

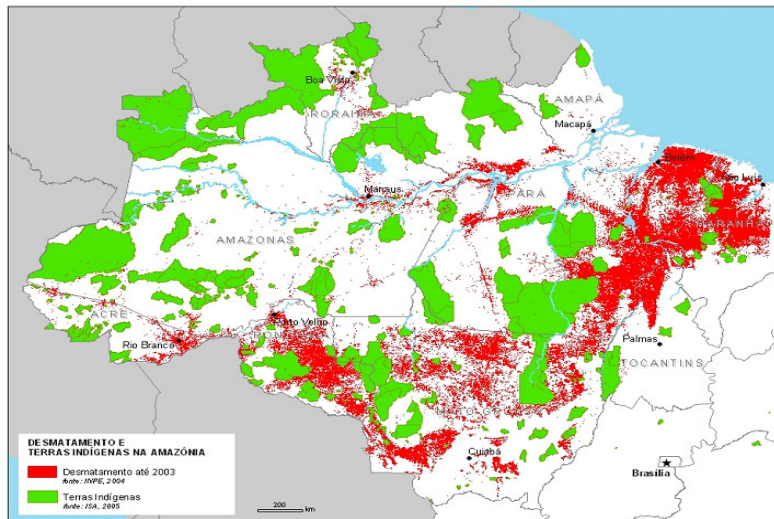
Summary of “Promoting indigenous rights and wise resource management. Contradiction in terms, romanticism or effective strategy? Lessons from 15 years of support to Brazil” by Lars Løvold.

Camilla Brattland, Tromsø Forum Conference 5th of October 2006

Lars Løvold made a speech based on the Rainforest Foundation's 15 years of experience working in Brazil, and he pointed out the fact that supporting indigenous rights is also to protect the rainforest. However, recognition of rights alone is not a guarantee for sustainable management of the forests. Indigenous peoples in Brazil are spread over a variety of 216 small-numbered peoples with different languages and some with little contact with the outside world.

To be able to meet modern-life challenges connected to a monetary-based economy and new income opportunities, indigenous rights are instrumental in protecting indigenous culture from outside pressures that can easily erode indigenous peoples' control over the rainforest and their own society structures. The state has not sufficiently implemented measures to protect indigenous peoples' territories or to make sure their culture is not threatened, nor does it provide culturally adapted education programmes and health services, even though Brazil has signed the ILO Convention 169. Mr. Løvold pointed out that this continues to be the work of NGO's, and that the first step is to secure collective territorial rights for the indigenous groups, in addition to strengthening culture, language and self-confidence, education, resources and administration. Indigenous peoples' organizations must also continue to be supported in their work and networking with other indigenous peoples and political processes at all levels.

In his presentation, Løvold also showed that indigenous peoples defend their own territories and their rights, resulting in a healthy forests and no deforestation on indigenous territories. On the map, the green areas are indigenous areas and the red are deforestation areas (2005).



Finally, Løvold stressed that Non-Governmental Organizations, international organizations, national authorities and international institutions and agreements need to join forces to maintain the diversity of cultures and in nature in Brazil. In the discussion afterwards, Løvold received a question regarding romanticizing of indigenous peoples in Brazil, where the peoples are represented as nature-loving, innocent primitives living in peace and harmony in the deep jungles. Løvold commented that in his experience, indigenous peoples in the rainforest maintained a different and much higher quality of living than what any Norwegian would think, and that the real romanticizing going on is the naïve assumption that as long as indigenous peoples gain their rights, the rainforest will be managed sustainably when they are left alone. In today's situation, the pressure from outside forces is too great for indigenous peoples to manage to protect the rainforests alone.