

Birmingham Business School Academic visits Brazil to promote sustainable development in the Amazon

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Brazil is not only about the World Cup, or even the next Olympics, it is also an arena to discuss the future of a sustainable Amazon. Dr Pamela Robinson recently visited Brazil to engage and debate with a number of interested parties that are focused on promoting sustainable development in the Amazon.

Here, she describes her time getting hands-on experience in the rivers and canopies of the Amazon forest.

The creek is in the Amazon basin, the biggest river system in the world lying within seven countries, with the greatest portion situated in Brazil. Amazonia has the largest area of rainforest on earth and is the habitat of a third of the world's known species – so the world's biggest biome. It has long been known as the 'lungs of the world' as photosynthesis captures atmospheric carbon.

The purpose of this visit was to engage and debate with a number of interested parties: academics, research institutes, policy makers, local and state government officials, and companies, which were focused on promoting sustainable development in the Amazon. The British delegation was organised by the UK Science & Innovation Network in association with the British Embassy, the Brazilian government and the Goeldi Museum in Belém, with Professor Sir Ghilleen Prance at the helm (former distinguished Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew and actively involved in the sustainability debate).



(l-r): Dr Pamela Robinson (Birmingham Business School), Professor Rob MacKenzie (School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences), Dr Caroline Cowan (British Embassy Brasilia), Patricia Latter (Royal Veterinary College)

Dr Robinson arrived in Belém, the gateway to the Amazon, on the 29th September ready for adventure, and on the following day undertook an exciting 12 hour overnight steamer transfer and 3 hour speedboat journey to reach the Scientific Station Ferreira Penna in Caxiuana. The station was funded and developed by the UK and Brazilian governments twenty years ago and Pam and the team were housed in the station for the next 24 hours, meeting with the many researchers that were based there and discussing their work and observing some of the trials in the forest. Pam adds:

Repeating the river journey back to Belém, we arrived in the morning to begin a two-day workshop exploring 'Biodiversity, Innovation and Sustainability' activities in the Amazon and to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of Ferreira Penna, for which a special commemorative stamp was launched. The workshop focused on how innovation was an important tool for the economic and social development of the region and how scientific activities could promote science in an integrated way with social, economic and environmental systems.

A key aim of the workshop was to foster debate and stimulate strategic science collaborations. Many of the participants, including academics, politicians, policy makers and company representatives were invited to make presentations highlighting their involvement in the development of sustainability. Dr Robinson continues:

I presented a summary of the research activities of the **Global Value Chain (GVC) research cluster** (</schools/business/research/research-clusters/gvc/index.aspx>), highlighting our research on high-value engineering, operations management, innovation and the role of business and other core stakeholder groups in respect of promoting sustainable management practices.

This led to a debate that centred on the 'great sustainability dilemma' and a single critical question being posited: how can economic development be balanced with ethical and environmental concerns? A question that was difficult to answer without acknowledging tough trade-offs for the various stakeholders involved.

The issue of how to manage a sustainable future for Amazonia remains a burning question and it is hoped, that this event will bring together actors that can begin to address such a challenge.

Visit [Dr Pamela Robinson's university profile \(/staff/profiles/business/robinson-pamela.aspx\)](/staff/profiles/business/robinson-pamela.aspx) to find out more about her teaching and research interests.