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In the first place I extend my sincere condolences to Vanessa's family and friends all around the globe. The news about her murder is devastating and I feel shocked and speechless. At the same time I would like to honor her memory by sharing some of my personal impressions and experiences with her.

It was in January 2001 when I first met Vanessa on a workshop on community forest management in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia. Her reputation was ahead of her, as a colleague from GTZ had told me that I would meet a very dynamic and energetic person committed to the development of forest-based communities in the Amazon. This was by no means an exaggeration and Vanessa demonstrated her first-hand experiences, insight in Amazonian life, and dedication to local communities in more than one occasion. Since we were both working on Brazil nuts at that time, we continued to be in e-mail contact after the event.

In mid-2002 Vanessa wrote me again, this time with regard to the possibilities to do a Ph.D. at CATIE. Her research interest centred on options to add value to tropical forests without compromising the natural resource base or, as she put it, "add value to the forest and ensure economic sustainability, but always respecting the 'ground zero' of environmental and social sustainability." I assume that it was largely her field experiences in the Peruvian Amazon and elsewhere which broadened her view from a conservationist's perspective to a more inclusive appreciation of the different dimensions of sustainability. Her critical mind and profound interest in questioning even well-established notions and concepts made her a very interesting candidate for embarking on a Ph.D. program. In Vanessa's words, "as realistic conservationists we have to find solutions to the doubts that exist regarding the feasibility of sustainable forest management." A circle closed when after earning her M.Sc. in Environmental Forestry from the University of Wales in Bangor (UWB) in 1994-95, she was admitted to the joint doctoral program between CATIE and the UWB in 2003. On the CATIE campus, she quickly became friends with a number of Master and Ph.D. students. In fact, there were few people who did not know her, as she was very sociable, open-minded and always interested in getting to know new people.

Vanessa had gone a long way from a conservation-oriented NGO activist to a people-centred researcher (though she was always more into practical conservation and development issues rather than in dry theories or quantitative approaches). The very topic of her Ph.D. research, "Trade-offs between livelihood security and forest conservation in the Brazilian Amazon: the case of forest-based settlements in Acre," reflects this process. I guess sense of being torn apart these trade-offs were not only her research object but also part of her own sense of being torn apart between the at times conflicting goals of forest conservation and livelihood security.

When convinced of something, Vanessa's mind was hard to change. Probably there were few things Vanessa did not have a clear idea or opinion about. In the context of her research, "the economics stuff was not her cup of tea," as Sven Wunder put it, and for this reason she had no trouble in redefining a question on classical microeconomics during her preliminary exams into a question that fitted more her interests and preferences. With the same liberty she made adjustments in the PEN questionnaire. When installing herself in Acre, Vanessa's openness, curiosity and charming nature helped her establish a solid network of institutional ties and friendship bonds. In her 'ark' in Rio Branco, which she had made a comfortable place, she found refuge from the challenges of the field work and her Ph.D. research as a whole. From there we had lengthy telephone conversations about her methodological

approach, the advances in her field work and the challenges encountered along the way. Just before leaving for the field, we had two longer conversations on August 30th and 31st. We discussed the remaining field work and decided to cut back her interviews from 100 to about 60, focusing on two settlement areas rather than three as originally envisioned. The idea was to enable her finishing her field work as early as possible and to return to CATIE in February/March next year in order to finalize her thesis within the time frame established by UWB and CATIE. In our last conversation, Vanessa felt relaxed about what appeared to her a feasible program for the months to come and she was eager to go the field to finalize the first phase of her field work in Sena Madureira. Before ending our conversation, she sent hugs and kisses to my wife and our baby, and I wished her good luck in the field and said "take care."

It is very hard to accept that Vanessa won't be back from the field, with all her energy and enthusiasm for bettering the lot of the people she was living and working with and doing research about. If 'unfair' ever had a meaning, it relates to the fate she met in the Amazon forest that, next to Sobrainho dos Gaios, had become a second home to her. We will keep her in respectful and loving memory. May her soul be at peace.