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Parallel Development of Five Partnerships to Promote Sustainable Soy in Brazil: Solution or Part of Wicked Problems?

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Abstract

The central question of this paper is how to understand and characterize the parallel development of global private partnerships and other partnerships at the global level or national level, that all aim to promote sustainability of a global commodity. The aim of this paper is to contribute to the discussion on the role and use of global private partnerships in coping with sustainability as a wicked problem. For this purpose we have constructed and used a theoretical framework on complex decision-making processes with a grounded theory that explains diversity of private governance networks in terms of rivalry and exclusion. Focusing on five partnerships that promote sustainable production of soy in Brazil, the paper concludes that their development is highly interdependent and dialectical. One of the five partnerships is the Round Table on Responsible Soy. Both the start and development of this global private partnership have not ended but fuelled rivalry between different partnerships, herewith reproducing the wickedness of governance of sustainable production of soy. Managing sustainability as a wicked problem requires an understanding of the dialectical development of partnerships. Instead of embracing one partnership as the best or the benchmark, it may be wiser for policymakers to invest in managing interactions and articulating relationships between different partnerships at the global and national level.

Key words: Private partnerships, rivalry, wicked problems, sustainable soy, Brazil

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Introduction

Sustainability has been called an example of a special kind of problem: wicked problems (Batie 2008; Peterson 2009). Wicked problems are 'dynamically complex, ill-structured, public problems. The causes and effects are extremely difficult to identify and model; wicked problems tend to be intractable and elusive because they are influenced by many dynamic and political factors as well as biophysical complexities' (Batie 2008, 1176). Peterson (2009) considers sustainability as a wicked problem because it is 'complex, ill-defined, messy and unsolvable in any traditional sense' (p.71). In this paper we want to highlight two other dimensions of sustainability as a wicked problem: first, sustainability is a wicked problem because 'there is no definitive formulation of what the problem is' (Rittel and Weber 1973, 161). The problem of sustainability has something to do with lack of congruence between environmental, social and economic values, institutions and practices that explain more or less irreversible, processes of environmental degradation, social exclusion and, or economic decline. However, it is difficult to define and agree on what the problem exactly is, where the problem starts and what the scale of the problem is. Second, sustainability is a wicked problem because there has been an explosion of organizations and authorities at local, national and international levels to discuss and solve sustainability but at the same time little agreement on what formal and/or informal rule systems should define and direct sustainability (Rosenau 2003). The search for sustainability is characterized by 'double dynamics' of governance : 'actors not only deliberate to get favorable solutions for particular problems, but while deliberating also negotiate new institutional rules, develop new norms of appropriate behavior and devise new conceptions of legitimate political intervention' (Hajer 2003, 175-176). In other words, sustainability can be characterized by parallel processes of institutional proliferation and emergence of institutional voids.

One of the worldwide controversies on sustainability involving business, civil society and government actors, is about negative environmental and social effects of the production and expansion of global agricultural commodities, like soy, palm oil, wood, coffee, etc. Typically, different views exist on the relative weight and importance of negative effects and to what extent they outweigh positive effects. Also, there is no consensus on the extent to which negative effects can be attributed to production and expansion. Whilst knowledge and information on cause-effect relationships is still evolving or outright contested, actors from different spheres and different places have organized multi-stakeholder consultations to discuss how to promote sustainable production. Sharing concerns or desires on sustainability, they gradually realized that they were part of a very complex global system, glued together by multiple chains of production, trade and consumption of a global commodity.

Global Private Partnerships

The 1990s and even more so the 2000s have been the era characterized by the emergence of new forms of global governance in the field of sustainable production of global commodities like palm oil, soy, wood, coffee, etc. Whereas the UN Sustainability Summit of Rio in 1992 marked the beginning of many public-private partnerships to address sustainability concerns, it were typically business and civil society actors who manifested themselves as new authorities to govern sustainability of global commodities through private partnerships (Glasbergen 2008; Hospes 2011; Schouten and Glasbergen 2011). Seeing that national governments were hesitant to

develop global sustainability standards to direct producers and business of global commodities on pathways to sustainability, business and civil society actors began to organize themselves at different levels and in different countries to prepare the development of sustainability principles and criteria. They developed network-based polities or institutional arrangements and began to organize non-territorialized representation of stakeholders and stakeholder groups from different parts of the world. With a view to establish widely shared principles and criteria for sustainability rules and to become accepted as a new authority to develop such rules, the early developers of global private partnerships or networks tried to be inclusive in at least two ways: to include as much as possible of stakeholders from different spheres and places in the process of developing global principles and criteria and to develop as comprehensive as possible a set of sustainability principles and criteria.

Global private partnerships can be defined as new authorities or institutional arrangements to manage or at least cope with sustainability as a wicked problem. The rise of these partnerships can be seen as answering the call of Rosenau (2003) for 'innovative partnerships between different actors to reverse ecological decline in the early decades of the new century' (p. 28). However, the rise and development of these partnerships have neither been easy nor uncontroversial. First, business and civil society actors not only come from different places and spheres but also have different missions and concerns are inspired by values that may be hard to reconcile, and last but not least, may join or leave the process of consultation at different times. Second, for different reasons business or civil society actors may consider other organizational or regulatory initiatives at the global or national level as either more effective or legitimate in promoting sustainability. This means that some kind of rivalry may exist between global private partnerships and other partnerships at global or national level, calling themselves networks, coalitions or alliances.

The aim of this paper is to contribute to the discussion on the role and use of global private partnerships in coping with sustainability as a wicked problem. For this purpose we want to describe the parallel development of global private partnerships and other partnerships, coalitions or networks, that all aim to promote sustainable production of a global commodity. Our main question is: how to understand and characterize this parallel development? Our specific questions are: to what extent and how is the start of a global private partnership affected by other, parallel initiatives? Does the development of global principles through multi-stakeholder consultation end or rather feed rivalry between a global private partnership and other partnerships, coalitions or networks? Does the global private partnerships emerge as the benchmark or rather as one of the forms of governance to generate and implement sustainability principles and criteria for a territory or category of people?

To describe and analyze interactions through time between different partnerships and their principles or programs, we will construct and use a theoretical framework. The framework is a combination of the 'rounds model' that has been coined by Teisman (2000) to analyze complex decision making processes, and a grounded theory that explains diversity of private governance networks in terms of rivalry and exclusion (Smith and Fishlein 2011).

The empirical and analytical part of this paper will focus on the emergence and development of the Round Table on Responsible Soy (RTRS) as a global private partnership and four other

organizational and regulatory initiatives that started before or after the formal launch of this global private partnership: the Soy Platform of Brazil, the Basel Criteria, the Soy Moratorium and Soja Plus. As far as the locus of soy production is concerned, we will concentrate on global and national organizations or agreements that are of importance for production of soy in Brazil, as the second largest producer of soy in the world.

Our empirical data are based on semi-structured interviews with different business, civil society and some government actors in Brazil and the Netherlands as part of evaluation research in 2006 (Hospes 2006; Hospes et al. 2009; Hospes 2010) and in 2011 (Valk et al. 2012); participatory observation of the authors at national and international conferences organized by the RTRS; and desk study of minutes of board meetings and meetings of the General Assembly of the RTRS. Appendix 1 provides a detailed and chronological overview of the sources and methods used to describe the parallel development of the five partnerships directed at the promotion of sustainable soy and the interactions between them.

In the next section we will present our theoretical framework. Thereafter, as a background note, we will briefly introduce soybean production and the Forest Code of Brazil. We will then analyze three rounds of interactions between different partnerships, principles and programs of business and civil society actors, that all are directed at promoting sustainable soy in Brazil. In the final section we will draw some conclusions and present some methodological ideas and policy suggestions for studying or supporting the development of partnerships.

Theoretical Framework

To analyze complex decision making in societies that are confronted with network structures, Teisman (2000) distinguishes three models. The first one is the phase model. A key assumption underlying this model is that decision-making can be neatly divided into distinctive stages of formation, adoption and implementation of policy. Another assumption is that a focal actor adopts a dominant definition of the solution to a problem. The phase model is a planning model, but is not very useful to analyze decision-making processes of actors involved in geographically wide and socially diverse networks.

The second model is the stream model. This model is based on the idea that policy making consists of three parallel streams: a stream of problem definitions, a row of solutions and a series of political commitments. According to this model, major policy changes can only occur if these streams become linked, that is, when problem statements, solutions and political commitments of different actors coincide and fit at one moment in time. This model comes much closer to reality, but fails to acknowledge interactions between actors through time and the actor as a processor of (particular versions of) the three streams.

The third model is the rounds model. This model is focused on interactions between different actors (individuals, groups or collective entities) in and through time. In contrast to the phase model, this model assumes that many actors are involved in decision making, not just a focal actor. In contrast to the stream model, this model assumes that every actor involved in decision making will introduce his or her own perception of relevant problems, possible solutions and political judgment. Like the phase model, the rounds model adopts a time perspective: a

distinction is made between different time periods. However, these periods are not characterized in terms of the distinctive stages of the phase model but by more or less controversial decisions that mark the beginning and end of a 'decision making round'. Much more than the stream model, the rounds model is focused on interactions among different actors, or the wicked character of these interactions: during one period or round, one actor may consider a proposal or activity as part of policy implementation. This same proposal or activity may be conceived as part of policy development by another actor. Also, one actor may consider his proposal or activity as a solution to a problem whereas another actor may conceive this proposal or activity as the beginning or cause of a problem.

The rounds model has been mainly used to analyze interactive decision-making in public policy and public-private partnerships in western countries (like the Netherlands, UK, Canada) in the domains of resource management, spatial planning or environmental assessment (Edelenbos and Klijn 2005; Howlett 2007; Klijn and Teisman 2003; Kørnøv and Thissen 2000). Howlett (2007), for instance, used the rounds model to explore policy chronologies of decision-making processes. He examined activities and interaction in five domains between government and NGO actors during different rounds of public policy making in Canada. Calling for further investigation and elaboration, his analysis found that both governmental and NGO activity vary greatly over rounds in terms of intensity and that NGO activity in particular appeared to be driven by opposition to proposed bills.

Given the network-like character of global private partnerships and the many actors and interactions involved in decision-making, we think that the rounds model is also extremely useful to describe and analyze interactions and decision-making processes at these partnerships. However, to make the model more suitable to describe interactions between different partnerships, we propose to redress a flaw in the model and use a theory that explains diversity and competition between different networks.

The rounds model focuses on interactions between actors but assumes that actors remain where they are. The study of Smith and Fishlein (2011) on rivaling private governance networks, however, shows that we cannot assume that all actors are remaining engaged with one particular network all the time but may shift from one to another, or even leave one initiative to start a new one. The rounds of decision-making can be seen as a game of musical chairs, with actors moving around the chairs and deciding to sit or leave the game when the music stops. Actors may switch from one negotiation space or rule-making process to another. They observe that, 'The impetus for creating a competing network most often stems from groups of stakeholders that are either excluded from the creation of the initial effort or feel disadvantaged by the course its development is taking' (Smith and Fishlein 2011, 514). Moreover, they argue that exclusion of actors from existing networks explains diversity of and competition between different organizations and networks. Finally, they conclude that competitiveness does not so much depend on specific rules but on the composition of an organization or network and the unique relation-specific resources and capabilities of this organization or network (ibid).

Combining the theory on rivalry of Smith and Fishlein with the rounds model of Teisman, we want to posit the following. Exclusion of actors from a decision-making process can be considered as the critical mechanism or event to explain both diversity of and rivalry between

different initiatives. Such exclusion can take place in different ways and for different reasons during different rounds of decision making. Actors may not have been invited at the very beginning of an initiative, or find it too hard to make their voice heard or vote count. Some may find an issue lacking on the agenda, others disagree with the adoption of specific principles and criteria. For different reasons, they may leave a network because they feel disadvantaged by the course of its development, and start a new initiative.

To further develop the theoretical argument on rivalry between different initiatives to explain diversity, we want to consider the scale of an initiative. Next to membership composition and specific rules, an initiative can be characterized in terms of scale. With the scale of an initiative, we mean the scale at which the initiators believe or assume that problems, norms and other solutions for (lack of) sustainability need to be negotiated and agreed upon. If an initiative to promote sustainable production of a commodity is defined at the global scale, then actors from all over the world can join the initiative and participate in decision-making processes, provided they have the means to do so. For those global commodities that are geographically concentrated in a few countries, this implies that producers have to cope with or see themselves confronted in a network with many foreign or international actors. If an initiative is defined at the national or local scale, then foreign or international actors are or can be excluded from membership and decision-making rounds.

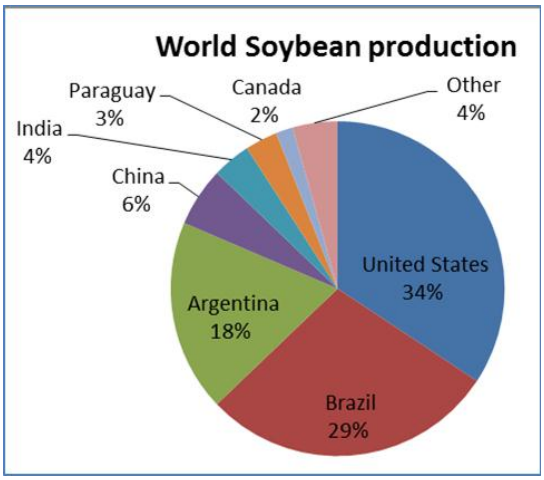
Soybean Production and the Forest Code of Brazil

Soybean is a multi-purpose crop and global commodity. It is used for production of feed, food and fuel. All over the world, the myriad uses of soybean have been discovered and developed by firms, researchers and government agencies in the fields of health, nutrition, food, agriculture and industry. Not surprisingly, soybean has been qualified as a 'miracle bean' (Both ENDS 2006; Prodöhl 2010).

Production of soybean is largely concentrated in the western hemisphere. The USA, Brazil and Argentina are the three main soy producers in the world (see Figure 1). These three countries are also world leaders in export. China is the major destination market: 59 percent of all traded soybean is imported by China, followed by the EU 27 (14 percent).[1]

Whereas the USA is the world's leading producer and exporter of soy, much of the sustainability debate has concentrated on Brazil, covering the largest part of the Amazon biome. The fear of rapid and irreversible deforestation of the Amazon biome as a result of agricultural expansion has been a key motive of international and national civil society organizations (like WWF, Greenpeace, the Brazilian Forum of NGOs and Social Movements for the Environment, the Amazon Working Group, etc.) to call for sustainable or responsible soy production to minimize negative environmental and social effects.

[1] Until the second World War, China was the world's largest producer of soybean. In 1943 the USA took over is position and in 1974 Brazil's production also passed that of China (Shurtleff and Aoyagi 2007).



USA	90,605
Brazil	75,500
Argentina	49,000
China	15,100
India	9,800
Paraguay	8,373
Canada	4,345
Other	12,016
Total	264,739

Figure 1. World soybean production 2010/2011 (in 1,000 MT)
Source. USDA-FAS Table 07 Soybeans: World Supply and Distribution, downloaded September 20th of 2012 at http://www.fas.usda.gov/psdonline/circulars/oilseeds.pdf

These civil society organizations are not concerned about the lack of environmental law to regulate deforestation but rather the lack of compliance to such law and the political pressure of soy producers to soften the Brazilian Forest Code (Lima et al. 2011). This code sets limits on the amount that can be cleared within any plot of land. 'The 1965 Code (Law 4.771/65) was amended in 2001 (MP 2.1666/67), making it a legal requirement that 80% of each parcel within the Amazon biome must remain forested, which means that soy farming will be much less profitable here than in the Cerrado, where only 35% of native vegetation cover has to be retained' (ibid). In addition, the Brazilian Forest Code distinguishes Areas of Permanent Preservation (APP). These are vulnerable areas, such as riversides, hilltops, and steep slopes, where agricultural production and expansion is not allowed.

The Ministry of Environment of Brazil has concluded in several studies on deforestation in Brazil that poorly defined property rights form a major explanation of on-going deforestation and lack of compliance to the Forest Code of Brazil (Valk et al. 2011). These poorly defined property rights also form one of the main reasons why land conflicts persist at the agricultural frontiers in Brazil (Alston et al. 1996; Mueller et al. 1994).

In May 2011 the Brazilian Congress approved an amendment of the Forest Code, that would provide amnesty for illegally logged forest before 2008. This amnesty did not pass the Brazilian Senate. The senate, however, did accept a revision of the Forest Code in December 2011, that gives a long time (20 years) to large soy producers to comply with legal requirements and sets smaller margins for cultivation close to vulnerable areas (Valk et al. 2011).

Global private partnerships, and certainly the RTRS that requires soy producers to comply with applicable national legislation, can be seen as social mechanisms or designers of soft law to realize greater compliance to the Forest Code of Brazil. Second, they offer alternative and higher sustainability standards for soy production, certainly in case this code is watered down.

Five Sustainability Partnerships

In the 2000s, business and/or civil society actors have formed different partnerships, coalitions or networks to develop principles or programs for promoting sustainable production of soy (CREM 2011; Proforest 2005; Valk at al. 2012). Five of these partnerships, networks or coalitions are relevant for the production of soy in Brazil (see Table 1). Two of them have been the initiative of global players from business and civil society: the Swiss retailer COOP and WWF Switzerland are the initiators of the Basel Criteria; WWF and Unilever are the initiators of the Round Table on Responsible Soy. Three partnerships, networks or coalitions are the joint initiative of Brazilian agribusiness and, or NGOs: the Soy Platform of Brazil is the initiative of one Brazilian NGO and four Brazilian networks; the signatories of the Soy Moratorium are two Brazilian associations: ABIOVE (Brazilian Association of Vegetable Oil Industries) and ANEC (National Association of Grain Exporters of Brazil). These two associations, together with Aprosoja (Mato Grosso Soybean Producers Association) and the civil society organization ARES (Responsible Agribusiness Institute), are the initiators of Soja Plus.

Table 1. Partnerships, principles and programs for sustainable soy in Brazil

Initiators of partnership, principles and/or program	Name of partnership, network or coalition (Year of start)	Name of principles or program (Year of launch or adoption)	Territorial focus or social object in Brazil
1. Brazilian NGO and four Brazilian networks	Soy Platform Brazil (2004)	Criteria for socially responsible soy (2004)	Companies that buy soy or soy-related products
2. COOP Switzerland and WWF Switzerland	(2004)	Basel criteria (2004)	Non-GM soy producers
3. WWF and Unilever	Round Table on Responsible Soy (2006)	RTRS standard (2010)	All soy producers
4. Brazilian business associations ABIOVE and ANEC	(2006)	Soy Moratorium (2006)	Amazon biome
5. Brazilian business associations and civil society organization (ABIOVE, ANEC, Aprosoja and ARES	(2010)	Soja Plus program (2010)	All soy producers

In three cases, the initiators did not give a name to their partnership but simply presented their principles or program to a wider audience: the Basel criteria, the Soy Moratorium and Soja Plus. In two other cases, the initiators did give a name to their partnership, as to underline the importance of forming a new network and organizing deliberation on the development of principles and criteria: the Soy Platform of Brazil and the Round Table on Responsible Soy. This is most visible in the case of the RTRS with a time lap of four years between the official start of the partnership and the adoption of their soy standard.

Though all partnerships have developed principles or programs that are relevant for the Brazilian context, they are not directed at the same territory or social objects. The Basel criteria are meant

for production and producers of non-genetically modified soy only. The RSPO principles and criteria refer to both GM and non-GM soy. The criteria developed by the Soy Platform are meant for companies that purchase soy or soy-related products in Brazil. The Soy Moratorium refers to the Amazon biome, not all of Brazil. Soja Plus is a program for all soy producers in Brazil.

Using our theoretical framework, we will now describe interactions between business and civil society actors during different rounds of decision making on partnerships and principles to promote sustainable soy. Each round is characterized by a multitude of actors, initiatives and decision-making processes, that influence each other. Some actors may consider their initiative as the framework for new ones, yet other actors who have been not been invited at the very beginning of this initiative, may deny this initiative and start their own. The establishment of a partnership or a solution to a problem in one round, may be challenged or denied during another round, leading to new governance arrangements and solutions.

The first round includes the following events: the launch of the Basel Criteria, the start of the Soy Platform Brazil, the organization of the first international conference on sustainable soy and the start of the Soy Moratorium. The official registration of the RTRS as an association under Swiss law in November 2006 marks the end of this round. The second round includes the following events: the annual extension of the Soy Moratorium, the launch of the Soja Plus Program and the adoption of the principles and criteria for responsible soy at the General Assembly of the RTRS in June 2010, also marking the end of this round. The third round is still evolving. Our description of this period will focus on what we expect to be future dialectics of the RTRS as a global private partnership amidst other partnerships, increasingly involving government actors from Brazil. Figure 2 provides a schematic picture of the three rounds, characterized by the parallel development of and interactions between different partnerships to promote sustainable soy in Brazil. These interactions and their outcomes will be presented in more detail in the following description of the three rounds. For our use of the rounds model, we have followed a methodological protocol (see Appendix 2).

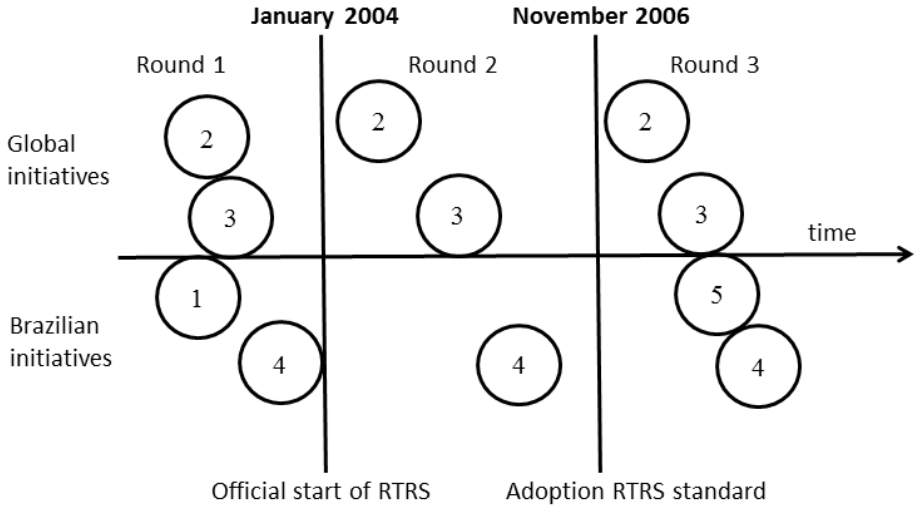


Figure 2.

Note. The circles refer to different partnerships, principles or programs for sustainable soy in Brazil. 1= Soy Platform of Brazil; 2= Basel criteria, 3= RTRS, 4= Soy Moratorium; 5= Soja Plus.

The First Round: Parallel Private Initiatives in Brazil and Europe

In the first half of 2004 different meetings were organized in Brazil and Europe that would lead to different principles for promoting sustainable production of soy.

From February to June 2004 the Soy Platform of Brazil organized two meetings and one virtual forum to develop a common view on principles and criteria for sustainable production of soy. The platform was organized by CEBRAC Foundation and four network organizations from civil society of Brazil (Proforest 2005): the Brazilian Forum of NGOs for the Environment (FBOMS), the Cerrado Network, the Amazon Working Group (GTA) and the Southern Brazil Family Farmworkers' Federation (FETRAF-Sul). Some 61 Brazilian environmental and social NGOs got involved in drafting 'social responsibility criteria for companies that purchase soy and soy products'. The consultation process was financially supported by three Dutch organizations (Cordaid, DOEN Foundation and Solidaridad), that wanted the diverse Brazilian civil society organizations to get their act together.

March 2004 WWF Switzerland and the Swiss retailer COOP launched the Basel Criteria, consisting of principles and criteria for responsible soy production. A distinctive principle is that genetically modified seed must not be used. Two months later WWF International and Unilever organized an informal meeting in London to discuss the organization of a global multi-stakeholder consultation process to develop principles and criteria for sustainable soy. This meeting led to the establishment of an organizing committee to prepare an international conference on sustainable soy. The international committee consisted of WWF, Unilever, the Dutch development agency Cordaid, the Brazilian smallholder organization FETRAF-Sul, the Brazilian holding company Grupo André Maggi that happens to be the largest private producer of soybeans in the world, and the Swiss retailer COOP.

The first international conference on sustainable soy was held in March 2005 in Brazil. In theory, the Basel Criteria could have been put on the agenda as version 1.0 of global principles and criteria for sustainable soy at this conference. However, the organizing committee was divided about the question whether or not to consider genetically modified soy as sustainable. With financial support of Cordaid, Fetraf-Sul had been conducting a campaign to keep soy production in Brazil GM-free, much to the regret of large soy producers. At the conference, genetic modification of soy became an issue that created a huge divide between smallholder organizations and environmental NGOs on the one hand and large producers and trading companies on the other hand, that did not want to purchase non-GM soy only (Hospes 2006, 12-14). Confronted with this deadlock and fearing to lose participation from NGOs or business in the consultation process, the organizing committee decided not to take sides: 'The Round Table process will not promote the production, processing or trading of either genetically modified nor non-genetically modified soy'.[2] The issue was simply put off the agenda. This did not prompt COOP, one of the initiators of the Basel Criteria, to turn its back to the multi-stakeholder process. The Swiss retailer remained seated at the organizing committee of the RTRS after its

[2] Roscher, B. 2007. Responsible Soy Production: What Are the Issues at Stake? WWF's Approach: Roundtable on Responsible Soy and Basel Criteria. Presentation at Soy Certification Seminar Berlin, downloaded from http://awsassets.panda.org/downloads/01feb282007bellaroscher.pdf on February 20, 2012.

first international conference. This was not the case for FETRAF-Sul, who could not agree with declaring genetic modification as a non-issue. This organization of family farmers left the organizing committee, with its Dutch funding agency, Cordaid, following its steps.

In theory, 'the social responsibility criteria for companies that purchase soy and soy products' as developed by the Soy Platform of Brazil could also have served as a baseline for discussion at the first international conference. In fact, the Soy Platform of Brazil had not only been organized to reach consensus among the very diverse NGOs of Brazil on criteria and indicators but also to serve as an input for negotiations with actors in the soy production system, including major international soy purchasers: 'We present, as guidelines for the negotiations, indications and suggestions of criteria, that should be adopted around the world'.

Unfortunately, many companies did not accept or simply ignored the social responsibility criteria of the huge network of Brazilian civil society organizations at the first international conference on sustainable soy. The representative of the large soy producers in Brazil and member of the organising committee of the RTRS, Grupo André Maggi, raised the rhetorical question: 'how to expect a company to adopt social responsibility criteria if it is not allowed to participate in the discussion on these criteria?' (Hospes 2006). At the same time, small Brazilian NGOs monitoring soy expansion in the north and north-east complained about the limited time for them to raise their concerns at the international conference and turned their back to the multi-stakeholder process. They turned their back to the RTRS. From that moment, the organizing committee and later the board of the RTRS would face great difficulties in getting Brazilian social NGOs and associations of family farmers to be represented among their ranks. The organizing committee faced much less difficulty in getting more representation from other spheres: after the first international conference, two environmental NGOs (Guyra Paraguay and Brazilian research institute IPAM), a producer organization from Argentina (AAPRESID) and two business actors (ABN-AMRO and the Brazilian ABIOVE) accepted the invitation to join the organizing committee.

The multi-stakeholder consultation at the first international conference on sustainable soy did not lead to a shared problem statement but rather reinforced conflicting points of view of companies and NGOs on soy cultivation. Companies regretted that NGOs only emphasized negative effects of soy production, ignoring positive ones. In their view, NGOs 'lacked understanding' and 'spread false messages' whereas NGOs accused companies of 'greenwashing': image building meant to obscure real problems related to soy cultivation. Still, the organizing committee accepted the proposal of CEBRAC, Greenpeace, the Dutch development agency Cordaid and some other NGOs to rename the round table process and to replace the concept of 'sustainable soy' with 'responsible soy'. These NGOs could not accept the idea that large-scale and export-led soy cultivation would be qualified as sustainable. With the concept of responsible soy, they wanted producers and traders to accept their responsibility for negative social and environmental impacts of (expansion of) soy production.

Whereas quite some Brazilian NGOs and farmer organizations turned their back to the RTRS after the first international conference on sustainable soy, the organizing committee decided to proceed. At this point, they did not want to use earlier initiatives of Brazilian NGOs and Swiss actors as a starting point for global multi-stakeholder consultation on principles and criteria for

responsible soy: the criteria of the Soy Platform of Brazil were disregarded because they were not the result of a consultation between business and civil society; another reason why they were not accepted as a baseline for consultation at the RTRS was that the criteria included a prescription that companies must only purchase non-GM soy. The Basel criteria were disregarded because they were biased towards the production of not genetically modified soy. Also, they had been developed by only two actors from one country and were not based on a global multi-stakeholder consultation.

Before the official registration of the RTRS as a foundation under Swiss law in November 2006, the Soy Platform of Brazil had become defunct. Contrast to the criteria developed by the Soy Platform of Brazil, the Basel criteria remained 'alive'. A certification company (CertID) would use the Basel criteria to develop the ProTerra standard for Brazil for non-GM agricultural commodities, including soy.

During the 'informal life' of the RTRS, a third initiative was taken. Two Brazilian business actors, ABIOVE and ANEC signed a moratorium, or temporary stop, in July 2006 on the trade of soy that would be planted as of October 2006 coming from deforested areas within the Amazon biome. This step did not come out of the blue. To a large extent the moratorium can be attributed to the publication of the report of Greenpeace (2006) called 'Eating Up the Amazon'. In this report the planting of 1.2 million hectares of soy in the Brazilian rainforest in 2004-2005 was called a 'crime'. Noting that 80 percent of world's soy production goes to the livestock industry, European agri-food businesses were then qualified as 'partners in crime'. Fearing damage to their reputation and loss of market share if no action would be taken, McDonalds, El Corte Ingles, Waitrose, Asdao, Ritter-Sport and Tegut agreed to form an alliance with Greenpeace with a view to demanding responsible soy from their suppliers in Brazil. Together they made a proposal to Brazilian vegetable oil and grain industry to accept a moratorium on the trade of soy from the Amazon. Less than two months before the second international conference on responsible soy, ABIOVE and ANEC proudly announced a soy moratorium for two years, presenting it as a form of self-regulation. To comply with this commitment and to organize the monitoring of any deforestation in the Amazon biome due to expansion of soy production, a Soy Working Group (GTS) was formed with representatives from the business sector and civil society organizations, including Greenpeace, International Conservation, IPAM, the Nature Conservancy and WWF-Brazil.[3]

For the business actor ABIOVE, their decision to sign the Soy Moratorium was not reason to give up their leading role in the organization of the multi-stakeholder process at the RTRS. On the contrary, this dual strategy made a lot of sense. We could say that ABIOVE tried to cope with the wicked problem of civil society organizations having different perceptions of problems and solutions regarding soy expansion and deforestation. Some civil society organizations (like WWF) believe in development of new partnership models and multi-stakeholder dialogue to make production of soy more sustainable. Other civil society organizations (like Greenpeace) do not believe in multi-stakeholder dialogue to generate solutions for the problem of de-forestation. They consider critical campaigns and bad publicity as more effective tools to change practices of

[3] The Amazon Environmental Research Institute (IPAM) became a member of both the organizing committee of the RTRS and GTS in 2006.

companies and to stop deforestation. ABIOVE organized deliberations with both types of civil society organizations, explaining their commitment to both the Soy Moratorium and RTRS.

In sum, we can say that the first round (January 2004-November 2006) is characterized by different initiatives, disagreement on problem definitions and multi-stakeholder consultation processes that exclude actors, views and issues and herewith trigger new initiatives. The round begins with a series of three parallel initiatives of business and/or civil society actors in Brazil and Europe during the first half of 2004: the formulation of socially responsible criteria by Brazilian civil society organizations through the Soy Platform of Brazil, the launch of the Basel Criteria by COOP Switzerland and WWF Switzerland and the start of an international organizing committee to prepare the first international conference on sustainable soy in Brazil. The parallel initiatives did not really cross-fertilize each other. The criteria of the Soy Platform of Brazil that were meant as an input for multi-stakeholder consultations were not accepted by soy businesses as a framework or baseline for discussing principles and criteria.

This was not only a matter of disagreement on specific criteria. In the first place, they could not agree with the problem definition of civil society organizations on soy production, that was too much focused on negative effects of soy production and ignored positive ones. Second, businesses ignored the initiative of the civil society organizations because they had been excluded from the development of these criteria. Feeling that there was too little room at the first international conference on sustainable soy to voice their problem statements and to discuss their solutions, that is: the socially responsible criteria, many social and environmental NGOs of Brazil turned their back to the RTRS as a multi-stakeholder consultation process. At this conference, genetic modification was a very controversial issue. The organizing committee decided not to take sides, which immediately disqualified the Basel Criteria, that are directed at non-GM soy only, as a framework or baseline for future consultation.

Not awaiting the establishment of a global standard for sustainable production of soy orchestrated by the RTRS and faced with the alarming report of Greenpeace 'Eating Up the Amazon', Brazilian business associations agreed to temporarily ban the purchase of soy from the Amazon biome. In July 2006 ABIOVE and ANEC signed the Soy Moratorium. Four months later the RTRS would register as a foundation under Swiss law.

The Second Round: The Global Partnership Losing Ground in Brazil

The official start of the RTRS in November 2006 marked the beginning of a series of consultations on principles, criteria and verification of responsible soy. From October 2007 until March 2009 a working group organized five meetings to formulate draft texts, taking into account comments from three multi-stakeholder consultation periods. This resulted into a Field Testing Version that was put on the agenda for approval by the General Assembly of the RTRS in June 2009.

Not all participants were happy about the Field Testing version. Aprosoja (Mato Grosso Soybean Producers Association) could not agree with criteria 4.4 on responsible expansion of soy cultivation:

> Expansion for soy cultivation during field test period may not take place on land cleared of native habitat after May 2009. Exception: Producers who want or plan to clear native habitat after the cut-off date of May 2009 must produce scientific evidence from a comprehensive and professional third-party assessment of the area concerned that identifies the absence of: all primary forest, other High Conservation Value Areas (HCVAs), local peoples' lands. Payment for Environmental Services will be explored during field test period beginning after the cut-off date of May 2009.

Mato Grosso is the major soy bean producing state of Brazil, in which about 30 percent of total Brazilian soy production is cultivated (Goldsmith 2008). According to Aprosoja, the criteria on responsible expansion would make it difficult for their soybean producers to log lands after May 2009, even though it is permitted according to Brazilian law. In a similar vein, Aprosoja objected the requirement of an alternative High Conservation Value analysis, when deforestation is legally allowed. Moreover, such an analysis would simply bring extra costs to producers. Therefore, Aprosoja proposed an alternative version, providing compensation for farmers who voluntarily would refrain from clearing lands which could legally be cleared.

Environmental NGOs were not very pleased with this alternative version. They feared that due to the strong lobbying of 'ruralists' in the Brazilian Parliament, the revision of the Forest Code would result in more leniency on deforestation. These NGOs considered the RTRS as an alternative tool to keep up high standards and to restrict deforestation when the new code would offer less legal protection of high conservation areas from agricultural expansion. In addition, small-scale producers from other countries, like India, who cultivate soy under very different conditions, did not squarely support the proposal of Aprosoja.

The proposal of Aprosoja for an alternative version of criteria 4.4 did not reach a simple majority in every chamber of the General Assembly. The General Assembly of RTRS consists of three chambers, with an equal number of votes: producers, civil society, and industry, trade and finance. For a proposal to be adopted, every chamber has to reach a simple majority. The alternative version of Aprosoja was rejected. Aprosoja decided to raise an official protest against a procedural error on the voting, proposing that the formulation of the article should be reconsidered by the working group. However, the General Assembly also voted against this protest, which prompted Aprosoja to resign from membership of the RTRS.

Nearly one year after the adoption of the RTRS principles and criteria, another major Brazilian player announced its withdrawal from the RTRS: ABIOVE. This is a serious matter for the RTRS for two reasons. First of all, ABIOVE had joined been in the board of the RTRS since its official start. Second, the nine members of ABIOVE (including large multinationals like ADM, Bunge, Cargill and Louis Dreyfus) together represent 72 percent of Brazil's soybean processing volume. ABIOVE left the RTRS and at the same time launched the plan to organize a new voluntary scheme for soybean producers of Brazil: Soja Plus. Together with Aprosoja, ANEC and ARES, the association declared that public consultation rounds with stakeholders would be organized to discuss sustainability criteria.

The major issue on the agenda of the General Assembly of the RTRS in June 2010 was the adoption of version 1.0 of the RTRS principles and criteria. Six members of ABIOVE participated in the General Assembly. They had not resigned from membership of the RTRS after their association had withdrawn. Cargill openly questioned the future of the RTRS without substantial participation of Brazilian soy producers and called for a longer field testing period. ADM complained that 'we do not see many farmers attracted' and proposed to invite farmers to seek modifications to the principles and criteria. This way they both proposed implicitly to postpone the adoption of version 1.0 of the principles and criteria. This did not happen. The standard got accepted, though not unanimously: ADM, Bunge and Cargill raised a red card.

Parallel to the process of consultation on RTRS principles and criteria for responsible soy, the Soy Moratorium was annually renewed by ABIOVE and ANEC. In 2008 the two-year moratorium was extended for the first time with one year, much to the liking of Greenpeace that happily reported about this decision. The Brazilian Ministry of Environment was invited to join the Soy Working Group to monitor any deforestation in the Amazon biome. This way the moratorium not only got a kind of quasi-permanent status but also evolved from a business-to-business agreement into a public-private partnership.[4] Also, whereas the Soy Moratorium is geographically limited to the Amazon biome, the actors involved in the monitoring include national and international actors, like Greenpeace and International Conservation. In 2009 and 2010 the Soy Moratorium was again extended with one year.

In sum, we can say that the second round (November 2006-June 2010) is characterized by disagreement at the RTRS on the proposed criteria for responsible soy expansion and on its decision-making process, triggering Brazilian business actors to leave this partnership and to establish a new one. Multi-stakeholder consultations on principles and criteria for responsible soy of the RTRS dominated interactions between different business and civil society during the second round. During this process two leading Brazilian business associations turned their back to the RTRS process: Aprosoja (the association of soy producers from the largest soy producing state of Brazil, Mato Grosso) and ABIOVE (representing major soy traders and global agribusiness, like ADM, Bunge and Cargill) resigned from membership. They were not happy with the criteria on responsible expansion of soy cultivation. At the same time they were unable to effectively direct the decision making process of the RTRS as a member-based organization. The producers held one of the three chambers of the General Assembly, the others taken by civil society and commerce. Also, during the process of multi-stakeholder consultations on RTRS principles and criteria, the membership of the chamber of producers not only grew but also diversified. For instance, associations of family farmers from India joined the RTRS, having little in common with large-scale soy farming business in Brazil. As a result, Aprosoja and ABIOVE could not easily organize and direct decision making within their constituency, the producer chamber of the General Assembly, having one third of all votes. They decided to establish a new partnership, together with ANEC and ARES, with a view to prepare a new voluntary certification scheme: stepping out the RTRS, they started Soja Plus.

[4] Globalsat, 2008. Mapping and monitoring of the Soy Moratorium. Globalsat 2010. Soy moratorium: mapping and monitoring of soy plantings in the Amazon biome in the third year.

The Third Round: Brazilian Business Building Public-Private Partnerships

Several events after the adoption of the principles and criteria at the General Assembly of the RTRS in June 2010 suggest that Brazilian business initiatives will not fade away. On the contrary, we expect that Aprosoja, ABIOVE and ANEC will use Soja Plus to create maximum political space to define what is sustainable production of soy in the legal context of this country and to develop public-private partnerships for this purpose. On the one hand, the Brazilian Forest Code is considered a strict environmental law that sets high limits to deforestation in the Amazon biome and vulnerable areas. On the other hand, this code is subject to constant political struggle. Soy producers are exercising political pressure to get it changed, offering them more time to comply or more possibilities to compensate for deforestation by renting or buying parcels of forest elsewhere (Lima et al. 2011).

In a seminar of March 2011, Soja Plus seemed to water down its original ambition to establish a new voluntary standard for certification. The initiators announced to focus primarily on capacity building which should enable soy producers to comply with Brazilian legislation. This step could be seen as a defeat of Soja Plus and indirect acceptance of the RTRS as a global standard. However, the opposite could also be true. The capacity building of soy producers is not only focused on best practices but also on sharing information and contributing to a better understanding of the new Forest Code. In July and August 2011 producers participated in on-site workshops on labor legislation for producers and rural property managers and in seminars on Regulatory Standard No. 31 of the Ministry of Labor and Employment. This shows that the disappointment of Aprosoja about the adoption of an RTRS criterion that was more stringent than the Forest Code, had not only made them leave the RTRS but also start a new initiative: Soja Plus. This initiative takes national legislation, not the global standard of the RTRS, as its terms of reference. The capacity building of soy producers could also be seen as a first step of the organizers of Soja Plus towards preparing these producers for certification under a new Brazilian standard.

It is not unlikely that Soja Plus will evolve in a similar way as the Soy Moratorium, also being an initiative of ABIOVE and ANEC. These two Brazilian business associations had turned the Soy Moratorium from a form of self-regulation into a public-private partnership, involving Brazilian governmental actors and (inter)national environmental NGOs. The Soy Working Group that is monitoring the moratorium not only consists of ABIOVE and ANEC's member companies but also the Ministry of the Environment, the Bank of Brazil and five environmental NGOs. In October 2011, the Soy Working Group announced that the Soy Moratorium will be renewed for another year until the end of January 2013.

The controversy about criteria 4.4 on responsible expansion of soy and the workshops of the Soy Plus program to learn soy producers about the new Forest Code have not gone unnoticed to the organizers of the seventh international conference of the RTRS. The controversy and workshops boil down to the question how to articulate private voluntary standards and public regulations, which has been defined as one of the key themes at the conference of 2012. The position paper on this theme states that 'private standards and public regulations are often complementary and work in synergy; synergy that must be consolidated' (Djama 2011). Our analysis of rivalry and dynamics of sustainability governance of soy suggests that such consolidation will invoke new

interactions between business, civil society and government actors on rules for sustainability and who is to define sustainability. The articulation of linkages between global private standards and public regulations at the national level is complex, if not a wicked problem, and will form a new challenge for business, civil society and government actors.

In sum, we can say that a new parallel development of partnerships characterizes the third round (from June 2010 onwards). The RTRS is seeking to implement the principles and criteria adopted at the General Assembly of 2010 and to develop synergy between the RTRS as a global standard and public regulations at the national level. At the same time Brazilian business associations use and develop their private agreements and programs to seek conformity of soy production with national legislation and to build what the RTRS has not realized, that is, the development of public-private partnerships, involving both national and international actors. Whereas the decision of Brazilian business associations to leave the RTRS and to establish new partnerships reflects their disappointment about criteria and decision-making at the RTRS, their development will remain dependent on actors and interactions at this round table.

Conclusions

The parallel development of the RTRS and other partnerships, networks and coalitions directed at the promotion of sustainable soy can be characterized as an interdependent and dialectical development.

Two partnerships had contributed to controversy at the RTRS prior to its official launch and had influenced decision-making at this round table. The first one was the Soy Platform of Brazil, an initiative of Brazilian networks of civil society organizations. They had organized the platform to formulate socially responsible criteria for companies that buy soy or soy-related products. Their main aim was to use these criteria as a baseline for negotiation with business actors at the first international RTRS conference. However, soy businesses refused to discuss these criteria because they had not been involved in the formulation and could not agree with the underlying problem statement that soy production has only negative environmental, social and economic effects. As a result, many social NGOs turned their back to the RTRS. The Soy Platform of Brazil collapsed after the official start of the RTRS.

The second partnership that affected early discussions at the RTRS before its official start, was a joint initiative of a Swiss NGO and retailer to formulate principles and criteria for responsible soy production. A key element of their 'Basel criteria' is that genetically modified seed must not be used for soy production. Faced with diametrically opposed views of business and civil society actors on whether genetically modified soy can be regarded as sustainable, the organizing committee of the first international conference on soy decided to define GM as a non-issue. They feared that taking sides with one side in the debate would damage and slow down the process of multi-stakeholder consultation. This decision put both the criteria of the Soy Platform of Brazil and the Basel Criteria off-side in decision-making processes at the RTRS: both initiatives did not consider GM-soy as sustainable.

After the official start of the RTRS, Brazilian soy business very much tried to influence the decision-making process with regard to the formulation of global principles and criteria for

responsible soy. Associations of large soy producers and multinationals buying their produce could not agree with the proposed RTRS principle on responsible expansion of soy. This principle was more stringent than the Brazilian Forest Code, allowing deforestation in certain situations. However, the Brazilian soy businesses failed to get their views on responsible expansion of soy accepted at the General Assembly. Aprosoja and ABIOVE resigned from membership and, together with ANEC and ARES, started Soja Plus. The original ambition of Soja Plus was to develop a new voluntary certification scheme for all soy producers in Brazil. On second thought, the initiators decided to focus first on training soy producers in good agricultural and financial practices, and on helping soy producers to comply with national legislation.

Both the start and course of development of the RTRS as a global private partnership can be characterized in terms of rivalry between different organizational initiatives, criteria or programs of civil society and/or business actors from different parts of the world, most notably from Brazil. Both the start and development of the RTRS have not ended but fuelled diversity and rivalry. Whereas the adoption of the soy standard at the General Assembly of the RTRS can be seen as an attempt to establish a worldwide benchmark, the initiatives of Brazilian business actors to establish the Soy Moratorium and Soja Plus clearly suggest that they take a different view on this: national legislation of Brazil and the economic sustainability of the Brazilian soy industry should be taken as the point of departure in this country to promote sustainable production of soy, not some global rules. If additional environmental services are imposed on the Brazilian soy industry by international players, they expect to be compensated for their services.

Using our theoretical framework, we have gained a number of insights from our analysis. These insights can be helpful to overcome some blind spots and limitations in the discussion on the role and use of global private partnerships to cope with sustainability as a wicked problem. First, though the difficulties and limitations of organizing global private partnerships are not ignored in the literature, there is still a lack of understanding processes and dynamics of these partnerships. To redress this, we propose to study global private partnerships as part of a series of interactions with other partnerships, coalitions or networks at the global and national level. We also propose to focus on mechanisms, motives and interactions that explain lack of participation in multi-stakeholder consultation, or resignation of membership of global private partnerships. As we expect dialectical developments of global private partnerships and public regulations and authorities at the national level, we finally propose to put greater emphasis in research on interactions between business, civil society *and* government actors in their competitive and confusing search for sustainability.

Second, we think that there is a bias in the literature towards conceiving global partnerships and multi-stakeholder consultations as better or even ideal and certainly more promising forms of governance. They are too easily seen as a solution to wicked problems instead of breeding ground of such problems, characterized by lack of agreement on the problem statement, solution or supreme authority to develop the principles. Any actor (whether from the sphere of business, civil society or government) that wishes to support or commit itself to a partnership or criteria to promote sustainability, should understand the dialectical development of partnerships and criteria. Instead of choosing one initiative as the best or the benchmark, it may be wiser to invest in managing interactions and articulating relationships between different initiators of partnerships at the global and national level (Glasbergen 2011; Visseren-Hamakers et al. 2011).

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Appendix 1.

Key Sources and Lists of Interviewees

1. The key document for the description of the first round (2004-2006) has been an evaluation report entitled 'Cordaid and the adoption of social responsibility criteria for soy production by companies' (Hospes 2006). The objective was to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the Dutch development agency Cordaid in contributing to the adoption of social responsibility criteria for soy production by companies. For this purpose, the preparation and early development of the RTRS was reconstructed on the basis of analysis of archival data and through interviews in April-May 2006 with a wide range of people, both in Brazil and the Netherlands. This research provided a comprehensive view of different actors and initiatives involved in the promotion of sustainable soy in Brazil from 2004 till 2006, as reported by Hospes (2006).

   The report was part of the evaluation by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs of policy influencing through the Dutch Co-Financing Program (Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2007), led by the first author of this article. The interviewed people for the evaluation of Cordaid and the adoption of social responsibility criteria for soy production were:

Cordaid:
- Bob van Dillen, Lobbyist
- Wim Goris, Programme Officer Latin America Department

- Dicky de Morrée, Policy Adviser and Programme Officer Latin America Department
- José Ruijter, Co-ordinator Quality, Policy and Strategy for Access to Markets

Partner organizations of Cordaid in Brazil:

- Judson Barros, President, Funaguas
- Luis Eduardo Montenegro Castelo, Vice-President, Cebrac
- Padre Edilberto, Coordinator, FDA
- Mauricio Galinkin, President, Cebrac
- Marcus Roszinsky, Representative Fetraf in Parana state
- Lindomar Silva, Regional Secretary, Caritas
- Jane Souza, Agricultural Engineer, CPT and Caritas Para
- Marco Antonio Sperb Leite, Director, Cebrac
- Jax Nildo Aregao Pinto, Project Coordinator, CPT Para
- Altemir Tortelli, General Coordinator, Fetraf-Sul
- Rui Valença, Coordinator, Fetraf-Sul
- Agnes Vercauteren, Assistant International Relations, Fetraf-Sul

Business representatives in Brazil

- Rodrigo Moreira, Complexo Soja, Cargill
- Luiz Antonio Regi, Manager Quality Department, IMCOPA
- Michel Henrique R. Santos, Manager Corporate Marketing & Communication, Bunge
- João Y. Shimada, Environment Department, Grupo André Maggi
- Adalgiso Telles, Director Corporate Marketing & Communication, Bunge
- Gilmar Tirapelle, Complexo Soja, Buyer of local soy, Cargill
- Ocimar de Camargo Villela, Environment Department, Grupo André Maggi

Business representatives in the Netherlands

- Hessel Abbink Spaink, Corporate Social Responsibility, Rabobank International
- Frans Claassen, Director, Product Board for Margarines, Fats and Oils (MVO)
- W.G. van de Fliert, Secretary General, Dutch Association of Animal Feed Industry (Nevedi)
- Sjaak Hendriks, Manager Quality & Environment, Hema
- Simone A. Hertzberger, Head Quality and Product Integrity, Albert Heijn
- Frank van Ooijen, Director Corporate Communications / Corporate Social Responsibility Officer, Nutreco
- Richard W.A. Piechocki, Issue Manager, Rabobank Nederland
- Jan Kees Vis, Director Division Sustainable Agriculture, Unilever

Others:

- Jan Maarten Dros, Consultant, AIDEnvironment
- Jan Gilhuis, Programme Officer Sustainable Soy, Solidaridad
- Henk Hartogh, Coordinator NWE/EWE programme, NC-IUCN
- Ronald T.R. Hiel, Partner, Schuttelaar & Partners
- Ilan Kruglianskas, Agriculture and Environment Programme, WWF-Brazil
- Tamara Mohr, Director, Both ENDS

2. The key source for the reconstruction of the second round (2006-2010) of decision-making and interactions between different actors and partnerships involved in the promotion of sustainable soy in Brazil has been the General Assembly of the RTRS in Sao Paulo in June 2010. The first author was an observer at this General Assembly. He combined informal interviewing at the General Assembly with analysis of minutes of board meetings to explore why Aprosoja and ABIOVE had resigned from membership of the RTRS. Given the sensitivity of the issue and busy schedules of participants, interviewing of key players (Aprosoja, ABIOVE, Cargill, members of RTRS board) was informal and focused on one issue: the background and motives of Aprosoja and ABIOVE to resign from the RTRS.

3. The key source for describing the third round (2010-now) has been the comparative study of sustainable soy initiatives in Brazil and Argentina, conducted by the three authors of this article: Van der Valk, Mheen-Sluijer and Hospes (2012). Two key questions of this study are: can we speak of rivalry in sustainability schemes? do multiple standards enhance or obstruct sustainability? To address these questions for the Brazilian context, four initiatives and their interactions were analyzed on the basis of analysis of written sources (evaluation reports, annual reports, minutes of meetings, websites) and interviews with stakeholders in Brazil and the Netherlands in February-March 2010: the RTRS, Agricultura Certificada, Soja Plus and the Soy Moratorium. The interviewed people are members of the RTRS (WWF, Instituto Ethos, Solidaridad, ADM, Grupo Los Grobo, Andre Maggi) or initiators of Soja Plus (ABIOVE, Aprosoja).

The interviewed people were:

a) In Brazil:
- Carlo Lovatelli, ABIOVE and Soja Plus
- Diego di Martino, ADM Brazil
- Marcelo Duarte Monteiro, Aprosoja
- Cassio Franco Moreira, WWF-Brazil
- Bernardo Pires, ABIOVE
- João Shimada, Grupo Andre Maggi
- Ricardo Manoel Arioli Silva, Aprosoja
- Fabio Trigueirinho, ABIOVE, Soja Plus and Instituto Ethos
- Alex Ehrenhaus, Grupo Los Grobo

b) In the Netherlands:
- Marieke Leegwater, Product Board for Margarines, Fats and Oils (MVO)
- Pieter Sijbrandi, Solidaridad

Appendix 2.

Methodological Protocol for Our Use of the Rounds Model

1. Select a partnership that aims to promote sustainable production of a global commodity.
2. Collect as many documents as possible (articles, reports, minutes) about the genesis and evolution of this partnership.
3. Try to identify moments that suggest the start or completion of a decision-making round of this partnership by searching for milestones, markers, turning points or critical events in the development of the partnership (meeting of founding fathers, official start, change of status, new agenda, membership changes, agreed procedures, adopted principles).
4. Distinguish three or more decision-making rounds.
5. Search for other partnerships (at global or national level) that also aim to promote sustainable production of the same global commodity in a same country of production.
6. Classify all partnerships in terms of initiators (public, private; global, national, local), year of start, territorial focus or social object in the selected country.
7. Put the start and possible ending of every partnership on a time-line.
8. Try to identify references to other partnerships in documents of every partnership for every round.
9. Make a list of actors whose names often appear in documents, or who seem to have played a key role at the start or completion of every decision-making round of the partnership selected under 1.
10. Make a list of (representatives of) organizations that have been critical at key events close to the start or completion of a decision-making round of the partnership selected under 1.
11. Make a list of (representatives of) organizations that have resigned from participation in meetings or membership of the partnership selected under 1.
12. Conduct interviews with these actors and ask them (a) to explain the rationale of and differences between partnerships; (b) to reconstruct the start or completion of every decision-making round of the partnership selected under 1; (c) to list their concerns and/or explain why they have resigned from membership of the partnership selected under 1.
13. Try to participate in an annual meeting of all members of the partnership selected under 1; conduct participatory observation and organize interviews with actors who seem decisive, controversial or influential for decision-making during this event.
14. Use the results of document analysis and interviews to describe interactions between partnerships during different rounds of decision-making and to explain diversity and/or rivalry between them.

