

Brazil's social movement, women and forests: a case study from the National Council of Rubber Tappers

P. SHANLEY¹, F.C. DA SILVA² and T. MACDONALD³

¹Center for International Forestry Research, (CIFOR), Jl. Situ Gede, Sindang Barang, Bogor 16680, Indonesia and Woods & Wayside International, Princeton, NJ, USA.

²National Council of Extractivist Populations (CNS)

³Woods and Wayside International (WWI)

Email: P.Shanley@cgiar.org and floresta.cristina@gmail.com and trilbymac@gmail.com

SUMMARY

This paper discusses the evolution of the roles of Brazilian women within one of the most prominent organizations of the Amazonian social movement, the National Council of Extractivist Populations (CNS). Between 1990 and 2009, Brazil's Federal government created 89 extractive and sustainable development reserves in Amazonia, encompassing 24 million hectares. The conceptual underpinning of these reserves – sustainable and multiple-use forest management – are daily put into practice by thousands of rural Amazonian women. However, rural women's relative role in forest policy is currently marginal. The Secretariat of Women Extractivists of CNS helped to transform women's roles within CNS and the political hierarchy of extractive reserves from largely invisible to one of significance. Their work across sectors, cultivation of ties with the State, capacity building and acknowledgement of women's cultural connections to forests, provide a strong foundation for an increasing role of Amazonian women to promote sustainable forest management and conservation.

Keywords: social movement, women, forests, conservation, Amazonia

Le mouvement social, les femmes et les forêts brésiliens: étude-cas du Conseil national des récoltants de caoutchouc

P. SHANLEY, F.C. DA SILVA et T. MACDONALD

Entre 1990 et 2009, le gouvernement fédéral du Brésil a créé 89 unités de conservation en Amazonie, recouvrant 24 millions d'ha. La région amazonienne comprend le plus grand nombre de zones protégées au Brésil, un tiers du total. Ce succès favorable aux démunis et à la forêt plonge de profondes racines dans le mouvement social hautement développé du Brésil. Au cours des deux dernières décennies, le mariage des intérêts des ressources naturelles et sociales a aidé à paver la voie des changements de politique progressive dans le soutien des communautés dépendantes de la forêt et des économies locales basées sur des produits forestiers divers. Cet article examine l'évolution du mouvement des femmes dans l'une des organisations de mouvement sociaux amazoniennes les plus prééminentes: le conseil national des récoltants de caoutchouc (CNS). Cet article décrit divers projets du secrétariat des femmes extracteurs du CNS, et montre que des alliances stratégiques avec le secteur de la santé ont permis de lier les questions féminines à la conservation forestière au centre de l'agenda du CNS.

Movimiento social brasileño, mujer y bosque: un estudio de caso del Consejo Nacional de los Recolectores de Caucho

P. SHANLEY, F.C. DA SILVA y T. MACDONALD

Entre 1990 y 2009, el gobierno federal de Brasil creó 89 unidades de conservación en la Amazonía abarcando 24 millones de hectáreas. La Amazonía alberga el mayor número de áreas protegidas en Brasil, con un tercio del total del país. Este logro "en pro del pobre, en pro del bosque" está muy arraigado en el desarrolladísimo movimiento social brasileño. Durante las últimas dos décadas, la imbricación entre los intereses sociales y el interés por los recursos naturales ha ayudado a allanar el camino para la aparición de cambios políticos progresivos en apoyo de las comunidades que dependen del bosque y las economías locales basadas en una variedad de productos forestales. Este artículo discute cómo ha evolucionado el movimiento de la mujer en una de las organizaciones más prominentes dentro del movimiento social de la Amazonía: el Consejo Nacional de los Recolectores de Caucho (CNS, siglas en portugués). Este trabajo describe varios proyectos de la Secretaría de Mujeres Extractivistas del CNS y muestra como las alianzas estratégicas con el sector de la salud han ayudado a que los problemas de la mujer en relación con la conservación forestal sean parte fundamental de la agenda del CNS.

INTRODUCTION

Between 1990 and 2009, Brazil's Federal government created 89 extractive and sustainable development reserves in Amazonia encompassing 24 million hectares. As of December 2010, 44% of Brazil's Amazon region was in protected areas (Veríssimo *et al.* 2011), with Brazil's total conservation area equal to approximately one third of the world's protected areas (Schwartzman *et al.* 2010). This accomplishment is more remarkable when the causative factors are considered. Forest conservation in the Brazilian Amazon has come about, in large part, due to pressure from rural, marginalized, low-income populations who historically had little voice or political presence (Campos and Nepstad 2006). During the last two decades, the dovetailing of social and natural resource interests helped to pave the way for progressive policy changes in support of forest-reliant communities and local economies based on diverse forest products. This "pro-poor, pro-forest" achievement has deep roots in Brazil's highly developed social movement which has been central in achieving human and land rights not only for extractivists, but also for indigenous populations and women.

Although remarkable human rights and conservation gains have been made, extractive reserves are currently rife with problems of management, organizational uncertainties and paternalistic leadership (Diciommo 2007, Hall 2004). Questions regarding the future of extractive reserves, in newly designated areas, include if the forests will be protected, how they will be managed, and whether women's voices will be heard. In spite of the fact that rural Amazonian women practice multiple-use of forests through the collection, use and processing of diverse forest products, they have often had an insubstantial role in forest management and policy (Kainer and Duryea 1992). To discern women's current and potential future role in forest conservation, it is useful to examine the roots of the extractive reserve movement and how women's roles have evolved. This paper discusses the evolution of women's involvement within one of the most prominent social movement organizations in Amazonia, the National Council of Extractivist Populations (CNS – formerly the National Council of Rubber Tappers).¹

Of the protected areas in Amazonia, indigenous lands represent 49% and Conservation Units 51%. Conservation Units are divided into two categories, sustainable use, comprising 33%, and integral protection, totaling 18% (Pereira *et al.* 2010). CNS works in areas designated as sustainable use which includes Extractive Reserves and Sustainable Development Reserves. In both, the land is owned by the federal government with local communities and the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Natural Renewable Resources (IBAMA) sharing responsibility for managing the land. The objective of such protected areas is to reduce conflict and land speculation, thereby allowing local residents rights to manage natural resources sustainably. *For the purposes of brevity,*

we will refer to both extractive reserves and sustainable development reserves as extractive reserves.

The extractivist movement in Brazil, which started with the rubber tappers, began not as an environmental movement but a human rights movement, and has close ties with the agrarian reform movements. The two movements evolved together, and worked parallel to one another in the fight to achieve access to land and forests for resource-dependent populations, as well as for government services, credit, and human rights. While the movements are mutually supportive, their objectives are different: the agrarian reform movement works to gain land for landless farmers, while the National Council of Extractivist Populations works to conserve forests for extractivists. Apart from the Landless People's Movement (MST), which has adopted agroecology as part of its agenda (Delgado 2008) there tends to be relatively less concern for resource management and forest conservation on the part of the agrarian reform movement (Futemma and Brondizio 2003, Pacheco 2009). While the two movements lack common ground for shared projects, they do share human rights goals. Both are currently working together to achieve improved access to the national healthcare system and to fight for the protection of rural activists who are frequently assassinated for their work defending land and forests against powerful business interests.

The rubber tappers movement came to be allied with the environmental movement when international environmentalists adopted the fight of the rubber tappers to defend their forests as their cause celeb. The strategic collaboration between national and international environmental groups gave it unprecedented visibility and effectiveness throughout the 1980s to the present (Allegritti 2002, Arnt 1998, Brown and Rosendo 2000a, Schwartzmann *et al.* 2010). The roots of CNS highlight the catalytic role of Chico Mendes and the rubber tappers movement in linking human and environmental rights (Allegritti 1998, Brown and Rosendo 2000b, Keck 1995, Schmink and Wood 1992).

Women were not active in the leadership of the rubber tapper movement in these early days, and there are few accounts of their political participation in the movement and subsequently in conservation units (Campbell 1987, Hecht 2007, Simonian and Glaser 2003). In some cases, women joined forces with male leaders and fought for their rights together, as during *empates*, where rubber tappers would gather to prevent loggers from clear cutting their forests, often with women on the front lines (Campbell 1987). In other cases, women worked to achieve their particular rights outside of the male-led rubber tappers movement, and joined forces with Brazil's early women's movement to work on women's rights issues more broadly (Campbell 1987).

Since the formation of CNS in 1985, women have made great strides towards achieving equal rights, political voice, and respect from men both at home and in society at large. However, in spite of the wide utilization and processing

¹ CNS leadership voted to change the name of the organization in 2009 to be inclusive of all types of forest product collectors, not only rubber tappers.

of forest goods by rural Amazonian women, their role in the political workings or management of extractive reserves is relatively little documented. This raises some questions: what is the current role of women in CNS? What types of projects are women involved in and why? Have they attained positions of leadership? And finally, if and how are women influencing the political agenda of CNS?

This article explores the early role of the Catholic Church in providing a space for marginalized groups, including women, to become politically engaged; how women gained voice through the church and political reforms; and how they achieved institutional space in the National Council of Extractivist Populations. Next, projects of the Secretariat of Women Extractivists of CNS are described, as a case study by which to examine the changing role of women within one of the foremost social movement organizations involved in forest conservation in Amazonia. Differing perspectives on forest value by women and men within and outside of extractive reserves are then examined. The article closes by exploring how women may be influencing CNS programs and agenda to reflect their unique objectives and concerns, such as health care and multiple use forest management, and the evolving role of women within CNS and in extractive reserves more broadly.

METHODS

This article is based on data gathered from records of the National Council of Extractivist Populations regarding the number and content of health and forestry related CNS workshops conducted in Amazonian extractive reserves, as well as the extent of women's leadership throughout the organization's history. Additional information has been drawn from interviews with the first Secretariat of Women of CNS, as well as from experience on the part of the present Secretariat conducting workshops in extractive reserves. Data regarding gender differences in perceptions of forest value were gathered as part of workshops focused on forest use, value and management conducted within and outside of protected areas. These workshops were conducted in response to requests from local host institutions, community organizations and NGOs and implemented by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) in cooperation with local partners. An overview of literature regarding Brazilian social movements and their roots in political reform, land tenure and the Catholic Church, helped to contextualize the role of women in CNS and conservation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Theoretical context

Social movements have been defined as, 'informal networks based on shared beliefs and solidarity which mobilize around conflictual issues and deploy frequent and varying forms of protest' (Della Porta and Diani 1999). Numerous theories

have been postulated regarding social movements; some of those relevant in the Brazilian context include resource mobilization theory which highlight the ability of oppositional groups to capitalize on political and social opportunity (Jenkins 1983) and notions of collective identity as a mobilizing force (Polletta and Jasper 2001). Recently, some scholars have noted that it is difficult to understand social movements without taking into consideration the personal, lived experience of the activist as central to understanding the shared associations toward mobilization (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001).

Health and environment have also emerged as powerful lenses for grievances and although these have received less theoretical notice, they merit attention as new arenas of social movement mobilization (Brown *et al.* 2004, Morgen 2002). In rural areas where social movements have taken on issues related to biodiversity, embedded notions of culture, place and territory have also become essential to the identity and causes of social movements. Escobar (1998, 1992) highlights the identity born from nature and culture as potentially central to alternative models of development which counter restricted, needs-based, rational economic and ethnocentric frameworks.

Root of Brazilian social movements in political reform and the Catholic Church

Within Brazil, social movements have had a substantial role, being closely aligned with labor and agrarian reform movements (Pacheco 2009), democratization (Hochstetler 1997), the Church (Drogas 1999) and more recently, women's and environmental issues (Campbell 1997). In the early 1960's the stark inequality between large property owners and poor tenant farmers sparked the radicalization of small farmers across Brazil. President João Goulart responded by enacting the first labor legislation, which extended to rural workers, the right to organize into unions as well as legislation defining the types of land that could be expropriated for agrarian reform. Elites, fearing these moves would further embolden the working classes and could lead to a Communist revolution, threw their support behind a military coup in March 1964, which ushered in 21 years of military rule (Deere 2003). The military's suspicion of the Church and open hostility to the working classes alarmed many clergy. Many activist priests and nuns who defended the rights of the poor were imprisoned, tortured and killed, further souring the relationship between Church and State. Faced with competition from Protestant and secular movements, the Catholic Church made a tactical move to reject the State's political agenda and to fortify its alliance with the social movements rather than risk irrelevance (Hewitt 1989, Drogas 1999).

Christian Base Communities, or CEBs, offered a mechanism for incorporating this group back into the Church. CEBs were comprised predominantly of working class, politically oriented lay groups that were most influential in Brazil from the early 1960s to the late 1980s. The CEBs were led by lay people, often without the participation of the clergy. However the priests and nuns who acted as supporters and facilitators

of the CEBs were often proponents of Liberation Theology, an ideological movement that linked the teachings of Christ with the liberation of the poor from suffering and exploitation (Adriance 1991, Deere 2001, Drogas 1999, Teixeira 1988). At their height, CEBs boasted more than 100 000 groups with roughly five million members (Pierucci and Reginaldo 1995). Unions were banned during the dictatorship, but the State was reluctant to attack the Church directly and the Church was able to offer some protection for social activists who used the CEBs as a space to discuss their political agendas. The CEBs were crucial to the transition to democracy and the reemergence of Brazil's social movements; however their role diminished in importance after the dictatorship.

The CEBs were characterized by their strong female membership (Drogas 1999). The Church represented an intermediate space between the home and the public sphere where women's presence was considered socially acceptable. The CEBs gave many women their first taste of political engagement and the women's movement grew in part from that beginning (Adriance 1991, Schmink 1981). While many CEB members, including women, went on to become leaders in workers' unions, others felt that the Church was not receptive to gender-specific concerns and joined forces with the larger women's movement (Cavendish 1994).

Under the guidance of bishop Dom Moacyr Crechi, the CEBs took on a prominent role in the politicization of rural workers and rubber tappers in the Amazon. By 1981 there were 1 000 CEBs, 130 community centers, 70 youth groups and hundreds of CEB leaders in Acre (Allegretti 2002). Moacyr Crechi was a leading figure in the process of organizing the rubber tappers through partnership with both religious and secular activists. These efforts culminated in the founding in Acre of the National Federation of Agricultural Workers (CONTAG) in 1975, which, along with the support of the Ministry of Labor, helped the rubber tappers to form a Rural Workers Union in 1977 (Allegretti 1998).

In the early years of Acre's Rural Workers Union, 90% of the members were men. The union wanted one member per family, and only in cases where there was no male head of household were women allowed to join the union. Although women were not considered to be rubber tappers in their own right, one study found that 64% of women in Acre had cut and collected rubber at some time in their lives, and 78% regularly collected and processed rubber tapped by a man (Kainer and Duryea 1992). Among the first women to attend union meetings were members of the CEBs, and they encouraged more women to participate.

The National Council of Extractivist Populations

The National Council of Extractivist Populations, formerly known as The National Council of Rubber Tappers, was founded in 1985 during the First National Encounter of Rubber Tappers in Brasilia, with the purpose of advocating for the social and political empowerment of forest communities. CNS brought together various initiatives fighting for human rights of forest-dependent people and the sustainable

use of forest resources. CNS works in support of public policies which help to maintain extractivist families in rural areas, recognizing their role as agents of conservation. To this end, CNS works to influence public policies in Brazil related to the production, processing and commercialization of extractive products. CNS participates in negotiations with the federal government to demarcate reserves and settlements, and advocates for a land use policy specific to Amazonia.

Rubber tappers' resistance to powerful landowners seeking to expel them from their forests became known to environmentalists and NGOs working in Amazonia (Hecht 1989). These groups assisted the rubber tappers in developing the concept of extractive reserves as a means of implementing land reform and the sustainable use and conservation of natural resources (Hecht and Cockburn 1989). Social justice and environmental protection goals were, therefore, linked. The pressure resulting from a combination of protest and advocacy at the local, national and international levels finally led the government, in 1990, to institutionalize extractive reserves as part of the national environmental policy (Brown and Rosendo 2000a) (Figure 1).

Evolution of the Secretariat of Women Extractivists within the National Council of Rubber Tappers

During Brazil's transition to democracy in the 1980s, various women's groups and associations were formed in the Amazon region and across the country, each with a different focus and objective. Many female CEB members realized that they would not be able to work towards gender equality under the auspices of a Church-run organization and joined with other political and social movements. Some, such as the Women's Movement of Amazonia (MAMA), capitalized on international donors' interest in gender issues and garnered funding from external sources. Others, such as the Quebradeiras de Coco (women who process babaçu nuts) were born out of the struggle which a particular group of extractivists were

FIGURE 1 CNS women and men demonstrating for forest and human rights, in the state of Pará, Brazil. The banner reads, "Justice in the Forest CNS"



confronting. The Quebradeiras de Coco assembled to address their concerns as women and as extractivists confronting discriminatory government policies that favored large cattle ranchers and extensive monoculture plantations (Hecht and Cockburn 1989, Schmink and Wood 1992). In 1995, the Quebradeiras de Coco organized the first large-scale demonstration of Amazonian women, called the Interstate Movement of Quebradeiras de Coco Babaçu (MIQCB), bringing together hundreds of activists from four northern states, Pará, Piauí, Maranhão and Tocantins.

Sensing the possible loss of power base through these women's potential secession from the National Council of Rubber Tappers, CNS resolved to establish a new division, The Secretariat of Women Extractivists. CNS invited the prominent leader of the Quebradeiras de Coco, Dona Raimunda, to be its founding Director. Despite widespread discontent regarding the possible appropriation of their leader at such a critical time, Dona Raimunda accepted the offer, considering that inside CNS, she could possibly help rural women's cause more than in a gender-specific and geographically restricted parallel movement.

During her first three years as Director of the Secretary of Women at CNS, Dona Raimunda received external support to work on issues related to gender and education; however, funds for the Secretariat were administered in Brasília, which restricted her independence in managing projects. In 1998, during CNS's General Assembly of their Fifth Annual Congress, Dona Raimunda was re-elected for another three-year term. During this Assembly, the composition of directors was changed to include 30% women, in an effort to make the organization more reflective of women's needs. One of the resolutions defined during the Fifth Assembly was for CNS to actively support women in management positions within unions, associations and cooperatives. In 2000, CNS recruited Fatima Christina da Silva who had previously worked on community-based sustainable development in Acre with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture. With two experienced women on board with knowledge of different areas of Amazonia (east and west), work on a range of women's issues on a regional scale began to coalesce.

The Secretariat confronted huge challenges. Women were responsible for the multitude of duties involved in taking care of their children and husbands, as well as engaging in the heavy manual labor of forest extractivism and agriculture. This left little time or motivation to participate actively in social movement activities, the objectives and goals of which some perceived as unclear or unattainable. Women represented a social category perceived as producing insignificant fiscal earnings and possessing negligible power to demand their rights. Given women's scant knowledge regarding the functioning of governmental organizations as well as citizen rights, they remained largely invisible at home and to local, state and federal governmental agencies.

The Secretariat set out to strengthen extractivist communities through women's empowerment, and to change public policies and private attitudes towards women extractivists and agriculturalists to reflect their needs, including basic education and health care. The Secretariat recognized that without

women's full participation and equal rights, the mission of CNS to create sustainable, thriving communities in extractive reserves would never be realized.

Projects of the Secretariat of Women Extractivists of CNS

The Secretariat of Women Extractivists of CNS had bold plans to empower extractivist women throughout the Amazon, but they started small. They began by giving women an opportunity to meet and share their problems and dreams. Through communication and solidarity with other women they gradually lost their sense of abandonment as they witnessed others in the same condition and realized that they needed to join forces to bring about transformation, in their own lives and society. Despite the enormity of the struggle, the union of women grew each year.

The Secretariat also understood the importance of keeping a low profile. Rather than directly tackling sensitive issues related to gender, they began to work strategically on citizenship, an issue which was not explicitly threatening. Lack of identification documents was a fundamental problem for men and women alike, leaving them unable to gain access to their civil rights. Beginning in 2003, the Secretariat launched workshops within various extractive reserves in the state of Pará, as well as a campaign to acquire documents for families living within the city of Novo Ipixuna. In a massive effort, they successfully obtained identification documents for 5,000 families, the first step in enabling them to assert their rights as citizens.

The next issue the Secretariat tackled was health. The choice of health care as their platform was a strategic one. First, women living in extractive reserves are the principal health care providers for their families. Women's accumulated knowledge of forests within the extractive reserves, the ecology, habitats, and specific location of phototherapeutics, is intimately connected with their family's health. Second, the issue of health care traversed scales, resonating from the local to the national level, which helped the Secretariat cultivate a closer relationship with the State. Third, the topic of health was non-threatening to male household members as well as to the leadership within CNS. Men and women were invited to workshops as the Secretariat of Women recognized that a change in family dynamics would only come about through education, inclusive activities and communication. Furthermore, health had the added advantage of producing benefits for the whole family, as women better understood their own health and that of their family members, they improved their ability to recognize, treat and prevent illnesses.

After gaining substantial first-hand experience in scores of extractive reserves, the Secretariat of Women turned their attention from local practice to national policy. In 2005, CNS's Secretariat participated in the *Grupo da Terra do Ministerio da Saude* (Ministry of Health's Working Group on Land Issues) to construct a National Policy of Health for Rural People jointly with other groups of the Brazilian social movement. Over the course of the year, the Secretariat worked

closely with the Ministry to amend health policies. They were also successful in modifying policy language away from an agriculture-centric nomenclature to new language which includes forest peoples. The name became, the National Policy of Health for Rural and Forest Populations. This was a significant achievement in recognition of extractivist communities as well as calling for more equitable access to and provision of health services for forest-reliant people.

The negotiations that CNS and other social movements took part in Brasilia not only pushed forward legislative reform but catalyzed a blurring of the boundaries between lay and expert forms of knowledge and between actions of the State and the health care expertise of rural women (Brown et al. 2004). The public health care system has a tendency to disregard or disparage plant-based health care practices and treat women as uninformed. By contrast, long-held photo-therapeutic knowledge imparts an authority to women that strengthens their role as their family's primary health care practitioner and gives them control over their family's health care process (Wayland 2001).

Forest and environment

Next to health care, the topic which arose most frequently among women in extractive reserves was forests – use of forest products, ways to generate income and conservation of trees which provide food and/or medicine for families. Although their role in forest use and management is far less documented in the literature than that of men, women's role in the use and processing of forest resources is substantial (Kainer and Duryea 1992, Simonian 2001, Wayland 2001). Building on the strength of rural women, in 2004, the Secretariat of Women created a program entitled, A Bagagem das Mulheres da Floresta (Baggage of the Women of the Forest) signifying the knowledge that women possess and the tools and outside knowledge that the project brought to them (i.e. videos, books, workshops). Critical support from the Ministry of Health allowed them to broaden their workshops to reach every extractive reserve in Amazonia.

Traveling workshops throughout the remote reserves in each of the Amazonian states continued for a multi-year period commencing with health care and building on women's knowledge base, while expanding to include relevant topics, including human rights, community organizing and sustainable use of forest products. Between 1996 and 2011, 430 workshops were conducted in extractive reserves, reaching an estimated 31,100 women and men (Table 1). Workshops bridged the interface of scientific and local

knowledge, validating traditional knowledge while introducing relevant aspects of science, policy and market information (Shanley, Medina and Serra 2010). Such initiatives reveal motivation on the part of social movement activists who crossed boundaries to advance their knowledge of science related to forest management. The information conveyed awakened many residents as to the threats that logging and other unsustainable use practices could be to their livelihoods (Figure 2).

Because extractive reserves have set limits as to the use of natural resources by resident communities, the need for sustainable development plans for the reserves only became apparent relatively recently. In 2008, extractive reserves began to implement sustainable development plans under the auspices of the Chico Mendes Institute, a government agency formerly connected to IBAMA that is in charge of regulating conservation units. However, many extractive reserves contend with widespread problems in organization and management, stemming, in part, from geographical isolation, poor education and social fragmentation (Hall 2004). Without strong local resource-governing institutions, communities often have conflicting visions and lack the capacity to manage areas collectively (Pinto da Silva 2004). Unfavorable macro-economic policies, land invasions, weak capacity to enforce boundaries, low prices for extractive products and long distances to volatile markets make for a complex web of challenges (Hall 2004).

FIGURE 2 Example of a poster used during workshops to illustrate the impacts of logging on livelihoods (Shanley, Medina and Serra 2010)

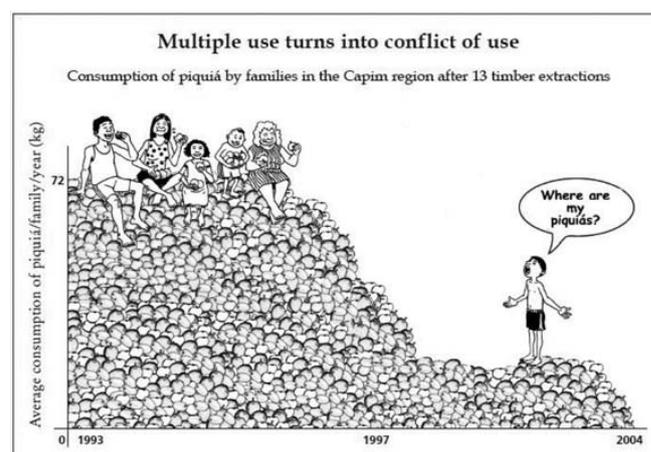


TABLE 1 Workshops conducted in extractive reserves by the Secretariat of Women Extractivists, CNS

Topics	1985–1995	1996–2004	2005–2011	Total
Health and Environment	0	30	197	227
Gender and Environment	0	35	95	130
Income and forest products	0	7	30	37
Community organization	0	11	25	36

Women and forests outside of protected areas: lessons for CNS

Part of any plan for conservation of the Amazon forest will need to address not only protected areas, such as extractive reserves, but also areas which are not protected. Experience also demonstrates that conservation efforts must focus on not only ecological factors, but include a strong social component (Colchester 2000, Rocheleau and Edmonds 1997). In Amazonia, small holders within and outside of protected areas constitute an important social capital and are making unprecedented conservation gains, in part through their newfound proximity to power and ability to occupy political positions at the state and federal levels (Campos and Nepstad 2006).

CNS's participatory approach to multi-stakeholder decision making offers an example of the communication and organizational skills needed to manage forests in increasingly contested areas. In areas where no monitoring or safeguards are in place to protect natural resources and where women are less integrated into decision-making processes, there is a lower likelihood of equitable negotiation regarding the use of forest resources, often leading to unsustainable outcomes. In spite of political and social gains over the last couple of decades, women's roles in forest management and policy frequently remain peripheral to men's roles. As one leader who conducted workshops in both protected and unprotected areas stated, "Where CNS is active, there is the strengthening of extractivist populations and inclusion of women. But where there is no community organization or workshops, there is often no vision, orientation or initiative." If and how women are involved and how they view and interact with forests can be critical, as management decisions often determine land use (see box).

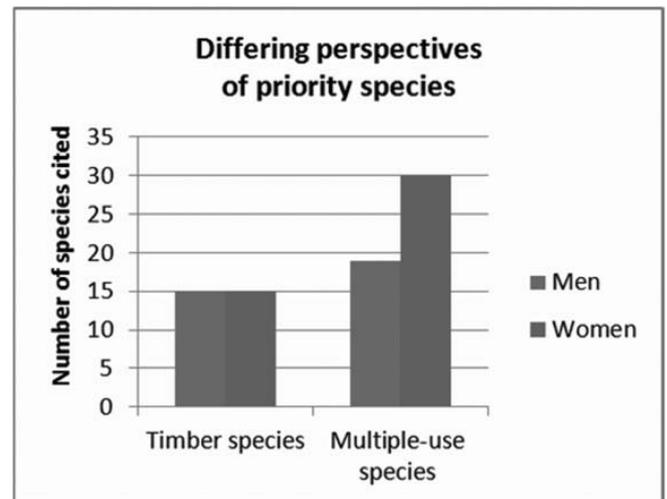
Today, in rural communities throughout Amazonia, decision-making regarding land use and timber sales remain the domain of men. Frequently negotiations take place during meetings of male community members; women have no say

in the process. Timber sales have direct repercussions for women, however, as they use forest goods to maintain the health and nutrition of the family. Some, generally small, segments of communities, both within and outside of protected areas, have pushed back against loggers and ranchers to conserve rubber, fruit trees and medicinal species (Shanley 2006). After conducting approximately 100 workshops in forest communities in and outside of reserves over the course of the last ten years, educator Gloria Gaia states, "In every community it is the men that sell the forest. But in some regions, the women restore it, they plant and bring back the medicine and fruit trees."

Women's leadership and recent accomplishments of the Secretariat of Women Extractivists of CNS

Women's leadership is growing within CNS and women's issues are gaining attention with numerous factors facilitating

FIGURE 3 *Species considered of highest value according to 1,515 rural men and women in the state of Pará, Brazil*



Differing perspectives of forest value by men and women Flavio Contente

The Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) conducted workshops focused on forest value throughout the state of Pará. Eighteen workshops were realized in sites including extractive reserves, agro-extractivist communities, settlement zones and logging frontiers. Approximately fifteen hundred male and female participants were asked, "What is the importance of the forest in your life?" and, "Which species are priorities for your community?" Responses revealed minimal differences between the regions but marked differences regarding which species are deemed important according to gender. Men in each of the regions generally defined timber species as the species of greatest value because these are the species for which the most money can be earned. A farmer in Mojú, in the state of Pará stated what other men expressed: "I only value what places money in my hand, I do not know about these things like selling bark, fruit or seeds." By contrast, the majority of women in protected and unprotected areas considered the economic value and direct use of species for food, nutrition, medicine and culture. Women included a host of species, differing in plant type (vines, bushes, herbs, trees) as well as in plant part used (fruit, bark, leaf, seed, root). The statement of a woman in Baião, Pará echoed the sentiment of others: "The forest is a grand womb generating life; because of this we preserve her."

The graph above demonstrates the number of timber and non-timber forest product species cited by men and women during 18 workshops (Figure 3). The species useful for timber are equally cited by men and women whereas women cite nearly double the number of non-timber forest species as men. Results reflect a study on the importance of forests conducted in Bolivia where the proportion of men citing timber species was double that of women (Bolanos and Schminck 2009).

this process. A central goal of the Secretariat has been to build community capacity and to form new women leaders capable of organizing politically and fighting for women's rights to generate income, have land title, health care and education. Women currently participate in general meetings on political and organizational topics in extractive reserves, a space that was previously male only. Although women are still reluctant to speak in such meetings, over time it is anticipated that a critical mass will be reached to attain the "threshold representation" necessary for women to feel empowered and to enter into decision making forums (Agarwal 2010). Thus far, the actions taken by the Secretariat to encourage women's participation reflects key recommendations of a global analysis of 14 case studies on women's role in forestry. Recommendations include: providing a safe platform for dialogue between stakeholders; training officials to understand the needs of rural women; training marginalized women; collective action; and networking between powerful and less powerful players (Colfer 2009).

While female leadership was negligible in the early days of the movement, the growing numbers of women in leadership positions within CNS likely reflects external pressure to include women as well as a growing internal commitment on the part of the organization's directors. CNS has a Deliberative Council which is composed of 27 community leaders from a range of extractive sectors who are elected every 3 years. Currently women represent 40% of the members and in the next election CNS has set a goal to have 50% women within its governing body. While the goal is laudable, attaining it will be difficult. The struggle to improve the leadership within unions, cooperatives, associations and CNS continues, as even today, inequality and the traditional profile of male leadership persists. At present, the Secretariat continues to be composed of two full time staff along with field collaborators, including 15 volunteer community organizers. These volunteers serve practical functions within extractive reserves such as health care and education while also acting as social change agents, working to transform political and social structures in support of rural communities (Figure 4).

As of 2011 there are no women presidents of forest extractive reserves, however, in marine extractive reserves, there are seven women presidents (Table 2). The high level of participation by women in coastal areas is due to the relative facility of travel and accessing information, as compared to forest communities where distances are greater and less easily traversed. Women in coastal areas can more easily gain the information and experience necessary to lead by participating in meetings with local workers unions and other social movements, such as the Federation of Rural Agricultural Workers

FIGURE 4 *Leading environmental and human rights activists, Maria do Espírito Santo and her husband, José Cláudio Ribeiro. Maria worked closely with projects of the Women's Secretariat of CNS. Both were assassinated May 24, 2011 for their efforts protecting human and land rights in Amazonia*



(FETAGRI) and the National Confederation of Agricultural Workers (CONTAG).

Exposure to women activists in social movements has helped to raise the level of participation of women in CNS, and since its inception the Secretariat has collaborated with agricultural and rural workers, and politically oriented social movements to improve women's rights. An example of this is the *Marcha das Margaridas* (March of the Margaridas) an annual march begun in 2000 in Brasilia for women's rights. Attracting thousands of women from throughout Brazil, the march was inspired by the 1983 assassination of the rural woman activist, Margarida Maria Alves. One hundred thousand women are estimated to take part in this year's March, faithfully recalling the lives and work of slain activists.

This year, the life and work of two leading Brazilian forest and human rights advocates will be honored, Maria do Espírito Santo da Silva, who worked with the Women's Secretariat of CNS, and her husband, José Cláudio Ribeiro, who also worked with CNS. On May 24th, 2011, during the writing of this article, they were assassinated for their work protecting forests and human rights in the State of Pará. Among participants in the social movement it is often stated that each death of a rural activist serves to strengthen the struggle for human rights and forest conservation. This sentiment is reflected in the widely recounted statement, "Each drop of bloodshed transforms into a tree." (Fig. 5).

Each march has a theme and a series of demands to improve the lives of rural women and their families. The theme of 2011's march, Sustainable Development with

TABLE 2 *Female leadership within CNS*

Dates	1985–1995	1996–2004	2005–20011
Women in the directorship of CNS	12	15	22
Number of female presidents of extractive reserves	0	2	5
Organized groups of women extractivists formed within reserves	3	5	11

FIGURE 5 Women accompany the funeral procession of Maria do Espírito Santo and José Cláudio Ribeiro in the state of Pará, Brazil. One thousand one hundred and fifty rural activists have been slain in land conflicts throughout Brazil during the last 20 years



ONLINE
COLOUR
ONLY

Justice, Autonomy, Equality and Liberty, illustrates the link between human rights, environmental justice and conservation that various social movements, including the Secretariat of Women of CNS have jointly worked for. The role of the Secretariat within CNS has been to deepen the organization's commitment to and actions leading toward forest conservation and women's rights, recognizing that rural women's daily activities are integrally linked with production, health care and their sense of place in forest ecosystems. The Secretariat's tactical focus on health served to bridge scales between tangible concerns in extractive reserves and national issues of relevance to the State. The choice of health as an organizing theme also brought needed information and services to reserves while helping to create greater recognition of, and respect for, forest-reliant populations among policy makers in Brasilia. This stance of CNS and the Secretariat stands in contrast to various factions of the agrarian reform movements which consider environmental issues as secondary or even as distracting to the primary goal of land reform (Futemma and Brondozio 2003).

Success in cultivating proximity to the State has helped to attract the support of government agencies and international donors for women extractivists' projects. The Secretariat of Amazonian Coordination in the Ministry of the Environment has financed projects to specifically assist women extractivists. CNS donors are supporting projects which help women through the development of markets for forest products to generate income. Since 1985, for example, the number of women in extractive reserves who have formed production groups to market forest products has grown from 3 to 18. Save the Children, a UK-based NGO that supports initiatives around the world to improve the lives of children, supported the construction of two Community Houses in two Sustainable Use Conservation Units on the Island of Marajó. These houses are centers of information and training on children's

rights, healthcare and food security for families, and have attended over 5,200 children and 1,500 women.

Recently, the Secretariat of Women of CNS had three notable victories – the International Service Human Rights Award for Women's Rights, accepted by Fatima Cristina da Silva in London, UK; and the Chico Mendes Award for the Defense of Human Rights for their work on Health and the Environment accepted by Célia Regina das Neves in Acre in 2009. In addition, the Secretariat has won the ActionAid award for their video on health care. These comprise three major prizes awarded to the small-staffed and modestly funded Women's Secretariat of CNS. Notably, the actions for which each prize was won, link human and environmental rights, underscoring the extent to which the conservation of forests is inextricably connected to dignity, equality and justice for rural women and their families. Given the gains made by this small Secretariat, the roles of women within social movements as a potentially galvanizing force for forest conservation and human rights need closer examination.

In addition to what the Women's Secretariat has accomplished, CNS has made key gains in human and land rights during its 26 years of existence. Some of the more notable include the following:

- Active in 50,000 km² of forest
- Catalyzed the creation of over 89 extractive reserves and protected areas, totaling 24 million hectares of forest, benefitting an estimated 30 000 families.
- Developed 10 Projects of Extractive Settlements, covering roughly 1 million hectares and benefitting approximately 3,000 families.
- Worked with the Bank of Amazonia (BASA) to develop a line of credit available from the Program of Support for Development of Extractivism (Prodex)
- Obtained subsidies for the price of rubber
- Created the Program of Amazonian Solidarity, which promotes socio-economic improvements of rubber tappers through incentives for multiple-use of forests, and supports commercialization, health, and infrastructural improvements.

CONCLUSION

In spite of its major role in the expansion of Amazonian protected areas, the direct role of social movements in forest conservation in Latin America has been given less attention than deserved by academics and by conservation organizations (Schwartzman *et al.* 2010). Although conservation organizations have spent relatively large sums of money in efforts to set aside protected areas, few have been effective in doing so (Alcorn 2005, Cleary 2006). Given the conservation efficacy of social movements in Brazil, the earlier perception of them as scattered, disorganized protests without political force or a role in Brazilian land use planning is giving way to an understanding of their key role in shifting government policies to promote the protection of land and forest rights.

Within this emerging vision of the environmental role of social movements in Amazonia (Souza 2008) it is useful to reevaluate the role of women within traditionally male dominated groups, specifically forest conservation and land tenure movements. Although once barred from entry into rural workers' unions and social and land reform movements, women are now commonly members of social movements linked with forests and land reform. The case study discussed demonstrates a still ambiguous role for women within CNS and forest conservation. Women are secondary to men in institutional politics. As of yet, there are no women leaders of forest extractive reserves. Women living within reserves generally have little voice in land use and forest management decision and have scant access to formal education or public health care (Paula *et al.* 2003). Paradoxically, women are a collective repository of expert knowledge on forest habitats and species; and they practice multiple-use of forests for the collection, processing and production of forest goods and occupy the position of the primary family medical practitioner (Kainer and Duryea 1992, Wayland 2001).

The Women's Secretariat of CNS built on these strengths of forest-reliant women by strategically mobilizing support across sectors and scales, working from the personal to the political while blurring the boundaries between lay and expert knowledge. Their accumulated actions are part of a global movement working towards a paradigm shift in development, environment and health. This movement encourages a shift away from a purely rationalist, economic-based model to sustainable, place-based, culturally cohesive communities (Escobar *et al.* 2002). Far from being an image borrowed from or imposed upon the movement from international environmentalists, forest conservation for many rural women in Amazonia signifies sustenance for their families, cultural continuity and a place and means to live independent of oppression. This union between forest conservation and health care reflected in the daily lives of rural Amazonian women is the bond which the Secretariat of Women of the National Council of Extractivist Populations recognized and used as their primary platform of work over the last decade.

Over time, key questions will be how the reserves are managed and who the decision makers will be. Lessons from outside of protected areas indicate that where community organization is lacking, where women have not been involved in decision making processes and where communities are uninformed about forest values and the threat of land use change, forests can be readily degraded through successive sales to loggers, ranchers or large-scale agriculture. Furthermore, gender-specific initiatives which are externally driven by donors and lacking in grass roots support are generally ineffectual. Lessons from grass roots initiatives within and outside of protected areas suggest that the underlying beliefs and actions of the Women's Secretariat of CNS are timely and relevant for the challenges facing Amazonia. Environmentalists, development practitioners and academics interested in forest conservation may benefit from taking better notice of the diverse and meaningful roles women play in social movements in Amazonia and beyond.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors thank the National Council of Extractivist Populations for sharing their experience and records regarding the evolution of the Women's Secretariat. Flavio Contente provided useful data regarding forest workshops in the state of Pará. Gloria Gaia provided valuable insights based on 25 years experience conducting medicinal plant workshops in rural communities. The authors also gratefully acknowledge the thoughtful and constructive comments of the referees who made valuable suggestions to improve the paper.

REFERENCES

- ADRIANCE, M. 1991. Agents of Change: The roles of priests, sisters, and lay workers in the grassroots Catholic Church in Brazil. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* **30**(3): 292–305.
- AGARWAL, B. 2010. Does Women's proportional strength affect their participation? Governing local forests in South Asia. *World Development* **38**(1): 98–112.
- ALCORN, J. 2005. Dances around the fire: Conservation organizations and community-based natural resource management. In: Brosius, J.P., Tising, A.L. and Zerner, C. (eds.) *Communities and conservation*, pp. 37–68. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- ALLEGRETTI, M.H. 1998. Chico Mendes ten years before. In: S. Schwartzman (ed.), *From the ashes: Reflections on Chico Mendes and the future of the rainforest*. Washington DC: Environmental Defense Fund.
- ALLEGRETTI, M.H. 2002. A construção social de políticas ambientais: Chico Mendes e o movimento dos seringueiros. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Brasília, 2002.
- ARNT, R. 1998. Ten years with Chico. *From the ashes reflections on Chico Mendes and the future of the rainforest*. Washington DC, Environmental Defense Fund.
- BOLANÓS, O. and SCHMINK, M. 2005. Women's place is not in the forest: Gender issues in a timber management project in Bolivia. In: COLFER, C.J.P. (ed.) *The Equitable Forest: Diversity, Community and Natural Resources*. Washington, D.C.: RFF/CIFOR. pp. 274–295.
- BROWN, K., and ROSENDO, S. 2000a. Environmentalists, rubber tappers and empowerment: The politics and economics of extractive reserves. *Development and Change* **31**: 201–227.
- BROWN, K., and ROSENDO, S. 2000b. The institutional architecture of extractive reserves in Rondonia, Brazil. *The Geographical Journal* **166**(1): 35–48.
- BROWN, P., ZAVESTOSKI, S., MCCORMICK, S., MAYER, B., MORELLO-FROSCH, R. and GASIOR ALTMAN, R. 2004. Embodied health movements: new approaches to social movements in health. *Sociology of Health and Illness*, **26**: 50–80.
- CAMPBELL, C. 1997. Out on the front lines but still struggling for voice: Women in the rubber tappers' defense of the forest in Xapuri. *The Ecologist* **27**(2): 46–54.

- CAMPOS, M. and NEPSTAD, D. 2006. Smallholders, the Amazon's new conservationists. *Conservation Biology* **20**: 1552–1556.
- CAVENDISH, J.C. 1994. Christian base communities and the building of democracy: Brazil and Chile. *Sociology of Religion* **55**(2): 175–192.
- CLEARY, D. 2006. The questionable effectiveness of science spending by international conservation organizations in the tropics. *Conserv. Biol.* **20**: 733–738.
- COLCHESTER, M. 2000. Self-determination or environmental determinism for indigenous peoples in tropical forest conservation. *Conservation Biology*. **14**: 1365–1367.
- COLFER, C.J.P. 2005. Conclusion: Implications of adaptive collaborative management for more equitable forest management In: Colfer, C.J.P. (ed.) *The Equitable Forest: Diversity, Community and Natural Resources*. Washington, D.C.: RFF/CIFOR. pp. 274–295.
- DEERE, C.D. 2001. Gender, land rights, and rural social movements: Regional differences in the Brazilian agrarian reform. *Prepared for delivery at the 2001 meeting of the Latin American Studies Association*, Washington DC, September 6–8.
- DEERE, C.D. 2003. Women's land rights and rural social movements in the Brazilian agrarian reform. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, **3**(1/2): 257–288.
- DELGADO, A. 2008. Opening up participation in agrobiodiversity conservation: the expert-lay interplay in a Brazilian social movement. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* **21**: 559–577.
- DELLA PORTA, D. and DIANI, M. 1999. *Social Movements: An introduction*. Malden, MA, Blackwell.
- DI CIOMMO, R. 2007. Gender, tourism, and participatory appraisals at the Corumbãu marine extractive reserve, Brazil. *Human Ecology Review* **14**(1): 56–67.
- DROGAS, C.A. 1999. No land of milk and honey: Women CEB activists in posttransition Brazil. *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* **41**(4): 31–55.
- ESCOBAR, A. 1992. Imagining a post-development era? Critical thought, development and social movements. *Social Text* no. **31/32**: 20–56. Duke University Press.
- ESCOBAR, A. 1998. Whose Knowledge, whose nature? Biodiversity, conservation, and the political ecology of social movements. *Journal of Political Ecology* **5**: 53–82.
- ESCOBER, A., ROCHELEAU, D., and KOTHARI, A.S. 2002. Successful Social Movements and the Politics of Place. *Society for International Development* **44**(1): 28–53.
- FUTEMMA, C. and BRONDIZIO, E.S. 2003. Land reform and land-use changes in the Lower Amazon: Implications for agricultural intensification. *Human Ecology* **31**(3): 369–402.
- GOODWIN, J. JASPAR, J.M. and POLLETTA, F. 2001. *Passionate Politics: Emotions and social movements*. University of Chicago Press. 320 p.
- HALL, A. 2004. Extractive Reserves: Building natural assets in the Brazilian Amazon. *Working Paper Series 74*. *Political Economy Research Institute*, University of Massachusetts, Amherst Mass.
- HECHT, S. 1989. Chico Mendes: Chronicle of a death foretold. *New Left Review* **1**/173: 47–55.
- HECHT, S. 2007. Factories, forests, fields and family: Gender and neoliberalism in extractive reserves. *Journal of Agrarian Change* **7**(3): 316–347.
- HECHT, S. and COCKBURN, A. 1989. *The fate of the forest: Developers, destroyers and defenders of the Amazon*. London: Verso.
- HEWITT, W.E. 1989. Origins and prospects for the option for the poor in the Brazilian Catholic Church. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* **28**(2): 120–135.
- HOCHSTETLER, K. 1997. Democratizing pressures from below? Social movements in new Brazilian democracy, Latin American Studies Association XX International Congress, Guadalajara, Mexico, April 17–19, 1997.
- JENKINS, J.C. 1983. Resource mobilization theory and the study of social movements. *Annual Review of Sociology* **9**: 527–553.
- KAINER, K., and DURYEYEA, M.L. 1992. Tapping women's knowledge: Plant resource use in extractive reserves, acre, Brazil. *Economic Botany* **46**(4): 408–424.
- KECK, M. 1995. Social equity and environmental politics in Brazil: lessons from the rubber tappers in Acre. *Comparative Politics* **27**(4): 409–424.
- MORGEN, S. 2002. *Into our own hands: The women's health movement in the United States, 1969–1990*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- PACHECO, P. 2009. Agrarian reform in the Brazilian Amazon: Its implications for land distribution and deforestation. *World Development* **37**(8): 1337–1347.
- PAULA, D., WEIGAND, R. and RODRIGES, V. 2003. *Strengthening the participation of women in development plans of extractive reserves and women's health in Rondônia, Brazil*. Gainesville: University of Florida.
- PEREIRA, D., SANTOS, D., VEDOVETO, M., GUIMARÃES, and VERÍSSIMO, A. 2010. *Fatos florestais da Amazônia*. Imazon, Belém, Para, Brazil.
- PIERUCCI, A.F. and REGINALDO, P. 1995. Religiões e voto: a eleição presidencial de 1994. *Opinião Pública* **3**(1): 20–44.
- PINTO DA SILVA, P. 2004. From common property to co-management: Lessons from Brazil's first Marine extractive reserve. *Marine Policy* **28**(5): 419–428.
- POLLETTA, F. and JASPER, J.M. 2001. Collective identity and social movements, *Annual Review of Sociology* **27**: 283–305.
- ROCHELEAU, D. and EDMUNDS, D. 1997. Women, men and trees: Gender, power and property in forest and agrarian landscapes. *World Development* **25**(8): 1351–1371.
- SCHMINK, M. 1981. Women in abertura politics. *Signs* **7**(1): 115–134.
- SCHMINK, M. and WOOD, C. 1992. *Contested frontiers in Amazonia*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- SCHWARTZMAN, S., ALENCAR, A., ZARIN, H. and SANTOS SOUZA, A.P. 2010. Social movements and large-scale tropical forest protection on the Amazon frontier: Conservation from chaos. *Journal of Environment and Development* **19**(3): 274–299.

- SHANLEY, P. 2006. Science for the Poor: How one woman challenged researchers, ranchers, and loggers in Amazonia. *Ecology and Society* **11**(2): 28. [online] URL: <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol11/iss2/art28/>.
- SHANLEY, P., MEDINA, G. SERRA, M. (eds.) 2010. *Frutíferas e plantas úteis na vida Amazônica*. CIFOR/MMA/EMBRAPA, Brasilia, Brazil.
- SIMONIAN, L.T.L. and GLASER, M. 2003. Extractive reserves and the question of sustainability: Recent experiences in the north of Brazil. *German-Brazilian workshop on neotropical ecosystems – Achievements and prospects of cooperative research*. Hamburg, Germany, September 3–8.
- SIMONIAN, L.T.L. 2001. *Mulheres da floresta Amazonica: Entre o trabalho e a cultura*. Universidade Federal do Pará, Núcleo de Altos Estudos Amazônicos, Belém, Brasil.
- SOUZA, A. 2008. The gathering momentum for environmental justice in Brazil. *Environmental Justice* **1**(4): 183–188.
- TENDLER, J. and FREEDHEIM, S. 1994. Trust in a rent-seeking world: Health and government transformed in northeast Brazil. *World Development* **22**: 1771–1791.
- TEIXEIRA, F. 1988. *Comunidades eclesiais de base: bases teológicas*. Petrópolis: Vozes.
- VERISSIMO, A., ROLLA, A., VEDOVETO, M., and FURTADA, S.M. 2011. *Áreas protegidas na Amazônia Brasileira: Avanços e desafios*. Belém, Brazil: AMAZON/ISA.
- WAYLAND, C. 2001. Gendering local knowledge: Medicinal plant use and primary health care in the Amazon. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* **15**(2): 171–188.