

## ***Teko Arandu: New Paths Towards a Sustainable Future***

*A case-study about the Brazilian Guarani-Kaiowás*

*Teko Arandu* is an expression from the Tupi-Guarani language, which is shared by the variations of the Guarani (among them, the Kaiowá) and which can be translated as 'living with wisdom.' Its meaning embraces the different ontological perspectives that these peoples have about the world, the humankind and nature, which reflect their cosmological systems and specific relations with their ancestral lands. In discourses about sustainability this kind of traditional wisdom might be a crucial resort to widen the possibilities of creating significant sustainable futures. Considering that the numbers of endangered cultures and languages are as alarming as the numbers of ecosystems and species of plants and animals being extinguished of the planet, it has become necessary to create integrated approaches to protect culture and nature. Hence, the preservation of cultural diversity, involving also linguistic diversity as the pivotal heritage of humanity, is a quintessential step for the nurture of a more inclusive discourse of sustainability. In this sense, the *Teko Arandu* is a concept that indicates how new directions for sustainability can influence and be influenced by the case of the Brazilian indigenous group Guarani-Kaiowá.

The contemporary discussions about sustainability lack a wider comprehension of what culture and nature may signify for different peoples, and how this variety of perspectives is fundamental for a fairer approach to the topic. Most of the theories about sustainability are still stuck on the main idea of sustainable development, which has been proven to be the biggest oxymoron of contemporary ecological discourses. It superficially encourages the establishment of a green economy with less impact on nature, but gives a way for the justification of the uninterrupted use of natural resources, since growth is still the final desirable goal. This misguided understanding of sustainability is due to the Western-modern domination of values. In order to open the discussions about sustainability to new and creative solutions, it is necessary to ponder different forms of human relationships: human-nature; inter- and cross-cultural; and current-future generations. It is necessary to search for distinct values that do not envision economic growth and technological development as the singular form of achieving human wellbeing. These values may vary according to the range of cultural experiences and needs of a determined group, which are usually based on the ontological perception, cosmological systems, cultural rituals and environmental conditions that each group perceive as fundamental for the construction of their identity.

In the example of the Guarani-Kaiowás, not only the preservation of their natural habitat is fundamental for the preservation of their culture and language, but also the maintenance of their language and cultural practices is a quintessential step for the preservation of the rainforests and all the biodiversity contained within it. Therefore I want to present some of the investigations regarding their cultural practices and how this reflects on a more sustainable use of the land and how their cosmological comprehension influences their contact with nature. This kind of investigation might be really fruitful for a

differentiated management of the local environment and for Brazil to come up with some innovative politics towards growth, ecology and human and cultural rights. However, in Brazil the increasing level of corruption and the aspiration of becoming a “well-developed” country whatever the cost, is still at the core of the general understanding of development and progress. What the Brazilian government fails to realize is that the indigenous peoples constitute a large and culturally rich part of the nation and they should have the right of celebrating their culture with assured support from the government. Many Brazilian people and the government also fail to realize that where there are indigenous groups living, the indices of the preservation of the rain forests are higher than where they have been eradicated. Therefore not only a reform on the Brazilian management of heritage and cultural values is needed, but also a complete restructuring of the educational systems, to provide a wider intercultural participation and the tolerance and respect for other peoples beliefs; and also, where there is a high number of indigenous peoples living, to provide the inclusion of the local languages and cultural values (history, myths, ecological knowledge) as part of the mandatory curriculum.

Perhaps now that Brazil is going through a moment of glorious economic recognition on an international scale, it should be time for the Brazilian government to assume a different attitude towards ethnic minorities and allow the voices of these groups to be heard. Brazil still holds the responsibility for Pantanal and the Amazon Forest (despite the high levels of deforestation and degradation of them), and perhaps if the righteous position was taken in perceiving the importance of the protection of these groups’ cultural values as a fundamental vehicle for the preservation of our ecosystem, the Brazilian government could, with support from UNESCO and based on the participatory actions by the indigenous peoples, establish a new politics of preservation of ethno-environmental diversity and of a ‘sustainable holding back’ rather than a ‘sustainable development’.

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