

Brasil II 16.-28.3.2009

What does it help?

Many told us that Brasil maybe has the best environmental laws of the world. But they along with many other laws are no enforced. Instead the police itself is acting like a Mafia. They can kill, intentionally, documented on video, and not be punished.

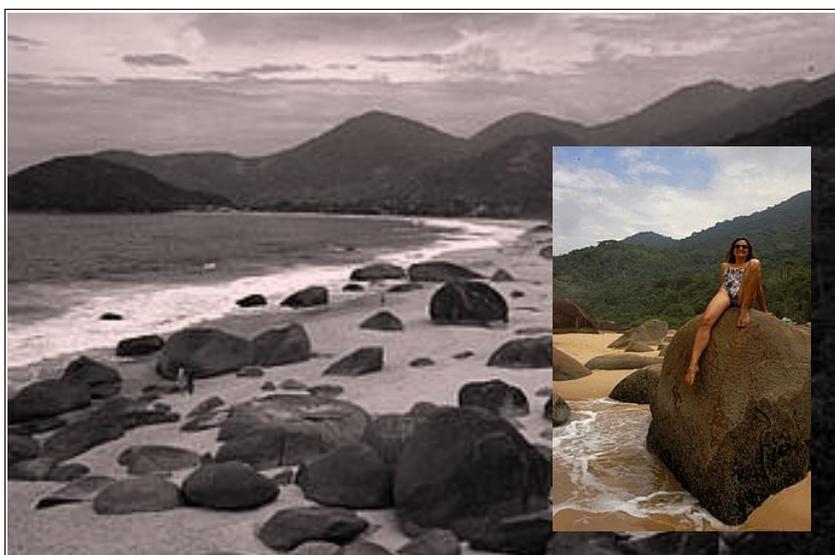
We saw many beaches and hills behind the beaches full of houses. Law forbids it and protects beaches as public heritage. But noone enforces the law. Of course many are bribed into looking away.

We heard of an entrepreneur in Sao Paulo who had kidnapped the boss of another company. The story behind this is that he had worked as a sub-contractor of the bigger company and was not paid. The other company just said they could not. The legal system was no help. So the robbed sub-contractor went to a business-meeting of the contractor where they praised their gains during the year. He went up to the boss, took him hostage and told the others that he will be released if the company pays the due bill...

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After our course in IPEMA (see Brasil I) we went back to Rio along the coastline and stopped in Paratí and Trindade. Brasil has almost 8000 km of coastline, much of it is pristine sand beaches with warm water.



Even beaches in Rio are fairly clean in the morning because there are lots of people busy and lots of mashinery to clean up all the garbage. Everybody seems to think that leaving the garbage they brought was the most natural thing to do. The motto here still appears to be:

“Use it and drop it!”

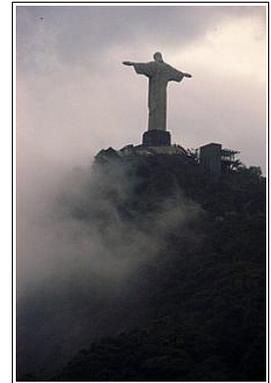


Every second Rio sends 150.000 ltr of sewage into the Atlantic Ocean. This is the amount of the ZEGG pond every three seconds! Surprisingly enough the water of the beaches appears clean. They send it out almost 3 km and probably into strong currents that carry it off into deep water. But what does it do there?

Brasilians seem body focused. The women (especially in Rio) wear sexy cloths, tight fitting pants and super mini bikinis with tiny triangles over the nipples and strings disappearing in



between the bum independent of wether they are slim and fashionable or big. It seems that they love their body and love to show it in any form. This again feels great to see. It seems like a natural and healthy pride. Unfortunately it developed into a body cult that leads many women doing plastic surgery and using silicon inlays in breasts and bums.



The male expression of this seem to be muscles and training. Male bathing fashion is long and wide Bermuda pants, that they loose in the waves and need to wear underwear underneath. All in all not very sexy to see and not very nice to wear.

Nudity on the other hand seems out of the question. Nudity is seen as being sexual in public, and sex is taboo. The church influence is too strong in this. And with the current Pope still in office we cannot expect the church to alter their antique standpoints and leave the criminal prohibition of condomes etc. The indigenous population, like everywhere in the world, saw it different as this foto of the Yanomami in an exhibition in Paratí depicts.



If you are in a hurry in Rio, take a bus. They are fastest and pass taxis and cars on any lane and drive between 80 and 90 km/h. Taxis are more easy going.



Terra Una in Santa Teresa (a Community and forming ecovillage)

They found a beautiful land above 1000m high and only 3h from Rio. Part of it is Nature Reserve and protected (whatever this means here – see box). There is ample water and different unpolluted streams on the land that have water all year round. A dream. The only problem is the question of how to live there. Where

does the money come from.

They know each other since 7 years. Most of them are earning their money in Rio with some form of art and for that they need the city. They travel back and forth quite a bit, but this is hard and a strain on the community feeling. And it creates a tear between them. Those, who managed to live on the country side and need the help of the others to work on houses and land on the one side, and those, who would like to come but depend on the city.



They live in beautiful Santa Teresa in houses close together like a city ecovillage. Santa Teresa is a town within Rio, a neighbourhood where people know each other. Of course there are assaults and gang wars happening also between Favela Mafias and the police, but life is special and above Rio. It is high up on a steep rock, with fascinating houses and looks.

After all the times of planning a workshop, canceling it etc. because never all of them are in one place, we were invited for dinner in one of the houses. We met and talked and discovered a lot of mutual sympathy. The next day they proposed to the 15 others to meet with us to use the time for Forum the following day. All agreed and we spent an intense day of condensed training in communication and awareness training skills. At the end of the day we had experienced a lot and had become friends. Friends it was hard to leave, great people working for a better world wherever they are. Sparks of light in the global net.

The world was plentiful, before we humans turned up. It is US who are creating the scarcity. One of our paradigms is: "If we do not suffer, we do not live".

We are a cooperative, our cells work together, if not, we would die.

In Permaculture everything is dynamic!

It is difficult to have a positive influence on an untouched piece of land. Where we can make a difference is where the land has been destroyed.

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Gaia Village

Gaia Village in Garopapa wants to create an example for a friendly coexistence of people and all that is around – the living Gaia System.
It has 7 focus points:



1. preservation and recuperation of ecosystems
2. sustainable rural production (e.g. organically grown water buffalo)
3. environmentally friendly technologies
4. infrastructure of buildings
5. human development
6. environmental education
7. sustainable health



We were invited to visit by Franco and Justo Werlang who developed the idea and continuously are supporting it. The idea originated in meeting the former environmental Minister of Brazil, José Lutzenberger (we had met Lutz at his visits at ZEGG). Lutz had developed the Gaia foundation and together they developed the idea of Gaia Village in 1997. The final start was in 2000.



"Lutz" puppet

The property for the Gaia Village was bought in the 60ies by the father Gastao Avelino Werlang, who already then started planting trees. They also already then pressed for a prohibition of hunting on the land. Today it is 850 ha big, directly on the coast. A continuous effort has reforested the land in many places and stabilized moving sand dunes who before were burrying land by 10m a year.



Justo Werlang

At first they used Casuarina and Pines in the sand. Today they only use native plants which are grown first in a nursery. As the land is wet and has frequent rainfall, many plants also grow by seeds. Water is not the problem as even the sand dunes are wet about 5cm below the surface. The problem is the wind and the sand that covers all an asphixiates all. Plants and nutrients are burried deep. It is a struggle meter by meter to win against the smaller but still powerfull sand dune.

On the land are many new buildings, beautifully designed and built from recycled material (wood, windows, stones, brick, tiles) from abandoned buildings in the area. They have a huge store of numbered wood boards and beams from many buildings. Enough probabely to build a village.

Many forest areas and forest corridores have been planted. As the land is on the coast, it has many different ecosystems with different challenges to reforest them: the coastal area with salty winds, the sand dunes, the wetlands, the inland area, the lakes... They needed to collect substantial knowledge and develop differing strategies for all these areas.

14 people work on the land and about 350 water buffelo graze the new fields surrounded by forest. The educational center receives many visitors, school classes etc. The income comes from the sale of organic meat. It covers about 10% of the overall costs. The rest is coming from the G.A. Werlang enterprise and the assets of the family, who finance their idealistic idea.

All of them together they are creating the paradise on these 850 ha that the earth is meant to be everywhere.



Architecture

Alternative architecture is growing in the rich niche. Still it is something for the more well off people to use only recuperated wood and windows and glass, bricks etc. for new buildings. Even earth or adobe buildings is having a renaissance. But always some – of course small – part of cement is mixed in for stability. The most common mixture seems to be: 5 (earth) : 2 (sand) : 1 (cement). The problem with this is that it cannot be reused anymore. One of the many great advantages of earth building.

We were shown many fantastic buildings from almost 100% recuperated materials like this police station. Of course the wood taken from old buildings is tropical, hard, heavy and beautiful. And of course they do not need to think about insulation or air tightness.



“green” police station from recycling material

Sao Paulo

After the calm land we flew into the megacity of 20 Million inhabitants. It is very rich and very “western” and at the same time very poor and lost. When we flew in, we were greeted by a grey sea of houses and a thick layer of smog. I am used to see this over all big cities when flying in, but this one was very thick.



Fortunately friends picked us up at the airport so we did not have to find our way with busses or pay a taxi. We were welcomed and brought to a cosy and grounded house on the green outskirts of SP which belongs to Marianne.

Her father is Finnish and the mother Brazilian. She lived many years in London and is zoologist. She started a Jaguar project in Patanal and is very active. Her problem is finding partners in her ideals and work who are reliable. This proved to be difficult. She is full of great ideas and also has the power to make them come true, but not all of them herself.
(www.ekonoz.com)

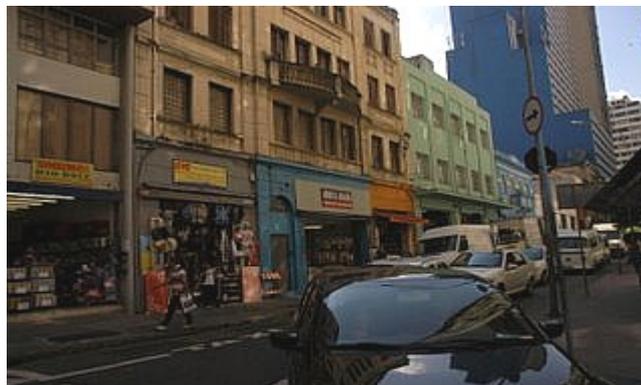
In many "alternative circles it is very normal to pay someone to clean the house, wash dishes and cloths, take care of the garden, etc. It is a high society attitude mixed into the alternative thinking. Still I do not know yet how to think about this. Sometimes it leads to people becoming dependent of being served. It is also an impopart part of the social system where people with more wealth employ others, give them work and salary.

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Sao Paulo has banned big advertisement and billboards within the city limit since a couple of years. Shops are allowed only about 10% of the house length for a sign.

After tough protests and contrary to what I wrote in the box above, this law was enforced stricktly. Before you could hardly see the houses behind the billboards, and now there are small signs you need to look to find them. It is unusual and lets the mind rest and exhale. It is so soothing to not be molested. No TV screens, nothing.

Many cities are thinking about copying it now.



The other thing is that each day a part about a fifth) of the cars (depending on the number on the licence plate) are not allowed to drive. Trucks can only deliver at night. Still SP is asphinxiating in traffic.

