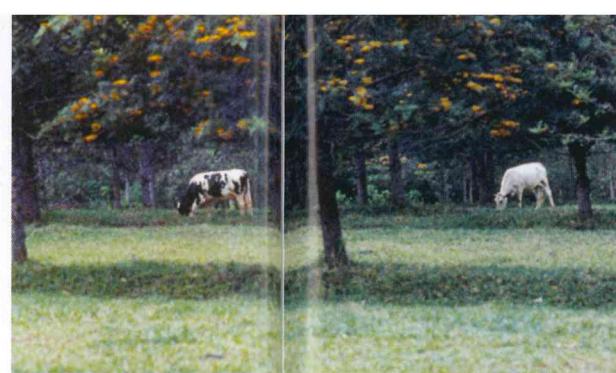




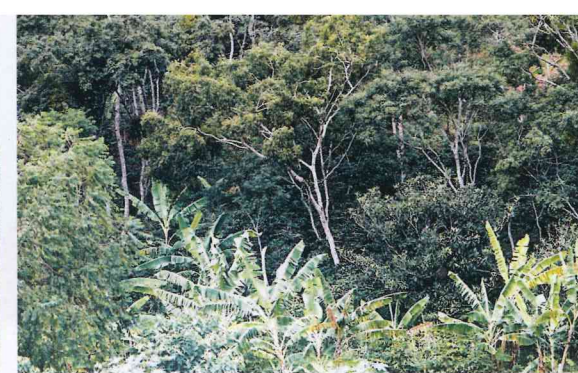
Agristeppe in Chapada dos Parecis, MT



Cattle under the Grevilha tree, Paranavaí-PR



Eucalypto trees in south of Bahia



Coffee arábica trees in Pernambuco, Taquaritinga do Norte

The Return of the Trees

A National Campaign for Sustainable Afforestation

"Terra Brasilis" has always stood out among all continents as home to most of the world's forest areas. Savannas, steppes and deserts prevail in Africa, Asia and Australia. In Brazil, even in areas where rainfall is minimal, such as in the semi-arid region, we still have a deciduous forest: the caatinga. Our savanna - the cerrado - was once a forest. But our forests are being decimated; of the primary Amazon rain forest less than 50% remains, and of other biomes less than 10%. Our continental country has lost its climate anchor. Without forests we are exposed to the impact of storms, heavy rains, and long-lasting droughts, not to mention the recent hurricanes. We must take on the challenge these facts constitute with determination and courage. Above all, we must take concrete steps, however small, and show their results to society. Our purpose is to provide the spark that will kindle such decisive action. Let us not waste time on pessimism!

Recent catastrophes are only the very tip of the iceberg

The recent flooding that took place in the Rio de Janeiro mountainous region brought even more evidence of the fact that deforested areas are not capable of equalizing or mitigate the effects of rainfall. While it rains too much in some parts of the country (Santa Catarina, Minas Gerais, the Rio de Janeiro mountainous region) it rains too

little in other regions (the northwestern Rio Grande do Sul and the Amazon region have endured long periods of drought). The reaction of the government, the media, the urban population and the institutions is to concentrate on disaster prevention structures and mechanisms, on urban remodeling projects, protection against catastrophes - in other words they are focusing solely on the consequences. As if environmental imbalance were part of fate and has no historic causes and cannot be reverted. How can we ignore what is all too plain to see? After five decades of continuous deforestation, almost the entire country is being plagued by increasingly dramatic catastrophes. The Government

and several NGOs are focused on the study and preservation of forest remains, while farming boundaries are expanded to make more profit and victims. Very little - if anything at all - is done to reforest the huge farming steppe that already covers more than 50% of the country's territory. As if nothing could be changed in this absurd bi-polar perspective: Production areas are, by definition, deforested and preservation areas are, by definition, unproductive. In our view we have to bring back the trees to production areas without interrupting the processes that generate foodstuffs and raw materials as well as develop forest-farming systems and connect native forest fragments (i.e. agroforestry).



Tangerine trees in Vale do Cai, RS

What to do? Which are the advantages?

We are intent on remodeling farming systems as well as the urban landscape through a significant presence of trees, multiplying such systems and certifying and rewarding their benefits. We need a change of attitude as police patrolling and coercion to restrict the expansion of production areas have already proved their range of efficiency as well as their limitations. We need to make rural producers commit to the project, and turn them into co-players of a true forest-farming revolution. We already have the technology for the farming environment, which turns a farming steppe into a much more efficient forest farming production area. What is still lacking is to connect these systems with their urban beneficiaries through environment and forest certification, allowing for the compensation of this kind of global climate equalization service.

There are numerous benefits arising from the afforestation of pastures such as improving productivity and the quality of fodder as well as making life more comfortable for cattle. With regard to perennial crops such as coffee, mate-tea, cacao, orchards, etc., afforestation boosts productivity, production stability and phytosanitary balance. Not to mention the benefits resulting from the afforestation of riparian woodlands, of mountain tops, river mouths and hillsides, which increases the availability of adequate plantation water. For grain, sugar cane and other crops, the integration with a matrix of biodiversity corridors and wind-breakers is very positive and does not prevent mechanization. Furthermore there are indirect benefits in terms of water residence (time), carbon sequestration and climate equalization, which represent concrete global benefits and a safe alternative for future generations.

We still have the possibility of turning this situation around, but time goes by much faster than we realize. The Return of the Trees gives us a chance to act on behalf of the land we have inherited, on behalf of our children and grandchildren. The climate disasters seen during the past five years can be avoided in the future if we face up to their causes. We must begin with small-scale family farming and improve the sustainability of the small farmers by merging The Return of the Trees with the configuration of agricultural and ecological production systems. Then, more farmers should be attracted to the project.

*Luis Alfredo Ferreira da Silva
Manfred v. Osterroht
Simone Miketem*

Pilot Project: we get it off the ground - civil society gets organized to embark on it!

Set up a small and effective task-force capable of selecting the first area and region to which trees are to return. In concrete terms, we suggest the following timetable:

1. Set up and train a team of 4 professionals: city planner, rural consultant, social scientist or pedagogy professional and a forest-environment certification professional.
2. Negotiate and obtain the support of an environment-forest certifying body to develop methods, alternatives and certification stamps of areas, properties, municipalities and other national and international government agencies. Simultaneously, develop the first handbook containing a presentation of the proposal, its benefits, methods, and how to get started.
3. Shortlist 3 areas with features favorable to the introduction of the project, for a subsequent visit and inspection. Select one of these areas for introducing the pilot project and set up a local nucleus, a public-private-civil society initiative capable of implementing the project.
4. Provide guidance and consultancy services to the project during a period of at least two years.
5. Create a site and conduct a campaign to co-opt urban and rural volunteers: young people eager to convey their enthusiasm to new generations.
6. Assess the development of the project. The report of the pilot-project should be turned into a book, a co-authorship project, for the launch of the project nationwide. The book will feature practical and hands-on concrete experiences ready to be implemented and multiplied on a much wider scale.

The initiative already counts on the support of the Danish organization AmazonasSelva. But to make it grow, we need more support. If we have succeeded in stirring your interest in the project, we would very much appreciate if you would send your comments and/or suggestions to manfred.osterroht@gmail.com or roerbaek@terra.com.br. We are planning for a more detailed presentation and debate to be held at the Scandinavian Club - R. Moraes Barros 1009, Moema - on April 28, 2011;



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