



Part 3

Corridors to the Future: Conservation of the Atlantic Forest

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Future

While some pieces of the Atlantic forest have been reconnected using wildlife corridors, many challenges remain for the AMLD to effectively conserve the Atlantic forest. In this short essay we will investigate these main challenges and provide some sample solutions to these. For this essay, we have conducted an interview with Luis Paulo, the executive secretary for and geographer at the AMLD, about his vision on the above.

One of the major remaining issues is that the AMLD has to deal with the state of the territory and the different stakeholders located within. The primary group of stakeholders that require a targeted approach are the land owners. Most of the properties surrounding the AMLD are of medium-size, meaning that many of these have local landowners that need to be engaged in conservation and convinced of its importance. So far it has been difficult for the AMLD to convince some landowners of this and to purchase their lands with the aim to restore them, even when these lands otherwise have no function and are not in use. Some landowners are open to selling their land, that is also the case for the landscape whereon the Darwin200 corridor has been placed. Negotiating with landowners continues to be a delicate process that has both positive and negative results, and a process wherein a methodology to approach the landowners is context-dependent. Another issue is the number of corridors. While a number of them have been put in place, they are no full alternative to a fully connected landscape. In this sense, increasing the number of strategically placed corridors would be highly beneficial. For example, Laila, local conservationist at the AMLD, mentioned an idea or plan to put in place ~25 more rope corridors above the oil pipeline. While this would be very beneficial, establishing a future total of 31 rope corridors over a 187 kilometre long pipeline is only a small solution to a massive issue. Since this pipeline is only partially in AMLD territory, creating corridors across the pipeline would also have to come from other parties in charge of the land elsewhere, including NGOs similar to the AMLD but also local governments.

For both of these issues, education is key. This includes broader convincing of the importance of biodiversity as a whole; the natural as well as monetary value attached to maintaining a healthy ecosystem. Not only is nature vital for the preservation of local systems, but biodiversity also has value for human (mental) health, clean drinking water, for the economy through sustainable management and use of ecosystem resources, climate change mitigation, just to name a few. If landowners can be convinced to intrinsically care for nature, they might also be convinced to sell unused land for habitat restoration, or to sell pasture that is currently in use from an altruistic motive. When selling of lands is not an option, they might be convinced to farm in a biodiversity-inclusive manner, for example by planting living fences (or by allowing AMLD or similar organisations to sponsor planting them). If a wider audience cares for biodiversity, public policies may be put in place to aid this transition.

Of course, this is easier said than done. Many organisations are trying to convince not just Brazil but the whole world of the immense value of nature. However, here we are not aiming to convince the world, we want to engage the people who live in or next to the Atlantic forest. People who not only can see the beauty of the forest for themselves, but also people who directly gain value from the forest, whether monetarily, through recreation, or by drinking clean water originating from the depths of the forest.

As part of the solution, local school children have been invited to help with planting the Darwin200

corridor on AMLD ground. Local children have also been otherwise involved, and a small golden lion tamarin information hut has been created targeted at children for education purposes (The Golden Lion Tamarin House). The AMLD has also been working on educating landowners for over 30 years, and they have learned what works and what does not- who is more friendly to their cause and who is not.

A lot of work still needs to be done to raise public awareness, especially with adults. We cannot wait for the new generation to be fully grown and aware of the importance of the forest when only such a small fraction of its original cover remains. Nevertheless, we have to remain optimistic, even if and when the conditions are difficult. In the words of Sarah Darwin, great-granddaughter of Charles Darwin 'We need to protect what we have and restore what we have lost'. While in AMLD lands we can see the negative impact of human interventions, we can also see the positive results from constructed and planted corridors. It is possible to reverse the situation. It takes a long time to see results, but they show that the work in the last couple decades has not been for nothing. The number of golden lion tamarins has skyrocketed, the total conserved area surrounding the AMLD has expanded, and slowly people start to become convinced of the importance of biodiversity conservation. If we care and act, this whole region could be a rainforest again within our lifetime.



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