

Wind Farms on 'Our Copacabana': The Wind Industry Experiment in Northeastern Brazil

by Keith Brower Brown
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NEW REPORT REVEALS OPPOSITION AGAINST THE DEVELOPMENT OF LARGE SCALE WIND FARMS IN BRAZIL ONE MONTH AHEAD OF RIO+20

Last month, Brazil's Energy Minister Edison LobÃ£o and the CEO of German wind power giant Fuhrlander joined to lay the bricks for the company's wind turbine factory in north-eastern CearÃ¡ state [1]. Meanwhile, as wind farms spread rapidly across the northeastern region,Â many neighboring communities are firmly opposing the large-scale developments. One month before the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) approaches this report from Carbon Trade Watch aims to reveal unexpected and harmful consequences of the 'green' economy in the global South.Â

The report 'Wind Farms on Our Copacabana: The Wind Industry Experiment in North-eastern Brazil', identifies how the rapidly growing large wind farms are coming into conflict with neighbouring communities in this marginalized region of Brazil. The report draws on over two months of field research in CearÃ¡ state to show how subsistence fishing communities are increasingly raising committed opposition to wind farms, both existing and proposed [2]. Conflicts over blocked access to fishing areas, infrastructural damage from passing construction equipment, and a dearth of local economic benefits from the wind farms has driven both village residents and regional social movements to judicially oppose and physically roadblock new wind power developments.

The author of the report, Keith Brower Brown, stated, 'The fraught experience of the largest wind power industry in the Global South shows that renewable energy, on an industrial scale, can backfire on the sustainable development goals under which it has been internationally supported.'

With over 2 GW of wind power capacity projected to be in operation by the end of 2012, the Brazilian wind industry has rapidly grown to a size larger than the rest of Latin America combined [3][4]. A diverse cast of international manufacturers and developers, along with a range of Brazilian public companies and start-ups, has been drawn to the north-eastern region's wind boom.

Tamra Gilbertson from Carbon Trade Watch states, 'We need to define 'renewable' and 'sustainable' energy. While architects of the 'green' economy plan to implement large-scale renewable energy development, the projects are creating conflicts with local communities and at the same time do not address over-consumption in the North. We need to tackle the root causes of the climate crisis.'

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Notes to editors:

[1] Knight, S. 'Fuhrlander begins work on Brazilian factory'. Wind Power Monthly. April 30 2012.

<http://www.windpowermonthly.com/news/1129316/Fuhrlander-begins-work-Brazilian-factory>

[2] Brown, K. B., 2011. Wind power in northeastern Brazil: Local burdens, regional benefits and growing opposition. Climate and Development, DOI:10.1080/17565529.2011.628120. October 2011

[3] Global Wind Energy Council, 2011. Global Wind Statistics 2010. <http://www.gwec.net/index.php?id=168>

[4] Kuick Research. "Brazil Wind Power Market Analysis". March 2012.

<http://www.prlog.org/11830500-brazil-wind-power-installed-capacity-to-surpass-2-gw-in-2012-kuick-research.html>

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