

## **COMPLEX INTERDEPENDENCE AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO A NEW APPROACH TO THE WORK OF THE AMAZON COOPERATION TREATY ORGANIZATION**

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### **Abstract**

This paper aims to analyse the work that the Amazon Cooperation Treaty (TCA), later converted at the beginning of the 21st century into the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) with permanent secretariat in Brasilia, has conducted in favour of the debate on the sustainability of the Amazon. Although the work of this organization has usually been studied under a realist approach, focusing mainly on the action of its Member States, it is argued that the Complex Interdependence, a theory developed by Nye and Keohane, can expand the knowledge of the work of the Treaty in favour of the debate on the sustainability of the Amazon region

### **Keywords**

Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO); sustainable development; complex interdependence theory; regional environmental debate.

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## **COMPLEX INTERDEPENDENCE AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO A NEW APPROACH TO THE WORK OF THE AMAZON COOPERATION TREATY ORGANIZATION<sup>1,2,3</sup>**

**Gisela da Silva Guevara**

### **Introduction**

The Amazon Cooperation Treaty (TCA) and its re-launch in the 1990s with the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO), was a historic opportunity for South American countries to reflect on the meaning of sustained and sustainable development for their Amazonian territories. Six years before the Treaty was signed, the Stockholm Conference had defined sustained development as "a process through which natural resources are preserved for the benefit of present and future generations" (Stockholm Declaration, 1972, principle 2). Over ten years after Stockholm, the Brundtland Report (UN, 1987) not only expanded the concept to sustainable development, but also drew attention to the seriousness of forest deforestation.

Patricia Guzmán emphasizes that

*"The conceptual fragmentation of the territory through 'borders' had an incoherent impact. Ideally, given the presence of a limited resource, the concept of political boundaries should have led to an integral understanding of the causes and effects of human activity [...]" (2012: 29).*

This statement could not be better applied to the Amazon, a territory that is shared by eight South American nations that share numerous common problems. These range from disturbing levels of deforestation and water resource management to high poverty rates, correlated, in some cases, with a greater propensity for illegal activities.

For the eight member countries of the TCA, the Amazon represents a very different percentage with respect to the extension of their respective national territories. While for

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<sup>1</sup> All parts in foreign languages in this text were translated into Spanish by the author, except in the explanatory notes, where they were kept in their original language.

<sup>2</sup> The author thanks the two anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments. Any error is the sole responsibility of the author.

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Brazil it represents more than 60% of its territory, for nations like Ecuador it corresponds to about 46%. In Brazil there are also large asymmetries between the south and southeast with their industrialized megacities, such as São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro, responsible for 50% of the GDP, and the north and west of the territory, with low population density, high poverty rates and difficulties in integrating into the national space (Anatol, 2011).

Focusing especially on the Brazilian Amazon, Espitia Caicedo (2007) highlights that 80% of the wood of the Amazon rainforest is illegally exploited and even when such exploitation is done legally, it causes great destruction. On the other hand, when we take into account the unemployment problems affecting the Amazonian states such as Pará, Mato Grosso and Rondonia, and that the exploitation of wood corresponds to 15% of the GDP (Espitia Caicedo, 2007), we realize that to develop more sustainable models for the Amazonian territories, whether Brazilian or non-Brazilian has been, for decades, a blunt need.

When the TCA was signed in 1978, the relationship between sustained development and economic models had not yet been clarified. In fact, in an ambiguous way, the TCA mentions that

*"Considering that in order to achieve an integral development of the respective territories of the Amazon it is necessary to maintain the balance between economic growth and the preservation of the environment" (ACTO, n.d.).*

Only at the beginning of the 1990s were the premises of the Amazon Pact re-evaluated and the concept of sustainable development recognized, with the creation of two new Special Commissions, the Environment Commission and the Indigenous Affairs Committee. (Román, 1998). It is necessary to emphasize that the re-launching of the TCA in those years had been closely tied to the threats, real or perceived, of the internationalization of the Amazon<sup>4</sup>. However, it was still not clear how the TCA signatories should cooperate regarding the Amazonian affairs and how funding for the Treaty could be obtained. The dilemma remained for the members of the Amazonian pact, and especially for Brazil: should the Treaty's priority be to protect the sovereign rights of the Amazonian countries against the supposed ambitions of the North? Or to coordinate common policies to manage in a sustainable way the Amazonian resources of the eight TCA signatory nations?

The South American states, both within the framework of their centralist models, as in the case of the Colombia, and as federalists, as in the case of the Brazil, tend not only to ignore the specificities of their Amazonian areas, but also not to value the transboundary possibilities of their environmental and cultural characteristics. In the case of the Colombian Amazon, Arenas and Ruedas (2012: 145) affirm that the national government's policies "reflect a vision from the Andean or the Caribbean facet and have

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<sup>4</sup> For an in-depth view of the topic on the internationalization of the Amazon, especially the Brazilian case, see Da Silva Guevara, Gisela (2016).



not managed to incorporate the particularities of a region where the environmental and cultural wealth goes beyond the national border".

Germán Grisales sums up how to deal with the problems of the Amazon region as follows: "We must treat the Amazon as an internal matter; defend it as a regional issue, and receive financial and technical support [...] as a global plan." (quoted in Espitia Caicedo, 2007: 78). Starting from Grisales' statement, this article seeks, in the first instance, to analyse the efforts of the TCA, at a regional level, to encourage reflection on models of sustained development for tropical forests. Secondly, the limitations of the neorealist approach to ACTO are examined, and a proposal to expand knowledge about this organization through Complex Interdependence is advanced. These aspects are analysed in order to assess whether ACTO has contributed significantly to the debate on the sustainability of forests, regionally speaking.

We suggest that several premises of the Complex Interdependence (CI) theory can be applied to the analysis of the TCA/ACTO, reviewing the realist/neo-realist analytical approach. Among them is that the role of the hegemon requires "deference", but it does not mean that it does not have to lead to a consensus with the member states of the regional organizations. On the other hand, the relevance of the action of transnational networks of contacts during the consolidation of the funding of the TCA was not taken into account at the time, since a realist/neorealist state-centric approach dominated, as we will see in this article in the case of the network built around Carrera de la Torre. Under the CI approach, these networks make it possible to highlight that not only the states are determinant in the consolidation of regional organizations. Finally, we believe that it is necessary to take into account that CI allows to give importance to the work of transnational actors which, in many cases, are very proactive when promoting the environmental initiatives of environmental organizations, as we will see with the pilot project of the MAP initiative (Madre de Dios, Peru, Acre, Brazil, Pando, Bolivia).

The methodology is qualitative, using several academic works and articles and primary sources, where the role of the ACTO in the regional debate in favour of the sustainability of tropical forests can be evaluated. A set of treaties and other official documents were triangulated with secondary sources in order to shed light on the work of transnational actors, among others. Several dimensions were defined from which we aimed to review the limitations and biases of the realist or neorealist theoretical approach, in order to open a new field of analysis under the Complex Interdependence theory applied to the TCA/ACTO. These dimensions include:

- 1) The funding of the TCA driven by transnational networks of contacts, which were largely ignored by realist or neorealist analyses;
- 2) The overvaluation of the role of the hegemon (Brazil) in explaining the progress of the TCA/ACTO;
- 3) The undervaluation of the work of transnational actors such as the MAP, which encompasses the work of NGOs, think tanks, transnational organizations and university academics, among others, which deserves more precise study when analysing the work of environmental organizations, like the ACTO;



- 4) The undervaluation of the work of environmental organizations articulated with non-state actors, in the sense of promoting the "bottom up" protection of environmental aspects of tropical forests.

### **Theoretical framework**

According to Brazilian academic de Brito (2007: 182)

*"Legally, the TCA can be classified as a multilateral, international framework treaty. It is also considered an international environmental treaty, with soft law norms' characteristics, and which creates an international regime in the Amazon region [...]."*<sup>5</sup>

The treaty, also known as the Amazon Pact, had been promoted in the 1970s by Brazil under the label of regional cooperation, in order to manage environmental issues combined with the economic development of the Amazon. When the pact was signed, at the end of the 1970s, the concept of sustainable development<sup>6</sup> had not yet been fully debated internationally. At the Stockholm Conference in 1972, only the concept of sustained development had been defined in its final Declaration.

For Philippe De Lombaerde (2009: 8) regional cooperation

*"can be defined as an open process, whereby individual states (or possibly other actors) within the framework of a given geographical area, act together for mutual benefit and to solve common tasks, in certain aspects [...] despite conflicting interests in other fields of activity."*

This definition is differentiated, according to the same author, from that of "regional integration", which refers to "a more in-depth process, by means of which units that were previously autonomous are merged into a whole" (op. cit.: 8). Based on De Lombaerde's definitions, we will move on to discuss which theoretical approach would best serve us for our case study of the ACTO.

The eight South American countries that ended up signing the Amazon Pact in 1978 had fuelled serious distrust regarding Brasilia's objectives with this agreement, which were not easily eliminated with the signing of the pact. Indeed, the initial ambitions expressed by Brazil to make the TCA a broader integration scheme were rejected by Venezuela, which "feared a Brazilian expansion in the region." (Román, 1998: 242).

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<sup>5</sup> Author's Translation.

<sup>6</sup> Sustainable development is defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (*Our Common Future*, UN, 1987).



The mistrust mentioned above was justified. As Román<sup>7</sup> (1998: 250) stated, in the mid-1980s, "Brazilian leaders now considered regional cooperation as a tool to achieve military security objectives." In fact, the TCA and later the ACTO have been met with scepticism by a large part of academics. Da Silva (2012) mentions that despite the cooperative mechanisms in environmental terms, the interests and ambitions of the member countries, which are mainly focused on power relations, continued to rise above all on this organization. De Brito (2007), on the other hand, emphasizes the incongruity between the sustainability discourse of the ACTO and the practice of the signatory countries.

The aforementioned could lead us to see it, at first glance, with realist lenses, or more precisely, to conclude that offensive neorealism could be the theory that would best apply to our case study. In fact, neorealist Mearsheimer (2001) argues that countries do not cooperate to promote peace, but to maximize their power in the system.

In the case of Brazil, the Calha Norte Plan (PCN), created in 1985 and released to the public domain the following year, sought to strengthen the military protection of the northern border against unstable neighbours such as Peru, Bolivia or Colombia<sup>8</sup>. These three countries produced constant amounts of cocaine at the beginning of the 1990s (Anatol, 2011). Román (1998) states that the priority of the Brazilian leaders was to complement the PCN with the TCA. In other words, Brasilia pursued national security objectives with this treaty and not so much promoted regional cooperation to deal with the environmental issues of the Amazon. But then, how to explain that, despite the rejection by the other Amazonian nations of the Brazilian military objectives regarding the TCA, the pact gradually became a regional cooperation tool, through which there was

*"a conceptual redefinition of the relationship between environment, security and economic development [...], with the military security issues becoming less prioritized"? (Román, 1998: 256).*

Due to the aforementioned, offensive neorealism proves to be a theory with limitations for our case study, because it does not fully explain the consolidation of the TCA. Under the mandates of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2002), Brazilian diplomacy began to address issues in "a cooperative international environment with a predominance of interdependence" (Vigevani, i.a., 2003: 56). To explain the consolidation of the TCA, the theoretical approach to complex interdependence of Nye and Keohane (1977) could be very useful. Neither Brazil nor the other South American countries could consider taking forward only their military objectives to protect their borders, from the exclusive perspective of their sovereignty, having to use multilateral fora to better interact with other nations in a Post-Cold War context, more interdependent, in order to discuss such pressing issues such as the sustainable development of the Amazon. In fact, with the creation of the TCA in 1978, even if the context was the Cold War, in the framework of

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<sup>7</sup> He is one of the TCA top experts and wrote a Ph.D. thesis on the subject.

<sup>8</sup> Brazil has special contingents of border patrols along the borders with Peru, Bolivia and Colombia, which according to the neighbouring country are designated BOBRA (Bolivia-Brazil); PEBRA (Peru-Brazil) or COBRA (Colombia-Brazil) (Anatol, 2011).



authoritarian regimes<sup>9</sup> member countries had recognized that they had to cooperate to safeguard the Amazon. We have then in the TCA and, later, in the ACTO, the awareness of the member countries that 1) Measures must be taken against the environmental deterioration of the Amazon and 2) that the Amazon had to be considered as a South American regional priority.

The notion of Complex Interdependence arose in the 1920s with academic Raymond Leslie Buell but it was with the work of Nye and Keohane, published for the first time in 1977, entitled *Power and Interdependence*, that what interdependence means for International Relations and its usefulness for the analysis of this field of knowledge became better understood. The two Americans argue that the decline in the use of military force as a political tool and the increase of economic interdependence (and other forms) should increase cooperation between states (and other actors) (Nye and Keohane, 1977).

The characteristics of Complex Interdependence mentioned by Nye and Keohane (1977) include interstate, trans-governmental and transnational relations. On the other hand, while the realists or neorealists start from the premise that the connection channels in world politics are, par excellence, between states, the two North American authors explain that the agenda of interstate relations is composed of multiple themes not always clearly hierarchized. Thus, "Different issues generate different coalitions, both in the framework of governments and transversally to them, and involve different degrees of conflict." (Nye and Keohane, 1977: 25)<sup>10</sup>.

Likewise, according to Complex Interdependence, it is stated that "less vulnerable states will try to use asymmetric interdependence in some particular groups of issues as a source of power" (Nye and Keohane, 1977: 32). In the case of the TCA and after the ACTO, Brazil tried to launch proposals that were articulated with regional security, economic and environmental integration issues. The first two were rejected by some neighbouring nations, but the last one had some acceptance, as we shall see.

Nye and Keohane (1977: 32-33) argue that Complex Interdependence would make it more likely that the topics' agendas would be "affected by international and domestic problems [...]." The question is, in our case study, in what way, for example, the discussion that took place at the beginning of the nineties about the internationalization of the Amazon or the Rio 92 Conference<sup>11</sup> led to a reactivation of the TCA. On the other hand, what role did international organizations have in environmental issues, in the agenda established by the TCA and in its reactivation, according to Complex Interdependence? We will therefore find out, according to this theoretical approach, what was the role of the TCA at regional level in promoting the debate on the sustainability of tropical forests.

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<sup>9</sup> In the case of the Brazilian authoritarian regime, it extended between 1964 and 1985.

<sup>10</sup> Author's translation.

<sup>11</sup> The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, which took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.



## **The ACTO and the debate on the sustainability of forests at regional level**

In the academic literature, the ACTO has often been negatively described. This is due to various reasons: for example, in Rodolfo Ilario da Silva's master degree thesis (2012), it is mentioned that the organization's budgetary difficulties, depending on external resources, mean that the cooperation among its members is not as close as it would be desirable. In addition, he emphasizes that while it is true that member countries show consensus as to their willingness to cooperate, they nevertheless have "difficulty [...] in translating this compatibility into practical actions." (da Silva, 2012: 179). For Sant'Anna (2009: 121) "The preservation of sovereignty is still a topic of greater relevance in meetings within the scope of the ACTO. It is understood that countries are reluctant to affirm commitments that imply greater obligations."

Despite the scepticism demonstrated by the aforementioned authors, other scholars, such as historian Amado Cerro, emphasize the importance of signing the Amazonian pact, stating:

*cooperation matters began to acquire relevance and to exceed the limits and possibilities of bilateral cooperation. [...] This treaty was conceived with a different purpose from the treaties which created the Alalc, the Aladi or the Andean Pact, which sought to stimulate intra-zonal trade or the common market. Its main objective was to implement a permanent agreement mechanism between the governments and the technical sectors of the Amazonian countries, with a view to cooperation in non-economic areas, such as hydrological and climatological studies, technical and scientific cooperation in health, transportation, communication, preservation of the environment, etc. (Cerro, 2001: 261).*

The economist Alfredo Costa-Filho (2003), in turn, points out that cooperation is increasingly important, since the Amazon is worldwide of growing significance. However, he warns that the eight ACTO countries conduct their Amazonian programmes very heterogeneously. Still, we must recognize, as Keohane (1984) does, that cooperation cannot be seen only in terms of common interests, as the the states' potential objectives must be taken into account. On the other hand, we must bear in mind, like Paasi (2011: 15) that

*"Like it or not, regions and regional identities seem to have maintained their important roles in the world. They are not merely abstract academic discourses, but crucial elements of social and political practice and discourse."*

The TCA also leads us to question whether a regional agreement which was signed at the end of the 1970s, later reactivated in the 1990s, that prioritized cooperation in





environmental terms, or if it was, first and foremost, a pact intended, as the Brazilian slogan put it, to "occupy in order not to deliver", faced with the supposed ambitions of the industrialized powers regarding the rich Amazonian resources. In this sense, José Greño Velasco (cited in Román, 1998: 128) questioned: Did the TCA have the intention of specifying a cooperation through integral development or did it (just) seek the mutual recognition of sovereignty over the respective Amazonian territories?

In 1980, a few years after the TCA was signed, a document from the Brazilian Foreign Ministry contradicted the idea that the colossus was seeking hegemony in South America, stating

*"In general terms [...] Brazil seeks the reality of cooperation, not the chimera of the hegemony and considers highly positive that Latin America is an area of deconcentration of power [...]"* (Itamaraty to the Delegation in Buenos Aires, 25.08.1980, cit. in Cervo, 2001: 262).

It must be noted, despite the aforementioned, that the studies on the TCA (for example Román, 1998) show that the fears of the South American neighbours continued.

Regardless of the fears of the TCA member countries against the claims, real or fictitious, of Brazil, under Complex Interdependence we have a different approach from the neorealists regarding the role of hegemony and leadership in International Relations, which enriches the study of our case on the ACT. Regarding the role of leadership in International Relations, it is stated:

*Successful hegemonic leadership depends, to some extent, on asymmetric cooperation. The hegemon has a different role, providing its partners with leadership, in exchange for deference. However, different from the imperial power, it cannot make or force [to fulfil] the rules without a certain degree of consensus on the part of the other sovereign states.* (Keohane, 1984: 46).

When the TCA was signed, it was stipulated that ordinary meetings should be held every two years. That did not materialize. Additionally for meetings aimed at studying specific problems defined by the Treaty, the countries and their representatives did not take seriously the preparation of the topics announced in advance, arriving at the meetings without having done the due preparatory work. Additionally, it was necessary to wait until the end of the 1980s for the first special Commissions<sup>12</sup> to be created, due to initial scepticism about the Treaty. (Román, 1998).

Until the 1990s, the TCA's functioning was affected by budgetary insecurity, since the nations-member of the pact defended the idea that the developed countries had to

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<sup>12</sup> It is also important to note that, in 1996, Guyana, Suriname and Venezuela had not yet created permanent national commissions, which should work in coordination with the TCA Commissions. (Román, 1998).



provide the funds for the protection and development of the Amazon, which placed the agreement in the paradox situation of depending almost entirely on international organizations (Román, 1998). This clearly contradicted the idea that the countries of the South should finally take the development of their territories in their own hands.

In the 1990s, before and after Rio 92, the debate over the shared responsibility of the North on environmental issues was heated. While the position of the nations of the South was usually that the Northern countries should provide resources for the environmental services provided by the South, during, for example, the talks on Agenda 21, within the framework of the Rio 92 Conference,

*"strong criticism against the Southern bloc was heard because it was viewed that their only interest in the Conference was to look for mechanisms to extract more resources from the North" (Rodriguez Becerra, 1994: 84).*

It should be noted that the text of Agenda 21<sup>13</sup> calls for not only states to promote international cooperation in sustainable development, but also states that "other international, regional and sub-regional organizations must also contribute to this effort." (Argentine Ministry of the Environment, chapter 1, 1.3.).

The obstacles to launching environmental projects were of different kinds, and not only in terms of resources. They started with the principles stipulated in the TCA, which were not very clear about which development was desired for the Amazon. It is mentioned that the Amazonian pact had the objective of

*"promoting the harmonious and integrated development of the basin, as a basis for sustaining a model of regional economic complementation that contemplates the improvement of the quality of life of its inhabitants and the conservation and rational use of its resources." (OAS, n.d. n.p.).*

However, the definition is quite ambiguous and therefore leading to a wide variety of interpretations and forms of implementation.

Even at a systemic level, as in the case of Agenda 21 of the United Nations, there are strong criticisms on the part of academics dedicated to environmental issues. Blühdorn and Welsh (2008: 6), for example, mention that both the global Agenda 21 and local ones "are invariably subordinated to economic growth, competitiveness and innovation." The same authors also state that an obstacle to dealing with environmental crises is that there are so many ecological approaches in this regard, so the impact of environmentalism ends up being overwhelmingly affected. Blühdorn goes so far as to

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<sup>13</sup> Agenda 21 was a programme developed by the United Nations Sustainable Development Division to implement sustainable development principles at all levels, from the local to the global.



mention the "abdication of the ecologist paradigm" (Blüdorn, 1997 cit. in Blüdorn and Welsh 2008: 9).

Also, in the 1990s, Brazil accepted to be part of the International Pilot Programme for the Protection of the Tropical Rainforests of Brazil, which sought to enhance "the natural heritage, productive potential and cultural diversity of the regional population" (Kohlhepp, 2018: 308). This programme had five subprogrammes that included science and technology, the management of natural resources such as parks and nature reserves, and analysis and monitoring. The novelty of this programme was that it emphasized the contributions, among others, of small producers, *seringueiros*<sup>14</sup> and indigenous groups, with "bottom up development" characteristics (Kohlhepp, 2018: 315). We can thus verify that already in the international cooperation for environmental issues, an approach in which not only the national state, but also several state and non-state actors at various levels, from the international to the local, are important.

Ravena (2012) highlights that environmental problems and the access/use of natural resources have substantial implications for reaching a common institutional framework at the national level of the contemporary state, which has a global dimension. However, according to the same author, when analysing the formulation and implementation of environmental policies in the European Union, contradictions or dilemmas characterized by "the intrinsic relationship between the domestic and international levels" arise (Ravena, 2012: 36). Nevertheless, the author admits that "interdependence continues to be the beacon of an international policy aimed at environmental regulation [...]" (op. cit. 36).

One must not ignore that the obstacles to achieving a unified approach in dealing with environmental issues are vast. Emily Forster (2013) mentions a fundamental one. This leads to the propensity, within the framework of security organizations and agencies, to maintain traditional security ideas that invariably tie environmental issues to the interests of the national state. In this regard, the author emphasizes,

*"state-centric notions of green [environmental] security are not sustainable [...] and military intervention [...] is not necessarily the way to deal with problems."* (Forster, 2013: 43).

The foregoing does not stop considering that the Armed Forces are well positioned to deal with environmental issues due to their technological capabilities, such as monitoring satellites (Forster, 2013). This undoubtedly applies to the Amazon, whose extensions can hardly be supervised without their support. However, in the case of the SIPAM/SIVAM satellite system that Brazil developed, it is not always seen with good eyes by its neighbours, perhaps because it is intended, together with the Calha Norte Plan, as mentioned by the academic Nascimento (2010: 185), to "defend, protect and guarantee the integrity of the national territory, combat illicit acts," and, he adds "above all, to promote the sustained and sustainable development of the Amazon and the Border Strip in particular".

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<sup>14</sup> Rubber collectors.



The Brazilian approach seems to be that of protecting the territory of the colossus of the south, also in a sense, though not explicitly stated, against the illicit acts of its neighbours. This is an attribution and a good right of any sovereign state. However, it is necessary that the Amazonian States complement their monitoring with activities that support the local populations. This is because the abandonment of remote areas such as the Amazon, whether Brazilian, Colombian or otherwise, often prompt the local inhabitants to engage in illegal activities due to lack of job opportunities.

In the case of Brazil, the country has an environmental police in the Amazon, which, with the support of SIVAM, monitors illegal tree cutting, illegal mining and illicit activities perpetrated on indigenous reserves (Anatol, 2011). However, it becomes imperative that both Brazil and the other Amazonian countries cooperate more in regional sustainable development projects that support the local populations living in the jungle.

From the Brazilian perspective, Cordeiro da Trindade (2010) states that, in the official discourse, the Amazon region was always viewed as area that should be protected from other South American countries. The author emphasizes that "much more than revealing the region, as content-forms, political borders tend to only formally single out regional dimensions, denying the extensions of socio-spatial formations beyond those same borders." (Cordeiro da Trindade, 2010: 111). The author ends by questioning: what is the profile and importance of the lower and upper, formal and informal circuit of the economy in border areas of the Brazilian Amazon with neighbouring countries? (Cordeiro da Trindade, 2010: 121). It seems that the ACTO does not answer these questions.

In spite of the aforementioned ambiguities of the TCA, at the end of the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s, as Rio 92 approached, the member states of the TCA were forced to act. A determining factor was the intensification of the debate on whether the Amazon should be internationalized, to eventually be better protected<sup>15</sup>. For Román (1998), the TCA was reactivated to form a platform that would allow the South American nations to establish a common position regarding the Amazon. In order to prepare the position they would take at the Conference, in February 1992 the Amazonian nations met in Manaus. This meeting ended with a declaration that emphasized the importance of promoting regional cooperation on an equal footing.

### **Limitations of the neorealist approach to the ACTO and new theoretical perspectives**

The issue of the funding of the TCA had been taken very seriously from the Ecuadorian *pro-tempore* Secretariat of Luís Carrera de la Torre, at the end of the 1980s. Carrera began a broad action to negotiate with international organizations, in which he was seconded by Roberto Samanez of the FAO, the United Nations Organization for Food and Agriculture, and by Antonio Braque, of the UNDP, the United Nations Development Programme. Although the Ecuadorian government had shown great disinterest in the *pro tempore* Secretariat of Carrera<sup>16</sup>, the diplomat had acted actively with the support of those who had decided to back it up transnationally. Not only had he managed to create

<sup>15</sup> This topic can be read in-depth in Da Silva Guevara (2016).

<sup>16</sup> Carrera de la Torre even had to use his own house for a year due to the fact he did not have a place to practice the *pro tempore* secretariat (Román, 1998).



projects focused on the integral development of the Amazon (Román, 1998), but also he obtained external funding through his transnational contacts and connections, before a rather passive Ecuadorian government. This case shows us that the Complex Interdependence approach applies here.

Young (1989) refers that "non-governmental organizations or individuals themselves can be leaders in efforts to form international regimes<sup>17</sup>." (op. cit. 373). Although the topic of whether the TCA, or the ACTO as of 1998, is an international regime falling outside the framework of our work, we can demonstrate, with Young, that at a decisive moment in the development and consolidation of the TCA, transnational networks of contacts and individuals such as Carrera de la Torre, were decisive in promoting the Amazonian pact.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the MAP Initiative was created, which initially sought only to change the use and coverage of Amazonian soils in the Madre de Dios region (Peru), Acre (Brazil) and Pando (Bolivia) (Chávez et. al., 2005). The initiative came from research projects conducted at the Federal University of Acre, in Brazil, and the Woods Hole Research Centre<sup>18</sup> (Sant'Anna, 2009). Based on the knowledge produced by professors and researchers in Brazilian universities, this "was transferred [...] to the delegations of Peru and Bolivia." (Chávez, 2005: 64). For de Brito (2007), the MAP initiative emerged as an alternative to the traditional cooperation model of the TCA, given the lack of effectiveness of the Treaty to promote sustainability in the MAP region.

Ravena (2012) highlights that since at least the seventies, the work carried out by academics on environmental issues was relevant in the implementation of international agreements in this field. With this, environmental problems such as jungle deforestation became more visible, while tools to improve environmental regulation were being refined at the international, national and local levels. In the European Union, as the most relevant example, efforts have been made to incorporate and implement environmental solutions within the framework of multilevel governance in subnational spaces. However, there are still obstacles in this regard (Varas Arribas, n.p.). We highlight two aspects regarding he efforts to regulate environmental issues at regional level:

- 1) The contribution of academics to better study environmental issues;
- 2) The empowerment of subnational regional actors to solve these problems. The MAP, in South America, is part of these efforts.

Despite De Brito's criticism of the selfish interests of the states in the Amazonian area, scholars of the MAP Initiative (Chávez, 2005: 59) state that the TCA was a reference for the MAP,

*"Considering that it is a legal instrument signed 30 years ago, it is interesting to note how, at that time, guidelines were defined to promote the harmonious and integrated development of the Amazon*

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<sup>17</sup> Román defines international regimes as "social institutions composed of agreed-upon principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures that are intended to govern the interaction of actors in specific areas." (1998, p. 65).

<sup>18</sup> Centre located near New York, dedicated to the study and debate of climate change.



*basin as a basis for a regional economic complementation model  
[...]."*

Already in 2002, with the MAP III and under a new concept of space that sought to move from "borders of separation to borders of cooperation" (Chávez i.a., 2005: 52), the Initiative began to bring together technicians and researchers, municipal governments, representatives of civil society, in a dynamic that successfully promoted the multidimensional treatment of the problems of the Amazon. Half a decade after the MAP initiative, one can say:

*There is no doubt that there was a gradual consolidation of a transboundary social movement whose essence is the conviction that the development of the South-western Amazon can only be channelled through cooperation and the integration of local, regional and national societies [...]. (Chávez, 2005: 56).*

The MAP Initiative is a transnational actor that includes NGOs and transnational corporations and less institutionalized movements (Risse-Kappen cit., in Sant'Anna, 2009: 168). Taking into account that the MAP<sup>19</sup> ended up being supported later by the ACTO, the GEF<sup>20</sup> (Global Environment Facility) and the UNEP, United Nations Programme for the Environment, regarding the climate adaptation of the region Dios-Acre and Panda, we could affirm that from a state-centred approach, the MAP could reveal the failure of the ACTO. However, if we take into account the Complex Interdependence perspective, the MAP, by uniting efforts and transnational networks of scientists, municipal governments and civil society, supported by organizations such as the ACTO or the UNEP, shows that the neorealist approach excessively limits the study of the MAP to the States, and only to them. Under De Brito's realist approach (2007), the MAP would show that the TCA had failed, but under the Complex Interdependence approach used in this article, by supporting the MAP the ACTO proves to be effective by recognizing non-state initiatives as relevant for the sustainability of the Amazon. There is no doubt that the subsequent support of the ACTO to the MAP demonstrates the potential of the organization. In fact, according to the ACTO, the GEF and the UNEP report:

*The pilot project has provided the basis to formulate and implement adaptation strategies for climate variability with the representatives of the governments of the three countries and the local society. With the trinational team of 15 specialists, the technical validation of the*

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<sup>19</sup> The pilot project that associated the MAP to a more systemic initiative to support the Acre River basin from climate change has the support of Peru, with authorities such as the National Water Authority and the Maldonado local water administration, of Brazil with the National Research Institute, among others, and on the Bolivian side, the Departmental Emergency Operations Centre of Pando, to name some national and local organizations.

<sup>20</sup> The GEF was created in 1991 to fund projects whose objective is to protect the environment worldwide. The World Bank manages its resources is the.



*vulnerability and risk maps was carried out through a 185 km expedition along the Acre River (November-December 2013)*

The aforementioned pilot project allowed, successfully, to implement a trilateral early warning system, which is seen as a model for future expansion to the other Amazonian countries. However, we do not rule out, although we do take them into account, De Brito's criticisms that the TCA should be more efficient and effective regarding the development and implementation of sustainable programmes for the Amazon.

We would not like to stop completing this section without making reference to a survey carried out in 2010 in Colombia on the Amazon. The results were worrisome and show that much more should be done by the ACTO, the civil society and local governments, among others, regarding the backward regional Amazonian areas.

In the aforementioned survey, 67% of the population knew little or nothing about the Amazon. Both the indigenous population and the non-indigenous population consider that this is highly threatened, not only due to deforestation, but also to illicit activities, internal conflict, as well as loss of cultural identity (CEPAL, 2013).

Although it is not the subject of this article to delve into the subject of cultural regions<sup>21</sup>, we consider that Axerod, who mentions that there is an emergence of regions with shared cultures, advances some premises that may be useful for the Amazon. One of them establishes that "Initially, most of the neighbouring places have little in common, and therefore have little probability of interacting with one another. However, when two places interact, they become similar, and thus are more likely to interact with each other." (Axelrod, 1997: 157). In the case of the Amazonian areas, so neglected by the governments and object of all kinds of myths or misinterpretations<sup>22</sup>, the ACTO should, from our perspective, exercise a pedagogical task that could range from the environmental importance of the Amazon in South America, to its cultural rescue through the demystification of preconceived ideas. But that would be another research.

## **Conclusions**

With our research, we sought to demonstrate that the TCA was an agreement that had innumerable difficulties to be implemented, including the same ambiguity regarding the definition of sustainable development applied to the Amazon. Another obstacle was, as we saw, that initially the member countries had different ambitions in terms of their objectives. Brazil, for example, sought to confer on the TCA a dimension that would make it possible to strengthen military security and monitor its borders, which ended up being rejected by the other member countries. Although the TCA has been usually studied through the realist (or neorealist) approach, we attempted to demonstrate that Complex Interdependence can broaden the knowledge field about this Treaty. We saw that in the several stages of consolidation of the TCA, the interaction of international organizations with the Treaty enabled supporting the funding of sustainable projects.

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<sup>21</sup> Axerod defines a Cultural Region as "a set of contiguous sites with identical culture" (Axelrod, 1997: 156).

<sup>22</sup> For the Brazilian Amazon see, for example, Joana Becerra (2011), Ph.D. thesis.



From the various dimensions defined to review the realist/neorealist approach, we verify that there are limitations and biases in the realist or neorealist theoretical approach. Thus, the funding of the TCA was driven by transnational networks of contacts, despite the disinterest of the treaty states in initially funding the projects. On the other hand, by overestimating the role of the hegemon (Brazil) to explain the progress of the TCA/ACTO, the work of transnational actors such as the MAP, which encouraged projects to protect the Amazon, was not taken into account. These projects included contributions from centres, academics and transnational organisations, among others, which promoted a "bottom up" environmental project that led the ACTO to support relevant environmental initiatives. It was also concluded that Keohane's premise that cooperation not only takes into account common interests, but also the states' potential goals and targets, should also be taken into account.

Likewise, the MAP Initiative showed that the scientific community of Brazil, Peru and Bolivia, as well as civil society, received the support of the ACTO, the GEF and the UNEP in a process that was promoted "from the bottom up" and that these processes are more common than one might think. It is still necessary to continue research that more broadly evaluates how the ACTO is interacting with transnational networks, NGOs, and other regional and international organizations in terms of promoting the sustainable development of the Amazon. We consider, however, that this paper can already be a contribution to this topic.

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