not only from Cargill, but also from other major traders, which were also involved. After these actors decided to pressure traders together, Mike Roberts, then the chief operating officer, the second highest post in McDonald's hierarchy, met Gregory Page, the chief operating officer of Cargill, asking for action. Langert (2019) pointed out that the existence of a long-term relationship between McDonald's and Cargill was key to enabling collaboration.

In July 2006, less than three months after the launch of "Eating up the Amazon", the "boycott" was all over the news and a new phase of negotiation involving NGOs and traders started in Brazil. Soy traders were represented by the Brazilian Association of the Industry of Vegetable Oils (ABIOVE), and the National Association of Grains Exporters (ANEC). On the NGOs side, WWF, Conservation International and The Nature Conservancy, major international NGOs in Brazil, came to the table. Friends of Earth, Imazon, Imaflora and the STTR also accompanied the first meetings (GTS, 2007). After some conflicting statements, the Soy Working Group, co-lead by Greenpeace, represented by Paulo Adário, and ABIOVE, represented by Carlo Lovatelli, was established. In this, representatives detailed the forms to implement and monitor the agreement. It was decided that official deforestation data from the Brazilian Federal Government would be used and that a specialized company would be hired to verify if deforested areas were or not associated with soy plantations. Initially, airplane images were used in this detection, but later the remote sensing technologies of the National Institute of Spatial Research was involved in this monitoring. The Federal Government supported the initiative in other ways as it converged with its efforts to defeat deforestation.

Discussion

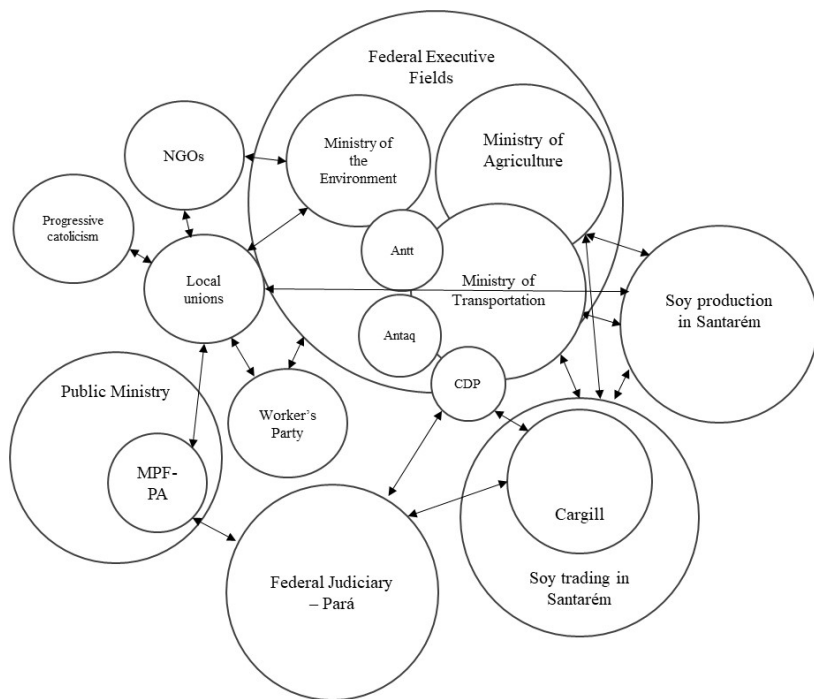
Integrating insights from social movements theory in the SAF approach enables us to better understand how movements were able to establish the soy moratorium in Brazil. We address the POS of markets as an ensemble of interconnected fields, reflecting about ideas developed by Schurman (2004) in relation to the ones of Fligstein and McAdam (2012). We also argue that social movements were able to change the focal points, shifting scales and externalizing contention to exploit the more open POS in Europe, using their resources and social skills.

The instances of the POS related to markets theorized by Schurman (2004) may all be addressed as SAFs. To this end, the concept of organizational field developed by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) must be abandoned in favor of the narrower view of Fligstein and McAdam (2012, p. 167-168), which encompasses the dimensions Schurman (2004) called sector and the nature of goods and services. More attention must be paid to the interconnection between arenas, including the interplay between sectors. Furthermore, based on the SAF approach, the dimension of corporate culture gives way to a vision of organizations as fields that condition responses to social movements.

The POS faced by movements in the subnational level is represented in Figure 5. Contention was triggered by the juridical disputes between MPF-PA, Cargill and Federal port authorities regarding the environmental licensing of the terminal. Facing threats due to the expansion of soy farming in the region, grassroots movements, encouraged by alliances with MPF-PA and with actors within the Federal government, got mobilized. Cargill, the incumbent soy trader and the operator of the polemical terminal – and not the soy farms – was defined as the key target. This reflects existing power asymmetries between the fields of soy farming and trading and the blocking of the farming SAF to grassroots action. At this level, movements faced a closed POS and were not able to influence markets. With the support of

local authorities, Cargill used all kinds of juridical maneuvers to keep operating and violently repressed protests.

Figure 5. Multiple SAFs of the regional POS



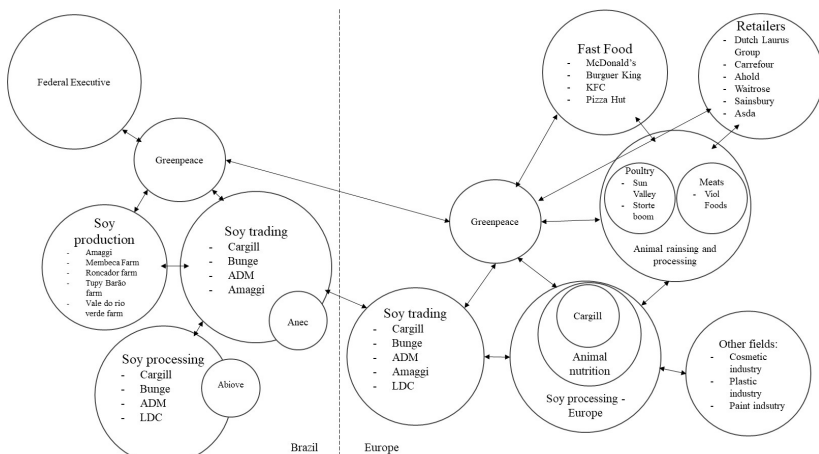
Source: Elaborated by the author

While local contention was unsuccessful, it enhanced movements which could operate at other levels, as Temper (2019) suggests. Greenpeace drew on the action and benefited from the alliance with grassroots movements, obtaining information and legitimating its position. Local conflicts also materialized the general threats of soy to the Amazon before the international community.

Greenpeace had resources available and social skilled strategists, who decided to scale up and externalize contention. The POS exploited by Greenpeace at this stage is represented in Figure 6. Rather than considering only networks, resource dependencies between companies directly connected and their political ties with the State, as Schurman's (2004) idea of organizational field suggests, we contextualized these networks into a set of interconnected SAFs.

As suggested by Tarrow (2005), the scaling up of the conflict demanded Greenpeace skilled social actors to adopt an extended frame, addressing soy production in the Brazilian Amazon as a whole. One way to scale up the conflict would be to target the Federal Brazilian government, but that was not Greenpeace's choice. Despite having important allies in the Ministry of the Environment, activists knew they did not have the strength to overcome the alliances of soy producers and traders with more powerful ministries as the Agriculture and Transportation, for example.

Figure 6. Multiple SAFs of the POS in international market



Source: Elaborated by the author

Externalization focusing on markets was deemed as a better strategic option. The choice of Europe took into account the openness of the POS *vis-à-vis* other nations buying Brazilian soy, such as China, Thailand, Korea, Indonesia and Iran. Greenpeace Brazil allied with Greenpeace Europe, using its international network to investigate the economic sectors in Europe and understand the multiple possible points of intervention, as suggested by Tarrow (2005) and Soule (2009). Soy is used in diverse sectors, including the cosmetic, plastic and paint industries. But Greenpeace strategists emphasized SAFs associated with food, as the name of the report it released indicates. Greenpeace developed actions targeting sectors and organizations it identified along the several fields connecting soy production to fast-food chains and supermarkets in Europe. These fields were considered easier to influence than other arenas dominated by commodity production firms such as Cargill, Bunge and ADM. Certain power structures in fields and among fields was assumed to occur. Incumbent actors of fast-food and supermarket fields were targeted presuming they could transform the practices of dominant soy traders which supplied them, operating a corporate boomerang (McAteer; Pulver, 2009; Bartley; Egels-Zandén, 2016). It was also assumed that if traders changed their practices, they could also transform its whole field and the soy farming SAF.

McDonald's was a special target in Greenpeace's reports and protests, which indicates a perception of Greenpeace strategists regarding the openness of its POS. Schurman (2004) theorized the organizational POS based on the idea of corporate culture, treating the organization as a unitary whole. The SAF approach suggests instead that organizations should be addressed as fields. As discussed by Fligstein and McAdam (2012, p. 64), formal organizations are particular kinds of SAFs, with formalized structures and boundaries. These structures are contested, involving power struggles, but tend to routinize conflict and make it susceptible to rule-oriented solutions. Different units of the organization may be assessed as SAF themselves, which relate based on prescribed "authority relations that

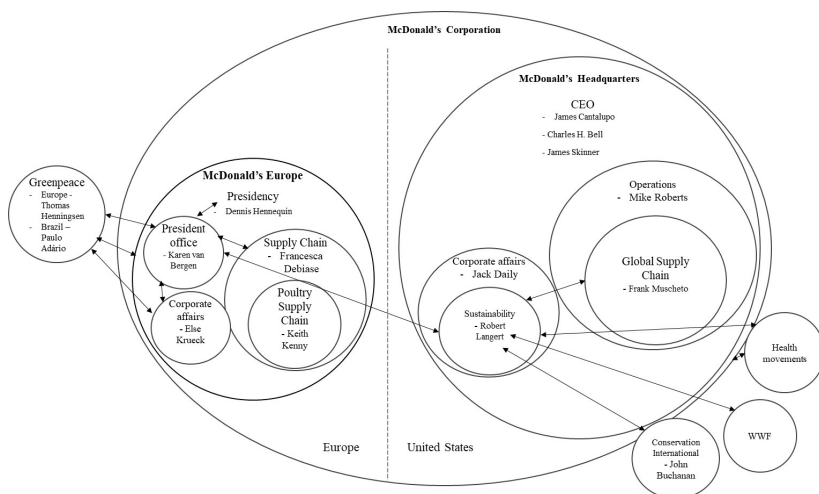
knit the system together” (p. 65). This does not exclude the existence of political dynamism. “Lower order participants can act both individually and collectively to impair the functioning of the unit and challenge the nominal authority of higher-ups” (p. 65).

Figure 7 represents the SAFs involved in constructing the response of McDonald’s to its detractors. In Europe, there was a clear prevalence to take Greenpeace’s claims seriously and try to resolve them, while in the headquarters there was a strong tendency not to dialogue with the NGO. The headquarters is, of course, higher in the formal hierarchy than the European subsidiary. However, lower order participants were able to impose their view, transforming the corporate policy as whole. For that purpose, these social skilled challengers had to forge a coalition, which involved the presidency, its staff and the supply chain area. They also allied with the sustainability area of the headquarters, a challenger area of the dominant field. Van Bergen was an especially skilled actor and had an important role in mobilizing actors who were in favor of the negotiation with Greenpeace. Acting together, challengers made two key strategic moves. First, they had the “audacity” to confront Jack Daily, the vice-president of Corporate Affairs, somehow forcing him to accept the negotiation. Second, they had to convince the global supply chain area, led by Muschetto. Two factors enabled the engagement of the global supply chain subfield. The first was a contradiction between its established policy regarding the purchase of beef from illegally deforested rainforest areas and its purchasing practices for soy for these areas. The second was the simplicity, feasibility and low costs of the solution presented by Greenpeace to McDonald’s, which were appealing to operation managers.

Van Bergen also leveraged convergences of interest between McDonald’s and Greenpeace when she proposed that the agreement should mobilize other companies. By mobilizing other buyers in Europe, they were able to amplify the pressure over soy traders and reduce McDonald’s exposure. Expanding the “boycott” to other major traders was relevant to avoid

Cargill, a strategic partner of McDonald's, to absorb the consequences of the agreement alone, which could lead to a disadvantage in relation to its main competitors. At the same time, this made it possible to amplify the environmental impact of the agreement.

Figure 7. Multiple SAFs of McDonald's POS



Source: Elaborated by the author

Final remarks

Our analysis elucidates how environmental movements were able to restrict the practices of major soy traders, establishing the soy moratorium. Differently from most of existing studies on this zero-deforestation agreement, which assess its output, we studied the process that led to its establishment at a level of empirical details that no other study had done thus far.

In doing so, we contributed to the integration of concepts of social movement theory and the SAF approach. We demonstrated that the POS

in markets may be better understood as a set of interconnected fields engaged in the production of relatively homogeneous goods and services instead of a single organizational field. This enabled us to take into account not only general supply chain conventions and relations of power among firms actually interacting, but also the political-cultural relations within and between the sectors in which these firms are embedded. Also, instead of considering organizations as unified entities, with a single organizational culture, we demonstrated the advantages of addressing organizations themselves as SAFs, composed by different subfields and actors with particular views and interests which not only cooperate but also compete to define the dominant organizational culture. Our study also demonstrates that the micro foundations of the SAFs perspective and the concept of social skills are key to properly address how actors may choose to strategically externalize and shift scales of contention to exploit openings in structures of political opportunity.

Silvio Eduardo Alvarez Candido is a Doctor in Production Engineering and Professor of Organizational and Labor Studies at the Federal University of São Carlos.

✉ seacandido@dep.ufscar.br

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the São Paulo State Research Support Foundation (FAPESP) for supporting this work (Projects 18/00292-5 and 20/16236-7). I am also grateful to Mark Granovetter and the Center for Latin American Studies at Stanford University for their support in carrying out the research and for hosting me as a visitor during the 2018-2019 academic year.

References

1. ALONSO, Angela; COSTA, Valeriano; MACIEL, Débora. Identidade e estratégia na formação do movimento ambientalista brasileiro. *Novos estudos CEBRAP*, n. 79, p. 151-167, 2007.
2. ANDRADE, Roberta A.; SACOMANO NETO, Mário; CANDIDO, Sílvio E. A. Implementing community-based forest management in the Brazilian Amazon Rainforest: a strategic action fields perspective. *Environmental Politics*, v. 31, n. 3, p. 519-541, 2002.
3. BARBOSA, Luiz C. *Guardians of the brazilian amazon rainforest: environmental organizations and development*. Londres: Routledge, 2015.
4. BARTLEY, Tim; EGELS-ZANDÉN, Niklas. Beyond decoupling: Unions and the leveraging of corporate social responsibility in Indonesia. *Socio-Economic Review*, v. 14, n. 2, p. 231-255, 2016.
5. BECKER, Bertha. K. Revisão das políticas de ocupação da Amazônia: é possível identificar modelos para projetar cenários? *Parcerias estratégicas*, v. 6, n. 12, p. 135-159, 2001.
6. CANDIDO, Sílvio Eduardo A.; SACOMANO NETO, Mario; CÔRTEZ, Mauro R. How social inequalities shape markets: lessons from the configuration of PET recycling practices in Brazil. *Business & Society*, v. 61, n. 3, p. 539-571, 2022.
7. CARDOSO, Fátima C. (2008). *Do confronto à governança ambiental: uma perspectiva institucional para a Moratória da Soja na Amazônia*. Dissertação (Mestrado em Ciência Ambiental) – Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2008.
8. CARNEIRO, Marcelo. S. A construção social do mercado de madeiras certificadas na Amazônia brasileira: a atuação das ONGs ambientalistas e das empresas pioneiras. *Sociedade e Estado*, v. 22, p. 681-713, 2007.
9. DIMAGGIO, Paul. J.; POWELL, Walter. W. The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American sociological review*, v. 48, n. 2, p. 147-160, 1983.
10. FLIGSTEIN, Neil. Understanding stability and change in fields. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, v. 33, 39-51, 2013.
11. FLIGSTEIN, Neil. *The architecture of markets*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
12. FLIGSTEIN, Neil.; MCADAM, Doug. *A theory of fields*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
13. GIBBS, Holly et al. Brazil's soy moratorium. *Science*, v. 347, n. 6220, p. 377-378, 2015.
14. GREENPEACE. *Comendo a Amazônia*. Brasil: Greenpeace, 2006.
15. GTS – GRUPO DE TRABALHO DA SOJA. *Relatório da moratória da soja no bioma Amazônia*. Brasil: GTS, 2007.

16. HOCHSTETLER, Kathryn; KECK, Margaret E. *Greening Brazil: Environmental activism in state and society*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.
17. HUSU, Hanna-Mari. Rethinking incumbency: Utilising Bourdieu's field, capital, and habitus to energy transitions. *Energy Research and Social Science*, v. 93, e102825, 2022.
18. KECK, Margaret E.; SIKKINK, Kathryn. Transnational advocacy networks in international and regional politics. *International social science journal*, v. 51, n. 159, p. 89-101, 1999.
19. KING, Brayden G.; PEARCE, Nicolas. A. The contentiousness of markets: Politics, social movements, and institutional change in markets. *Annual review of sociology*, v. 36, p. 249-267, 2010.
20. KNEEN, Brewster. *Invisible giant: Cargill and its transnational strategies*. Londres: Pluto Press, 2002.
21. KUNGL, Gregor; HESS, David J. Sustainability transitions and strategic action fields: A literature review and discussion. *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions*, v. 38, p. 22-33, 2021.
22. LAMBIN, Eric et al. The role of supply-chain initiatives in reducing deforestation. *Nature Climate Change*, v. 8, n. 2, p. 109-116, 2018.
23. LANGERT, Bob. *The battle to do good: Inside McDonald's sustainability journey*. Bingley: Emerald, 2019.
24. LEROY, Jean-Pierre. *Uma chama na Amazônia*. Rio de Janeiro: Vozes, 1991.
25. MARTIN, John-Levi. What is field theory? *American journal of sociology*, v. 109, n. 1, p. 1-49, 2003.
26. MCADAM, Doug; TARROW, Sidney; TILLY, Charles. *Dynamics of contention*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
27. MCATEER, Emily; PULVER, Simone. The corporate boomerang: Shareholder transnational advocacy networks targeting oil companies in the Ecuadorian Amazon. *Global Environmental Politics*, v. 9, n. 1, p. 1-30, 2009.
28. MEYER, David. Protest and political opportunities. *Annual review of sociology*, v. 30, p. 125-145, 2004.
29. NEPSTAD, Daniel et al. Slowing Amazon deforestation through public policy and interventions in beef and soy supply chains. *Science*, v. 344, n. 6188, p. 1118-1123, 2014.
30. POLANYI, Karl. *A grande transformação*. Lisboa: Leya, 2013.
31. POLKINGHORNE, Donald. E. Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. *International journal of qualitative studies in education*, v. 8, n. 1, p. 5-23, 1995.
32. SCHURMAN, Rachel. Fighting "Frankenfoods": Industry opportunity structures and the efficacy of the anti-biotech movement in Western Europe. *Social problems*, v. 51, n. 2, p. 243-268, 2004.

33. SOULE, Sarah. *Contention and corporate social responsibility*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
34. STEWARD, Corrina. From colonization to “environmental soy”: a case study of environmental and socio-economic valuation in the Amazon soy frontier. *Agriculture and Human Values*, v. 24, n. 1, p. 107-122, 2007.
35. TARROW, Sidney. *The new transnational activism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
36. TEMPER, Leah. From boomerangs to minefields and catapults: dynamics of trans-local resistance to land-grabs. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, v. 46, n. 1, p. 188-216, 2019.
37. TORRES, Maurício; BRANFORD, Sue. Após mais de uma década, pacto voluntário entre empresas e ONGs deixa dúvidas sobre eficácia em proteger a Amazônia. *The Intercept*, 16 mar. 2017. Disponível em: <https://theintercept.com/2017/03/16/moratoria-da-soja-solucao-contra-o-desmatamento-ou-marketing-corporativo/>

Received: Nov. 16, 2022.

Accepted: July 10, 2023.