

# Taken at the flood

## A look on the resilience of local norms of land uses in the Eastern Amazon

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**UNI  
FREIBURG**

“Good enough tenure” in sustainable forest and land management  
LANDac Annual International Conference, June 28-29, 2018, Utrecht, NL

# Contextualization



- General agreement on the importance and relevance of local institutions
- But, poverty and environmental degradation prevail in local land user landscapes
- Do local institutions have the capacity to positively influence this dynamic?

# Study



- Three case studies from the Amazon region
  - The **indigenous group** Paiter-Suruí in an Indigenous Reserve
    - Study of Maximilian Graefen
  - **Traditional communities** in an Extractive Reserve
    - Study of Gabriel Medina and Cláudio Barbosa
  - **Small-scale farmers** along the Transamazon Highway
    - Study of Anderson Serra and Ana Paula de Sousa



# Indigenous groups

Indigenous Reserve  
“Sete de Setembro”  
Paiter-Suruí



- Since official contact in 1969 massive institutional changes
  - Diseases
    - Depopulation, which stopped traditional routines
  - Catholic church
    - Family units instead of brotherhood, religious instead holistic world view
  - Governmental agencies and other economic actors
    - Replacement of the non-monetary economy grounded in solidarity and reciprocity with a monetary economy grounded on income generation and markets
- 1983 Creation of the Indigenous Reserve
- Since then, attempts for institutional re-organisation
  - Kinship ties remain as well as some collective activities, but many traditional institutions got lost
  - Adoption of new institutions aiming at benefitting from markets, NGOs and governmental policies
    - Villages, family households, representative organisations, associations
  - Creative in pragmatically dealing with opportunities
- Institutional arrangement guarantee survival, but neither the old nor the new local institutions provide guidance to effectively govern resources so to overcome poverty and dependency

# Traditional communities

Extractive Reserve  
„Verde para Sempre“



- People brought to the region to work for rubber barons
- When those left in 1970, a process of auto-organisation started
  - Continuation of collective extractive activities
  - Demarcation of individual areas
  - Only contact to externals through mobile traders
- Since the 1980s external threads
  - By commercial fishermen
  - By timber enterprises
- Local political organisation
  - Fishing agreements and demarcation of community areas
  - Creation of representative organizations
  - Establishment of alliances with environmental NGOs
  - Creation of the Extractive Reserve (2004)
- Challenge: How to use the resources under the new protective scheme?
  - Two groups: back to informality with all pros and cons vs. legal and sustainable
  - General paralyses and no advance, including local institutions

# Small-scale farmers

Transamazon  
Highway





- In the beginning
  - 1970 distribution of individual properties (100ha and 500ha)
  - 1974 support stopped, but inflow of farmers continued
- Since then..
  - Social organization initiated by farmers from the South
  - Support from the Church and NGOs
  - Creation of Rural Worker Unions and regional representative organisations, strategic engagement in the Worker Party
  - Increasing political influence
    - Land, credits, technical assistance, infrastructure
- More recently
  - Social, economic and political diversification
    - Consolidation of small-scale agriculture in favorable contexts
    - Acceleration of land accumulation and destructive large-scale land uses
  - Local organizations
    - Adoption of environmental discourses
    - Some few innovative local production initiatives (cacao)
    - But, largely focused on their classic topics: land and credit

# Interpretation of findings



- Traditional institutions are relevant and effective regarding land tenure issues, and to guide economic action under difficult conditions
- Locals dispose on the capacity to create and adapt local institutions to respond to the requirements (and opportunities) of external governance schemes
- In the given context, local institutions will become standardized in accordance with external requirements
- This will create social and environmental drawbacks
- Setting up (desired) local governance models in accordance with local cultures and capacities would require approaches very different to contemporary “integration” and “inclusion” mainstream



# Thank you for your attention

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