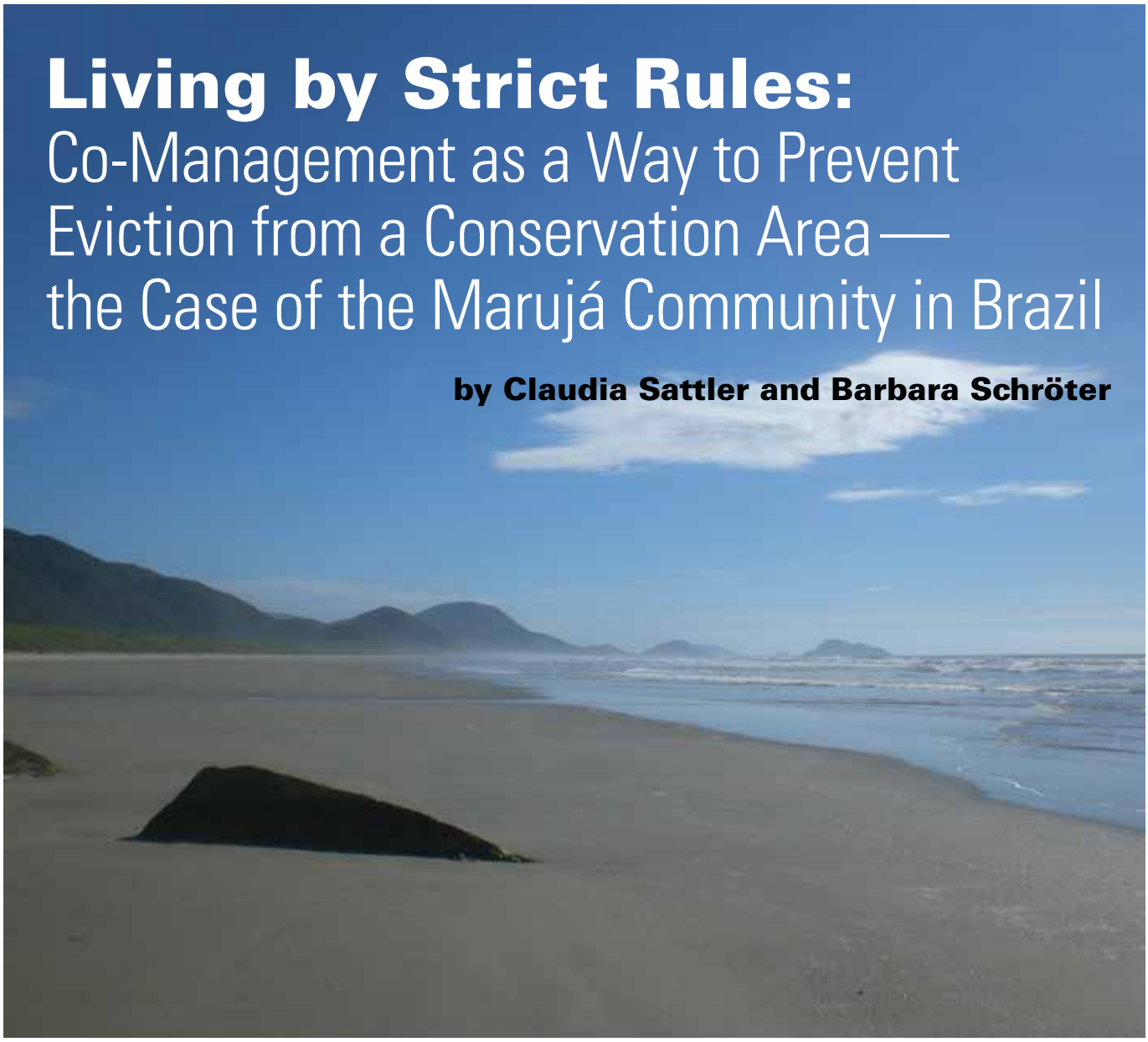
Living by Strict Rules:
Co-Management as a Way to Prevent Eviction from a Conservation Area—the Case of the Marujá Community in Brazil

by Claudia Sattler and Barbara Schröter



Claudia Sattler

The beach at the Cardosa Island State Park.

In Brief

Economic growth is a paradigm foreign to most traditional communities, as their culture is closely connected to a sustainable way of living that keeps natural resources intact over long periods of time, and is based on group rather than individual welfare. With changing frame conditions such communities often struggle to find ways to maintain their traditions and cultural identity. This paper describes a case where a small community managed to deal with two different threats: eviction from a state park conservation unit and increasing environmental degradation through effects of mass tourism. This was achieved through a process of self-organization and entering into a co-management agreement with the local state park, where both parties now function as allies for nature conservation under the premise that the community follows a set of strict rules limiting their economic activities and maintaining their status quo.

The Marujá community is located inside the Cardoso Island State Park (*Parque Estadual Ilha do Cardoso*, PEIC) at the border between São Paulo and Paraná states.

The region is extremely rich in biodiversity with vast areas of continuous Atlantic Forests, which includes large stretches of mangroves as well as sensitive dune ecosystems. Marujá is home to 60 families with about 180 inhabitants. The community members consider themselves to be 'traditional people' (*Caiçaras*), an ethnocultural mixture of indigenous people and descendants of Portuguese colonizers and former African slaves. 'Traditional people' in Brazil are defined as groups who are culturally different and who recognize themselves as such. They depend on natural resources for their cultural, social, religious, ancestral, and economic activities.

> *"We live in harmony with animals, because we need them, and the nature, and they need us. In fact, we need more from nature than nature needs from us."* [Marujá *Caiçara*]

The use of natural resources is based on traditional knowledge that has been passed down through generations.[1] Although recognized, in contrast to indigenous people, traditional people lack protection by the Brazilian constitution. Geographically, *Caiçaras* are distributed along the coastline of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Paraná, and northern Santa Catarina state.[2] In terms of ecosystem services, they rely on a diverse range for their livelihoods. These not only include provisioning services such as growing crops and catching fish for self-consumption, but also extraction of natural materials (e.g. wood, roots, seeds, shells, etc.) for handicrafts, and regulating services such as water filtration for wastewater treatment. Cultural services are also important, as their cultural identity is closely linked to nature and the belief that they are the caretakers of the ecosystems that they depend upon.[3] *Caiçaras* usually have close relational ties, and their interaction is based on trust and collective action for the common good. This is expressed by activities of mutual support and help (*Mutirão*) to solve community and individual problems.[4] The *Caiçaras*' way of life is seen as self-sustaining and sustainable. For example, for fishing, they use a traditional device made of wooden poles called *cerco*.[5] It ensures that only older and bigger fish get trapped inside the *cerco*, while younger and smaller fish can escape through the poles.

Key Concepts

- **In response to environmental degradation caused by mass tourism, a local community in Brazil entered into a co-management agreement with the State Park in which it resides to prevent eviction from a conservation area.**
- **The community agreed to maintain their status quo and to live according to a number of strict rules restraining their economic activities, while committing themselves to support the State Park in achieving its conservation mission.**
- **In return, the State Park waived its right to evict the community from the area as required by law for this type of conservation unit.**
- **This co-management agreement has proven to be effective; however, it may be fragile in view of anticipated future developments.**

The Problem: Looming Mass Tourism and Eviction from the State Park

The PEIC was created 50 years ago in 1962. Per definition, a state park does not allow inhabitants and requires the relocation of existing communities.[6] Although enforcement was low at that time, about one-third of the communities decided to leave the region. However, the Marujá community and several other communities persisted and maintained their communities within the PEIC. Many feared that they would not be able to hold on to their traditions once they were removed from their ancestral territory.

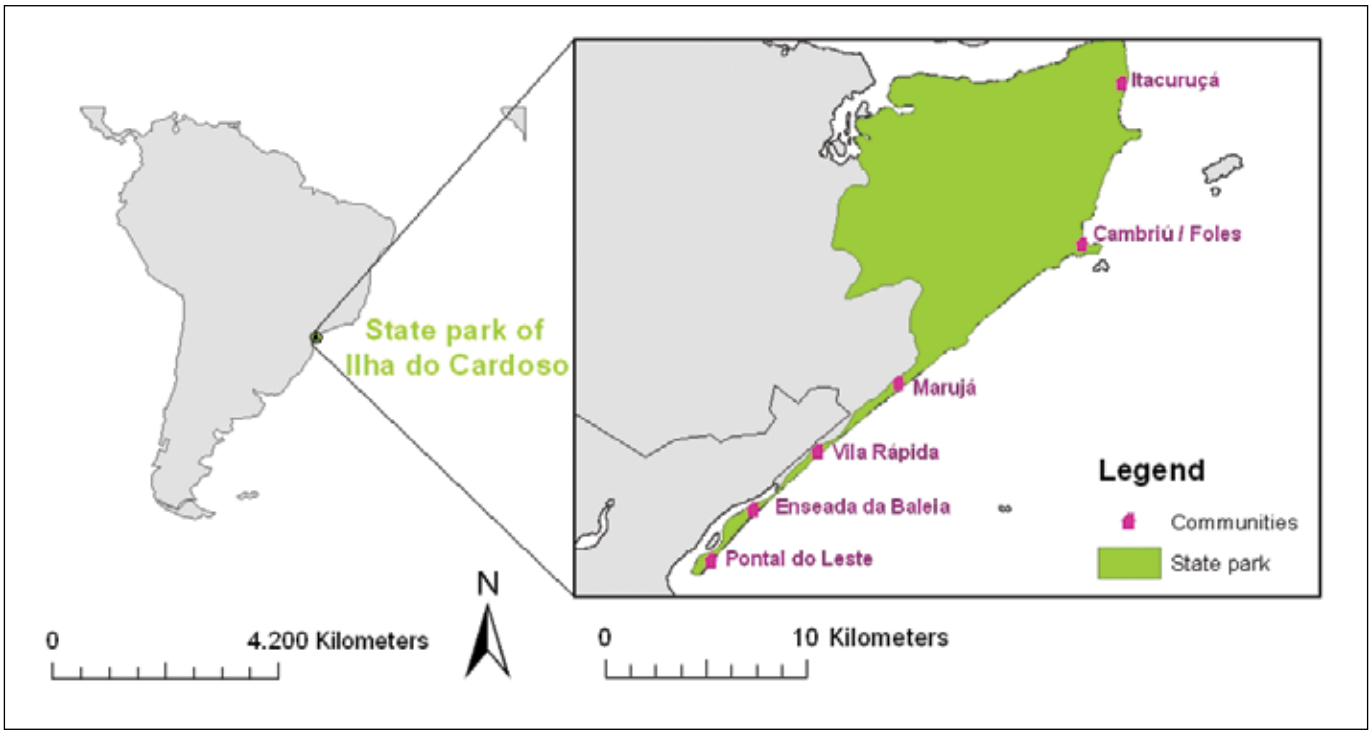
> *"Quietness, breathe fresh air, no pollution. The way of life here is great...Here no one starves ...There is fish, there are oysters, seafood for you to pick up...Not in the city. If you don't have cash in your hand, there is no way to survive."* [Marujá *Caiçara*]

In the late 1980s and continuing until the 1990s, the area was put under more and more pressure as large numbers of tourists were attracted to the region for its natural beauty. This resulted in severe land speculation for real-estate development and illegal construction was observed within the park boundaries.[6] The process was reinforced by the construction of a major highway, which suddenly linked urban centers to the region. At this point, the state park could not effectively prevent these developments as it lacked adequate human and financial resources.

> *"Supervision is the responsibility of the Park, but they have too few people to control. I think they have three. Imagine, if they had 100, they still wouldn't manage."* [Marujá *Caiçara*]

Tourists were also drawn to the Marujá community, causing a number of environmental and social problems. Illegal camping and construction occurred close to the beach areas, profoundly impacting sensitive dune ecosystems and mangroves.

> *"There was no control. Anyone who wanted could come. They [tourists] used to camp where they wanted. They used to leave a mess...That was not what we wanted. We want a sound tourism, tourists who come to enjoy nature."* [Marujá *Caiçara*]



Authors

The Marujá community is located inside the Cardoso Island State Park at the border between São Paulo and Paraná states.

Areas of primary forest were cleared for illegal development to meet the demands of the tourism industry. Seasonal accommodations were constructed for visitors, and soon a number of tourists decided to stay for longer periods of time, building summer domiciles or taking up permanent residence in the community. In consequence, the wastewater treatment, not designed for so many people, broke down. On top of that, the former tourists and new residents were not dedicated to the traditional way of life. Previously, community members produced almost no unrecyclable waste. As the number of new residents grew, large amounts of plastic garbage resulted, simply left in the environment. Soon problems with sewage and wastewater treatments as well as garbage collection became unmanageable, causing severe sanitary problems. New residents were also known to fish and hunt with modern gear 'just for fun,' taking more resources than needed for self-consumption and leaving unused resources to spoil in the environment.

"...They take all the fish, and what they don't want, they throw on the beach." [Marujá *Caiçara*]

In parallel to these environmental problems, social problems developed. The community segregated into the old community of traditional people and the new residents, both with colliding lifestyles. As this happened, the relationship between the two changed from initial equality to dependence, as the traditional people increasingly became employees of the new residents. They worked either in their private residences as chambermaids, gardeners, etc., or in the newly established tourist businesses as cooking or cleaning personnel.

"If there were no rules, for sure, there would be hotels...Caiçaras would end up being employees of the guys who have the money." [Marujá *Caiçara*]

In the new market created by the tourism boom, the local traditional people lacked the necessary mindset and financial resources to set up the businesses for themselves or to pursue new economic activities. As the divide became more apparent, criminal offences such as thefts, rows, and domestic violence were noted, associated with alcohol and drug usage formerly unknown to the community. Gradually, the culture in the community shifted from the overall concept of subsistence to economic growth. Notably, economic benefits were mainly enjoyed by the nonlocals while the traditional people drifted into a position of economic dependence.

Overall, the situation could be described as highly problematic from two perspectives. First off, the park lacked the means to effectively enforce the existing environmental legislation, that is, to see to the relocation of existing communities in the state park, and also control the environmental damage inflicted by the increasing numbers of visitors to the region. Second, the livelihood of the *Caiçaras* was threatened by the imminent enforcement of the environmental legislation that

Barbara Schröter

The traditional *cerco* used for fishing ensures that only older and bigger fish get trapped inside, while younger and smaller fish can escape through the poles.

stipulates their eviction from the state park. Additionally, their traditional lifestyle was challenged by the growing number of outsiders in their community who did not adhere to a life led in harmony with nature.

The Solution: Co-management to Prevent Eviction from the Park

In response to the increasing environmental degradation and social disintegration, the traditional community members organized themselves and founded a community association called AMOMAR (*Associação dos Moradores do Marujá*). AMOMAR's three main aims are laid out in their statutes and include the following: to fight for the right to stay in the Park for traditional Marujá residents (Article 1), to ensure their quality of life based on their traditional lifestyle (Article 2), and to conserve the surrounding natural resources (Article 3). AMOMAR was used as a forum to deliberate the most pressing problems and to discuss possible solutions and strategies. The main concerns centered on the question of how they could best defy the imposed growth mentality carried into the community by the outsiders and preserve their traditional way of life, while legally remaining in the state park. Decisions were taken by majority vote. Nontraditional community members were allowed to participate in the meetings but were excluded from voting. After a time of consolidation, the group contacted the state park to make their concerns heard. This was followed by a long process of communication and argumentation before both parties reached an agreement.

Claudia Sattler

A stretch of Mangroves in the Marujá region.

Through this process, the community negotiated its right to remain in the state park. This right is valid only for *Caiçaras*. To be considered a *Caiçara*, one has to meet two criteria: first, having family ties to the region, either by birth or through marriage, and second, being committed to the traditional *Caiçara* culture. For the traditional people, the right to remain was only granted under the condition that the community now follows a strict steady-state and no-grow strategy based on a number of rules. These rules, still valid today, stipulate that the annual number of tourists allowed to visit the community is restricted. In this way, the community is able to manage additional wastewater and garbage, but it is still allowed to gain income from small-scale tourism.

Several rules relate to the economic activities that are allowed in the park. While small-scale fishing with traditional gear for self-consumption and collection of small amounts of specific resources (e.g. certain wood species, shells, etc.) for handicrafts is granted, other activities such as hunting and farming are strictly prohibited. Surrendering agricultural and hunting activities was a significant concession for the community, because these activities had been an inherent part of their culture for generations. Similarly strict rules apply for construction. Illegally built houses need to be demolished and the areas in which they were built must be reforested. New houses can only be built in designated areas and in a traditional fashion (small, one-story houses) upon consent from the state park. Existing houses cannot be modified or improved, such as by adding a bathroom, unless there is approval from the state park. For these reasons, tourists are now assigned to households, either for camping or in-house accommodation, on a rotating basis throughout the community.

In the case of a rule violation by a community member, the community has the right to define the sanctions based on decisions made through AMOMAR. Sanctions include fines, additional input asked for the joint

efforts (*Mutirão*), demolition of illegally built structures, and in rare cases, being cut off from resources, such as water from the community water reservoir. In addition, the rules state that the community is not supposed to grow any further. The only way additional members can be accepted into the community is through marriage. Visitors are only allowed to stay for a maximum of three months. If a member of the community is absent for more than one year, the right of residence is lost and can only be re-affirmed through negotiation with AMOMAR and the state park.

In exchange for adherence to these rules, the state park has surrendered the right to evict the traditional people of Marujá as originally required for this type of conservation unit. However, all visitors not considered to be *Caiçaras* were requested to leave. In return, the state park gained an ally for its conservation mission, as the community agreed to perform monitoring activities for the Park.

> *"The law is a matter of interpretation. Some say there shouldn't be people, full stop. I don't agree. To say that people should not be in a park is a bit crazy...I believe in the park model with traditional residents, with the goal of conserving the nature in the park, but also with saving the traditional culture."* [Cardoso Island former director]

The residents of Marujá now work in conjunction with the state park to report violations of park policies, both within and outside of the community. Operating with limited resources, the support of the Marujá residents was crucial to the success of the state park in monitoring this region. The community members have proven to be ideal partners in this cause, with an excellent knowledge of the local territory and an understanding of where rule violations will most likely occur, such as illegal fishing or hunting grounds, places where palm hearts are illegally cut, orchids are taken, etc. Thus, with the help of the community, those violating the state park rules are far more likely to be held accountable for their offenses. Punishment includes destructions of illegally used materials, such as hunting and fishing gear, fishing license withdrawal, fines, arrests, and lawsuits.

> *"They [the Marujá community members] help us a lot: passing on information, showing the locations, it's important...as the area is extensive, we can't be everywhere."* [Cardoso Island environmental police]

The complete negotiated agreement was documented in an environmental management plan (*Plano de Gestão Ambietal*), or MP. The first MP was approved in 1998 and was valid for two years in all six communities in the Park. An amended MP entered into force in 2000. The current MP is open for negotiation every five years, but no further amendments were made in either 2005 or 2010. For the renegotiation process between the state park and the communities, a new institutional structure was created called the Regional Council. The Council consists of representatives from the state park, each community, and other local actors. In cases where rule exceptions are asked for (e.g., for construction activities, reinstatement of community membership after absence, etc.) the Regional Council must be consulted for a decision.

> "[The MP] *was the way to ensure that the residents could stay. I think with the management plan you can at least legally claim something, you can rely on something."* [Marujá *Caiçaras*]

Overall, the negotiations were time consuming and not without conflict. For instance, in the beginning of AMOMAR, a two-list system with two competing teams was in place to elect the members of the AMOMAR board. But with this system it always turned out that the competing teams were from two different family clans, with the risk that the elected team would favor family members in their decisions. For this reason the system was changed to a one-list system with one team composed of members from different families.

Furthermore, conflicts between community and state park arise on a regular basis whenever exceptions from existing rules are asked for (e.g. construction activities). As those need to be granted through the Regional Council, it is generally a lengthy process that elicits loud complaints from community members. However no direct challenges to the process have arisen.

> *"For me, if there is consensus, there is something wrong. The diversity, the different perspectives, the reality of each is different, the point of view. When you go to a place where everybody says 'amen,' something is wrong...Disagreement is constructive...to have a position...and then it takes a joint decision...I strongly believe in a participatory process."* [Cardoso Island director]

Overall, the agreement is seen as beneficial to both parties. It put an end to the harmful invasion of the region by outsiders and allowed the community to stay in the Park and to preserve their traditional way of life as *Caiçaras*.

> *"Here everything is good for me. I feel good here. I do not want to leave. I do not want to go back to the city. It was a bad experience working in a family home. I had no freedom. Here you have freedom for all. I felt very sad when I came to spend the holidays here and already on the way back, I began to cry."* [Marujá *Caiçara*]

Claudia Sattler

Community members gather outside of an AMOMAR meeting.

The community was able to retain its integrity, while supporting the state park in its conservation mission. The co-management agreement increased the effectiveness of monitoring and protection of natural resources. Thus, the agreement challenges the paradigm of top–down conservation politics based on the assumption that conservation can best be achieved by creating designated areas without human settlements.[7] Moreover, as proven by the Marujá case, conservation aims can actually be better achieved by the inclusion and the support of the local population.

"We work together, it strengthens the ties, we share opinions and together everyone wins, the Park, the community...a management of the community where all parts work together." [Cardoso Island environmental monitor]

Conclusions: Come so Far… and Now?

Co-management agreements between communities and public authorities can lead to governance outcomes that benefit all involved actors.[8] As shown in this case study, both parties can gain much if willing to compromise. Nevertheless, there is also evidence that the current agreement can be fragile in terms of longevity, as younger community members may opt out of the arrangement. Attracted by higher standards of living more in line with the paradigm of economic growth, the younger generation increasingly perceives the traditional *Caiçara* culture as old-fashioned and out of tune with current developments. This causes great concern among the older community members, as they fear the young will lose their traditional roots and the close connection to nature.

Claudia Sattler

A traditional one-story Marujá house, with increased sustainability from power generated by solar panels.

> *"It's hard to make the youth stay. They want to follow what's happening outside of the community."* [Cardoso Island environmental monitor]

Another uncertainty is related to the continued future demand for small-scale and eco-friendly tourism, which forms part of the community's income. As they can no longer grow crops and hunt, they need the extra income for their livelihoods.

Finally, a possible reclassification of the conservation area from state park to a 'Sustainable Development Reserve' (SDR) has been discussed. As the SDR category allows for settlements and is also less restrictive on the types of activities, the frame conditions for the agreement would completely change. On one hand, it would allow the community to resume some of the traditional activities that are prohibited under the current MP, such as growing agricultural crops and hunting. On the other hand, it would become impossible to keep people from again moving into the region, as there would no longer be a legal argument to keep them out. How the Marujá community will react and adapt to these possible developments remains to be seen.

Acknowledgements

The paper is based on personal interviews conducted with community members (18 interviews) and members of the state park authorities (six interviews) in the period from September 2012 to February 2013. We wish to thank the community members of Marujá for participating in the interviews and for their great hospitality and support during several field visits. We also thank the state park, the Forest Foundation, and the Coordination Office of Environmental Technical Information, Documentation and Research for interview participation

Claudia Sattler

A bromeliad plant in the rain forest. The region encompassed by the state park is rich in biodiversity.

and additional access to data. Furthermore, we thank our Brazilian research partners Camila Jericó-Daminello, Karla Sessin-Dilascio, and Paulo Antonio de Almeida Sinisgalli from the University of São Paulo, as well as Ademar Ribeiro Romeiro, Ranulfo Paiva Sobrinho and Lucas Ferreira Lima from the University of Campinas for their support in the case study work. The research underlying this study was conducted through the CiVi.net project, funded by the European Commission within its 7th Framework Program under project ID 282750.

Supplementary Material

A participatory movie on the Marujá case study is available on YouTube: http://youtu.be/Y-4oeydIbKE

Participatory movies involve the community in the process of movie making. The project team simply functions as a facilitator of the process by teaching participants how to use the movie equipment to direct and film videos and do interviews. The footage is selected at daily screenings for a period of about 10–14 days. While classic movie production focuses on the final product, participatory movie production focuses on the process of making the movie and its meaning for the participants and the process of learning and exchange that brings for the whole team.

References

1. Decreto No.6.040., Art. 3, I. Presidency of the Republic of Brazil [online] (2007) http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2007-2010/2007/decreto/d6040.htm.
2. Diegues, AC. *Enciclopédia Caiçara, Volume I, O Olhar do Pesquisado* (HUCITEC, São Paulo, 2004).
3. Gadelha, C. Proibido trabalhar: Problema socioambiental dos filhos da Ilha do Cardoso/SP (PhD thesis, Anthropology, University of Campinas, 2008).
4. Willems, E. *A Ilha de Búzios* (HUCITEC, São Paulo, 2003).
5. De Oliveira, FC & Hanazaki, N. Ethnobotany and ecological perspectives on the management and use of plant species for a traditional fishing trap, southern coast of São Paulo, Brazil. *Journal of Environmental Management* 92, 1783–1792 (2011).
6. Barbosa Beccato, MA. *Elaboração Participativa de uma Proposta de Reestructuração do Sistema de Tratamento de Esgoto da Comunidade de Marujá - Parque Estadual da Ilha do Cardoso, SP* (Master thesis, Environmental Engineering, University of São Paulo, 2004).
7. Agrawal, A & Gibson, CC. Enchantment and disenchantment: the role of community in natural resource management. *World Development* 27, 629–649 (1999).
8. Berkes, F, George, PJ & Preston, RJ. Co-management: the evolution in theory and practice of the joint administration of living resources. *Alternatives* 18, 12–18 (1991).