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CONTESTED FRONTIERS IN AMAZONIA

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Contested Frontiers in Amazonia: Introduction

In contrast to the cheerless mood of today's headlines, the early 1970s was a time of effusive optimism in the Brazilian Amazon. The military regime, then in power for nearly a decade, set out to populate the region and exploit its natural resources through a series of widely publicized development schemes. The federal government promoted credit and tax incentives to attract private capital to the region and financed the construction of the Transamazon highway—an unpaved road that extended some five thousand kilometers from Maranhão and Pará in the east across the uncharted Amazon basin to the westernmost state of Acre on the border with Bolivia. The cornerstone of the effort to modernize Amazonia was the National Integration Plan that called for the colonization of small farmers on one-hundred hectare plots along both sides of the highway. Like the Homestead Act in the United States a century before, the settlement project sought to create a prosperous small-farmer class by freely distributing ag-

ricultural land in sparsely populated territories. Colonists were drawn from the ranks of poor farmers and from the rural landless in the overpopulated northeastern region of the country.[1] According to the official propaganda of the day, the Transamazon would connect "people with no land to a land with no people."

The initial euphoria soon gave way to a more sober appreciation of the difficulties entailed in agricultural projects in lowland tropical areas. Colonists settled by the Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) in Marabá, Altamira, and Itaituba faced numerous problems, especially getting crops to market. The colonization projects nonetheless continued to attract migrants from all parts of Brazil who arrived in Pará in numbers that far exceeded INCRA's capacity to absorb in the planned communities. With few alternatives available, small farmers staked out whatever land was accessible, laboring under the mistaken assumption that state lands not being cultivated were theirs for the taking.

The north-south road (PA-150) that connected the towns of Marabá and Conceição do Araguaia to the Transamazon and the Belém-Brasília highways provided a corridor through which settlers entered and spontaneously occupied small plots of land in southern Pará. In the meantime, well-financed investors, mostly from central and southern Brazil, took advantage of profitable tax and credit programs offered through SUDAM (Superintendency for the Development of the Amazon).[2] They converted huge tracts of land to pasture or bought land to hold in investment portfolios as a hedge against future inflation. Violence became commonplace when cattle ranchers, land grabbers, and peasant farmers competed for control of the newly accessible territories. Newcomers clashed among themselves and with natives of the region who resolved to defend their way of life against the onslaught. The furious confrontations that ensued claimed the lives of thousands of people and bestowed on Pará its unfortunate notoriety as the "Wild West" of Amazonia.[3]

By the middle of the 1970s many of the small farmers who informally claimed untitled land (called *posseiros*) had been driven off the plots they had cleared. The dispossessed faced a difficult and uncertain future. Many moved on down the road. Others ventured farther back into the bush, only to fall victim again to expropriation. Thousands of families drifted from one work site to another, temporarily employed by labor recruiters

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IN SOUTHERN PARÁ

Highways — Towns ●
Rivers — Dam —
Indian Reserves

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Kilometers
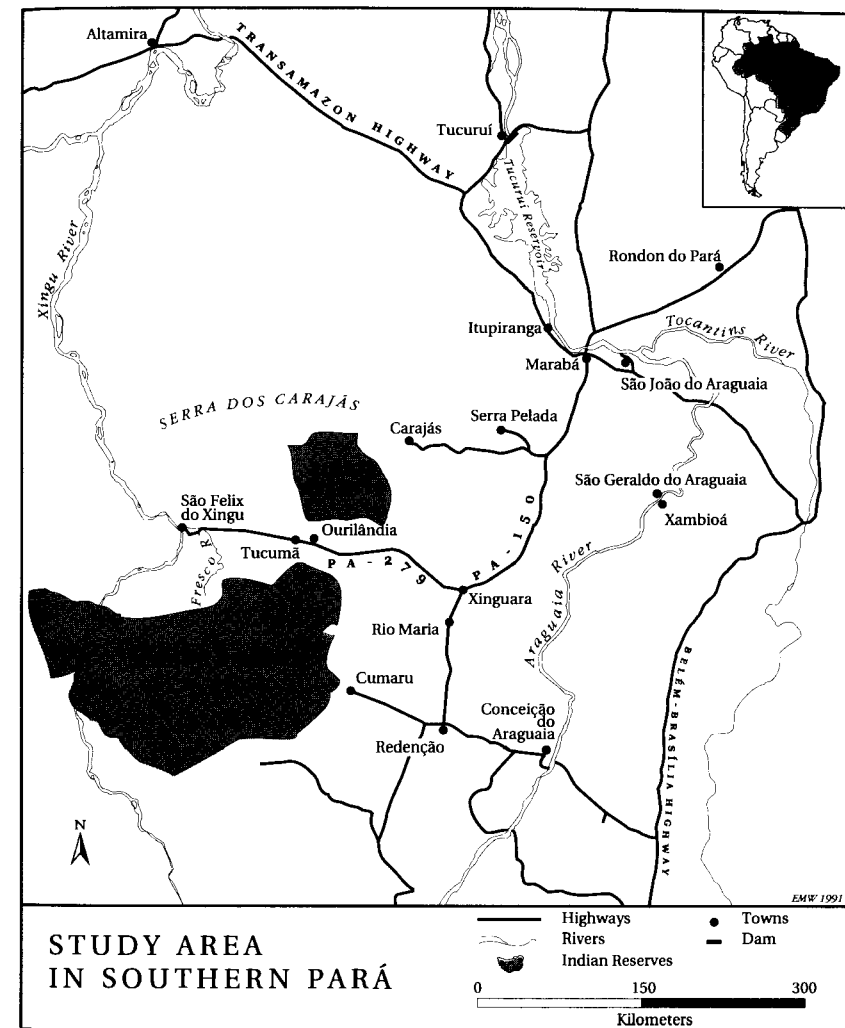
(called *gatos* or *empreiteiros*) who had been contracted by ranchers to clear land for pasture during the dry season. Those with enough money to do so packed their belongings and went back to their home states. Many more lost their land but were too poor to return. They sought refuge in the new villages that sprang up along the roads or in the shantytowns on the outskirts of established cities like Marabá. In as little as two or three years places that once held only a handful of people suddenly exploded into makeshift towns of fifteen to twenty thousand. Most urban centers

lacked sanitation, medical, and educational services and offered displaced peasants and new migrants neither regular employment nor the means to support themselves.[4] The growing apprehension in the mid-1970s was captured in a caustic remark made by an attendant working at a gas station located along the first few kilometers of the crimson, dust-choked Transamazon highway. "You are embarking on the Great Transamargura ('Transbitterness')," he said as he refueled our vehicle. "It's a poor man's road. It links nothing but poverty in the Northeast to misery in Amazonia."

The deadly conflict between ranchers and peasant farmers in southern Pará was often cast in Cold War terms by military authorities. In the early 1970s the armed forces confronted and eventually defeated a small but well-organized leftist guerrilla group. Using Vietnam-style tactics, the Brazilian army units swept through the countryside rounding up anyone found in the area, including peasant farmers, many of whom had only the vaguest notion of what was happening to them.[5] As a consequence of the "Araguaia War," the federal authorities classified the Marabá area as a national security zone. The new designation meant a heavy military presence and gave the federal government the right to appoint people to local political posts. In the countryside, individuals who helped peasants resist expropriation by cattle ranchers were regarded by the military and police authorities as communist instigators. Community leaders, including a number of activists in the Catholic church, were jailed for "subversive" behavior.

By equating criticism with treason, the military's national security doctrine made it both difficult and dangerous to find fault with the way colonization was taking place in Amazonia. Military authorities interpreted the international outcry over deforestation and the threat to Indian groups as an imperialist plot. They saw evidence of communist infiltration in the violent confrontations between ranchers and peasants. In this way legitimate ecological and social concerns as well as localized struggles between different groups were elevated to an importance on a par with the international competition between North and South and between East and West. It was a posture that permitted the military and the police to act with impunity in frontier areas.[6]

The heavy influx of population and the front-page publicity given to the violent confrontations between ranchers and peasants served to undermine support for the INCRA program at a time when the colonization program came under growing criticism for being expensive and failing to live up to its objectives. In the tradition of blaming the victim, the colonists themselves were faulted for their presumed lack of managerial skills even though many of the problems they confronted were hardly of their own making.[7] Business interests seized the opportunity to wage a campaign in support of the view that a more "rational" and less "predatory" process of occupation could be achieved by backing the private sector.[8] By the mid-1970s pressure from the business lobby had succeeded. Public colonization, the only relatively safe haven for the small farmer, was virtually abandoned in favor of privately owned and operated colonization schemes. Large-scale, government-administered colonization projects continued only in the northwestern state of Rondônia, where they suffered their own difficulties.

Development policies for the Amazon turned from an initial emphasis on absorbing excess population in other regions of Brazil to favoring the expansion of large-scale capitalist ventures. Official documents published after 1974 called on the government to halt the influx of peasant migrants and to adopt a different strategy by which to settle the region. The new approach was reflected in the second National Development Plan, which set forth a regional agenda called POLAMAZONIA. As the acronym implied, the objective was to create growth poles by redirecting public and private investment into areas with economic potential: cattle raising and large-scale farming and mining operations.

POLAMAZONIA emphasized a set of familiar assumptions. Since the 1950s politicians and planners in Brazil had been thoroughly wedded to the "developmentalist" paradigm. This perspective saw capital accumulation, foreign investment, and big economic projects as a means of achieving high rates of growth. Embedded in such a view was a preference for large, capital-intensive investments rather than for small, labor-oriented projects. The approach invoked a firm belief in advanced technology as a means to promote the general welfare and to resolve external difficulties associated with economic growth, such as environmental degradation or the displacement of people.[9] In retrospect,

official Amazonian policy in the early 1970s, with its emphasis on small farmers, was clearly out of step with the main direction of this development policy. The change in priorities in the mid-1970s away from the National Integration Plan's concern for the mass of poor people in the Northeast did not represent a new agenda so much as a return to the long-standing priority given to private capital and to massive development schemes.

Implicit in the developmentalist paradigm were a host of negative conclusions: Small producers were regarded as inefficient and peasants as culturally retrograde. Extractive activities practiced by Indians and native Amazonians were seen as backward traits of an undesirable form of existence, and traditional knowledge systems were believed to be worthless. The tropical forest was considered as having little economic or biological worth beyond the monetary value of a limited number of hardwoods. And communal property rights, typical of Indian and some peasant communities, were seen as antithetical to private property, an institution deemed essential to the expansion of a modern, capitalist economy.[10]

Given the hegemony of the developmentalist worldview within the authoritarian regime, it was hardly surprising that attempts to protect the environment, to preserve the boundaries of Indian lands, or to defend the rights of small farmers—indeed, any idea that ran counter to development or to the interests of the major players in Amazonia—were notions that, at best, received little attention in the halls of political power and within the administrative agencies of the state. At worst, such views were labeled "subversive," and their proponents silenced by murder, imprisonment, and torture.[11]

Nowhere was the impact of the policy shift more keenly felt than in southern Pará. In 1976 INCRA increased the maximum size of land purchases. A private colonization company purchased an immense area of fertile soils near São Felix do Xingu that had been earmarked for a public settlement project. And the federal government pushed ahead with major construction projects, such as the Tucuruí hydroelectric dam along the Tocantins River and the huge iron ore mining operation in the Serra dos Carajás.

Violent confrontations between the various social groups on the frontier persisted and multiplied. In 1980 the federal govern-

ment created GETAT (Executive Group for the Araguaia-Tocantins Lands), a powerful agency that answered directly to the National Security Council. Armed with the power to cut through red tape, GETAT's primary objective was to defuse tension by resolving the most threatening cases of land conflict. The agency relied on streamlined bureaucratic authority to accomplish its purpose via a kind of "crisis colonization" program that provided titled land to migrants in areas where land disputes threatened to erupt into a major conflagration. Although the interventions were designed to cultivate political support, more often than not GETAT's activities undermined rather than strengthened the military regime's already declining political legitimacy.

In the 1980s the military faced a host of new challenges, including the discovery of rich deposits of gold in southern Pará. The gold rush set in motion a new wave of migrants to Amazonia and thoroughly transformed the regional economy. Once a promising claim was discovered, it was only a matter of days before thousands of people converged on the site. Landless workers turned to mining activities as a source of livelihood. Investors who supplied the food and equipment to the mining camps reaped handsome profits, which they invested in other enterprises. The prospecting and sale of gold and other valued metals soon became the financial mainstay of towns and cities across southern Pará.[12]

The spread of small-scale mining led to new forms of violence. Miners confronted Kayapó Indians over access to reservation lands and competed with mining companies that held rights to gold deposits on state lands. Unlike in the confrontation between peasants and ranchers, even the most powerful mining companies generally found themselves on the losing end of battles with *garimpeiros*, whose growing political and economic power added a formidable new voice on the frontier. In 1980 tens of thousands of miners invaded an area controlled by the powerful state-controlled Vale do Rio Doce company and refused to abandon the rich deposit known as Serra Pelada. Perceiving an opportunity to cultivate the miners as a local political constituency, the federal government decided against the company's claim and allowed the *garimpeiros* to stay on under the supervision of military authorities. But the strategy was to no avail. Following a dramatic showdown between miners and the Brazilian army in 1984, the *gar-*

impeiros abandoned their commitment to the regime and took Serra Pelada into their own hands.

By the mid-1980s the military's plan to develop and control the Amazon region was in disarray. In the countryside, claims to land and minerals by large investors were effectively contested by peasants, miners, Indians, and rubber tappers. Successive interventions on the part of the military to resolve these disputes only exacerbated the very tensions they were intended to defuse. Indeed, it was partly as a consequence of the militarization of Amazonia that sporadic incidents grew into well-organized efforts by previously "invisible" populations to resist threats to their livelihood. In local and state elections people cast their votes for opposition candidates. And in Brasília—once the political climate leading to the New Republic allowed open debate—activists and politicians mounted a vocal campaign condemning the environmental and social consequences of the regime's development policies.

The criticism of Amazonian development that began in Brazil in the late 1970s soon dovetailed with the growing worldwide concern about deforestation and its effects on native peoples and global climate change. Sharing a new vocabulary and a similar set of goals, conservation and environmental activists in Brazil and in developed countries participated in a new discourse that lent both visibility and legitimacy to the alternatives proposed by small producers in the Amazon. By the end of the 1980s the direct links established with international lobbyists and the alliances forged with opposition political parties within the country empowered local groups with resources and credibility that they had never before enjoyed. These changes altered the character of the confrontations on the frontier and introduced new ideas into the debate over Amazonian development policy.

If the battles fought in the late 1960s and throughout most of the 1970s were almost always one-sided in favor of large-scale investors who benefited most from the regional development policies, the balance of political power began to shift by the end of the decade. In the course of defending themselves, rubber tappers, miners, small farmers, Indians, and *caboclos* of mixed descent became better organized and learned to protect their interests more effectively against the threats posed by ranchers, mining

companies, land speculators, and bureaucrats. The odds remained against them; yet they showed with greater frequency that they could win major contests against their adversaries. Victories in Amazonia were facilitated by the political opening in Brazil and by the declining power of the military regime. In some instances the outcome of local conflicts affected economic and political trends on the national level, thus changing the conditions under which subsequent regional contests took place.

The case of Chico Mendes, a rubber tapper in the remote state of Acre, illustrates this new feature of the resistance in Amazonia. Chico, who began his career on the rubber trails at age 9 and learned to read only at age 24, led a successful attempt to prevent the deforestation that threatened the livelihood of rubber gatherers who had lived in the jungle for generations. From 1985, when he was the leading figure in the first national meeting of the rubber tappers union, until his murder at age 44 at the hands of cattle ranchers, his importance and visibility soared. By the time of his death Chico had expressed his views before the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, United States legislators, and other world leaders. His efforts were recognized by awards from the United Nations and the Better World Society and by posthumous honors granted by numerous organizations in the United States and Europe. That a backwoodsman such as Mendes could emerge as an international figure capable of forcing both the Brazilian government and international lending agencies to modify their plans for Amazonian development was a phenomenon that no one, including us, had anticipated.

By 1990 the terms of the Amazonian debate had shifted. The environmental and human rights consequences of the development policy became the target of headline stories in Brazil and across the world. The expansion of cattle ranching in the Amazon, once the mainstay of the modernization program, was condemned in favor of extractive activities that would leave the forest intact. Other questions arose about the equity and the sustainability of the developmentalist model, prompting a new appreciation of traditional Amazonia. Analysts reassessed the economic value of lesser-known forest products, which found their way into specialty items marketed in the United States and Europe. Indigenous cultures came to be viewed as repositories of practical knowledge,

and the management systems of Indians and peasants, especially those based on forest extraction, were treated as credible alternatives in the search for new policy directions. Innovative proposals included forms of collective property systems called "reserves." Like many other initiatives proposed by peasants, rubber tappers, and Indian groups, the notion of extractive reserves arose not from a planning office or from the handiwork of a particular individual but from more than a decade of struggle in a changing political environment.

Conceptualizing Frontier Change

The contemporary movement of people into Amazonia is the most recent, and presumably the last, of three more or less distinct phases of frontier expansion that took place in Brazil after World War II.[13] The first occurred in Paraná and involved the southward spread of coffee that began in the 1940s and continued through the mid-1960s.[14] The second frontier movement took place in Goiás and Mato Grosso in the 1950s and 1960s when the rise in the internal demand for beef led to the expansion of cattle ranches into the vast plains of western Brazil. Moving the country's capital inland from Rio de Janeiro provided further stimulus to the westward movement of population. So did the construction of new roads, the most important of which was the paved link between Brasília and Belém, capital of the northern state of Pará.[15] The Belém-Brasília highway, completed in the 1960s, made new lands accessible to wealthy investors and reduced transportation costs.

The occupation of new agricultural lands manifested the general tendency inherent in growth-oriented capitalism to absorb excess capital and labor through geographical displacement.[16] In Brazil, the spatial displacement that occurred during the three periods of frontier expansion was an integral feature of the far-reaching transformations that took place in the country in the postwar period.[17] Brazil's capital-intensive and uneven style of industrial growth meant that far too few jobs were created in the urban and rural economies.[18] The result was a surplus population that migrated to frontier areas in search of agricultural plots to cultivate. At the same time, entrepreneurs channeled surplus cap-

ital to the countryside in search of productive investments and to purchase cheap land as a hedge against future inflation. As a consequence, an increase in agricultural production in Brazil, as in many other countries in Latin America, largely occurred as a result of the expansion into new lands rather than because of yield increases. Between 1950–54 and 1970–74, horizontal expansion alone explained 89 percent of the growth in grain production in Brazil.[19]

In Paraná and Goiás-Mato Grosso, the expansion of agrarian capitalism occurred at the expense of pioneer smallholders. The process occurred in stages.[20] When markets for land and labor penetrated into areas previously isolated from the national economy and the political system, settlers and long-time residents were dispossessed, and land became concentrated in large holdings. Small farmers either found employment as wage earners or moved on to the next frontier.[21] Over time, the tendency (although not fully realized) was for private property to replace informal means of land tenure and for the wage relationship to become the dominant means of labor recruitment and remuneration.

The third phase of expansion occurred in northern Brazil during the 1970s and 1980s. It was driven by many of the same underlying forces and exhibited many of the same outcomes as those that appeared earlier in the south and in the west. The Amazon frontier nonetheless had a number of specific features, the most important of which was the prominent role played by state agencies. Earlier periods of expansion had been relatively spontaneous. In the 1970s the exploitation of Amazonia was enthusiastically promoted by the federal government, then under the control of a centralized and repressive military regime.

The decision to develop Amazonia in part represented a solution to political dilemmas that confronted the authoritarian regime at the time. In the years immediately following the coup in 1964, military authorities and civilian technocrats embraced orthodox development policies that favored foreign capital and promoted a drastic restructuring of the economy. To their chagrin, various factions of the national bourgeoisie, many of whom had supported the military takeover in the first place, soon discovered that they were not among the beneficiaries of—and, in some cases,

were directly threatened by—the development plans initially put into effect. Because the authoritarian regime could not long remain impervious to the demands of domestic capital, development planning in the late 1960s and early 1970s became less orthodox in philosophy and more nationalistic in rhetoric.[22]

Through the Operation Amazonia project and related development initiatives, federal agencies encouraged Brazilian investors to avail themselves of the tax and credit advantages presented to them. Amazonian development policy thus became one way by which the military regime sought to rebuild the broad political alliance that had brought it to power. Similarly, to counter the accusation of selling out to foreign capital, geopolitical concerns provided the overarching rationale for the extraordinary development plan. With its appeal to long-standing nationalist themes and its invitation to domestic capital to participate in a great and profitable venture, the "conquest of Amazonia" became a kind of exalted mission linked to the grandeur of the nation itself.

Against this background, it is unsurprising that the proposed initiatives were on a scale never before attempted in the region or, for that matter, anywhere else in the country. State-financed investments favored a wide range of economic interests and heavily promoted capital-intensive development projects. As a consequence of massive public spending, the Amazonian frontier was from the outset more heterogeneous and far more urbanized compared to what took place in Paraná and in Goiás-Mato Grosso.[23]

The settlement of northern Brazil also occurred within an economic and political setting quite different from the one that had obtained before. The interplay of international and domestic events in the 1970s and 1980s established a context that affected the outcome of local struggles in ways that were often as unforeseen as they were improbable. In addition, capital and labor in Amazonia were displaced into a cultural and ecological environment markedly different from that in any other part of the country. Rather than being destroyed or pushed aside, tenacious elements of traditional Amazonian extractivism merged with modern systems of production to bring about novel forms of socioeconomic and political organization. The variations of preexisting mechanisms of labor recruitment that developed and the evolu-

tion of differentiated systems of subcontracting bore little relationship to the anticipated movement toward a thoroughly proletarianized labor market observed in other contexts.

The frontier conflicts associated with these changes were correspondingly complex. Contested claims to land, gold, and timber existed simultaneously across the landscape, as did competing forms of labor control and political authority. In addition, the actions of regional elites and the grassroots mobilization of peasants, Indians, rubber tappers, and independent miners repeatedly subverted the military's agenda and the institutions that large capital attempted to impose on the region. The result was not a single process of linear change but instead a diversity of contested frontiers with highly varied outcomes. To account for these events, the framework we constructed gave priority to the conflict between the various social groups involved in the making of Amazonian history.

Conflict and Power

By *social group* we mean collectivities of people defined by common forms of access to productive resources and by their participation in similar social relations in the process of making a living. The patterned behavior of individuals within a particular group derives from their shared material circumstances and their common position within the social structure. Intrinsic to these positions is a more or less shared sense of the problems to be solved, the goals to be sought, and the means to achieve desired objectives. These commonalities shape the cultural, ideological, and political perspectives people invoke in their daily lives. Such commonalities form the basis of the concerted action that transforms individual actors into a politically mobilized collective.

We can sort the legion of social groups operating on the frontier setting into dominant or subordinate strata based on their relative degrees of power—the capacity of an actor to impose his or her will successfully on another. The dominant stratum encompasses owners of large ranches and sawmills and the managers and directors of mining companies as well as independent merchants and representatives of corporate capital. Members of the subor-

dinate stratum include the array of less powerful actors, such as wage workers, peasants, independent miners, rubber tappers, Brazil nut collectors, fishermen, and Indians.

Social conflict is an inherent property of a class-divided society. In the case of Amazonia, conflicts issued primarily from contested claims to valued resources, such as land, gold, and timber. In the clash of interests on the frontier, one can draw a useful distinction between competitive conflicts and those that involved resistance. Competitive conflicts occurred between members of the same stratum, such as the contests between miners and Indians (both subordinate) over access to gold deposits. Resistance, on the other hand, occurred when members of the subordinate group challenged attempts by the dominant stratum to appropriate resources or to impose its will on the manner in which resources were to be exploited. The conflict between ranchers and peasants over access to land and resisted attempts by mining companies to impose a wage-labor system on freelance *garimpeiros* are examples of resistance.

Of the two types of social conflict, resistance—the main focus of this study—is the more pervasive form and the one more likely to entail violence.[24] In our analysis of violent and nonviolent forms of resistance, we found it useful to think of the degree of power commanded by contestants in a dispute as something participants actively assemble from multiple sources. Economic wealth and the capacity to achieve desired ends by direct force are the most tangible bases of power on the frontier. For example, compared to poor and generally unarmed peasants, cattle ranchers have far greater economic resources. In addition, they frequently rely on hired killers and private militias to accomplish their objectives through violence or the threat of physical harm.

Other sources of power are indirect, such as the power garnered from access to, or control over, various aspects of the state apparatus. To address this source of power, we documented the way powerful economic groups influenced the allocation of public funds (e.g., roadbuilding, development projects, tax and credit incentives) and identified the mechanisms by which they manipulated the rules and practices that mediated intergroup conflict (e.g., the legislature, courts, administrative bodies). The ability to lobby planning and administrative agencies was especially consequential during the years of military control when other means of influencing state policy were severely restricted. A third source of state-derived power was the ability of members of the dominant strata to deploy the army and police in their behalf.[25]

While the state was a wellspring of varying qualities and degrees of power, state policy and action were also infused with contradictions. One source of diversity stemmed from the fact that members of the dominant group did not speak with a single voice on matters of Amazonian development. Instead, they often competed with one another for contradictory concessions from planning and administrative offices. Another source of diversity had its origins in the fundamental contradictions within and between agencies (federal, state, and local) in terms of their respective goals, constituencies, and overlapping legal-administrative authorities.[26] The notion of different groups within the dominant strata competing for rewards within multiple levels of the bureaucratic organization—itself ridden by conflicting missions and varying degrees of effectiveness—is the image that guides our analysis of how state policy was constructed and executed.

The least direct of all sources of power emanates from the ability to draw upon and, in some cases, construct an ideological discourse that confers varying degrees of legitimacy upon competing claims. In the conflict over resources, social groups formulated and strategically deployed idea systems to strengthen their position. The discourses adopted by different actors were more often borrowed than created *de novo*. Some claims to Amazonian resources called on the values of modernity, as when ranchers appealed to economic rationality to justify ownership of vast stretches of land or when mining companies promoted efficiency criteria to dispose of freelance *garimpeiros*. Such postures were effective inasmuch as they resonated with dominant values and assumptions within the state apparatus and in society at large, especially during the early years of the military regime. Other actors, such as the military itself, laid claim to patriotic notions about national security and the inviolate sovereignty of the fatherland. Peasants, for their part, invoked the virtues of self-suf-

ficiency and the dignity of fulfilling God's mandate to make the earth produce as a means to vindicate their informal appropriation of land.

More recently, Indians and rubber tappers, in their attempt to protect themselves from encroaching ranchers and gold miners, have extolled the wisdom of traditional culture and the virtues of conserving the forest. By so doing, they established an affinity with—and to some degree were prompted by—the worldwide environmental movement. Indeed, the ascendance of environmental criteria within Brazil and across the world has profoundly altered the content of the debate over the fate of Amazonia and over the merits of "development" in general. The result has been what we call the "greening of the discourse," a process by which nearly all social actors on the frontier—including unlikely groups such as ranchers, loggers, and military geopoliticians—have recast the justifications for their respective interests in environmental terms.

A dramatic example of the greening of the discourse—and the problems it raised for a particular group—was the way rubber tappers in the state of Acre, in defending their territories against encroaching ranchers bent on replacing the forest with pasture, came to define themselves as conservationists and ecologists, labels that emerged from the alliances they had forged with national and international activists whose mission was to defend the forest. As Chico Mendes had put it in an interview just before his death, "until recently, the word 'environment' didn't even exist in our vocabulary." Several years later, Osmarino Amâncio Rodriques, Chico's successor, questioned the political usefulness of the environmental discourse that the rubber tappers had endorsed. He feared that an exclusive emphasis on ecological themes ran the risk of drawing attention away from what he regarded as the priority issue—land reform. If the defense of the environment is divorced from social justice, Osmarino claimed, the rubber tappers union ran the risk of endorsing what he called an "empty environmentalism" (*ambientalismo vazio*).[27]

Ideological positions (and repositioning) such as these are not mere reflections of material interests. Nor are they static features of people's consciousness. To the contrary, we treat ideologies as part of the arsenal of weapons the contestants actively forge and mobilize in the contest over the boundaries and the content of accepted discourse. In the process, they alter the definitions of themselves and their understanding of the world around them. Social action therefore has a *constitutive* property. By this we mean that the preferences, interests, and ideas that define individuals—and that become the basis for collective action—are formed or constituted in the process of actions that engage participants in a dispute.[28] From this perspective, people act not merely to meet preexisting ends but also to constitute themselves as persons and as groups with particular and desired attributes. Because the interests that characterize different social groups are as much formed as they are revealed in the contests in which people are engaged, they are mutable and subject to continual redefinition.[29]

In this light, we can identify contradictory interests—and therefore the potential for social conflict—between, say, peasants who staked their livelihood on the use value of land and ranchers and speculators whose interests were based on the concept of private property and of land as a marketable commodity. Even if peasants and ranchers had different interests, the latter were not construed as constant or a priori features of either group. To the contrary, the constitutive aspect of social process stresses the idea that both peasants and ranchers, in negotiating the contests that involved them and in the process of mobilizing the various sources of power at their disposal, continually reconstructed their respective interests, amending their strategies, bonds, and alliances accordingly.

The multidimensional bases of power—physical, economic, political, ideological—meant that a particular group might be well-endowed in one domain but less so in another. Compared to peasant farmers, gold miners commanded greater coercive capability but less ideological currency. Indians benefited from alliances with domestic and international human rights and environmental lobbies, but peasants and miners did not. Large-scale ranchers, for their part, brought considerable economic resources into play and possessed the means and credibility—at least early on—to promote their interests within planning agencies and courts of law. As these examples illustrate, the strategies adopted by participants in a particular conflict largely depended on the type and

the effectiveness of power available to actors at a given point in time.

The Matrix of Contested Frontiers

"Winning" a contest is further conditioned by the alignment of opportunities and constraints defined by the social context within which the contest is embedded. By *context* we mean the configuration of economic, political, and ideological factors—within global, national, and regional arenas—that structure local outcomes by shifting power balances and by altering the incentives and disincentives for alternative courses of action, constraining some options while enabling others.

The significance of context is revealed by comparing the same action at two different points in time. Take, as an example, an attempt by peasant farmers to resist dispossession by ranchers. In 1973 the outcome was contingent on such factors as the strength of the military regime and its readiness to use force to silence opposition, a booming national economy, the undisputed acceptance within planning agencies of cattle raising as a modernizing economic activity, and a small and poorly organized peasantry in Amazonia. By 1984 the matrix of shaping influences was altogether different. The discredited military regime was engaged in a policy of crisis colonization; a severe economic crisis had weakened the power of the federal government and the private sector; ranchers were under intense criticism by environmentalists; and by then a far more articulate peasantry, aware of its strength in numbers, had emerged on the frontier. Ranchers held the stronger hand in both contexts; yet the configuration in the second instance permitted a wider range of outcomes, including the outright victory of peasant resistance.[30]

At times, the consequences of a particularly significant local contest alter economic-political structures and ideological discourses at regional and national levels. This in turn constructs a new context within which subsequent local conflicts play themselves out. If we expand the above example of ranchers and peasants to include the many other contests simultaneously underway in Amazonia, it is possible to see the mosaic of victories and de-

feats across the landscape. Together, these outcomes propel the evolution of the plot in unexpected directions, each iteration creating a new stage upon which another round of events is contingent.[31]

The result is social change, evidenced by transformations in the structure of the regional economy, the constitution of new social actors, the demise of others, and the reconfiguration of the economic, political, and ideological arrangements that defined critical periods in frontier history. Observable changes—such as deforestation, the geography of land use and human settlement, and the rise and decline of different economic activities—are therefore understood as net outcomes of multiple determinations, operating within different spheres of the social organization and influenced by the contest for resources among groups capable of mobilizing varying degrees of power.

Such conflicts were not limited to the question of direct access to land or gold. They also took place over the way in which resources were to be exploited (wage work versus other social relations of production) and, more abstractly, over the very definition of what constituted a "resource" in the first place. The latter was reflected by competing assessments of the value of the forest (versus pasture), the utility of Indian culture (versus modern technology), and the legitimacy of alternative forms of land tenure (private property versus collective ownership or informal possession). As these examples suggest, a "frontier" can refer to the physical edge of a settled area and to the battle lines that marked the confrontation between competing claims. It can also refer, metaphorically, to the uneasy boundary between alternative definitions of what resources are to be appropriated how and by whom. What we witnessed in Amazonia, therefore, was not a unitary process of change defined solely by the physical occupation of space and exploitation of resources but rather, as the title of this book indicates, a multiplicity of simultaneous and overlapping contested frontiers, both palpable and abstract.

The perspective we used to analyze and interpret events in Amazonia thus places the notion of social conflict at the center of our vision of frontier change. Our account gives importance to historical time and to the way participants in a dispute mobilize their respective power bases. In the process, they come to new

understandings of themselves and of the world around them and alter their strategies accordingly. This perspective recognizes that the political initiatives invoked by the participants as well as the power hierarchies that prevail within a given context are heavily contingent upon the changing alignment of influencing factors, many of which operate within economic and political arenas far afield from the site of the contest in question. Finally, this approach attends to the interplay of social action and structural context and takes temporal sequence to heart in accounting for both intended and unintended outcomes.[32]

The Study

Our work in the Brazilian Amazon first began in 1976 when we participated in a study of the sociodemographic impact of migration and colonization in and around the town of Marabá in southern Pará.[33] The project, which involved two months of intensive fieldwork, generated useful information on one of the most conflict-ridden frontier areas in Brazil. But that introduction to southern Pará left too many incomplete stories and too many unanswered questions for us not to go back again. What started out as a one-time analysis grew into a longitudinal study to track the evolution of frontier events. We returned to the same region in 1978 and made six additional visits between 1980 and 1989.

The initial study in 1976 was burdened by the paucity of secondary sources and by our lack of firsthand knowledge of the history of the Marabá area.[34] These limitations forced us to rely heavily on a retrospective construction of the events that had taken place before our arrival. Although the method is commonly used by historians and social scientists, the strategy was especially problematic in a place like southern Pará where the vast majority of our informants were themselves newcomers to the region.

In our later work we sought to redress this problem by collecting systematic "before" and "after" data in one community. A research design of this kind, sometimes referred to as a "natural experiment," required a research site that met two criteria. To ensure that the initial data reflected as closely as possible the characteristics of a traditional Amazonian community, we first had to find an isolated place that was relatively untouched by the massive transformations already underway by 1976. It also had to be a place that would not remain isolated indefinitely but would be significantly affected by the expanding frontier within a reasonable period of time. The site that most closely approximated these special conditions was the town of São Felix do Xingu.

Like countless other backwater villages, São Felix was founded during the rubber boom early in this century. In 1976 it could only be reached by boat or plane. There were no motor vehicles on the unpaved streets save a rusty yellow tractor that was the property of the municipal government and a late model jeep that the mayor had barged upstream from Altamira. Although more recent in origin, São Felix appeared to resemble the old-style Amazonian community Charles Wagley described in his classic book, *Amazon Town* (1964).

We came upon São Felix quite by accident. Toward the end of the field work in 1976 we boarded a single-engine plane to take us to a mining community located about two hundred kilometers northwest of Marabá. On the return flight, the pilot changed course in order to attend to a mechanical problem. We landed on a newly built runway just outside of São Felix do Xingu, a small riverine community at the confluence of two wide and beautiful rivers, the crystal blue Xingu and the slightly murky Rio Fresco, which joins the Xingu from the east. Several long-time residents were gathered by a stand-up bar on main street, and they drew us into their conversation. Did we know, they asked, about the PA-279, the state road then under construction, scheduled to reach São Felix in two or three years?

As it happened, we had traveled the initial stretch of the PA-279 only a few days before. At the time it amounted to little more than twenty kilometers of dirt trail jutting westward from the PA-150, which connected Marabá to Conceição do Araguaia. The desirability of the road and of the changes that it would bring to São Felix were the topic of debate that afternoon. The store owner readily endorsed the virtues of *desenvolvimento* (development) but not without some reservation. "The road will enable us to reach the rest of Brazil," he said enthusiastically. Then, in a more somber tone, he added: "It will also bring the rest of Brazil to us."

Listening to these comments, we could only recall the place we had just left that morning. The chaos and violence we had witnessed in the Marabá area, where the PA-279 began, stood in marked contrast to this quiet village. It was hard to reconcile what we saw around us in São Felix with the images we remembered of frontier life in southern Pará. Scene after scene came to mind of frontier life in southern Pará. Scene after scene came to mind of trucks, diesel smoke, and bar fights, of the desperate struggles over land in the countryside and the talk of communists and guerrilla war, of destitute migrant families huddled like refugees in straw shelters along the roadside with nowhere to go, of wealthy ranchers, wearing high leather boots and holstered pistols and doing business from private planes. Did the people of São Felix really know what they were in for?

If the image we had of southern Pará foreshadowed events to come in São Felix, there was little doubt that the road would restructure the entire region's existing socioeconomic and political organization, just as it would alter the physical environment and the size and composition of its population. The process would handsomely reward some people. Others would pay dearly for the changes. But how, exactly, would the drama play itself out? In effect, the prospect of a new road to a place like São Felix meant the opportunity to study a traditional Amazonian town before the onset of change and then monitor and analyze its progressive integration into the national economy. Through repeated visits we could accompany the changes that were sure to come about, documenting the process as it happened and, whenever possible, measuring the impact of the transition on the material conditions of different sectors of the town's population. With these objectives in mind, we did a base line analysis of São Felix and the surrounding region in 1978. We then carried out two major follow-up studies: one in 1981 just prior to the arrival of the road and another in 1984 after the road had reached the town. We made additional one- to four-week reconnaissance trips to the research site in 1980, 1983, 1987, and 1989.

If the men gathered that first day in São Felix had little notion of what was in store for the town, the same might be said of us with regard to the research project we proposed. Little did we know how complex the task would turn out to be and how far afield from São Felix the investigation would take us. The road

itself became a story unto its own (see chapter 5), as did the new towns that the PA-279 left in its wake, each representing critical aspects of the process of frontier change (see chapters 6, 7, and 8). Moreover, the neat "before" and "after" design, with the road marking the great divide, proved somewhat artificial. A number of changes began in São Felix before the road arrived in the town, and its effects will surely continue to be felt long after this study came to an end. In the final analysis, the road became a metaphor, loosely representing the advancing frontier but serving nonetheless to organize our research efforts that increasingly broadened in scope to include the entire southern region of the state of Pará.

The longitudinal design made use of both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. In 1978, 1981, and 1984 we employed conventional survey research techniques to apply questionnaires to a random sample of households in the town of São Felix do Xingu. The survey data provided quantitative estimates of changes in such variables as population size, migration histories, employment, housing quality, food consumption patterns, child mortality rates, and living conditions. On each of these occasions we mapped the town and compiled a commercial census.

Individual responses to standard sociodemographic questions about the age, sex, and place of origin of migrants, and about the economic and attitudinal items regarding land use and perceptions of well-being, provided indispensable information on the changes in employment and living standards in the town of São Felix. Yet an exclusive focus on individuals in one town meant paying insufficient attention to the federal and state-level development policies and to the national and international economic factors that were driving the process of frontier expansion. Events in the Amazon relentlessly drove home the realization that in addition to survey data much broader information was necessary.

To complement the survey results, we applied qualitative methods of data collection and a different conceptual orientation to the study of the frontier. The qualitative approach entailed an analytical focus on the regional economy, on the structure of political power, and on the social conflicts generated by the competition for resources. Instead of randomly selecting respondents, as we did in the survey analyses in the town of São Felix, we carried out in-depth interviews with key informants. Informants

were chosen for the strategic positions they held within various agencies and economic activities located in the research site and in the state and federal capitals.

In the course of this study we collected survey data on over four hundred households, recording the occupations, the living conditions, and the sociodemographic characteristics of the approximately twenty-five hundred people living in them. Together with other members of the various research teams, we carried out another six hundred or so in-depth interviews with respondents in southern Pará, Belém, and Brasília. Except where it is explicitly noted in the text, the material presented in this book is based on information from our own observations, surveys, and field reports.

In the initial stages of research, the first task was simply to identify the principal economic activities in the area. Traditional means of sustenance included Brazil nut collecting, rubber tapping, hunting, and fishing. The newer activities that began to penetrate the study area in the 1960s and 1970s included land clearing and ranching, logging and sawmills, farming, mining, and a host of parallel or support activities, such as transportation, banking, and service provision, as well as public and private colonization schemes. The prevalence and the spatial distribution of people and activities changed dramatically in response to a wide range of factors, the causes and consequences of which we set out to understand.

We were especially concerned with how the type and the intensity of social conflict between different groups varied over time and space. Conflicts that involved acts of resistance were methodologically valuable for several reasons. Changes in the pattern of outcomes over time revealed important shifts in the relative power of different social groups and provided insights into the role played by the contextual factors that distinguished one historical period from another. Similarly, local confrontations—because they were nearly always linked to broader economic, political, and ideological contests—drew attention to numerous properties of the social structure that we might otherwise have overlooked or understood only partially. Confrontations that resulted in violence further revealed the state's role in mediating social conflict, evidenced by the responses of the military, the courts, and by the actions and inaction of responsible administrative agencies.

Conflicts among social groups were only part of the larger picture of the social organization that included also the functional interdependence of various economic activities. For example, ranchers frequently employed small farmers on a seasonal basis to clear land for pasture and often purchased food crops sold by peasant producers. Such arrangements provided ranchers with a source of cheap labor and commodities while small farmers earned much-needed cash. Similarly, logging and farming were related activities. Sawmills purchased tree trunks from the peasant farmers who were in need of supplemental income. The makeshift roads that loggers built also made new areas of land accessible and thus affected the process by which land was occupied and cleared by small farmers.

We interviewed individuals who occupied key positions within strategically important agencies and activities. In the case of ranching, for example, we interviewed ranch owners and their administrators (if any), the people permanently employed on the ranch as well as the labor recruiter and the men he temporarily hired to clear land for pastures. Additional interviews were carried out with respondents several steps removed from the ranch itself, such as people involved in banking and credit institutions, public servants in land offices, nearby small farmers who provided occasional labor to the rancher, loggers who purchased mahogany trunks as land was being cleared, and so on. Local authorities and old-timers who knew the area well were a further source of information. We posed the same questions to a variety of informants until we were satisfied that we had obtained an understanding of the characteristics of each of the economic activities, of the perspectives of the various social groups involved, and of how and why these characteristics varied over time and space.

A consistent theme in our interviews concerned the migratory history of the individuals with whom we spoke. Where did they come from? How long had they been at the frontier? Why did they migrate to the frontier? Did they expect to return, or did they intend to stay? These and other questions addressed the issue of labor absorption by the various economic activities and provided crucial insights into the factors that stimulated the flow of

people into the region. In responding to these questions, informants shared their personal experiences with us. Some were stories of victory over astonishing adversity and of high risk gambles that paid off handsomely. Many others were tragic tales of plans gone awry, of illness, violence, and death. Whole families who had staked everything on a new beginning in Amazonia found themselves on the roadside in an alien environment with no roof over their heads and with no land or job. Whatever the informants' particular story, virtually everyone provided moving accounts of the profound human drama that lay at the heart of the process of frontier change.

Several steps removed from the site-specific events were a host of economic and institutional processes at the regional, national, and international levels that affected the course of frontier change in one way or another. We were thus compelled to collect further information at a variety of levels of economic and bureaucratic organization. This included a sustained attempt to track the evolution of Amazonian development policy within the planning bureaucracies of the state and federal governments. It was an avenue of research that took us from the small and understaffed office on a dusty roadside in southern Pará to the air-conditioned buildings that housed administrators and planners in Belém and Brasília and back again. This trajectory impressed upon us the divergence of opinions, perspectives, and expertise at the various levels. It also gave us an appreciation for the sharply different constellations of economic and political pressures that came to bear on the policy-making apparatus within the federal and state government and at the local level. Indeed, many of the factors that determined the content and the execution of development policies had little at all to do with what was going on in the frontier towns.

Beginning in 1976 and upon our return to southern Pará in 1978 as well as on six different occasions in the 1980s, we were able to keep a more or less running account of the changes that took place in the area. On the basis of the information collected at each point in time, we then reconstructed events that had occurred between our visits. In the later stages of fieldwork, the research assumed the quality of a detective story, with all the excitement and challenge of finding the clues to a complex, even

Byzantine, plot that constantly evolved in new and unforeseen directions.

In field interviews it was usually impossible to track the same individuals over time. But we were often able to contact the same person over and over again in the various government agencies. Through repeated contacts we came to know the people involved, and that made it easier to assess and account for each informant's level of expertise and for the political persuasions that were sure to affect his or her perspective. The method also established an important degree of rapport as many of our principal informants came to appreciate our long-term commitment to understanding the same issues that were central to their own lives and careers. The technique of keeping track of individuals had yet another advantage associated with the rapid movement of people from one institution to another. An informant within SUDAM in 1976 might be employed by INCRA in 1978, only to be found in private business in 1984. Each post made the individual privy to different types of information, and the movement itself provided a valuable comparative perspective on events and institutions.

Secondary sources of information on these topics were difficult to come by. Nearly all of the conventional materials, such as census data on population or official statistics on production and prices, were either out of date, inaccurate, or reported information in a fashion rarely useful to our purposes. We therefore turned to newspaper accounts, planning reports, statements by the Catholic church, transcriptions of legislative hearings, and so on. These sources of information, many of which are known only to specialists in the field, are compiled in the reference list at the end of this volume. Throughout our analysis and interpretation, we sought to remain true to the voices of the people involved and to the specifics of local histories that comprised the wider panorama of social change in Amazonia.

What began in 1976 as a relatively limited before-and-after study of a particular site in southern Pará thus evolved during fifteen years of research into a project that was wider in scope and different in emphasis than the study we first had in mind. Over time we increasingly came to appreciate the importance of local diversity in shaping what took place in the Amazon and to recognize the capacity of resistance movements to alter the

course of history, often in unexpected ways. In many cases, the outcomes we documented in the countryside ran counter to the predictions that dominated the social sciences a decade ago, just as our interpretation of events often involved concerns that remained peripheral to main theoretical perspectives in development studies at the time. These dilemmas compelled us to abandon or amend some of the theoretical assumptions we were initially committed to, notably the tendency implicit in our earlier work to emphasize structural constraints at the expense of a keener appreciation for the capacity of local groups to defend themselves. The conceptual framework that emerged in the course of this study thus attempts to account for the contingencies associated with acts of resistance without losing sight of the structural factors that led to patterned and more or less predictable outcomes.[35] The perspective we adopted is reflected in the way we present the material in this volume.

Organization of the Book

This book is divided into three main sections. Each section represents a different level of analytical specificity. Part one concerns Amazonia as a whole. Parts two and three successively narrow the focus to the region of southern Pará and then to the town of São Felix do Xingu and its surroundings.

The opening chapter in part one (chapter 2) summarizes the history of the region from the colonial period through the early 1960s. Chapter 3 analyzes the development initiatives of the military regime after 1964, focusing mainly on the parallel evolution of the policies that governed access to land and minerals. Chapter 4 concerns the end of the military rule and the early years of the civilian New Republic, a period that saw the growing strength of resistance movements in Amazonia and a profound shift in the terms of the policy discourse favoring environmental and human rights concerns.

The chapters in part two show how the local battles that took place in southern Pará were associated with and contributed to the evolution of the regional policies described in part one. Chapter 5 provides a history of the towns of Marabá and Conceição

ter 5 provides a history of the towns of Marabá and Conceição do Araguaia and the economic and political changes brought on by the roadbuilding programs of the 1960s and 1970s. The tortuous story of the PA-279 highway to São Felix do Xingu provides a detailed example of the multiple forces that impinged on the planning and execution of development policies. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 follow the road as it pushed westward across the state. Each chapter highlights a different aspect of the frontier change: the intense conflict over public lands (the town of Xinguara, chapter 6); private colonization in Amazonia (Tucumã, chapter 7); and the massive gold rush that profoundly transformed the character of the regional economy and the urban ecology of towns and cities in the area (Serra Pelada, Cuca, and Ourilândia, chapter 8).

The way the various themes presented in the first two parts of the book play themselves out in São Felix do Xingu is the topic of part three. Chapter 9 recounts the struggle by the Kayapó Indians to secure their land and the cultural and political transformation they experienced in the process. Chapter 10 reviews the recent history of São Felix do Xingu and the changes set in motion by the road and other development initiatives in the 1970s and 1980s. Finally, chapter 11 draws on the social survey data we collected in 1978, 1981, and 1984 to measure the changes in employment, housing, and other quality of life indicators among migrants and old-timers in the town of São Felix.

Our conclusions about the process and impact of frontier expansion (chapter 12) are not encouraging to those who wish to find the solution to rural poverty in Brazil in clearing the tropical forest and settling people in Amazonia. Nor will our findings provide much solace to those analysts who cling to the idea that the patterns of settlement and land use on the Brazilian frontier can be significantly influenced by simply passing enlightened legislation or by urging new regulatory procedures within the administrative bureaucracy. New development priorities and new policies to meet such goals are clearly in order. But to be effective, future initiatives must be formulated in light of the socioeconomic, political, and ideological factors that motivate the process of frontier expansion in Amazonia.

NOTES

1. Analyses of the colonization projects introduced in the 1970s can be found in Fearnside (1986b), Moran (1981), and Smith (1982).

2. See Hecht (1985) and Mahar (1979).

3. See Branford and Glock (1985).

4. The urbanization of Amazonia is discussed by Becker (1982). See also Godfrey (1990).

5. The story of the guerrilla movement in southern Pará is recounted in Doria et al. (1979), Moura (1979), and the collection of documents entitled *Araguaia: O Partido e a Guerrilha. Documentos Inéditos* (São Paulo: Brasil Debates, 1980).

6. José de Souza Martins (1984) provides an account of the militarization of frontier areas in Amazonia during the 1970s.

7. Wood and Schmink (1979).

8. See Pompermayer (1984) and Horak (1984).

9. In keeping with the precepts of modernization theory, poverty and underemployment are understood to be transitory phenomena, the solution to which will come about automatically through the "trickle-down" effect as the benefits of high rates of aggregate economic output diffuse from the rich to the poor, leading in the long run to a more affluent and egalitarian society.

10. In the developmentalist view, the dismantling of traditional cultural traits and socioeconomic arrangements occurs through a process of "creative destruction," in which the unproductive is replaced by the efficient and the traditional gives way to the modern. As the term implies, such transformation is not without its costs. Yet, in the neorealist worldview common to the higher military ranks and to aggressive proponents of industrial capitalism, the social and ecological costs are to be stoically borne until the transition to modernism is completed. Our review in Chapter 3 amply documents the extent to which these and similar assumptions found concrete expression among ranchers and mining companies on the frontier and in the numerous projects and incentive programs that have defined Amazonian development policies since the 1960s.

11. Ideas, as Eric Wolf (1982:390) put it, form an "ecology" of collective representations that is created through a process of selection among alternatives. "This process of inclusion and exclusion is not only cognitive; it also involves the exercise of power. To sustain ideological hegemony, the defenders of orthodoxy must carry their message into an ever larger number of instrumental domains, while curtailing the ability of subaltern groups to advance viable alternatives. Where redundancy falters and ideology-making fails, the deficit may be made up by force."

12. John Butler (1985) and David Cleary (1990) show the important role that gold came to play in local economies.

13. The history of Brazil's export cycles and the associated changes in population distribution are recounted by numerous authors: Baer (1965), Burns (1970), Furtado (1963), Caio Prado Junior (1971), Simonsen (1969), Merrick and Graham (1979).

14. For a history of the moving frontier in Paraná, see Foweraker (1981) and Margolis (1973 and 1979).

15. Merrick and Graham (1979).

16. David Harvey (1989:183) labeled the geographical displacement of capital and labor the "spatial fix" to the accumulation problem under capitalism.

17. The relationship between the agricultural frontier and the structure of post-World War II development in Brazil is discussed by Foweraker (1981).

18. Wood and Carvalho (1988:237–245) provide estimates of the rate of population growth and the rate of job creation in Brazil.

19. De Janvry (1981:61–93).

20. Analyses of frontiers in Brazil can be found in Monbeig (1952), Roche (1959), and Margolis (1973). Discussions of the meaning of a "frontier" and the stages of frontier expansion are presented by Katzman (1978), Martins (1975), Foweraker (1981:27–57), and Sawyer (1984).

21. Beginning in the 1940s and through the 1960s, Paraná was a major recipient of population. The rate of net migration suddenly turned negative in the 1970s. Between 1960 and 1970 Paraná experienced a heavy outflow of people from the rural area (Wood and Carvalho 1988). This turnaround was caused by the closing of the agricultural frontier and by the expulsion of population due to changes in agricultural production, especially the replacement of coffee by laborsaving soy bean cultivation. Many of those who left Paraná found their way to Amazonia as agricultural colonists or adapted their skills as pine loggers and sawmill operators to exploit mahogany and other hardwoods on the new frontier.

22. See O'Donnell (1978).

23. See Becker (1982, 1990).

24. Tilly (1978) and Skocpol (1979) draw an important distinction between conflict and violence, treating the former as an inherent property of a class-divided society and the latter as a specific manifestation of social antagonisms. Our analysis pays attention to both conflict and violence, including the everyday forms of nonviolent resistance by subordinate groups, such as those discussed by James Scott (1985) in his book, *Weapons of the Weak*.

25. The dominant thrust of state policy favors the interests of capital inasmuch as the actors within the realms of legal-political organization are hardly neutral arbiters in the tug and pull of competing agendas. Powerful economic groups have a stronger grip on the levers of state power and a louder voice in planning agencies compared to members of the subordinate class. More generally, the very stability and the legitimacy of the state itself depends heavily on the performance of the economic sector (Soares 1978). Nonetheless, by seeking a path through the thicket of conflicting pressures and by attempting to maintain its own legitimacy, state action displays a certain autonomy between the economic and the political realms. Such partial autonomy explains instances when state policy serves the interests of subordinate groups without losing sight of the greater power that dominant economic interests wield within the state apparatus. Treatments of the conceptual issues involved in the study of the relationship between the state and civil society can be found in Benton (1984), Carnoy (1984), O'Donnell (1973), Offe (1985), and Skocpol (1979). With regard to Amazonia, see Bunker (1985) and Foweraker (1981), from whom we have taken many insights.

26. See Bunker (1985).

27. Rodrigues (1990).

28. Our understanding of constituent properties of social action owes much to Bowles and Gintis (1987) and to Giddens (1984).

29. An important issue that arises here is the question of the kinds of action that are the focus of data collection and interpretation. In this regard, we find Ortner's (1984:150) review of anthropological theory to be insightful. In the section devoted to "practice" theory, she makes the following point: "Everyone seems to agree in opposing a Parsonian or Saussurian view in which action is seen as sheer enactment or execution of rules and norms (Bourdieu 1978; Sahlins 1981; Giddens 1979). Moreover, everyone seems also to agree that a kind of romantic or heroic 'volutarism,' emphasizing the freedom and relatively unrestricted inventiveness of actions, will not do either (e.g., Thompson 1978). What is left, then, is a view of action largely in terms of pragmatic choice and decision making and/or active calculating and strategizing." Indeed, it is this kind of action that is analytically central to the approach we use in this book.

30. The example brings home the point that frontier change was not a process controlled by any one class or group, no matter how central the group may have been. "The evident importance of the actors in a drama, " Eric Hobsbaum wrote in reference to another time and place, "does not mean that they are also dramatist, producer, and stage designer" (Hobsbaum 1975, cited in Skocpol 1979).

31. If society can be likened to a theatrical performance, it is one inspired by Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, a production in which the struggle between the various actors takes place over, not within, the plot (see Bowles and Gintis 1987:118).

32. The problem of agency and the constraints that structural contexts impose on it is a matter of considerable complexity. The issues at hand are brought into relief by critical exchanges between Thompson (1978) and Anderson (1980), usefully summarized by Giddens (1987). See also Gouldner's (1980) book, *The Two Marxisms: Contradictions and Anomalies in the Development of Theory.*

33. At that time we were members of a twelve-person team of researchers from the Center for Development and Regional Planning (CEDEPLAR) at the Federal University of Minas Gerais in Belo Horizonte. The group included a regional economist, several demographers, two sociologists, a social worker, a political scientist, and an anthropologist. Names of these and subsequent research team members who participated in the collection of data analyzed in this book are listed in the acknowledgements.

34. The study by Velho (1972) was the exception. See also Emmi (1988).

35. A conceptual framework does not comprise a theory (a system of interrelated propositions capable of being empirically tested). Rather, it is properly understood as a "map" of the terms and relationships that organize the research agenda. The framework provides guidelines for data collection and for shaping the welter of information into explanations that are logically situated within a general conception of social organization and change.