

## **New Amazonian geographies: emerging identities and landscapes**

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Common stereotypes of a homogeneous Amazonia belie the complexity and diversity of peoples and landscapes across the region. Although often invisible to the outside world, diverse peoples—indigenous, traditional, migrant, urban dwellers and others—actively construct their identities and shape cultural and political landscapes in diverse ways throughout the region. This volume combines political ecology, with its emphasis on identity, politics, and social movements, with insights from cultural geography's focus on landscapes, identities and livelihoods, to explore the changing nature of Amazonian development. These papers focus on indigenous identity and cosmology; changing livelihoods and identities; and transboundary landscapes. They highlight the diversity of proactive, place-based social and political actors who increasingly raise their voices to contest and engage with Amazon development policies. Based on their history, social values, and livelihood practices, such groups propose alternative ways of understanding and managing Amazonian landscapes.

**Keywords:** Amazonia; cultural geography; political ecology; landscape; identity

“Gigantic,” “green,” “emerald,” “wet,” “humid,” “important,” “(bio)-diverse,” “lungs of the earth,” “enormous,” “in danger” and “full of endangered species.” Amazonian researchers are accustomed to hearing people from many backgrounds—ranging from young schoolchildren, to university students, to other citizens and educators—use words like these to describe Amazonia. Such lush, larger than life perceptions of Amazonia dominate the mental landscape of those not familiar with the region. Less often, or after a few minutes of conversation, the description sometimes turns to talk about the indigenous peoples who reside in the

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region and “live in harmony with nature.” While these vivid images of Amazonia might help to fix the region in the imagination of the general public, the reality of Amazonia is both more complex and diverse.

Amazonia is a mysterious and powerful construct in our psyches, yet shares all-too-real (trans)national borders and diverse ecological and cultural landscapes. It is often presented as a seemingly homogeneous place: a lush tropical jungle teeming with wildlife and plants, as well as timeless Indians. Rarely are outsiders aware of the immense diversity of Amazonian flora and fauna, or of the fantastic stories of the varied peoples who inhabit the different corners of the region. As a result, Slater (2002, p. 203) argues that it is time for us to move “beyond Eden” and re-envision an Amazon that encompasses the diverse groups of people who live there, and the complexities of their interactions with one another and with the natural environments of their territories.

Far from a pristine jungle, Amazonia has since Conquest been linked to the world through global markets. After a long and varied history of migration, colonization, and development projects, Amazonia is peopled by many distinct and “other” cultural groups who are still invisible to the outside world despite their increasing integration into global markets and global politics. Millions of rubber tappers, neo-native groups, peasants, river dwellers, and urban residents continue to shape and re-shape the cultural landscape. They adapt their livelihood practices and political strategies in response to changing markets, and to shifting linkages with political and economic actors at local, regional, national, and international levels. This volume explores the diversity of changing identities of those inhabiting the region, and of the cultural and political landscapes they are constructing in different corners of this rapidly changing region today. It also traces how Amazonian groups draw on their place-based history, social values, and livelihood practices to challenge dominant development paradigms and propose alternatives more suited to their identities and aspirations.

### **Carving out Amazonian geographies: contested spaces and changing landscapes**

The Amazon, the second largest river in the world, flows approximately 2,320 miles from just outside Iquitos, Peru, through parts of Colombia, to the Atlantic Ocean near Macapá, Brazil (Goulding *et al.* 2003). The Amazon River basin extends over 2.5 million square miles, the majority of which is covered with tropical rainforest (London and Kelly 2007). Amazon rainforest covers much of Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela and Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana (Goulding *et al.* 2003).

The Amazon region is rich in a wide variety of minerals, including one of the largest gold reserves in the world (Hecht and Cockburn



1990; Schmink and Wood 1992). It has greater plant and animal diversity than anywhere else on earth: an estimated one million plant and animal species (20% of all total species on earth) inhabit the region (London and Kelly 2007). The extractive potential of this region has long been looked upon as seemingly endless—fruit, nuts, timber, rubber, medicinals, and minerals are just a few of the many natural resources that dominate the region. Furthermore, the Amazon watershed provides the largest source of fresh water on the planet (Goulding *et al.* 2003). This important ecosystem, however, is also a hotspot for tropical deforestation (Skole *et al.* 1994; Achard *et al.* 2002).

Since its “discovery” by Europeans, people have been fighting over what Hecht (2004) refers to as the “mythic,” empty Amazon. In 1494, the Tordesillas Treaty was signed between Spain and Portugal, granting Portugal everything 370 leagues to the west (Hecht and Cockburn 1990; Roux 2001). This gave much of what is now Brazil to the Portuguese. Early on, the French, the Dutch, and the Germans entered Amazonia along the eastern coast through the Guianas, with the goal of establishing trading posts and colonies (Hecht & Cockburn 1990). Additionally, the Spanish initially explored the Amazon region spurred by dreams of El Dorado, the lost city of gold. Increased exploration of the region in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the rubber boom (Dean 2002; Stokes 2000), poor mapping, treaty disputes, and other “cartographic uncertainties” (Hecht, forthcoming; Salisbury *et al.* 2011) further proved the need for countries to secure their own boundaries, while carving up and parceling out the vast territories of the Amazon region.

While each country has a unique history of Amazon development trajectories (see Hecht, forthcoming), many decisions regarding how, when, and where to develop the Amazon have been encouraged by the perceived need of filling the “demographic void” (Hecht and Cockburn 1990). In Brazil, for instance, whose developmental history is perhaps the most extensive, the military government’s geopolitical quest to fill the empty spaces of Amazonia and “*integrar para não entregar*” (integrate in order not to forfeit), led to General Médici’s (1969–1974) Plan for National Integration (PIN) (Treece 1994, p. 62). This plan sought to achieve Brazil’s economic miracle through the “rational use” of the Amazon’s resources (Guimarães 1991). Médici’s development plan also attempted to address social inequities by encouraging the migration of Brazil’s rural poor to the Brazilian Amazon, in an attempt to unite “men without land with land without men” (Schmink and Wood 1992, p. 105; Hall 1997, p. 47). The Plan for National Integration led to massive colonization schemes, known as Integrated Colonization Projects (PICs), and other large-scale agrarian reform programs known as Directed Settlement Projects (PADs), all requiring large-scale infrastructure, resulting in “big development” projects such as the building of the Transamazon Highway (Moran 1981; Smith 1982; Ludewigs 2006).

By the 1970s, Brazilian policy shifted once again, away from the smallholder colonists and towards large-scale cattle ranching and capital intensive mega-projects. The military government and the National Security Council provided ranchers with generous incentives, such as tax breaks and highly subsidized credit (Schmink and Wood 1992; Hecht 1993). Between 1971 and 1987, these incentives amounted to over 5.15 billion dollars (Hall 1997, p. 50). According to Fearnside (1997, p. 549), as much as 70 percent of historical deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon has been caused by medium and large-scale cattle ranchers. Such colonization projects and large-scale investments continue throughout Amazonia from Puerto Maldonado, Peru to the upper Napo Basin in Ecuador (Goulding *et al.* 2003; Perz *et al.* 2005).

The loosening up of policies after the fall of many of the military governments in the 1970s and 1980s was followed in the 1990s by the expansion of neoliberal policies favoring large infrastructure projects to support export and trade, such as those described by Pieck (2011). In response to the impacts of such development policies, and due to the growing influence of worker's unions (Keck 1995), liberation theology and the Catholic Church (Freire 1970), along with growing international concerns by environmentalists regarding the destruction of the Amazon rainforest, new social movements formed, pressing for both environmental and social justice throughout Amazonia (Allegretti 1990; Hecht and Cockburn 1990). These networks of allied social movements, and the local Amazonian communities tied to them, not only contested but also engaged with the state to construct alternative discourses and practical proposals for development, based on values of citizenship, participation, community, justice, and the moral economy.

Far from a demographic void, by the time of rubber tapper and union leader Chico Mendes' assassination by cattle ranchers in 1988 (Revkin 2004), Amazonia was a bustling frontier inhabited by a diversity of peoples—native, traditional, resurgent indigenous, palm-nut breakers, migrant colonists, and, increasingly, urban dwellers—including NGO and government functionaries as well as ranchers, loggers, and bankers. These different groups were pitted against one another in struggles to support or contest current development models as they were implemented across already-complex social and ecological landscapes. The papers in this volume highlight how such struggles have taken on nuanced and shifting forms, from contestation and resistance, to strategic engagement with the state and allies at diverse scales.

### **Amazonia today: diverse peoples and changing identities**

Today, Amazonia is home to over 20 million people, a number that remains unfathomable to most outsiders (Slater 2002, p. 10). This figure includes both urban and rural dwellers, ranchers, loggers, commercial



farmers, as well as a diverse array of traditional communities and social movements (Almeida 2008). The New Social Cartography Project of Amazonia (PNCSA), led by anthropologist Alfredo Wagner de Almeida, has systematically mapped and documented territories occupied by indigenous peoples (approximately 200,000–300,000 people), *quilombolas* (former slave groups—perhaps 2 million people), palm-nut breakers (approximately 400,000 people), as well as uncounted forest extractivists, fishers, and dozens of other self-defined communities (Almeida 2008; <http://www.novacartografiasocial.com>). These emergent communities are collective organizations created to represent common interests and press for legal recognition of traditional forms of land occupation and resource use (Almeida 2008). The multiple processes of territorialization and identity construction blur the lines among the major Amazonian social groups, as briefly described below.

### *Indigenous peoples*

Cultural development of indigenous Amazonian peoples was long thought to be limited by soil and climate deficiencies that made the apparently luxuriant jungle a “counterfeit Paradise” (Meggers 1971), but more recent research has shown how those native groups produced rich, anthropogenic *terras pretas* or “black earths,” and their pottery shards reveal that the Amazon has been populated, in some places quite densely, for at least ten thousand years (Denevan 1996; Smith 1999; Glasner and Woods 2004). A growing body of archaeological and linguistic research suggests that much of the current Amazon forest consists of “cultural landscapes,” the product of widespread and long-term anthropogenic manipulation, unlike previous models of pre-Colombian Amazonian peoples that conceived of them as living in small, dispersed settlements (Balée 1994; Heckenberger *et al.* 2007, 2008).

Smith (1999, p. 28) estimates that the native population of Amazonia was approximately 15 million at the time of European contact in 1500, consisting of hundreds of tribes. Today, over 200 native tribes remain. These tribes range in size from 200 to 30,000 people and their members speak over 180 languages from 30 language families (<http://pib.socioambiental.org/pt/c/no-brasil-atual/quem-sao/introducao>). Several isolated tribes have little or no contact with state governments or the broader society. In Brazil, the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) estimates over 50 such isolated tribes in the Brazilian Amazon, and others have been identified in Peru, Colombia, and Ecuador (Roach 2003).

Researchers and activists in Amazonia have long defended indigenous territories based on both social and environmental justice concerns (Ramos 1998; Hecht and Cockburn 1990; Colchester 2000; Cunha and Almeida 2000; Posey 2001). Beginning in the 1970s, Amazonian indigenous movements began to emerge, and to forge partnerships with

international advocacy and environmental groups, achieving some successes in securing land and other rights (Fisher 1994; Conklin and Graham 1995; COICA 1996; Ramos 1998; Langer and Muñoz 2003). In Brazil, over one million km<sup>2</sup> of protected indigenous lands already exist, serving as a barrier to both deforestation and the spread of agricultural fires; these protected indigenous lands also promote cultural survival and simultaneously provide a means for protecting biodiversity (Nepstad *et al.* 2006, p. 66). While generally having greater land security in Brazil, many native groups in Peru, Ecuador, and Venezuela, continue to be involved in violent encounters and territorial disputes with gold miners, loggers, and oil companies (Goulding *et al.* 2003; Pieck and Moog 2009; Salisbury *et al.*, 2011). Moreover, under threat from these same outside forces, many descendants of indigenous groups in Brazil who lost their language and other ethnic “markers” have begun to recuperate their indigenous past—a process known as “ethnogenesis”—as a means to gain land rights as well as cultural and political visibility (Bolaños, 2011). These emergent and shifting identities among indigenous groups are a reminder of the perennial territorial struggles that continue to shape identities and practices in the Amazon region (Little 2001).

### *Caboclos and Ribeirinhos*

*Caboclos*, traditional Amazonian peasants, and *ribeirinhos*, or river dwellers, are broad categories falling into an often pejoratively perceived “other” class, generally having negative connotations and referring to disparate groups of so-called deculturated natives, people of mixed indigenous, European, and Afro-Brazilian descent, as well as pre-Transamazon Highway smallholder migrants (Parker 1985; Nugent 1993). Such social categories as rubber tappers, Brazil nut collectors, and babassu palm-nut breakers represent specific occupational specializations within the categories of *caboclo* or *ribeirinho*. *Caboclos* generally operate as peasant swidden farmers, practicing both subsistence and overflow market agriculture, in combination with their long historic ties to the market through non-timber forest products such as Brazil nuts and rubber collection. *Ribeirinhos*, on the other hand, make their living mainly from traditional fishing practices for both home and market consumption (Nugent 1993; Harris 2000). The livelihood systems of these groups in Amazonia’s highly-seasonal conditions depend on a moral economy that links domestic units, binding people together through kin and neighbor ties, and providing a safety net during lean periods (Scott 1976; Harris 2000; Minzenberg and Wallace 2011). Although an uncounted number of *caboclos* and *ribeirinhos* live in the rural areas of Amazonia today, as Nugent (1993) argues, historically they are highly invisible in the Amazonian landscape and imagination of the outside world, neither ethnically distinct indigenous peoples nor modern urban citizens.



In the past 30 years, many of these Amazonian peasants, like indigenous groups, also have emerged from the shadows due to their successful political organizing (see Vadjunec *et al.* 2011; Porro *et al.* 2011). In the 1970s and 1980s these movements largely organized around land struggles and resistance to externally-imposed development programs, and over time they developed important alliances both inside and outside of Brazil that allowed them to engage directly as players in important policy debates. Like former slave communities, called *quilombolas*, these groups have taken advantage of the rights granted to “traditional peoples” in Brazil’s 1988 Constitution, to press for their rights to land and resources, construct new political identities, and propose new resource tenure regimes more compatible with their traditional norms and practices. In the absence of such political mobilization, and lacking governmental support for forest-based livelihoods practiced by *caboclos* and *ribeirinhos*, many of these traditional Amazonian peasants have shifted their livelihoods to agriculture and, primarily, cattle raising (Salisbury and Schmink 2007). Some have migrated to urban areas, while others have sought to reclaim their indigenous identities.

### ***Migrant colonists***

Spontaneous migration from other regions into the Amazon, historically associated with resource booms and expansion of the agricultural frontier, was eclipsed by state-directed development programs starting in the 1970s. Government-run colonization projects, big infrastructure projects, cattle ranching and Amazonian resource extraction such as gold mining and logging stimulated migration that led to rapid population growth in the Amazon region. Colonization schemes not only served hard-hit regions such as the northeast of Brazil, acting as a safety valve in times of drought, they also advanced the military government’s geopolitical strategies (Hecht and Cockburn 1990; Schmink and Wood 1992). The majority of colonists originally migrated to rural areas, but many have long since moved to urban centers, where new generations of Amazonians now are being born. For instance, the Transamazon Highway scheme implemented in the 1970s was a government-planned project that was supposed to settle one million families by 1980; however, less than 50,000 families currently remain (Goulding *et al.* 2003). In Acre, the southwesternmost Amazonian state of Brazil almost three times the population lived in rural areas than in cities in the 1970s; such trends reversed dramatically throughout Amazonia in the 1980s and 1990s (Schmink and Cordeiro 2008, p. 30). Some settler families, with favorable labor and natural resource endowments, have managed to stabilize and expand their production systems, while others have been forced to sell out, leading to consolidation of land, often in the hands of urban dwellers. Like *caboclos* and *ribeirinhos*, many of these settlers are shifting their

productive focus to short-term strategies such as small-scale cattle-raising (Browder 1994; Almeida and Campari 1995; Walker *et al.* 2000).

### *Urban dwellers*

Far from the wild Amazon found among the glossy, vivid pages of *National Geographic*, today's Amazon is highly urbanized. According to Goulding and colleagues (2003) as much as 75 percent of the lowland Amazon Basin population lives in cities. In Brazil, the percentage of the Amazonian population living in cities more than doubled between 1940 and 1991, reaching just under 60 percent (Browder and Godfrey 1997). The two major metropolitan areas of Belém and Manaus have grown rapidly, and are now home to over one million inhabitants each. Many of these urban dwellers are former *caboclos*, indigenous peoples, colonists, and migrants from rural areas, or their offspring. Godfrey and Browder argue that frontier settlement patterns are highly dynamic and fluid, thus making traditional, "established dichotomous categories of rural and urban ... problematic" (1997, p. 14), as rural dwellers increasingly combine rural livelihoods with urban residences, where many rural customs may persist in the towns and cities of the region. Such a diverse, highly dynamic, and rapid melding of Amazonian residents throughout a highly-contested region has produced emerging and complex identities as well as rapid changes in Amazonian cultural and political landscapes. The papers in this volume address changing transboundary landscapes, and fluid and shifting livelihoods and identities as emergent groups negotiate their place in Amazonian policies and practices.

### **Bridging identities, landscapes and livelihoods: political ecology and cultural geography**

#### *Political ecology — complex identities and social movements*

Political ecology (PE), which emerged in the 1980s as a subfield in both geography and anthropology, is most commonly defined as an approach to land degradation that combines "concerns of ecology and a broadly defined political economy" (Blaikie and Brookfield 1987, p. 17). PE has since expanded and serves as an "umbrella term" that incorporates mainly non-mainstream science, political, institutional, and economic perspectives on social and environmental justice issues. Numerous variations of political ecology exist, including "Third World political ecology," which focuses on processes of social, political, and economic conflict and environmental change occurring in developing countries (Bryant and Bailey 1997); "Liberation Ecology," which calls for a poststructuralist political ecological approach that "integrates politics more centrally," (Peet and Watts 1996, p. 3); and "Feminist political ecology," which argues



that gender is a key factor influencing resource access, control, and environmental change (Rocheleau *et al.* 1996, p. 28).

The political ecology of development in Latin America provides an essential backdrop for the emergence of environmental social movements, shifting landscapes and boundaries, and dynamic social and political identities in the Amazon region that are addressed in this volume. (See Robbins 2004 for a thorough discussion on identity and social movements in PE.) The chaotic, often violent, and rather rocky transition between the end of militarization and the birth of new democracies in Latin America, and the growing dominance of neoliberal development projects based on infrastructural development and export crops, led to resistance by Amazonian groups to the social and environmental impacts of these policies on their livelihoods and territories. Growing concerns over the negative social and environmental impacts of development, such as tropical deforestation, by local Amazonian populations as well as powerful international interests and NGOs, gave rise to new social movements, which increasingly adopted green discourses while focusing on pressing livelihood issues (Hecht and Cockburn 1990; Schmink and Wood 1992). The evolution from a red (socialist/workers' rights) discourse to a green (environmental) discourse brought increased power and mobility of historically marginalized groups, allowing them to reinvent themselves and gain new voice, while connecting diverse actors across both time and space. As Robbins (2004, pp. 188–189) explains: “such movements often represent a new form of political action, since their ecological strands connect disparate groups, across class, ethnicity, and gender.”

New social movements are made up of diverse actors with complex, multiple, overlapping, and even conflicting reasons for participating (Rocheleau *et al.* 1996; Robbins 2004). In order to deal with issues of marginalization and environmental degradation, these new social movements may form from alliances based in part on gender (Rocheleau *et al.* 1996), race (Miller *et al.* 1996), shared experiences (Harris 2007), and/or ethnicity (Bebbington 2001), among other things. Furthermore, in light of globalization, many new social movements have the ability to jump scales, connecting local people directly to international NGOs (often bypassing the state in the process) in order to gain both power and legitimacy (Bebbington and Batterbury 2001; Heynen *et al.* 2006). Perreault (2001) illustrates how indigenous groups in Ecuador adopt and exploit indigenous identity and discourse in order to gain political power and access to resources. Escobar and Paulson (2005) show how a “reaffirmation of identity” is a key organizing principle in the fight over territorial rights among ethnic communities in Colombia.

While many of these new social movements initially gain power through the adoption of green discourse or through their historic, traditional, low-impact livelihood activities (a declaration of their environmental identity),

they are also increasingly susceptible to growing criticism by environmentalists and policy makers when they or their land-use and livelihood activities are no longer perceived as green or traditional by outside supporters. As such, their very identity and legitimacy is often brought into question. Situating identity in relation to land-use and livelihood is therefore paramount to understanding complex environmental problems. Jackson and Warren (2005, p. 561) argue that identity construction needs to be analyzed as a process that is “fluidly multiple and . . . relational.” Understanding social movements and identity in the face of changing landscapes and livelihoods is of growing importance, particularly in rapidly changing regions of the world such as the Amazon.

One limitation of political ecology is that it often ignores the continuous “dialog” between human beings and their environment (Cronon 1994), therefore failing to consider environmental feedbacks. For instance, Black (1990, p. 44, original emphasis) argues that political ecologists mainly focus on one-way causality, “where it is argued that the state affects agrarian society, which in turn affects land management, but not *vice versa*.” Many of the articles in this volume illustrate how important local social actors can be in actively changing not only their own identities, but also the political and environmental landscapes of Amazonia. Organizing themselves to participate in resistance to or debates about infrastructural investments such as roads and dams and to propose alternative forms of land tenure and resource management rules and institutions, Amazonian groups both contest and engage with state development actors to negotiate the terms of their involvement with development.

### ***Cultural geography — landscape, identity and livelihoods***

Cultural geography, a wide-ranging, diverse and well-established subfield of geography, broadly claims culture and identity, in terms of both space and place, among its main subjects of study (Hugill and Foote 1994). Cultural geography’s rich history and focus on identity make it complementary to the PE research on environmental identities and social movements. An important component of cultural geography involves the study of cultural landscapes and their change over time. In the process of landscape production, as Jackson (1989, p. 48) argues, history and geography are not passive agents, but “are actively forged by real men and women.” In this way, landscapes are produced and constructed, serving as symbols of culture for society at large, and intimately entangled with one’s identity (Olwig 2001).

Cultural geography also focuses on the differences of individual perceptions of and experiences in landscape and the connections between place, politics, culture, and identity (Keith and Pile 1993; Lowenthal



2001). Often this involves research on emotional geographies (Davidson *et al.* 2005), and attachment to, or sense of place (Tuan 1974; Duncan and Duncan 2004). Such studies highlight the importance of everyday lived experiences (Nash 2000; Ley 2001), and enable cultural geographers to trace the contours of what J. E. Malpas (2007, p. 174) calls “a philosophical topography.” More specifically, “the nature and identity of individual persons in particular, is to be understood only in relation to place, and in relation to the particular places in which the subject is embedded” (Malpas 2007, p. 174).

Studies of place and identity are not limited to the individual scale, however. Equally important are the powerful emotional and affective bonds that form between groups of people, and certain sites, territories, and other spaces. In Amazonia, the process of sustaining these bonds has, arguably, never been more complicated or as highly politicized. One way to understand group identity, according to Alvarez *et al.* (1998), is to see it as a form of cultural politics. Group identity, then, while always fluid and contingent on the negotiations and struggles between different political, economic, and institutional actors, is ultimately about making meaning. In this light, discourse—understood as both practice and narrative—becomes a powerful way of defining values. At the center of major debates are discourses of “development,” “traditional people,” “indigenous,” and “primary vs. secondary forest,” among others. The papers in this volume contribute to our understanding of the fluid, fractal nature of diversely constructed and reconstructed cultural and political identities in Amazonia. They also highlight the importance of discourse and the relatively invisible cultural values and practices on which traditional Amazonian groups base their alternative proposals to the dominant neoliberal development model.

Today’s most critical environmental problems such as tropical deforestation and global environmental change, linked with social justice concerns for developing countries, require “bridging” between research cores both within and beyond our discipline (Turner 1997, p. 199). This collection of papers echoes Turner and Robbins’ (2008, p. 295) recent call for the combined use of “complementary but parallel approaches” of land-change science (LCS) and PE approaches in sustainability research. To these “hybrid” ecologies (Zimmerer 2006; Turner and Robbins 2008), which often incorporate a mixing of methods and even paradigms, we add a call for the rich detail and intricate understandings that can arise from studying the complex interactions between culture, place, and identity (see Bebbington and Batterbury 2001). Seriously engaging with identity will become increasingly important if we are to speak to the natural and applied sciences, policy-makers, governments, NGOs and environmentalists regarding the challenges and solutions for diverse Amazonian actors in the face of global environmental change.

### **New Amazonian geographies: emerging identities and landscapes**

The papers in this volume shine a spotlight on some of the hitherto relatively obscure dimensions of the emerging new cultural and political landscapes of Amazonia. These papers, presented by geographers, anthropologists, and a range of academic and independent scholars from both North and South America, focus on indigenous identity and cosmology; changing livelihoods and identities; and transboundary landscapes. They show the complexity of meanings associated with political boundaries and natural landscapes, and the evolving negotiations between local communities and the state, ranging from resistance to engagement. Based on increasingly fluid and fractal identities, these groups advance their alternative development proposals associated with distinct values, symbols, and memories tied to specific territories and lifeways.

The complexities of identity are explored in greater depth in the volume's first pair of papers on indigenous identity and cosmology. Anthropologist Laura Mentore explores the clash of discourse, and of underlying cosmographies, between the "arboreal, unilinear, commodified" framework of government development plans in Guayana, and the "fractal, recursive, mediated" cosmography of the Waiwai peoples. Ethnographic understanding shows that concepts such as "tree" and "river," embedded in memory, social relationships, attachment to place, and spirituality, are not readily translatable in Waiwai culture, much less the abstract notion of "Payments for Environmental Services (PES)"—even though such policy proposals are regularly assumed to be both universal and subject to straightforward translation.

Colombian anthropologist Omaira Bolaños takes up the issue of the revitalization of indigenous ethnic identities and territorial rights, and examines the ethno-political actions of the Indigenous Council of the Lower Tapajós-Arapiuns (CITA) to redefine themselves as indigenous peoples with stronger rights to their territories. These actions have triggered contesting discourses by non-indigenous actors who use essentialized notions of "indigenous" to question the legitimacy of these "resurgent ethnicities," in the same way that pristine notions of "wilderness" can be used to justify the expansion of deforestation in altered areas, considered to have low biodiversity values. These discourses serve to justify both the denial of indigenous land rights, and the continued expansion of agriculture into secondary forests.

The next three papers explore more deeply the complex links between changing livelihoods and changing identities among diverse non-indigenous Amazonian peoples: rubber tappers, *caboclos*, and babassu nut breakers. In their paper, geographer Jacqueline Vadjunec, anthropologist Marianne Schmink, and Brazilian geographer Carlos Valério Gomes trace the remarkable changes in livelihood practice, rural versus urban residence, and social identities among both rural and urban dwellers in the



southwestern Amazonian state of Acre. Drawing on long-term fieldwork, they explore how the history of the rubber tappers' social movement, and its success in land rights conquests and influence on public policies for the Amazon, made the state of Acre a laboratory for alternative socio-environmental development models based on *Florestania*: "citizenship with a forest face." As landscapes have been shaped and reshaped by changing resource use practices, new and complex hybrid landscapes and practices are emerging, linked to increasingly fractal and complex identities among rubber tappers and city dwellers.

The paper by anthropologists Eric Minzenberg and Richard Wallace focuses attention on the importance of intangible, social aspects of livelihoods among traditional riverside-dwelling *caboclos* in the western portion of the state of Acre. Their analysis of the drivers of hunting and meat exchange reveals the hidden importance of these activities in the traditional social reciprocity systems that provide the essential "glue" to bind together dispersed households and communities. In the current climate with its strong emphasis on markets and economic incentives, the paper draws attention to the overlooked importance of kinship relations, and how collaboration among kin and neighbors is enacted through hunting and meat distribution, important bonds which heavily influence both the physical and cultural landscape, and that could be undermined by market relationships.

Combining both social and agricultural science perspectives, Brazilian scholars Noemi Porro, Iran Veiga, and Dalva Mota explore the invisible social underpinnings of Amazonian livelihoods and identities in their paper on the emergence and risks of new political identities and alliances among women who traditionally earn their living from cracking open and selling the nuts from the babassu palm. The paper traces how a large population with diverse origins and land tenure situations was able to unite around common values and demands based on their traditional right to babassu as a common-use resource, an integral complement to their agriculturally-based livelihood in the contested territories of eastern Amazonia, where babassu forests are widespread. The babassu breakers' social movement has faced challenges of clientelism, imposition of outside agendas, and competing agendas for mobilization, which they are addressing through a dynamic process of social learning to seek double legitimacy: with members of communities that participate in their social movement, and with a network of external allies.

The last two papers in the volume explore transboundary landscapes in the Amazon region, at two distinct scales: regional and continental. Based on fieldwork in the transboundary borderlands between Peru and Brazil in southwestern Amazonia, the paper by geographer David Salisbury with Peruvian colleagues José Borgo López and Jorge Vela Alvarado explores how the Asháninka indigenous peoples on both sides of the border have responded to resource wars that historically have

driven multi-scalar, dynamic local changes in resource boundaries. With a common culture and history, the Asháninka defy notions of the “empty” Amazon by actively engaging in the defense of their borderland territories, where biogeographical boundaries delimiting resources and ecosystems blend in complex ways with national political boundaries straddled by these indigenous people. In the transboundary political ecology, the relative success of these groups depends on their ability to negotiate land rights and other forms of recognition by the state.

The paper by geographer Sonja Pieck analyzes the Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA), an ambitious multilateral program designed to reshape the entire landscape of the continent through 500 separate infrastructure projects, and the responses of transnational activist networks to these proposals as they seek to engage with states in a negotiation process. The paper explores the exercise of citizenship in a neoliberal setting, on the part of coalitions of activists who seek to institutionalize civil society participation through demands for greater transparency. Going beyond postdevelopment resistance to modernizing projects, these groups are negotiating the terms of their engagement with the state.

In her concluding paper for this volume, geographer Susanna Hecht comments on the emergence of a grassroots “Amazon Nation,” comprised of diverse local peoples, identities, and places, constructed through the assertion of new forms of citizenship, identity, and socio-environmentalisms as part of a new “statecraft” from below. She traces the roots of these new Amazonian geographies to the importance of Amazonia in the construction of the Brazilian modernist state, and the multiple forms of resistance that arose to contest deforestation and commodity expansion at the expense of culturally-rooted local populations linked to Amazonian territories. As Brazil steps to the forefront of global markets and politics, the emerging voices of the Amazon Nation will continue to demand their place in the debate, and to defend their uniquely Amazonian identities, livelihoods and landscapes.

## **Conclusion**

The papers in this volume present vivid dimensions of local Amazonian peoples as proactive, place-based social and political actors involved in a dialogue with current dominant development models, and proposing alternatives inspired by their own social and historical experiences in concrete Amazonian territories. Despite their historical invisibility, these are “living images of social actors raising their voices to speak about specific public policies” (Porro *et al.* 2011). The diversity of specific groups—transnational activist networks; borderland indigenous peoples; rubber tappers; urban dwellers; riverside and forest inhabitants; palm nut breakers; primordial and newly recreated indigenous groups—reflects the



distinct histories of migration, territorial conflict, resource exploitation and culture conflict across the communities, regions and populations of the Amazon basin (Little 2001). Their social movements have achieved various degrees of empowerment through organizing and alliances, as well as shifting their livelihoods and their discourses to construct new identities.

Alongside well-funded national and multinational development efforts to extend roads and dams throughout the Amazon region, local people and their allies also are involved in surprisingly successful processes of grassroots transformative social change, as exemplified by the policy successes of the rubber tappers social movement in creating and expanding new land reform concepts. These social movements, operating across diverse scales through networks and alliances, assert the rights of citizens to question the social and environmental impacts of large-scale development projects, and to propose alternatives based not only on economic goals, but also on such “moral economy” principles as justice, autonomy, common property, reciprocity, and mutual care. These movements and their proposals have resonated with emerging national and international environmental alliances and proposals over the past two decades, producing new and complex partnerships among diverse actors seeking to resist and engage state policies, while articulating alternative discourses and policies more appropriate to their local contexts.

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