

FOREST CITIZENS

Changing Life Conditions and Social Identities in the Land of the Rubber Tappers*

Marianne Schmink, University of Florida

Latin American Research Review, in press.

Abstract: In the past few decades, a new era of “socio-environmental” institutions and policies has promoted experimentation with alternative proposals for managing land and resources in the Amazon region. The rubber tappers’ home state of Acre was transformed by the Florestania policies of the “Forest Government” regimes that built on the rubber tapper identity and history to promote forest-based development and extend citizenship rights. Beginning in 1999, the state became a laboratory for experimentation with new approaches to development, at a time of rapid changes among both urban and rural populations. Data from household surveys in the capital city of Rio Branco, as well as extensive secondary literature, are used to trace the evolution of these new policies and projects, and their ambiguous implications for citizenship and sustainable development.

Since the 1980s the meanings and the scope of citizenship rights have shifted in Latin American as previously “invisible” social groups forged pluralistic cultural and political identities, and struggled to be heard, seen, recognized and respected (Yashar 2005: xiv). Many of these social movements emerged in response to changes in national citizenship regimes, from the

* The author gratefully acknowledges the insightful conceptual and editorial contributions of Charles H. Wood and Philip J. Williams.

traditional authoritarian and corporatist frameworks which emphasized patronage relations and collective representation, to contemporary neoliberal regimes which emphasize universal individual rights in a globalized world. In countries where social movements encountered the requisite political freedoms, and in places where they established external networks to support their organizing capacity, mobilized groups were able to articulate and project their interests to policy victories, often in surprising ways (Yashar 2005).

A telling example of one such victory took place in Brazil's westernmost state of Acre where the successful mobilization of rubber tappers, and the tragic death of their most famous leader, Chico Mendes, captured the world's attention in the late 1980s. In an unlikely confluence of events, the once forgotten dwellers of the deep forest burst onto the international stage, suddenly becoming icons of forest conservation in this remote, sparsely populated state far from the massive dams, mining projects, and industrial free trade zones that characterized development trajectories in other Brazilian Amazon states. The rubber tappers' proposal to wed biodiversity conservation and local forest people's territorial rights in a new land tenure regime called an Extractive Reserve became an emulated model for sustainable use experiments of protected areas that incorporated local resident populations.

The first Extractive Reserve established in the early 1990s was only the beginning of a longer-term political trajectory spearheaded by the rubber tappers and supported by a growing cadre of their allies in Acre. In the 1990s, elected municipal and state officials came to power with a strong ethical commitment to new forms of "forest-based development." The "Forest Governments," as they came to be called, would support and respect the cultural knowledge and history of forest peoples like the rubber tappers and indigenous communities. The goals, rights, and obligations of the innovative proposals were captured in the newly coined term,

“*Florestania*,” a rubric which joined in a single concept the Portuguese word for forest (*floresta*) and the word for citizenship (*cidadania*).¹ *Florestania* expressed Acre’s goal of drawing on its unique cultural identity, rooted in the defense of the forest environment, to promote development based on an improved version of the system of forest extraction that was the basis of the state’s traditional economy. The ambitions embedded in the notion of *Florestania*, like other projects positioned at the nexus of ecology and identity, constitute a complex and highly contingent source of identity articulation and resistance strategies for a common “life project,” in this case that of the rubber tappers (Escobar 2001).

Florestania soon emerged as one of the rallying concepts of the new Amazonian “socio-environmental frontier” (Becker 2004: 139-158). The term was sufficiently broad to encompass the diverse aspirations of *acrianos*:² social justice and citizenship rights; ethics, transparency, and participation in the political process; pride in Acre’s history and in its cultural symbols; conservation of forest resources; and sustainable development – both rural and urban – constructed from its social, economic, and ecological history (Becker 2004,: 139; Sant’Ana Júnior 2004; Souza 2006,: 29-31).

For all its imprecision, *Florestania* stood for a commitment to fight inequality and social injustice – to address not only people’s material needs, such as poverty and income insecurity, but also promote equal access to schools, health care, housing, employment, and political participation. It also entailed an ambitious development agenda that set out to construct roads and bridges, support the private sector, and subsidize controversial forest management proposals. With a commitment to the principle of sustainability, and premised on the construction of an

¹ The term was coined by Antônio Alves Leitão Neto, an advisor to the state government in Acre.

² People from Acre, according to the new spelling rules instituted in Brazil in 2008.

expanded scope of citizenship, *Florestania* thus sought to redress the many facets of social exclusion.

In keeping with the classic understanding of citizenship (Marshall 1950), *Florestania* serves to extend citizenship rights to attenuate and legitimate the social inequality inherent in the expansion of capitalist market-oriented economic development policies in the state. At stake are collective versus individual meanings of citizenship, and the tensions between them as market forces both generate wealth and exacerbate its concentration. In this sense, citizenship is essentially a means to manage social differences (Dagnino 2006; Holston 2008) and to depolitize citizenship struggles. But the manner in which the scope and meaning of *Florestania* unfolded in Acre also transcended the central reference in the liberal concept of citizenship, namely the claim to inclusion in an already established political system. In Acre, as in the rest of Brazil, what is at stake in the struggle for citizenship is more than the right to be included as a full member of society, as it entails, in addition, the right to participate in the very definition of that society (Dagnino 2006 :36). In this way, *Florestania*, in its idealized form, includes the creation of new rights and cultural sensibilities that not only combat material deprivation, but also combat the cultural rules that ignore the rural poor as subject and as bearers of rights. As I will show in the sections that follow, the newly invented ethical-political field embodied in the notion of *Florestania* emerged from the historical specificities, the situated struggles, and the cultural tapestry of Acre and its unique “locality” in an increasingly globalized world.

This paper examines the history of the rubber tapper movement and the emergence of *Florestania*, changes in the state’s rural and urban populations, as well as the initial effects of the sustainable development policies implemented during a period of neoliberal policies and intense social mobilization. Social surveys of the population of Acre’s capital, Rio Branco carried out at

four points in time (1989, 1993, 1999, and 2004) provide data that illustrate the improvements in life conditions, the persistence of inequalities, and the changes in social identity that occurred during the period.³

CITIZENSHIP AND IDENTITY

Emergent forms of citizenship have accompanied Latin America's wave of democratization since the 1980s, as well as in many other parts of the globe. Building on the human rights discourse of the 1970s, Latin American social movements, linked to important allies at national and global scales, played a leading role in a redefinition of politics in the region (Dagnino 2006; Holston 2008). Holston (2008: 34) describes this new form of citizenship as an "insurgent" counterpolitics "from below" that "bubbles up from the past" in surprising ways, an apt description of the Acre rubber tappers social movement (see also Jelin 1996).

The evolving form of citizenship rights in Latin America differed from the historical sequence Marshall (1950) identified in Europe and the United States. As Marshall pointed out, the extension of social services is not necessarily a way of leveling income, but a way to improve material life conditions and stimulate opportunities for social mobility within a market-dominated system. In Latin America, social rights have often been "exclusionary" (Sojo 2002: 28). In the case of Brazil, the "differentiated" form of citizenship has been described as a "resilient regime of legalized privileges and legitimated inequalities" based on differences in education, property, race, gender, and occupation (Holston 2008: 3-5). These forms of exclusion date back to the colonial period when *coronelismo* meant an alliance between public power and

³ Information in this paper was taken from a longer study reported in Schmink and Cordeiro (2008).

private local power that restricted access to land, forcing most people to live illegally. In the 1930s and 1940s, the advances in social and political rights instituted under President Getúlio Vargas, using a corporativist model of labor unions that persists to this day, extended citizenship rights to formal sector workers in urban areas, but excluded people employed in informal and rural occupations. It was not until 1985 that Brazil's new constitution extended the right to vote to illiterate people, the last country in Latin America to do so (Holston 2008: 100-106).

Brazilian culture traditionally emphasizes the “person” (defined by personal relations, including a place in the established hierarchy of social differences) over the anonymous, impersonal “individual” envisioned in human rights discourse (DaMatta 1991), and emphasized in contemporary neo-liberal policies which stress market integration as a form of citizenship. Tensions similarly exist between the neo-liberal “individual” citizen and the collective identities that emerged from social movements, such as the rubber tappers, which resonate with the corporativist emphasis on “organized civil society” as the best form of representation of interests. The salience of such tensions has grown with the re-emergence of neo-liberal policies in the mid-1990s, and the de-legitimization of “social rights” in favor of market-oriented individual freedoms.

In Brazil's Amazon region, these trends coincided with the return to federal planning strategies that emphasize infrastructural investments (roads, dams) and the “commercialization of nature” through marketing of environmental services and biological resources (Becker 2005: 30-36). The tensions and contradictions of these new forms of emergent citizenship are evident in Acre where neo-liberal and participatory models of citizenship co-exist, where the commercialization of nature constitutes a key feature of the forest-based development models, and where relations among the state, social movements and non-governmental organizations are

in flux (Paula 2005). These uneasy juxtapositions raise questions about the capacity of *Florestania* to balance economic priorities, maintain relationships between the state and the rubber tappers social movement, and address the rapidly changing life conditions and perspectives of the state's emerging citizens.

DISARTICULATED URBANIZATION IN AMAZONIA

In their book on urbanization, development, and globalization in Brazilian Amazonia, Browder and Godfrey (1997: 11; 2006) analyzed the complex process of “disarticulated urbanization” of the region, concluding that Amazonia is a heterogeneous social space, with irregular settlement patterns, disarticulated from any single master principle that could explain its spatial organization. Such diversity, which is aggravated through time due to “divergent logics of the location of settlements during different economic periods,” surely characterizes Acre's history. Initially a province of Bolivia, Acre was also briefly an independent country. Migrant rubber tappers from northeast Brazil won Acre's territory in the “Acre Revolution” of 1903 making it the only Brazilian state colonized by Brazilians. Forty years later, the *seringueiros* of Acre stepped back into the limelight, this time as “rubber soldiers” who guaranteed the supply of natural rubber to the Allies in World War II. No wonder that Acre's towns and cities grew as commercial centers linked to the rubber trade, including the capital of Rio Branco.

In many corners of the Amazon region, urban growth was disarticulated from agricultural development, from regional industrialization, and even from the control of a centralizing state (Browder and Godfrey 1997: 12-140), surpassing the productive and management capacity of local employment and services. The history of Rio Branco follows this pattern, at least in part. The spontaneous growth of the capital resulted from intense rural to urban migration, which

began with the collapse of the world market for natural rubber in 1920, later followed by another rural exodus after World War II due to the de-activation of the rubber trade, and the gradual collapse of the traditional system of rubber extraction.

The military-led development boom of the 1970s set in motion yet another period of rural-to-urban population movement caused by the influx of southern investors who transformed the landscape from forest to pasture. The shift from the extraction of rubber and other forest products to agriculture, ranching, and timber represented a watershed moment in Acre's social and economic history. In the space of a few generations, forest peoples living in remote areas without access to minimal health and educational services became city dwelling migrants working mainly in the public or private service sectors of the urban economy. With the new generation of urban-born children of rubber tappers came a complex shift in the identities and citizenship status of many of the people in the state.

Internal migration, always intense even under the *seringal* system, became increasingly channeled to urban centers after the 1970s, due to the transformations in traditional social relations in the interior, the expulsion of rural workers, and a gradual process of proletarianization linked to rural-urban migration. The lack of economic opportunities and the scarcity of social services in the rest of the state induced many people to migrate to Rio Branco in search of income and jobs, mainly as public servants, and in pursuit of access to education and health services. The state – as the largest employer and as provider of services – thus came to play a direct role in stimulating and supporting rural to urban migration, although state spending throughout most of the period was not articulated within a coherent development strategy.

Urbanization in Amazonia is nonetheless intrinsically linked to natural resource exploitation and to migration, in places where the rural-urban dichotomy is rendered problematic

by the complex and heterogeneous movement of people. Transformation of labor relations in both rural and urban regions, and the influx of migrants from the interior of the state infused urban Acre with symbols and cultural practices deeply rooted in a rural past only one or two generations distant, drawn from the culture of the *seringal* and from the particulars of its unique history.

Amazonia's urban centers can thus be seen as "gathering points" for labor which fulfill the political-ideological function of disseminating values and ideologies such as consumerism, and also constitute a nucleus for the process of social differentiation through social mobility (Becker 1990). More recent proposals point to the comparative advantage of urban growth poles with the potential to advance alternative regional development strategies (CGEE 2009). In Rio Branco, these new values and practices are mixed in complex ways with the historical legacy, cultural memory, and deep personal roots in the rural legacy of the *seringal*.

THE RURAL EXODUS AND THE RUBBER TAPPERS SOCIAL MOVEMENT

The period from 1971-1976 was the great upheaval in the history of Acre, which, until that time, had been dominated by the *seringal* and the rubber trade. In decline for decades, the rubber economy was dealt the final blow by the ambitious development plans of the military regime that sought to exploit the region's resources through the transfer of political power and control over land from local elites linked to traditional forest extraction activities to southern investors with excess capital (Schmink and Wood 1992: 58-66). In Acre, the withdrawal of credit and price supports for rubber was enough to push many former rubber barons to the brink of bankruptcy, leaving them with no choice but to sell their land to outsiders. For their part, in the 1970s and 1980s the rubber tappers started to refuse to pay the traditional "rent" to the rubber

barons. By the time the southern investors arrived in the eastern Acre region made accessible by new roads, the former rubber bosses controlled neither the land in the *seringal* nor the labor of the rubber tappers (CEDEPLAR 1979: 49).

It was the task of Governor Francisco Wanderley Dantas (1971-1975), named by the military government, to open the doors for the sale of Acre's land to southerners, generically referred to as *paulistas* regardless of their origin (Bakx 1986; Oliveira 1985; Silva 1982). According to a deposition in the National Congress by Dantas' successor, Geraldo Mesquita, the land rush under Dantas resulted in the sale of more than five million hectares, in most cases passing from a rubber concessionaire to an investor from southern Brazil (Mesquita 1977). This lightning privatization process increased the already high concentration of land ownership, and led to a drop in economic productivity as deforestation and land speculation became widespread (Bakx 1986; Silva 1982). When the new landowners discovered that rubber tappers still occupied the lands they had purchased, violent conflicts emerged as the *paulistas* tried to push the long-time residents off the property the ranchers claimed as their own. Some of the rubber tappers crossed the border into Bolivia. Others joined the agricultural colonies that were created for them. The majority took refuge in nearby cities, especially in newly established neighborhoods in the capital city of Rio Branco, which witnessed its peak period of in-migration from 1970-1979.

Internal migration in Acre reached beyond the limits of the capital city and the state's borders. Analysis using indirect measures of migration showed that Acre lost approximately 39,842 residents to other states during the 1970s, an annual loss of 3,984 people to other states and Bolivia, despite an overall population growth of 3% per year (Perz et al. 2005). This pattern of out-migration was the rule rather than the exception: the 1940s, with the recruitment of the

“rubber soldiers” and later the 1990s, after a paved road reached Acre, were the only decades when Acre did not show a negative net migration flow. In total, nearly 100,000 persons (one-sixth of the current population) migrated to other locations before 2000.

With a current population of not much more than half a million, Acre is a miniscule state in demographic terms, representing only 3% of the Amazon region’s population. An accelerated process of internal migration, beginning in the 1970s for reasons mentioned earlier, led to a 500% increase in the urban population by 2000, growing from 28% to 66% of the total population. The average annual rate of growth of Rio Branco from 1940 to 2000 was 6.4%, varying little across the decades. However, the rural exodus provoked by the rampant land sales in the 1970s led to a peak in demographic growth, which reached almost 11%/year, although the rate slowed again after 1980 (Schmink and Cordeiro 2008).

The patterns of migration and urbanization that initially accompanied the crises in the rubber economy shifted significantly after the 1970s, at least along the highways in the eastern part of the state. The decline of the *seringal* meant that many of the former “patrons” lost or abandoned their lands. With their absence former rubber tappers who had long lived in serf-like bondage established themselves as autonomous producers, selling their forest production to itinerant merchants who plied the rivers for trade. Others abandoned their properties, such that at the end of the 1970s rubber tappers migrated to the capital in number never seen before or since.

The expansion of land sales and the threats to rubber tappers’ forested territories also shifted the focus of their social mobilization. Originally concerned with workers’ rights and such civil rights as literacy (as a means to better negotiate terms of trade with the rubber patrons and merchants), they now turned their attention to land rights in order to guarantee continued use of the lands they had worked (Allegretti 2002). Because they depended on the forest for their

livelihood, and with the support of emerging alliances with international environmental networks, rubber tappers came to be seen as stewards of the forest. In defending their land rights, the mobilization of rubber tappers thus evolved into a movement of “environmental stewardship” (Keck 1995).

In the *paulistas*, the rubber tappers confronted a different kind of enemy from the patrons who had long exploited them in the *seringal*. The first basis for political resistance came from the Ecclesiastical Base Communities (CEBs), which were formed in Acre in the 1970s as in many other regions of Brazil (Bakx 1986; Barp and Barp 2002; Costa Sobrinho 1992; Esteves 1999; Fernandes 1999; Keck 1995; Rodrigues 2007; Sant’Ana Júnior 2004). With the emergence of the National Confederation of Agricultural Workers (CONTAG) in Acre in 1975, local rural workers’ unions spread throughout the state and provided new spaces for collective organization to defend land rights and the legacy of the rubber tappers’ cultural knowledge of the forest. Among other forms of struggle, after 1976 the tappers participated in dozens of non-violent stand-offs in the forest, called *empates*, to stop deforestation on their lands (Allegretti 2002; Bakx 1986; Esteves 1999).

The transformations underway in Acre in the 1970s failed to bring true development to the state and its people. A minority of the elites – former rubber barons, merchants, ranchers and government officials – monopolized the benefits of wealth in the region, while most of the residents remained marginalized. In the economic and political vacuum left by the decline of the *seringal*, new proposals for sustainable forest development began to emanate from the mobilization of local rural workers unions. These proposals would reach state, national and international importance by the 1990s.

MIGRATION AND TRANSFORMATIONS IN LABOR RELATIONS

The 1980s was a period of economic recession, agricultural globalization, and neoliberal reforms. It was also a time when demographic patterns began to change in the Amazon (Becker 1985, 1990; Perz 2000). After waves of in-migration to rural areas in the 1970s, the region experienced a period dominated by intra-regional population movement, especially rural-urban migration, leading to a drop in population of rural municipalities (Becker 1990: 77-78). In Acre, this emptying out of interior municipalities dated to the 1960s, beginning in the areas most affected by the land rush (CEDEPLAR 1979: 13-23). By the 1990s, the removal of remaining subsidies and price supports for rubber finally led most rubber tappers to abandon their traditional livelihood altogether. Ironically, just as the rubber tappers achieved their impressive victory in the creation of the extractive reserves and sustainable development reserves, a wave of neoliberal reforms eroded the mainstay of their traditional economy. Although Brazil nuts continued to play an important role in livelihoods in some parts of the state, most rubber tappers increasingly shifted to other land uses, such as agriculture and cattle ranching. The result was expansion of deforestation not only by large cattle ranchers, but also by small producers and traditional forest extractivists who had previously fought to halt forest clearing (Gomes 2001; 2009; Ehringhaus 2005). Ironically, many continued to refer to themselves as rubber tappers or extractivists long after they had abandoned these forms of making a living for less forest-friendly enterprises.

Comparing information on current and previous employment of the capital's residents, it is clear that migration to Rio Branco signified a change in activity for many people, from agriculture and forest extraction not to industry and construction, but primarily to salaried employment in the public sector. With the move to the capital, the proportion employed in non-

capitalist relations such as *aviado*, *parceiro* or *arrendatário* (forms of sharecropping) unpaid family worker, or temporary worker (*diarista*; *biscateiro*; *trabalhador de empreitada*), plummeted in favor of salaried work. Among poorer household heads, nearly one-quarter continued to work in informal categories, compared to only 4% of the most wealthy, a pattern that reflected how hard it was for poorer workers to penetrate the urban formal job market.

The decline of the rural sector, especially forest extractivism, and the sluggish industrial sector, confirmed the economic disarticulation of Rio Branco's population growth in the 1990s. The primary engine of urbanization was internal migration in Acre, especially among poorer families. Most people who left the countryside first moved to another town, and later made their way to the capital, often taking advantage of personal support networks in the city. Given the limited size of the Rio Branco labor market, especially for women, it was mainly the public sector that absorbed the newcomers, while those with fewer resources and social capital took refuge in temporary and informal employment. For all of its limitations, the majority of migrants saw Rio Branco as an improvement over the places they had come from.

NEW PROPOSALS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The rubber tappers social movement in Acre was the most innovative of a growing number of mobilizations that emerged in the Amazon in response to the military government's modernizing investments in the region at the end of the 1970s (Allegretti 2002; Ehringhaus 2005; Keck 1995; Oliveira 2003; Schmink and Wood 1992: 95-135). Globalization of the economy, neoliberal policies, and an economic recession led to out-migration of rural populations throughout Brazil (Perz 2000), while transnational advocacy networks and universal norms

regarding human, indigenous, and environmental rights stimulated social movement organizing (Yashar 2005).

After around 1985, an emerging “Socio-Environmental Front” articulated a new development vision for the Amazon, integrating environmentalists and local communities (Becker 1990: 28; 2000; Keck 1995; Schmink and Wood 1992). Confronting the environmental destruction caused by deforestation and the violence associated with the expulsion of rural people, the rubber tappers artfully inverted the modernist discourse. In response to the *paulista*’s notion of “empty lands, and to counter the charge of “technological backwardness,” they promoted the value of forest knowledge and proposed as an alternative, development based on an ecologically-friendly use of the standing forest (Esteves 1999: 130-179; Oliveira 2003). These ideas resonated the strong feeling of “Acrianity” in the state, and people’s resentment of the external imposition of federal mandates (Esteves 1999: 170-171; Fernandes 1999: 60; Oliveira 2003). Outside of the state, the rubber tappers were well received by national and international environmental groups who were increasingly concerned about the consequences of conventional development models. In their efforts to promote their innovative proposals, rubber tappers garnered the support of environmental groups who provided resources and information to a social movement that began locally but soon caught the attention of people across the world.

At the same time, the growing political liberalization in Brazil left a space for the growth of oppositional political parties which provided a vehicle for the rubber tappers’ proposals. The public rally that followed the death of union leader Wilson Pinheiro, who was killed in Acre in 1980, was attended by Luiz Inácio da Silva, who later became President of the country, and Jacó Bittar, leader of the emerging Labor Party (PT). Others present included CONTAG national and state delegates, and Francisco (Chico) Mendes, President of the rural workers’ union of Xapurí

(Fernandes 1999: 48), all of whom were subsequently charged together under the military's National Security Law. Events like this one strengthened the links between the rubber tappers in Acre and national organizations across the country. The rubber tappers institutionalized their movement by creating the National Rubber Tappers Council and the Forest People's Alliance in 1985. Their proposal to create Extractive Reserves – a new form of land tenure that would assure collective resource rights for forest extractivist communities – encompassed ecological (forest conservation), economic (livelihoods based on forest extractivism) and sociocultural elements (defending their identity as rubber tappers). This struggle, which led to the murder of Chico Mendes in 1988 by a local rancher, resulted in the creation of new land tenure categories in federal land reform (INCRA) and environmental (IBAMA) agencies beginning in 1989 and 1990 (Allegretti 2002; Esteves 1999: 225-228).

If the rubber tapper social movement emphasized their autonomy and their union base in the early 1980s, by the end of the decade the movement began to “universalize” its struggle by seeking common cause with other groups, and by dealing more effectively with the government (Oliveira 2004; Paula 2005: 251-253). The broadened horizon, which drew on “the environment” as a universalizing value (Keck 1995: 417) also meant that the previous emphasis on the Extractive Reserve gave way to a more general concern in the 1990s for “sustainable development” and the search for market instruments to improve incomes for rural producers (Ehringhaus 2005; Paula 2005: 155-156). Unsurprisingly, intense debates erupted concerning the potential contradictions between environmental goals and the consequences of market-based instruments to commercialize nature.

Florestania emerged as a strong regional banner for the Amazonian Socio-Environmental Front (Becker 1990: 158). The ambitions and idealism of the state encountered support from the

federal government, through the efforts of the two PT senators, Marina Silva and Tião Viana, and from President Fernando Henrique Cardoso himself, a sociologist and co-author of a 1970s book on Amazonia, who visited Acre in 1999. Anthropologist Mary Allegretti, a close ally of Chico Mendes and other rubber tapper leaders who helped to construct the Extractive Reserves proposal, in 1999 was named Secretary for Coordination of the Amazon in the Ministry of the Environment, where she adeptly marshaled resources to implement a series of important policy measures until she resigned in 2003.

In Acre, the proposals of the Forest Government constituted a laboratory for the implementation of ambitious sustainable development policy over the past decade. The government proposed to:

- Implement emergency policies to support productive chains for rubber, brazil nuts and timber,
- stimulate sustainable pioneer enterprises,
- develop longer-term strategies for sustainable development,
- institute necessary rules, institutions and infrastructure, and
- stimulate entrepreneurial capacity in the state.

The goal was no less than to create – for the first time – an articulated, state-wide model of sustainable development with interlinked ecological, economic, political and cultural goals.

The first set of hurdles to be addressed included people's distrust of politicians following decades of clientelistic and corrupt administrations that left behind a legion of failed policies, unmotivated employees, and a deteriorating patrimony of buildings and vehicles. During the first few years the government recuperated and modernized the state apparatus, including public buildings like the Government Palace and the state Secretariats. Another major challenge was to

increase the proportion of state revenues from sources besides federal transfers – which made up 85% of the state’s budget in 1998, but dropped to 70% after only six years in 2004 due to economic growth and more effective collection of taxes (Schmink and Cordeiro 2009: 58-59). In addition to greater fiscal responsibility, the Forest Government significantly reduced the state’s public debt, which allowed it to seek substantial outside funding in later years.

A second major challenge was to translate the lofty goals of *Florestania* into practice. As an early signal of this intention, the first policy of the Forest Government was the Chico Mendes law, which gave rubber tappers an additional payment per kilo of rubber if they had their documents in order, and were part of official associations or cooperatives (Kainer et al. 2003). With this measure, the government sought to keep the extractivists living in the forests, and promote their organization as producers and as citizens (through access to legal documents), in addition to improving the quality of rubber produced. To facilitate the marketing of forest products, the newly-created State Forestry Secretariat helped to develop a network of regional cooperatives inked through one state-level organization, COOPERACRE. Despite the fact that rubber tapping had been nearly abandoned in many communities, a decade later this rubber-support policy would bear fruit with the installation of a state-of-the-art condom factory managed by the state government, which purchased latex from hundreds of rubber tappers. Brazil-nut processing factories also were established in Xapurí and in Brasiléia.

The state government also made more controversial major investments in sustainable timber management (Kainer et al. 2003). The exhaustion of Malaysian and Indonesian tropical timber (Lele et al. 2000) increased global demand for Amazonian timber at the same time that polemical debates arose about the viability of sustainable timber management (Pearce et al. 2003; Rice et al. 1997). In Acre, dreams of a forest-based development model dated from 1987,

with the creation of the Acre Technology Foundation (FUNTAC), a quasi-governmental organization that has spearheaded science and technology efforts in some sectors.

The emphasis on the wood products sector as the motor for development, in addition to the investment in infrastructure, were supported by approximately US\$20 million from the National Economic and Social Development Bank (BNDES), and US\$64.8 million from the Inter-American Development Bank, with counterpart state funding of US\$43.2 million, among other sources. The axes of the state's forest policy included community forest management; state managed public forests; expansion of the forest product marketing chain; forestry education; diversification and adding value to forest production; and forestry technical assistance. The government created a new Forestry Secretariat and Forest Service; converted the former Agricultural College into a Forestry College, training technicians from all over the state; supported the creation of a Forestry Engineer degree program at the local university; and developed Brazil's first forestry residency program. They supported Furniture Poles in both Rio Branco and Xapurí, creating prototypes and providing consultants on design and development of high quality projects for both internal and external markets. In Xapuri, a high-tech flooring factory was built using US\$12 million from the Inter-American Development Bank and 10% state resources, and provided support for a dozen other forest industries.

The investments in industry and infrastructure were part of a broader strategy that favored the growth of the state capital, Rio Branco. The initial period of 1999-2006 was one of "structural public works" that revitalized the historical center of the city (palaces, museums, libraries, parks, riverside, markets), improved and built principal thoroughfares, and recuperated or constructed new access highways, including a new airport and new bridges. The Industrial District contributed to growth of the industrial sector from 5% to 12% of the state's economy

between 2001 and 2006, the sector that grew the most in this period (Moreira 2006). Rio Branco's "urban forest" was becoming the command center for the sustainable development project of the Forest Government in Acre (Becker 1995).

Starting in 1998, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Acre's economy began to rise at rates higher than those for Brazil as a whole. By 2003 it was even higher (5.8%) than rates for the Amazon region (5.4%), whose economic growth exceeded Brazil's (a mere 0.5% in 2003) in all but one year from 1989-2003 (IBGE 2003, cited in Schmink and Cordeiro 2009). Economic growth was highest in industry and communications sectors, which grew to represent 18% and 2% of the economy, respectively. The commerce and services sectors continued to account for two-thirds of the state's GDP, a reflection of the historic lack of economic dynamism. Exports of cattle hides, sawn wood and other wood products, Brazil nuts, beef and rubber more than doubled from 2002-2006, and from 1998-2003 employment increased by 14%, and by 8% in formal sector jobs (Schmink and Cordeiro 2009: 103-4). The social benefits from these policies were reflected in the improved life expectancy, reduced infant mortality rates, increased literacy and higher schooling of *acrianos*.

QUALITY OF LIFE AND URBAN *FLORESTÂNIA*

Historically Brazil has evidenced an extreme and persistent degree of income inequality (Wood and Carvalho 1988), and Acre is no exception. As in the rest of the country, not all Acrianos have the same access to rewarding jobs and salaries, or to the goods and services of the modern economy. Moreover, income inequality generally gets worse – rather than better -- during periods of growth, despite the government's effort to improve income distribution by stabilizing the economy through the Plan Real (1993/1994). Although the plan reduced the rate

of inflation and improved income distribution during the early 1990s, the concentration of income has persisted in both rural and urban areas.

Rural-urban migrants in Acre sought out Rio Branco in large part due to the unequal process of economic development, generating important differences between rural and urban areas, and between the capital and other cities and towns. Among the social rights of citizenship envisioned with *Florestânia* were better wages (still elusive for many), improved living conditions and greater access to urban goods and services. During the study period, differences persisted between the richest and poorest families in Rio Branco, but all social groups saw significant improvements in terms of many social indicators. Compared to other rural and urban areas of Acre, Rio Branco's better life conditions can be seen as the "urban face" of *Florestânia*. This contrast was reflected in better-quality housing, and increasing access to cooking fuel and other goods, as well as to urban services including electricity, garbage collection, piped water, access to public transport, churches, schools, health posts, leisure facilities, and local commercial enterprises such as groceries, butcher shops, bakeries, pharmacies, and other stores – which multiplied rapidly after 1999 (Schmink and Cordeiro 2008). Some indicators of urban infrastructure, however, showed stagnation or worsening over the same period, such as sewage, drainage, street lights, and road surfacing. In these aspects, Rio Branco was not better than some of the other cities in the state.

Evidence of persistent inequalities was reflected in significant differences between the richest 10% and the poorest 50% of Rio Branco's population in terms of housing quality, access to consumer goods, neighborhood businesses and services in 2004 (Schmink and Cordeiro 2008). These differences appeared to be linked to income differences and the ability to pay for luxury goods and private health services. The marked increase in access to basic goods and services,

though, showed how urban *Florestania* served to ameliorate the unequal distribution of income benefits from Acre's recent development.

Residents expressed widespread satisfaction with Rio Branco as a place to live, compared to previous places of residence: four out of five migrants living in the capital said it was a better place to live than where they had come from. Most (70-80% in every year of the survey) affirmed that it was easier to find work in Rio Branco, no matter where they had previously lived, and regardless of the sector in which they worked. Economic considerations figured prominently among the reasons people thought Rio Branco was a better place to live. A second factor of growing importance was access to infrastructure and urban services.

In addition to measurable improvements in access to employment, and to goods and services in Rio Branco, urban residents showed evidence of strong social capital: strong family ties ruled the migration process, and people (especially poorer residents) were more likely to express hope for the future impact of political policies, even though neighborhood associations in the city had lost their importance. The efforts of the Forest Government to strengthen pride in Acre's culture and history may have contributed to the sense of belonging, and to the intention of urban-dwellers to remain in the capital, despite the limitations and inequities of the city.

CHALLENGES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND *FLORESTANIA* IN ACRE

Evidence points to the conclusion that *Florestania* was successful in providing expanded social rights to urban residents, improving life conditions for all, if not equally. As conditions in the capital improved, the contrast with other urban areas and the interior became still greater. Firmly anchored in a neoliberal development model, *Florestania*, with its emphasis on marketing forest products, both reinforced the historical identity of the rubber tappers and transformed it into a modernizing project oriented to national and global market opportunities. With an

emphasis on individual rights and market mechanisms, *Florestania* fostered pride of place and a sense of belonging. Encompassing both neoliberal and participatory models of citizenship, *Florestania* effectively served to manage social differences and de-politicize social movement struggles by absorbing grass-roots organizations and leaders as active participants in the project.

Even with a favorable political context, and despite the considerable financial resources at its disposal, the Forest Government had trouble implementing a development project that attended to the multiple dimensions (social, economical, economic, cultural, political, ethical and human) that Governor Viana stressed as part of their model of development (Viana 2004). From the limited ranks of qualified persons in the state, the government absorbed many talented people from the university and local non-governmental organizations, leaving these organizations short on human resources at the very moment they were most needed (Ehringhaus 2005; Sant'Ana 2004: 284). Union leaders were co-opted by the state, thereby contributing to the demobilization of the grass roots. Some movement leaders worried that the innovative government actions weakened their position by leaving their organizations without a clear role, and by taking initiatives the merits of which were still debated, such as timber management. The scale and speed of the government's actions were a source of concern as they were thought to exceed people's ability to assimilate new ideas and live up to the demands of industries that set out to process forest products for a market that was still untested. Ironically, it was the environmentally threatening infrastructural projects like road-paving that generated the most political support.

Given the fact that "sustainable development" is an inherently ambiguous concept that is subject to multiple and competing definitions, it is hardly surprising that intense debates took place in the halls of government (Sant'Ana 2004: 302-303). Controversies surrounded many of the government's policies, including the idea of sustainable timber management, the extractive

reserves, and neo-extractivism (Arnt 1994; Browder 1992; Homma 1992; Rice et al 1997; Souza 2006; Xangai 2006). While some authors (Fearnside 1997; Lele et al. 2000) argued that payments for environmental services, such as protection of soils and water, sequestration and storage of carbon, and biodiversity conservation, were necessary to compensate for the opportunity costs of Amazon conservation, these mechanisms not only required difficult global negotiations (Cléménçon 2008; Hall, this volume), but were also seen by others as alarming examples of “commercializing nature” and a new affront to national security (Becker 1990; Paula 2005). The tensions between “developmentalism” and “sustainability” that permeate the world-wide debate over environmental policy were clearly manifest in the Forest Government’s policies and in the broader goals of *Florestania*.

The changing life conditions and social identities in the land of the rubber tapper reveal that *Florestania* in Acre constitutes an environmental citizenship that is fluid and evolving, encompassing cross-generational changes as well as contradictory elements of the great divides between rural and urban, traditional and modern, conservation and development, and the collective and individual basis of rights. Moreover, citizenship demands in Acre, as in Latin America, encompass both the struggle for civil rights as well as the search for a sense of belonging anchored in people’s collective identity. In opposition to the perception of subordination as the natural order of things, Acre has witnessed the emergence of an “insurgent” citizenship movement (Holston 2008), the symbolic content of which draws on the state’s special history, and the goals of which reflect the desire to retain a respect for the environment and, at the same time, promote the kind of economic growth capable of reducing the socioeconomic inequalities that for so long have afflicted the region.

REFERENCES

Acre (State Government)

2000 *Zoneamento ecológico-econômico do Acre*, 3 v. Rio Branco (15 October 2009 at http://www.ac.gov.br/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1533&Itemid=138).

2008 *Plano Plurianual 2008/2011*. Rio Branco (accessed 15 October 2009 at http://www.ac.gov.br/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=27&Itemid=165).

Allegretti, Mary

2002 *A Construção Social de Políticas Ambientais: Chico Mendes e o Movimento dos Seringueiros*. Ph.D. dissertation, Universidade de Brasília.

Arnt, Ricardo (Ed.).

1994 *O destino da floresta: reservas extrativistas e desenvolvimento sustentável na Amazônia*. Rio de Janeiro: Relume – Dumará.

Bakx, Keith Stanley

1986 *Peasant Formation and Capitalist Development: The Case of Acre, South-West Amazônia*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Liverpool.

Barp, Wilson José e Ana Rosa Baganha Barp

2002 “Crisis and mediation in social and agrarian relations: The case of Acre.” In *Globalization and Sustainable Development in Latin America: Perspectives on the New Economic Order*, edited by S.K. Saha and David Parker, 250-275. Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.

Becker, Bertha

- 1990 *Amazônia*. São Paulo: Ática.
- 2004 *Amazônia: Geopolítica na virada do III milênio*. Rio: Garamond.
- 2005 “Amazônia: Nova geografia, nova política regional e nova escala de ação.” In *Amazônia Sustentável: Desenvolvimento sustentável entre políticas públicas, estratégias inovadoras e experiências locais*, coordinated by Martin Coy and Gerd Kohlhepp, 23-44. Rio: Garamond.
- 2009 “Articulando o complex urbano e o complex verde na Amazônia” (accessed 25 September 2009 at <http://www.cgee.org.br/>).

Browder, John O.

- 1992 “Extractive reserves and the future of the Amazon’s rainforest: Some cautionary observations.” In *The Rainforest Harvest*, edited by Friends of the Earth, 224-235. London: Friends of the Earth.

Browder, John O. and Brian J. Godfrey

- 1997 *Rainforest Cities. Urbanization, Development, and Globalization of the Brazilian Amazon*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- 2006 *Cidades na Floresta: Urbanização, Desenvolvimento, e Globalização da Amazonia Brasileira*. Manaus: Universidade Federal do Amazonas.

CEDEPLAR (Centro de Desenvolvimento e Planejamento Regional)

- 1979 *Migrações Internas na Região Norte: O Caso do Acre*. Belo Horizonte: CEDEPLAR/SUDAM.

CGEE (Centro de Gestão e Estudos Estratégicos)

- 2009 *Um Projeto para a Amazônia no Século 21: Desafios e Contribuições*. Brasília: CGEE.

Cléménçon, Raymond.

2008 “The Road Map to Bali.” *Journal of Environment & Development* 17 (1): 70-94.

Costa Sobrinho, Pedro Vicente

1992 *Capital e Trabalho na Amazônia Ocidental*. São Paulo: Cortez.

Dagnino, Evelino

2006 “Meanings of citizenship in Latin America.” *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 31 (62): 15-52.

DaMatta, Roberto

1991 “Do you know who you’re talking to? The distinction between individual and person in Brazil.” In *Carnivals, Rogues, and Heroes: An Interpretation of the Brazilian Dilemma*, by Roberto DaMatta, 137-197. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

Ehringhaus, Christiane

2005 *Post-Victory Dilemmas: Land Use, Development, and Social Movements in Amazonian Extractive Reserves*. Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University.

Escobar, Arturo

2001 “Culture sits in places: reflections on globalism and subaltern strategies of localization.” *Political Geography* 20: 139-174.

Esteves, Benedita Maria Gomes

1999 *Do “Manso” ao Guardiã da Floresta*. Ph.D. dissertation, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro.

Fearnside, Philip M.

- 1997 “Environmental services as a strategy for sustainable development in rural Amazonia.” *Ecological Economics* 20 (1): 53-70.

Fernandes, Marcos Inácio

- 1999 *O PT no Acre: A Construção de uma Terceira Via*. Master’s Thesis, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte.

Gomes, Carlos Valério Aguilar

- 2001 *Dynamics of Land Use in an Amazonian Extractive Reserve : The Case of the Chico Mendes Extractive Reserve in Acre, Brazil*. Master’s Thesis, University of Florida.
- 2009 *Twenty years after Chico Mendes : Extractive Reserves' Expansion, Cattle Adoption and Evolving Self-definition among Rubber Tappers in the Brazilian Amazon*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Florida.

Holston, James

- 2008 *Insurgent Citizenship: Disjunctions of Democracy and Modernity in Brazil*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Homma, Alfredo K.O.

- 1992 “The dynamics of extraction in Amazonia: A historical perspective.” In *Non-timber products from tropical forests: Evaluation of a conservation and development strategy*, edited by Daniel C. Nepstad and Stephen Schwartzman, 23-31. Bronx, NY: The New York Botanical Garden.

IBGE (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE)

- 2002 *Contas Regionais do Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: IBGE.

Jelin, Elizabeth

1996 “Citizenship revisited: Solidarity, responsibility, and rights.” In *Constructing Democracy: Human Rights, Citizenship, and Society in Latin America*, edited by Elizabeth Jelin and Eric Hershberg, 101-119. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Kainer, Karen, Marianne Schmink, Artur C.P. Leite, and M.S.J. Fadell

2002 “Experiments in forest-based development in Western Amazonia.” *Society and Natural Resources* 16 (10): 869-886.

Keck, Margaret

1995 “Social Equity and Environmental Politics in Brazil: Lessons from the rubber tappers of Acre.” *Comparative Politics* 27 (4): 409-425.

Lele, Uma, Virgílio Viana, Adalberto Veríssimo, Stephen Vosti, K. Perkins, and S.A. Husain.

2000 *Brazil Forests in the Balance: Challenges of Conservation with Development*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

Marshall, Thomas H.

1950 *Citizenship and Social Class, and Other Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mesquita, Geraldo

1977 “Depoimento na Comissão de Agricultura e Política Rural, Câmara dos Deputados.” *Diário do Congresso Nacional* (Brasil, Brasília), Seção 1, Suplemento “A”, numero 157 (6/10/77): 47-64.

Moreira, Rachel

2006 “Acre começa a entrar na era da industrialização.” *Página 20*, 17 July: 12-13.

Oliveira, Ermício Sena de

2003 *O Movimento pelo Desenvolvimento Sustentável do Acre, Brasil (1988-2002): Ciclos de Protestos, Capital Social e Rendimento Democrático*. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Salamanca.

Oliveira, Luis Antônio Pinto de

1985 *O Sertanejo, o Brabo, e o Posseiro. Os Cem Anos de Andanças da População Acreana*. Master's Thesis, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais.

Paula, Elder Andrade de

2005 *(Des)envolvimento Insustentável na Amazônia Ocidental: Dos Misionários do Progresso aos Mercadores da Natureza*. Rio Branco: EDUFAC.

Pearce, David, F.E. Putz, J.K. Vanclay

2002 "Sustainable forestry in the tropics: panacea or folly?" *Forest Ecology and Management* 172: 229-247.

Perz, Stephen G.

2000 "The rural exodus in the context of economic crisis, globalization and reform in Brazil." *International Migration Review* 34 (3): 842-881.

Perz, Stephen G., Carlos Aramburú, and Jason Bremner

2005 "Population, land use and deforestation in the Pan Amazon Basin: A comparison of Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Perú and Venezuela." *Environment, Development and Sustainability* 7 (1): 23-49.

Rice, Richard E., Gullison, R.E. and Reid, J.W.

1997 "Can sustainable management save tropical forests?" *Scientific American* 276 (4): 44-49.

Rodrigues, Gomercindo

- 2007 *Walking the Forest with Chico Mendes. Struggle for Justice in the Amazon*. Edited and translated by Linda Rabben. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Sant'Ana, Jr., Horácio Antunes de, Jr.
- 2004 *Florestania: A Saga Acreana e os Povos da Floresta*. Rio Branco: Universidade Federal do Acre.
- Schmink, Marianne and Mâncio Lima Cordeiro
- 2008 *Rio Branco: Cidade da Florestania*. Belém: Universidade Federal do Pará/Universidade Federal do Acre.
- Schmink, Marianne and Charles H. Wood
- 1992 *Contested Frontiers in Amazonia*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Silva, Adalberto Ferreira da
- 1982 *Ocupação Recente das Terras do Acre. Transferência de Capitais e Disputa pela Terra*. Master's Thesis, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais.
- Sojo, Carlos
- 2002 "The idea of citizenship in the Latin American debate." *Cepal Review* 76: 25-37.
- Souza, Francisco Kennedy Araújo de
- 2006 *Effectiveness of Extractive Reserves, Agro-Extractive Reserves and Colonist Settlements in Southwest Amazonia: An Economic and Land Cover Comparison of Three Land Tenure Types*. Master's Thesis, University of Florida.
- Viana, Jorge
- 2001 "Foreword." In *Working Forests in the Neotropics: Conservation Through Sustainable Management?* Edited by Daniel Zarin, Janaki.R.R. Alavalapati,

Francis.J. Putz and Marianne Schmink, viii-xvi. New York: Columbia University Press.

Wood, Charles H. and José Alberto Magno do Carvalho

1988 *The Demography of Inequality in Brazil*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Xangai, Juracy

2006 “Neoextrativismo: tradição somada a tecnologia.” *Página 20*, 30 July.

Yashar, Deborah J.

2005 *Contesting Citizenship in Latin America: The Rise of Indigenous Movements and the Postliberal Challenge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.