

Conflict of Interest| sample answer

Q: 'Examine how conflict can arise between local interest and global interests when a resource is exploited for economic reasons.

In your answer refer to an example of such conflict you have studied' (2010 Q8 C)

The development of the Tropical rainforest in the Amazon basin Brazil as a result of the global pressure for resources has meant that the local people of Brazil are the ones that suffer, along with the local and global environment.

Locally the government needed to exploit the rainforest- they use profits to pay back debts that they owe to countries around the globe. The Industrial Substitution Industrialization (ISI) scheme set them in severe debt to the World Bank, therefore the pressure to make profit from the rainforest is not just local.

Deforestation occurs for agriculture, logging and mining all 3 affect the local people of Brazil yet also all 3 are being pressured to develop due to global demand for a rising world population.

The growing population has put pressure on the production of cheap food. Soya has been genetically modified to grow in the savanna climate. This monoculture, cash crop has led to clearing of forest and extinction of flora and fauna.

Commercial and subsistence, crop farming are being exploited as well as pastoral farming so much so that 34% of the total deforestation is due to farming. This number is rising as the global demand for food rises as well as Brazil trying to get into the world trading system.

Brazil is the number 1 beef exporter in the world. The demand for cattle is again becoming stronger. In all there are 165 million cattle and their pastures make up 20% of Brazil's natural territory.

These pastures are running out of space. So they look to the rainforest. However the extraction of trees quickly makes the latosol infertile without vegetation cover. As a result grass is not very nutrient rich and cattle do not thrive, forcing farmer to clear more forest.

Deforestation for logging has also been exploited due to global demand for hard woods such as teak, mahogany and Brazil wood. Local government distribute licences cheaply and there are few controls in place to try and keep it under control.

2.5% of Brazil's total GNP derives from logging. 80% is illegal and there is very little happening to stop this. Timber is exported and loggers leave with the profits. One tree can be worth €15,000 but one acre of forestry may be cleared to get to this tree.

Global demand for mineral resources has led to the local indigenous people suffering because of the violence miners use. The Yanomami tribe for example was reportedly attacked and some killed when trying to protect their homes.

The mining can leave the earth poisoned with chemical used to extract ores. For example cyanide used to extract gold. Locals south of the river Tapajós reported 90% of fish caught were contaminated with mercury.

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Local weather systems are affected by deforestation. Without trees transpiring, there is no moisture in the air. This can cause local draught, latosols soil turn into brick-like laterites which cannot be cultivated and ultimately desertification is a result.

The wider concern of global warming is also a big issue. The trees in the Amazon provides a carbon sink and without them to absorb the CO₂, more Co₂ is trapped in atmosphere causing climate change and rising sea level around the globe.

The local people of Brazil have tried to stop but the government have placed economic needs in front of environmental. Brazil is a NIC (Newly Industrialised Country) and its rapid economic development is bringing local and global interests into conflict on many fronts.