

***“Isso é nossa realidade” (This is our reality)***

**Beyond the images of Amazonia**



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The front page photograph shows a fish pond, where the owners have made a pumping system exchanging the water. Photo taken by Yngvil S. Lien

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# Abstract

This thesis explores the images and representations of Amazonia as a tropical rain forest, and how they influence the way people tend to picture the area. Shaped through trajectories of history, national expansion and environmentalism, these images come into being through actions; the way the Brazilian state and development organisations have established projects in the area. Having been described as an uninhabited, tropical rain forest, only inhabited by the pristine Amerindians, the non-indigenous part of the population has become invisible in these representations. My fieldwork was carried out in an island community outside Belém, the provincial capital of Pará, and explores the resource management the local islanders practiced in their livelihoods. Combining spheres of urban, rural, traditional and modern aspects, the islanders carried out their livelihoods in small-scale, multi-use strategies combining different sectors, and as I argue throughout my thesis, in sustainable manners. They were modern resource managers; taking advantage of the local knowledge of their given landscape. Working with a local women's movement concerned with acknowledging women's participation in agricultural livelihoods gave me insight in women's role in livelihood activities. The way modern and traditional knowledge and techniques were combined proved local communities in Amazonia to be important in relation to sustainable development projects, and should be included in the overarching image of Amazonia.

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# Map over the Brazilian states<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Source: Maps of World (2014).

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# Table of contents

Chapter 1 Introduction .....	1
Argument.....	2
Earlier studies .....	3
<i>Caboclo</i> categorisation .....	4
Field site: The island Cotijuba.....	5
Entering the field and methodological concerns .....	6
Method.....	7
Methodological concerns.....	8
Ethical concerns.....	9
Reflection over terminology.....	10
Theories .....	12
Structure of the thesis .....	12
Chapter 2 Untouched Nature and wild jungle: The overarching images of Amazonia .....	15
The historical formation of Belém .....	15
Colonial history .....	17
Rebellion and change of power .....	20
National Expansion into Amazonia.....	22
The overarching image of Amazonia .....	24
Amazonia: Lost Eden and the Exotic Other .....	24
Conflicts over land.....	27
Representations into actions .....	28
Environmentalism and development .....	29
Chapter 3 Cotijuba: An Island in-between.....	35
Spatial organisation of Cotijuba .....	36
Categorisation of houses.....	38
Livelihoods and use of natural resources .....	41
Plantations and gardens .....	42
Tourism.....	43
Cotijuba: Urban or rural? .....	43
Official definition of Cotijuba .....	45
Local categorisation at the island .....	47
Merging Spheres.....	48
<i>Tranquilidade</i> : Urban to Rural migration .....	49
An Island in transition .....	50
Chapter 4 Movimento das Mulheres na Ilhas de Belém .....	53
Women’s invisibility in Amazonia.....	53
Gender studies in Latin America and Amazonia in Particular .....	54
Organisation of household and work.....	56
Division of labour .....	58
Women’s labour as invisible .....	59

Being a woman in a rural community: Why MMIB became an important part of the local community.....	61
Partnership with <i>Natura</i> : A new way .....	63
Projeto Vida e Companhia .....	65
Creating an active local community: MMIB as the uniting force.....	67
<b>Chapter 5 Sustainable resource management.....</b>	<b>71</b>
Modernising Amazonia .....	71
The rhetoric's of sustainable development.....	74
Local strategies as sustainable.....	76
The gap between western knowledge and traditional knowledge.....	77
Strategies to secure a livelihood: Combining sectors and knowledge systems.....	79
Multi-use strategies.....	80
Local knowledge at Cotijuba.....	82
Fish tanks as an example of the merging of modern and traditional.....	83
Traditional management techniques.....	85
Slash-and-burn agriculture .....	86
Sustainable development and the exclusion of local knowledge .....	86
Local strategies: Combining several sectors and its sustainability .....	87
Fishermen-farmers and Amazonian resource-managers .....	88
The sustainability of Cotijuba .....	89
Concluding remarks .....	91
Bibliography.....	95





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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

*Belém, the “the big apple” in the middle of the Amazonian rainforest, feels like a metropolitan city and a peripheral place at the same time. When I was flying in, I could see nothing but a green landscape stretched out to the limits of my vision. It looks like a big, green ocean of trees and brown rivers, and I realized how big the Amazon really is. Suddenly, as if I had a hallucination, an enormous city appears, stretching out in the middle of the green ocean. Skyscrapers are rising up, with a frontline reminding me of the New York skyline. “What does this city do in the middle of the jungle” is my first thought, and as the plane comes nearer the city grows. It is huge, continuing further on with many municipalities. This large city is where I start off from, where I am doing my fieldwork exploring the images of Amazonia, and the particular mixture of modern and traditional, urban and rural spaces. Belém is and an important city linking the more interior parts of Amazonia with the rest of Brazil. It is a metropolitan city with skyscrapers, shopping malls, urban architecture and a huge network of roads, but it is also an “Amazonian” place, and part of the natural landscape of the Amazon.*

As many anthropologists before me, I was going to explore the vast landscape of Amazonia<sup>2</sup>. Even though I was prepared for the possibility of “the Amazon” not being what I imagined; my own images and perceptions of the area had been influenced and fed to me through campaigns and narratives, I still could not help myself getting carried away while flying in. I was not planning to do a “classical” anthropological fieldwork living with an Amerindian “tribe” deep in the rainforest, as many pictured when I told them I was going to Amazonia. Rather, I was going to study the modern Amazonia, the forces and influences creating the constructed images of the contested area, and how these images overlooked the complex social landscape of the present Amazonia. It might be generalising to take an area covering around 7 million square metres (CDEA 1992), with rivers, flooded - and firm land, stretched over several states and countries, and use the name “Amazonia” to talk about the whole area.

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<sup>2</sup> When I refer to “Amazonia” I mean the Legal Amazon of Brazil (*Amazônia Legal*) which also is a socio-geographic division in Brazil (CDEA, 1992).

That being said, authors mostly use the name Amazonia when referring to specific areas inside the Legal Amazon of Brazil. My own fieldwork was concentrated on the island of Cotijuba, a one hour journey from Belém, the capital of Pará in Northern Brazil (and part of the Legal Amazon of Brazil). Nevertheless, when reading and speaking about Amazonia, there seemed to be a way of both having a regional identity (*Paraenses* from Pará), and a notion of being Amazonian. This notion of being a part of Amazonia seemed to be important in Belém and at the island I studied, so I will continue to use this way of speaking about the people and the area. With that in mind, every place is different and an island community in Belém is not the same as a rural community in Manaus (in the Amazon state). I cannot say my findings can be generalised to every community within Amazonia, but I will connect it with some larger framework of ideas, images and the environmental forces at stake in Amazonia today.

## **Argument**

A central argument of this thesis is that the mainstream image of Amazonia has presented the area as a tropical rainforest built upon the “western” world’s expectation of “the exotic other”. With these images, the complexity of the social landscape is overlooked, as large parts of the population become invisible (Nugent 1993). My thesis focuses on this invisible part of the population, the non-indigenous inhabitants living in an Amazonian metropolitan area. I argue that their constant movement between different spheres and landscapes has formed a unique way of merging traditional knowledge with modern techniques in their livelihoods. In this sense, they are modern in many ways and have found ways of dealing with external factors without diminishing their local way of life.

Harris (2009) discusses how the particular way of life for ribeirinhos actually demonstrates a particular way of modernisation. They are not backward, but modern. Through focusing on livelihoods; “on the ways in which human beings relate to components of their environment in the activities of subsistence procurement” (Ingold 2011:9), I analyse how my research participants relates to their environment, and how they actively use their knowledge about the landscape in securing an income. Their adjustment to their surroundings and the active engagement with their specific locality makes them capable of using the natural landscape in their livelihoods, as well as adjusting strategies related to external forces, as the market economy and global trends.

Today's environmental concern has led to extensive projects involved with preserving the rain forest in Amazonia. While carried out in different ways, most aim, or at least claim to be, encompassed by the overall project of creating sustainable development. "Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (United Nations 1987). This idea can be good, but as with other kinds of development endeavours, the result varies (Ferguson 1994). I discuss how sustainable development projects in Amazonia overlook local knowledge and livelihoods, which already are sustainable. We need to include this in the framework of Amazonia, especially in relation to sustainable development projects.

### **Earlier studies**

Works of Stephen Nugent (1993), Mark Harris (2000), Adams et al. (2009) and Candace Slater (2002) have given me inspiration and understanding of how Amazonia is much more than a tropical rainforest with isolated populations. The construction of "Amazonia" as a concept needs to be understood properly in order to write about communities and inhabitants outside the mainstream image of Amazonia. It was particularly a quote by Harris that struck my mind. Only 5 % of the population inhabiting Amazonia are Amerindian<sup>3</sup>. The other 95% are barely mentioned in reviews over Amazonian anthropology (Harris 1998). Who are these other Amazonians, and why have they been left out of the picture?

The anthropology of Amazonia has largely been shaped by Amerindian studies. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century Amerindian communities was the subject of interest; others inhabiting the region did not grab the attention of anthropologists. Wagley's fieldwork in the 1960's was the first study of non-indigenous societies. "As we visited the towns and trading posts of the lower Amazon River and as we talked with people of all classes, I came to realize that the exotic grandeur of the tropical scene had drawn attention away from the activities of man in the Amazon Valley" (Wagley 1964:viii). Later, more anthropologists writing about non-indigenous societies followed, especially focusing on *caboclo* communities and categorisation.

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<sup>3</sup> Amerindian refers to the indigenous groups dwelling in the Amazonian rain forest and river system. I will elaborate further upon the term in the introduction, especially concerning why I choose to use the term Amerindian.

### ***Caboclo* categorisation**

Caboclos, river dwellers, rubber tappers, miners, loggers, peasants; the list could continue further, naming the different groups and communities of non-indigenous inhabitants in Pará and the rest of Amazonia. While *caboclo* are categorised in several ways, the term has been used as an umbrella term for the non-indigenous, historical peasant or river dweller making a living of a range of activities and adjusting according to the seasons and the landscape (Adams et al. 2009). This category has been discussed by several authors, since the term contains many connotations. In the 50's and 60's when some of the first international research was conducted on non-indigenous societies in Amazonia, they argued that *caboclo* was a form of *mestiço* (mixed origin) racial category, the offspring of a European (normally Portuguese) male and an Amerindian female (Nugent 1993:25). *Caboclo* as a social category also has negative connotations, as it was common to use the term to distance oneself from those of lower status. The *caboclos* were categorised as those of the lowest social and economic strata and was mostly used as an outside categorisation to distance oneself. "No one, not even the innocent Indian, uses the term to identify themselves." (Wagley 1985:viii) . The emphasis on *caboclo* as a social category diminished after more extensive national and international research, and through disciplinary change from human ecology towards structural Marxism and more holistic studies of the region, environmental concerns and the political and economic context (Adams, Murrieta, and Neves 2009:6). One important study to mention is Deborah de Magalhães Limas (1992) work on the social category of *caboclo*. She emphasise how *caboclo* in the local context is merely a colloquial classification term that is normally not used in the self-descriptive sense. She argues how academics should avoid using the term, as it has become an academically constructed concept, and we need to distinguish between the academic term and the local definition in studies of non-indigenous Amazonian communities.

In present studies of Amazonia and the different groups of people inhabiting this large area, there has been a turn from the studies of *caboclos* toward studies of the different subsistence groups; e.g. rubber tappers, river dwellers or peasants. Even though it is difficult to categorise groups by their occupational status, subsistence activity or whether they are modern or traditional, there is a need for tools to classify in order to analyse a community. What becomes important in this context then, is to clarify the specific terms and concepts in relation to the place studied. Peasant is a good example here. The term is universally used, but every locality has a different trajectory of how the peasantry was created. Brazil has a particular story of the peasants; there was no "evolution" from hunter-and-gatherer society towards

peasant societies. Rather, the Amazonian peasantry was an outcome the colonial expansion (Nugent 1993: 102). As with Mintz (1989) analysis of the Caribbean peasantry, he suggests a reconceptualization of the understanding of the peasantry, which also is relevant for the Amazonian formation. During the colonial expansion, the power elite tried to push the indigenous and non-indigenous peoples from the range of activities and hunting practices they used in their livelihoods, toward as systematic, capitalistic agri-and horticulture (Ross 1978). The peasantry as a concept, a group defined by its subsistence activity were created during this period, but those being “peasants” (or *campesinos* in Latin America) also included other activities in their livelihoods (Nugent 1993). They are not the “classical” peasantry in the Euro-American context, but a colonial invention shaped to the local, specific context and ecology.

In gaining an understanding of the several ways of categorising and distinguishing the non-indigenous population of Amazonia, the emphasis on mixture has been common. The population is mixed with many different analytical terms used to describe its fragments. Historical peasants, neo-peasants, frontier immigrants, traditional people, *Ribeirinhos* (river dwellers) and modern citizens are some of the terms used to describe the inhabitants. These terms does however not imply only which occupational activity the different segments use. Rather they change between different sectors as part of their livelihood, and the notion of mixture is particularly evident in the complex social landscape. The population on Cotijuba consisted of peasants, fishers, *ribeirinhos*, merchants, construction workers, *donas de casa* (housewives) and other categories of people. In the following, this form of mixture will be a focus.

### **Field site: The island Cotijuba**

Fieldwork for this study was conducted at an island community situated one hour from Belém, in the mouth of the Amazon River. Cotijuba, one of the 42 islands surrounding Belém, is approximately 60 km<sup>2</sup>, situated 22 km east of the city and part of the municipality of Belém. The island was first inhabited by the indigenous group Tupinambás, who gave it the name Cotijuba, meaning The Golden Path. The first non-indigenous settlements happened in 1748, and after this, the island have consisted mainly of a mixed population. Agriculture, extractive activities and fishing have been (and still are) the main activities at the island, but

today it is mixed with merchandise and tourism as well. The population of around 8000<sup>4</sup> inhabitants make a living of a combination of agriculture, fishing, tourism and trade. I focus on livelihoods and the combination of different sectors, both primary and tertiary sectors, and especially which strategies the islanders used to maintain a livelihood. The last 15 years, Cotijuba has experienced rapid changes after installing electricity and expanding infrastructure. With many new people moving to the island, together with the introduction of tourism, new ways of earning an income have been created. The island used to be more isolated and rural, but with the new movement the boundaries between the rural island and the urban mainland became more blurred. In river communities in Amazonia there have always been movement between islands and the mainland, and this pattern makes the distinction between the urban and rural unclear.

### **Entering the field and methodological concerns**

Landing in Belém, I had no clear plan of where I was going to conduct my fieldwork. I had tried to establish contact with researcher at the Federal University Of Pará (UFPA), but with very little language skills in Portuguese this proved to be difficult. I used the first month to find my way around in Belém, have Portuguese lessons, get some contacts and orientate my work towards a feasible fieldwork. Since I was an independent researcher with no contact to established Brazilian research institutes or groups, I decided I had to go through a local organisation or a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) to find a community suitable for fieldwork. I was lucky to get to know some students from UFPA and they were engaged in helping me in the process of getting into the field. This was of great importance to me, as they told me about Movimento de Mulheres das Ilhas de Belém, which was situated at an island called Cotijuba, just outside Belém. After learning a bit about them and the island in general I found this to both be very interesting field of study and also being perfect for my aim in my thesis; all those others living in Amazonia. Movimento de Mulheres das Ilhas de Belém (MMIB) was the largest organisation at Cotijuba, they were a women's association created for women working in agriculture. They also worked with involving the youths and the elderly of the island, and had projects extracting *priprioca*, a local root used for cosmetic products. They

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<sup>4</sup> There have not been done any official census in the latest years, but official government estimates the population to be around 5000 inhabitants (Melo, 2010). However, the government's official information and categorisation did not correspond with that of the local information, and many islanders estimated the population to be around 8000.

would be ideal for me to work with, as their ideology and local activism was very interesting in relation agriculture and livelihoods.

One of the students were particularly helpful, and got in touch with a woman living at Cotijuba who was involved in another association situated at the island, and we went together to introduce me to her. Dona Analéa worked in the city of Belém, but went to her house on the island in the weekends and every free time she had, and was engaged in policy and decision making related to Cotijuba. She also knew most of the women from MMIB, and went around with me to introduce me and my work to them. Functioning as a “door opener”, a person being the link between the outside researcher and the local community she made it possible for me to get an entry into the community. Being introduced to people was of great importance in establishing a respectful relationship based on trust. She also invited me to stay in her house during my fieldwork, and she and her husband became my hosts for my entire stay at Cotijuba. My host also introduced me to Dona Elena, a community health agent<sup>5</sup> who invited me to come along on her home visits whenever I wanted. This was very fortunate, as she always introduced me and explained what I was doing, and after being introduced by a community member, people felt more at ease talking to me and answering my questions.

## **Method**

My thesis is based on fieldwork from July to December 2013. Understanding a local lived reality and trying to grasp aspects related to a larger framework is not easy. One can rarely enter the field with clear ideas of general themes and findings. Even though I read general theories about Amazonia, I did not know what to expect at Cotijuba, and which themes would be evident to write about. I was very well received by MMIB, and was allowed to participate in a group twice a week for the islands elderly, which gave me insight to activities and peoples related to MMIB. I mostly focused on this in the beginning, as well as doing some informal interviews with the founder and leaders of MMIB to learn more about the organisation. My language skills were limited in the beginning, and my first interviews were structured, and at times rigid, as I had to rely only on written questions. I also worked out a form of questionnaire, which I used when talking to a larger quantity of the population on the

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<sup>5</sup> The Brazilian community health agents are lay health care workers, working in their own local community. They gather health information about patients, and provide assistance to the doctors and nurses at the local medical post. This is done by doing home visits, “rounds”, thus being a link between the local community and the doctors and nurses.

island when I accompanied the health agent on her visiting rounds. With this advantage, I managed to speak to many different people living on different parts of the island, and ask them the same questions. I made a questionnaire of simple questions related to how long they had lived on the island, where they have lived before, what their occupation was, how they defined the island in relation to urban or rural definitions and how they liked the life at Cotijuba. Sometimes, relating to their answers I made follow-up questions on interesting subjects. I was able to map out the different segments of the population and divide them into groups, and this helped me understand more about people's livelihoods. I always analysed the situation and the level of comfort the people had in speaking to me. Some only answered briefly my questions, and then I never asked further questions. If people seemed to like to talk and felt it was ok to talk to me, I normally asked more questions and kept the conversation going. It was mostly women I talked to, as men normally worked outside during the day. I also participated on several meetings arranged by local and regional organisations. This gave advantage of learning about political and local concerns, and also the active local community. Together with participant observation and by being part of the island community, I managed to capture some of the segments constituting their livelihood and lived reality.

### **Methodological concerns**

One of my main concerns was language, as I did not speak much Portuguese in the beginning. Despite intensive language courses the first month, it was not sufficient enough to understand everything. In Cotijuba the majority did not speak English, so I had to communicate in Portuguese. I also decided against having a translator, as it was hard enough for me to get entry in the fieldsite, I did not feel comfortable bringing another person in. My solution to the language problems was to tape record all the interviews, interesting conversation and meetings, as far as people were comfortable with it. I had a transcriber, who was a sociology student in Belém whom I paid to transcribe the interviews. I could understand more of written Portuguese than oral, so this worked well in the beginning. Normal days consisted of visiting places and people on the island, and participate in activities at MMIB. I had a notebook with me, and made handwritten notes along the way; parts of conversations and descriptions. I then typed my supplementary fieldnotes on my computer in the afternoon. After some months my Portuguese had improved, so I could understand more of the conversations I was engaged in, as well as the context. In the first months when I did not understand everything people talked about, I still learned much about the livelihood at the island and how people made a living there. Understanding everyday life, by participating in situations, gives the anthropologist a



sense of the knowledge and communication that is not orally spoken. This unspoken and embodied knowledge people express through their everyday practices can give insight to information and knowledge that is not spoken about or taken for granted (Jenkins 1994). In relation to my field work and my lack of language skills, I got a lot of information by interpreting body language, the tacit knowledge people expressed in conversation and also by understanding some words I could arrive at an understanding of the situation.

### **Ethical concerns**

After completing my field work and starting to write I had to reflect upon some ethical issues. The importance of anonymising was one. I have not given a fictive name to the island; as Cotijuba had a population of around 8000 inhabitants, it is difficult to find all my research participants if someone knows the island. The organisation I worked with is also widely recognised, and by doing a google search one can find their location. They wanted me to publish their real name, and I wanted to fulfil this requirement. The interviews I did concerning MMIB, was also made by publically known persons, the founder Dona<sup>6</sup> Antonia, and the coordinator Adriana Gomes, I have therefore not anonymised them. All the information they gave me were officially approved by the organisation, and part of their public information. I have anonymised all information of a more personal concern, not publically known or statements and utterances made by others involved in MMIB. I use fictive names on all my research participants, and whenever there was any material that could be of personal or sensitive relation throughout my thesis.

My position as a researcher was also something I had to think about. A huge part of my empirical findings was gathered through informal conversations with neighbours and persons I met at meetings and by going around on the island. They all knew I was a researcher, as they always asked me what I was doing at the island, but they also spoke freely to me as a friend after a while. I had to reflect upon which information to include in my notes, and I have used different techniques to anonymise. I always use fictive names (except the coordinators of MMIB), and if people told me things in confidence I did not write it down. I think my ways of anonymising and reflecting upon which information to include should be sufficient to maintain the research participant's rights.

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<sup>6</sup> *Dona/o* is a formal title, and common to use when talking to people. It shows respect, although not as formal as *Senor/a*

As an outsider it was difficult to get entry in the beginning. Through introduction by others, by participating in meetings and showing interest in the island, people soon talked more openly to me. In the beginning I had to prove I was not just a tourist, as most of the islanders called me a *Gringa*, and continued to do so for most of my stay. *Gringa* is normally a humorous slang for *estrangeira* (foreigner), but I preferred not to be associated with the tourists who came to the island in large quantities, and emphasised on telling people why I was living at the Island. With that said, I was still a foreign researcher, and people did think about what they told me. It is difficult to become such a natural part of the community that the locals will forget about me as an outsider. Sometimes my lack of Portuguese was an advantage, as I could not understand everything I was not a threat. I participated in the background; people knew I was there, but I did not interfere in their private conversations.

### **Reflection over terminology**

There are several terms in Amazonian anthropology which have been discussed and analysed extensively by anthropologists. It is necessary to address some of them here. However, I have deliberately avoided many of these discussions, as they were not directly related the scope of my thesis. In this section I will explain the most important terms and concepts, and mention some of the discussions or critiques of them, as well as my usage of the terms.

Amerindian is a term often used in my thesis, and related to indigenous groups. I choose to use Amerindian, as this is the term Brazilian anthropologist's use, and a term many indigenous groups use about themselves. Amerindian refers to the Indians living in America; the usage of Indian, which derives negative connotations elsewhere in South America, has gone through a regeneration through the reappropriation of the term by the Indians themselves (Ramos 1998). Some places I use the concept indigenous groups, for example when I speak of indigenous as an official definition, as the descendants of a specific land, recognised by the United Nations (United Nations 1997), or when the author uses this term in their analysis. When I am referring to the segments of the Amazonian population that are not Amerindian, I use the term non-indigenous to distinguish between them. This is purely an analytical tool, however, I am aware of the complications related to its usage. I do not tend to separate between these two categories based on who are indigenous and who are not. Rather, as earlier anthropological studies of Amazonia have focused extensively on the Amerindian groups, I use non-indigenous term to describe the part of the population rendered invisible in previous studies.

Landscape and dwelling are also concepts appearing in my thesis. I use the term landscape, because as Ingold (2011) emphasise, the landscape is not just there, it is part of the humans making of the world, laying out ecological but also cultural frameworks through the interaction between humans and their natural surroundings. This is related to how man perceives his environment and his making-of-the world, and how the landscape is a central part of those who dwell within that particular landscape. Dwelling is related to the landscape, and how humans (or animals) engage with their surroundings. Dwelling is how one “live-dwell-makes sense” of the landscape, and how the landscape and the environment takes form for man to dwell in (Ingold 2011). This could be discussed in depth; however, I choose to only briefly engage in them, as Ingold’s ideas works within my analysis and framework of ideas.

The term traditional communities have several connotations. A tendency in early anthropological writing has been to distinguish between “traditional” and “modern” communities, implying the former as primitive while the latter civilised. This is not my usage of the term. Traditional in the Amazonian context is a way of distinguishing between the Amerindian and the non-indigenous part of Amazonian society. While traditional have connotations of non-modern, I experienced on my fieldwork that people living in urban settings, or at rural places within an urban metropolis could still be living in a traditional sense. They use old knowledge and traditional techniques in their livelihoods, at the same time as they live more or less modern ways of life. I found the term traditional community a manageable term to use in this way, instead of saying only rural, implying separation from urban. When I say “traditional” and “modern”, I do not intend to separate them or see the two as opposites, as have been highly criticised in anthropology. Based on evolutionism; how societies developed from primitive (traditional) to civilised (modern), these terms still contains a hegemonic relationship (see for example Sahlins 2005). My scope of this thesis is not to evolve deep into discussions about what is modern and traditional. However, I do use the terms “traditional” and “modern” as an analytical tool to emphasise how these two are categorised, and how this relates to Amazonia.

Race is also a common theme in Latin American anthropology. Racial relations in Brazil and other Latin-American countries have a black/white dichotomy that is different from the one existing in North America and Europe (Wade 1997). Race is not just a conceptualisation of skin colour but is also linked with other socio-cultural attributes as economic status, class and other forms of social differentiation. The emergence of the Brazilian concept of race and class

can be discussed to have a clear historical line from the colonial era where the bourgeoisie upper class was light skinned, while the dark skinned was on the bottom of the social hierarchy (Stepan 1991). The term still contains negative connotations; stigmas of biological origin, heritage and by contrasting groups of people based on skin colour. However, as Brazil has claimed to be a “racial democracy”, the term race is still used in trying to emphasise the mixed Brazil where there are no “racial” prejudice. In reality, the situation is much more complex than a “racial democracy”, and there are major problems related to racism; differentiation based on skin colour and origin. When I use the term “race”, it is mostly to describe *mestiço* (mixed) categories, of different racial or ethnical origins (Stepan 1991).

## **Theories**

Through the following chapter I use a range of theories, and do not have one particular theoretical standpoint. I have however focused on the overarching image of Amazonia as a way of understanding and demonstrating how Amazonia is pictured, and how these images can lead to implications for localities. As already mentioned I base much of my analysis upon the work of Nugent (1993), Harris and Nugent (2004), Harris (1998, 2000, 2009) and Adams et al. (2009). They all share some of the same theoretical perspectives, within structural Marxism, but also include ecology, history and political forces in their analysis of the Amazonian peasantry. Slater (1996, 2002) will be the most important theoretical standpoint in my thesis; she argues how the image “the west” has of Amazonia is built upon an Edenic Narrative, making Amazonia into a place of imagination. The implications of this, as I also argue, that the complex, social landscape of Amazonia is overlooked. A critique of the sustainable development discourse following Guimarães (2001), demonstrates how sustainable development has become part of a larger discourse implicated with national and global trends. Environmentalism and sustainable development as a rhetorical device legitimising large scale projects will be discussed in relation to this.

## **Structure of the thesis**

In the following chapter, I will introduce the overarching framework of Amazonia, and how the region has been pictured through images and narratives which created a way of imagining Amazonia as a natural landscape of rain forest. I have chosen to focus on three trajectories which I found most evident in creating the overarching framework of how we think about Amazonia; colonial history, national expansion and environmentalism. Through these

trajectories one can understand some of the forces and influences creating the area into the contested landscape of Amazonia today, and how these images leads to actions.

Chapter three will give the reader an insight to my fieldsite; the island Cotijuba. How the island is structured, the landscape and livelihoods are important to mention here. I will then address one of the main themes; the categorisation of urban and rural, and how Cotijuba was in-between these categorisations. The official and local categorisations were not in accordance, and this had implications for the islanders. Here I will emphasise the connection between Cotijuba and the surrounding urban centres, and how there always had been contact between them. The movement of people and goods were high, and I analyse this in relation to one aspect I found evident; the sense of mixture in Amazonian communities. Contact between urban and rural places, mixture of people, ideas, knowledge and the specific landscape they navigate in shaped the social landscape. I will also discuss how the islanders maintained their livelihoods through combining many sectors. Recent changes occurring at the island have given the islanders new challenges, but their ways of adjusting and adapting give them a good tool to deal with this.

Chapter four will outline the organisation I worked with and particularly women's role in Amazonian communities. As I worked with a women's movement this becomes of importance as one learns the expansion of the organisation and the importance MMIB has had in creating an active local community. Division of work and gender, household organisation and women's invisible role in the subsistence activity will be important background to understand the formation of MMIB. I will also address MMIB's partnership with Natura, a Brazilian cosmetics company, and their role in local communities.

Chapter five will draw everything together around my main argument; how the local islanders had ways of combining traditional knowledge with modern techniques. I relate this to some specific examples of traditional knowledge about fish tanks and fish farming at Cotijuba, and how they have created new projects of commercialising fish based on the old techniques. A discussion of modernisation and the preconception of traditional communities not being modern is an important aspect here. I will see this in relation to the new discourse of sustainable development, and how projects are carried out without acknowledging properly the local knowledge and the already existing sustainable ways of making a living in the rain forest. Not acknowledging this builds on the images of Amazonia and its inhabitants as

natural and non-modern, but I will argue here that the ways the islanders lived were both modern and sustainable.

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## Chapter 2

# Untouched Nature and wild jungle: The overarching images of Amazonia

*“People seem to forget that Belém also is Amazonia. It is not just in Manaus<sup>7</sup> where you can go on river expeditions to see the wildlife. Belém was and still is the gateway to Amazonia”,* my friend exclaimed while talking about Belém and Amazonia in general. His view illustrates one of the many ways in which many Amazonian people are rendered invisible in the mainstream image of the region.

This chapter explores this mainstream image based on an “Edenic narrative” and a western vision of the “exotic other”, opposite of the modern west. I will illustrate why the non-indigenous population in Amazonia have been left out of the typical representations, and the implications of their invisibility. What constitutes Amazonia today, with this huge mixture of people, histories and places? To understand the narratives and images shaping our idea of Amazonia today, one has to disentangle the different images and trajectories in order to understand the underlying processes constructing these representations. I have identified and focused on three trajectories and their images to understand the overarching framework of Amazonia; the colonial history, national expansion and environmental concerns. One important factor will be how these images influence the local identity, especially how the images have influenced action and political decisions in the area.

### **The historical formation of Belém**

Belém is the capital of Pará, a state located in north of Brazil where the Amazon River flows out into the Atlantic Ocean. The rivers are of huge economic, social and cultural importance, as is the nature and the wildlife. Belém is stated to be the “gateway to the Amazon” (Wagley 1974), as the city has a big harbour and further connection to the Amazon River system. The geographical importance of the city, with connection to both the Atlantic Ocean and the

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<sup>7</sup> Manaus is the capital of the provincial state Amazonia, and where most river expeditions into “the Amazon” start off from.

Amazon River, was one of the reasons the Portuguese founded the city in 1616. From here, the Portuguese conquistadors<sup>8</sup> started off their expansion into Amazonia. Today the city is 1.059,406 square kilometres and has a population of over one million, making Belém a large metropolitan centre (IBGE 2014). At the same time as the city is a metropolis, the majority of the county's land consists of 42 islands, mostly rural areas. I had read literature about the historical processes “constructing” Amazonia, especially the relation between the urban cities and the more uninhabited “jungle”, and I soon observed and learned more about what it meant in reality, especially the relationship between the urban Belém and its surrounding rural islands.

*As the city of Belém has swallowed me in to its urban jungle of asphalt, buildings, houses and shops I forget that I actually am in the “Amazon”. Even when going on small riverboats to the surrounding areas, I get a constant reminder that this is not just rainforest, as huge tank boats pass by or as you turn around and can see the skyscrapers in Belém. The small wooden boats with ribeirinhos and fishermen (so typically used in images of the Amazon River), passes in a constant shuffle between the small green islands toward the big market Ver-o-Peso in Belém. There is a flow of people, boats, goods between the urban spaces and the rural surroundings reminding me that there is never a separation of “urban” and “rural”. (From field notes).*

My first meeting with Belém and the surrounding islands was important for the development of my fieldwork. I rapidly understood how my own images of “the Amazon” had shaped some ideas of how I thought Belém would be. I also realised how I had imagined Amazonia was created by larger forces. In order to understand the trajectories influencing the images of Amazonia I would have to understand the forces and the processes behind these imaginations.

To understand local societies today, one cannot avoid their contact with the rest of the world, and the historical trajectory ‘creating’ a certain cultural identity (Friedman 1994). The historical trajectory of Belém has since the colonial empire gone through many phases, shaping the regional identity to what it is today. From being part of the ‘backward’ periphery of Brazil, Belém has tried to establish its identity as a modern city and an important link to the rest of Amazonia. During the rubber boom the city's architecture changed, with European

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<sup>8</sup> Conquistadors were the name given to the Portuguese colonisers (Fausto 1999).



styled buildings and streets. A theatre and opera house were built, along with many parliamentary buildings in a grand, classical style (Grandin 2010). Today many of these remains, together with new and modern urban attribute. The harbour is still an important connection further into Amazonia, with boats leaving several times during the week. In order to fully understand the relationship between the urban metropolis, Belém, and the islands, one needs to understand the colonial history and the expansion into Amazonia, and how the historical trajectory influenced today's Amazonian, social landscape.

## Colonial history

“Our argument has rested upon the assertion of the past is always practiced in the present, not because the past imposes itself, but because subjects in the present fashion the past in the practice of their social identity” (Friedman 1994: 141).

Portuguese conquistadors sailed ashore in the state of Baiha in the year 1500, and believed they had arrived at a huge undiscovered island. Brazilwood was the main resource at that time, which later named the vast country Brazil, as they expanded further into the land to colonize it. They did not find gold or valuable minerals as the Spanish did in their colonies, so the Portuguese conquistadors established trading posts and found resources they could extract and sell in Europe to make a profit (Pace and Wagley 1997). To extract the resources, they needed a work force. Fausto (1999) explains how the slave labour started with the enslavement of Amerindian population and changed toward African slaves during the centuries from 1500 to 1800. In the beginning they either captured the Amerindians, or Jesuit missionaries ‘colonised’ them into living in work camps. But, since the Europeans brought with them bacteria and diseases formerly unknown for the Amerindian population, two devastating epidemics of tuberculosis, measles and smallpox amongst other diseases and viruses, killed about 60 000 Amerindians in the first decades of the Portuguese colonisation (Fausto 1999: 17). Portugal had already colonised some African countries and started slave trade and sugar cane plantations with slaves in Atlantic islands. They started importing African slaves into Brazil around 1550, since the African slaves were more ‘fit’ for slave labour and more resistant to the European bacteria’s than the Amerindians. Many of the slaves managed to escape, and created *Quilombos*, settlements of runaway slaves, which in some places still exists in Brazil today (Fausto 1999: 18).

From the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century the Portuguese colonisers focused mostly on the coastal cities and areas of economic importance. Some areas were used to plant tobacco, while the north-

east had sugar plantations, and the products were exported to Europe. The north of Brazil and the Amazon were not given much attention until they feared that French settlers were taking over. The Portuguese colonisers therefore founded Belém in 1616, and from thereon started their expansion into Amazonia (Fausto 1999). Belém quickly became of huge importance, being close to the Atlantic Ocean, and a natural harbour city connecting the Amazon to larger cities and to Europe. Cotton, wood, coffee, and rubber were some of the important export goods that quickly made the city an important trading post (Fausto 1999). Today, much of the colonial architecture still exists, from the fort built by the river, to important buildings influenced by European architecture. One of the most important places, which is still of great importance today, was the marketplace of *Ver-o-Peso* (literally meaning see the weight), also a connecting point for the local fishers and farmers to the rest of Amazonia. Today it still remains one of the most important market places for trading fish, meat, vegetables, açai and natural plants.

Trade relations were established in Amazonia, with an *aviamento*<sup>9</sup> system of trading between the rural communities and the trading houses in Belém and other large cities. The *aviamento* system consisted of the small traders, the *regatão*, travelling around in boats providing goods the small communities did not have, in exchange for raw material as rubber and other extractive products. The system worked as an exchange system of goods and raw materials, and seldom involved cash. Rather, it was based on debt where the extractivists, *caboclos*, fishermen, nut collectors and other communities from the rural isolated areas were provided with goods, which they later “paid” with raw materials (McGrath 2004). It can be seen as a merchant capitalist system giving the traders and trading houses power over prices, leading to unequal distribution and leaving the smallholders in debt (Pace and Wagley 1997). It was also implemented in the patron-client relationship between landowners (*patrão*) and the client. The collectors affiliated to a patron collected the raw materials in order to be able to live on the estate owner’s land, where they also could plant some gardens. Sometimes the relationship between the patron and the client could be of fictive kinship, the patron often became a godfather (*padrão*) to the client’s children, thus tying the patron to the family (Moran 1974). On the one hand, it was a system of unequal exchange leaving the collector in debt, but on the other hand, the importance of the *aviamento* system should not be overlooked. Through its extensive network it connected small communities in the periphery to the larger urban centres,

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<sup>9</sup> Comes from the Portuguese verb *aviar* meaning provide.

and set the ground for the large river network of contact and trade between communities and cities (McGrath 2004).

The rubber boom in 1810 is especially important for my fieldwork and the history of Amazonia. Most of the rubber was extracted in the states of Pará, Acre and Amazonas.<sup>10</sup> From 1810 the rubber demand increased with over 100%, leading to an admirable growth of the Brazilian economy, as they were the number one provider of rubber. Belém and Manaus were the largest economic centres, where the trading houses exported the rubber. The massive economic growth led to progress on infrastructure, architecture and expansion of the urban centres, as well as it gave the wealthy land owners an extensive economic boost. In Belém one can still see some of the traits from the rubber boom. The theatre and “European style” buildings are still standing as symbols from the rubber era, and in Manaus, in the state of Amazonas, the famous opera house in the “middle of the jungle” is one of the strongest symbols of the rubber boom in the Amazon (Grandin 2010). Through the *aviamento* system the rubber extracted from the rural areas and rubber trails were transported to Belém and Manaus where it was shipped off to Europe. There were many factors leading to the bust of the rubber economy. The invention of chemically produced latex was one major factor, but other factors arose during colonial times. Henry Wickham, an Englishman personally collected and smuggled out seventy thousand seeds of rubber trees (being the first of many bio-pirates in Amazonia). He then handed them over to the Botanical Garden in London, who successfully planted the seeds in the British colonies in Asia. These new rubber plantations quickly took over the market, pressing the Brazilian rubber economy towards its downfall.

In the following centuries many changes occurred in the colonies, mostly because of circumstances and changes in Portugal and the rest of Europe. The wars in Europe led to changes in Portugal, mainly the threat of Napoleon and several trade blockades. The Portuguese royal court moved to Brazil and the king regent, Dom João VI ruled the kingdom away from the arising conflict in Europe. Along with these transfers, Brazil was opened up to trade with other European countries during the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>11</sup>. Rio de Janeiro became the political centre as well as one of the important ports of free trade (Fausto 1999). Leading up to the independence of Brazil, frictions between Brazil and Portugal were building and becoming

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<sup>10</sup> Amazonas state is a provincial state and also a part of the Legal Amazon of Brazil.

<sup>11</sup> Britain in particular, as they were cut off from trade with the continent during a trade embargo. The relationship between Portugal and Britain was strong, and there were several trade agreements made between them concerning Brazil.

tenser. In Portugal revolutionary ideas had been forming and the need to have their king in the country were urgent. Leaving his son, Prince Pedro (later Dom Pedro) as the regent, King Dom João VI returned to Portugal in 1821 in order to save the throne. Meanwhile, an independence movement consisting of Portuguese and Brazilian elites had formed in Brazil, and it was not many years to the former prince Dom Pedro started the process of breaking away from Portugal, becoming the first king of the independent kingdom of Brazil (Fausto 1999).

### **Rebellion and change of power**

Brazil gained independence in 1824, and was at this time recognised as an independent nation by the United States and Great Britain. This did not mean however, that Brazil was independent in order of trade, commercialisation and power, but rather, that new forms of power were created (Fausto 1999). During the colonial years, an aristocracy of Europeans were established in Brazil, and the population was hierarchic based on class and race. The white European elite were in power, and the mixed population of *quilombos*<sup>12</sup>, Amerindians and Africans were on the bottom (Stepan 1991). As in many other former colonies the transition from colonial rule to local government was hard, and lead to a series of rebellions.

In Belém, the *cabanagem* (named after the peasants – *cabanos*) in 1835 was the largest rebellion, leading to the independence of Pará as a province. It was a mass movement of the local Brazil-born elite but also became the fight of the rural underclass' struggle for land and against unfair trade relations (Harris 2000). During the last century the peasant communities grew rapidly, as Amerindian settlements, run-away slaves and *meztisos/caboclos* (mixed population) established the low-class peasantry of *cabanos* by working on the land of wealthy landowners. The system became a patron-client relationship between the workers and the landowners, which in some ways were similar to the slave system. The workers were paid poorly and had to work long days in order to have a piece of land and maintain the lowest standard of living. The land system favoured rich landowners, and peasants were bound to work for a landowner exploiting the workers for their labour. They were also bound by debt through the *aviamento* system outlined above (Fausto 1999). The *cabanos*, which was the name given to the rebels, occupied Belém and evicted or killed the aristocracy but were overtaken by the Brazilian army in 1836 (Pace and Wagley 1997). Even though they lost

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<sup>12</sup> Quilombos was the name given to run-away slaves, and still has status as a category of the Amazonian population.

control to the government, the *cabanagem* led to a freer peasantry with less domination of landowners and patrons, and was an important point in the history of the Amazonian peasantry.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the different Latin American countries and colonies started to abolish the slave labour after pressure from European powers. Since the slave workers produced most of the raw materials for export in Brazil, the government hesitated to give it up. Brazil was thus one of the last former colonies to abolish slave labour; it was not until 1888 that Brazil abolished slavery, after ending the slave trade in 1850 (Fausto 1999). After abolishing slavery, the demand for a work force led to massive immigration of Europeans and Asians, as coffee, sugar and rubber were still in demand. Brazil became a country with a very mixed population made up from immigrants, Amerindian and African origins.

With a better understanding of the history of Brazil, one can connect the historical trajectories with today's Amazonian identity and way of living in the island where I did my fieldwork. The *Paraense* people have since the colonisation been a people of *mestiço* mixture: The mixture of "race"<sup>13</sup> and ethnicity has created a society of people who can claim many identities (Stepan 1991). Many periods of immigration have also influenced the Amazonian population, especially Japanese settlers. The different economic sectors have blurred boundaries as a peasant also can be a fisher and working in a city from time to time. Old traditions have merged together with the new, "modern" Brazilian ideas. Authors as Nugent (1993), Harris (2000), Adams et al. (2009) describe this overlapping of sectors, identities, traditions and people as one of the most important identity trait among the *Paraense*, especially among those living in the rural parts. This is partly because of the history of rapid booms of certain products, changing seasons and the adaptation to the climate and the river. People had to find alternative ways of living, and the occupations they had in the dry season ended when the rainy season started. Then they had to find other ways of making a living and providing food, and this constant change and many ways of securing income is very strong in the region. Throughout the colonial era, Amazonia was imagined and presented in different ways. After going through the national projects in the Amazon, I will relate the historical process of expansion into the contested area with the overarching images of Amazonia.

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<sup>13</sup> Race is a contested term, as it has connotations of skin colour and physical appearances, also involved in stigmas. I use race here, as Stepan (1991) does to explain the *mestiço* concept.

## National Expansion into Amazonia

Since the colonial era and later with the Brazilian expansion and establishment of development programs in the Brazilian Amazon, the slogan has been “to conquer”. The areas had to be conquered, overtaken by man in the fight against the “green hell”<sup>14</sup>, in order to control the wilderness and cultivate it. As the Brazilian president Getúlio Vargas said in 1940:

Nothing will prevent us from accomplishing in this spurt of effort which is the twentieth century the highest task of civilized man: the conquest and the domination of great valleys of equatorial torrents, transforming their blind force and extraordinary fertility into disciplined energy. The Amazon with the fecund impulse of our will, of our effort and of our work, will remain simply a chapter in the history of the earth but, on the same basis as other great river systems, will become a chapter in the history of civilization” (Vargas quoted in Wagley 1974:5).

And conquer they did.

In the 1960s, the Brazilian military government<sup>15</sup> made a Plan for National Integration (*Plano de Integração Nacional*, PIN), which opened the Brazilian Amazon up for resource extraction and ‘rational’ use of the resources (Vadjunec and Schmink 2012). In these years infrastructure was in focus, and a network of road and trains were built to connect the Amazon with larger Brazilian cities, thus making it easier to export goods to Europe and other countries. The periphery of Brazil was to be connected to its centre, along with the modernising politics of Brazil (Bunker 1988). The notion of an uninhabited rainforest was strong, and related to that time’s image of Amazonia as an empty space in need of development and expansion. Overlooking national and international protest they built the Transamazon Highway connecting Belém with Brasilia and later also Santarem. With the slogan “Land Without People for People Without Land” the programme settled thousands of poor migrants from the Northeast and South of Brazil in Amazonia, in small colonies along the newly built highway (Wood and Schmink 1984:x). The idea was that as long as they were given land, the people from North East would learn from the peasants from South about family farming and how to plant crops and vegetables. This was an essentialist view that the peasants from the south would function as “cultural brokers”, transferring their knowledge about crops and planting (Brondizio 2009:198). The soil quality and knowledge of the special techniques required for actually being able to plant and maintain plantations in Amazonia was not taken into account

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<sup>14</sup> I will elaborate upon the notion of Amazonia as “green hell” later in this chapter.

<sup>15</sup> The Brazilian army lead a coup on the former government and Brazil became a military dictatorship in 1964 (Fausto, 1999).

either, and as with many other development projects in Amazonia, they did not work out as planned. Many of the newly arrived peasants lived for some time in the colonies, until the land was not able to produce anymore, and they had to move around to find work. Many of them had to take paid work at rubber plantations, cattle farms or with some of the wealthy land owners, and became part of the patron-client relationship elsewhere in Amazonia, always being in debt and never being able to engage in their own subsistence activity (Nugent 1993).

The migrant peasants in the Amazon turned out to make a low profit, and the government changed focus from smallholders to large-scale cattle ranching, and to mega projects yielding greater profit. They had realised how much “green gold” there was to be extracted from the region, as coffee, cacao and other products from Amazonia was on demand in the European markets. Mining and oil extraction was also a rich source of expansion into Amazonia, as there was a lot of money to make in these areas (Vadjunec and Schmink 2012). In these undertakings, the notion of Amazonia as uninhabited was very strong; the government and companies took little or no notice of the indigenous and traditional populations living in the areas they made into cattle-ranches, dams, roads and so on (Slater 2002). This notion of Amazonia being open for anyone with capital to invest, is evident in many of the examples above, and how they established several different projects to develop and modernise the region. The idea was that in Amazonia, being a tropical rainforest, anything would grow. Most of these projects proved wrong, and a lot of the effort in the small scale subsistence farming area was abolished in favour of the capital intensive mega projects, which needed larger areas of land. The local inhabitants of Amazonia were not included in the government led projects, and both Amerindian and traditional peoples were displaced, forced to move and killed in large numbers in order for the government to get control over the land normally occupied by these groups (Pace and Wagley 1997).

The Amazon went from being the unexplored world of “the others”, with dark secrets and dangerous conquests, to become an enormous area where extraction of products to export into the capitalist market was the major activity. How Amazonia has been exploited and colonised by the Europeans can be said to have laid out the groundwork for how the Brazilian state acted in relation to the area. One can clearly see some lines of how man conquered the Amazon and more recent ideas about how the area should be put to use. This is an important basis for understanding the overarching image of Amazonia today, and how the change during the 70’s toward environmental concerns became important in today’s politics and international agencies interference in Amazonia. The modernisation process and national

expansion towards Amazonia have also been a very important trajectory creating Amazonia into an entangled Eden, based on the way those in power imagined Amazonia to be (Slater 2002).

### **The overarching image of Amazonia**

Amazonia is said to be a highly contested area. With expansion and intrusion into the area by a colonial power, national development programs, cattle ranchers, miners, oil companies and other actors, the area have suffered destruction and eradication of land, vegetation, animals and the people inhabiting the landscape. With one of the world's largest rain forest, providing the earth with much needed oxygen, Amazonia – “the lungs of earth” – cannot be destroyed and wiped from the earth's surface. There have been many different approaches to the problem, and different institutions have had different ways and interests in solving some of the problems ahead for Amazonia. Protected areas have been established for some of the remaining Amerindian groups, but at the same time, this has created conflicts trough excluding other groups inhabiting the same area. Development projects have been implemented to make sustainable livelihoods and ways of creating an income, but many projects have overlooked local knowledge about the area, leading several projects to failure (Slater 2002).

My argument is that we need to really understand this contested area; its landscape of rain forest, rivers, firm and wet lands and the different people inhabiting it. Amazonia is typically pictured with forest destruction, logging, mining, cattle farms, oil extraction and extinction of Amerindian tribes. But it is also home to millions of people making a living of different activities, having lived in the area for many decades, using techniques that are more sustainable than we (the West) imagine. As I will present in chapter 5, they live organically with subsistence farming, produce a quantity of their own food and live in harmony with the surrounding nature to a remarkable degree. These people are not newly arrived intruders, as pictured in some environmental campaigns, but rather, there due to long-term development throughout Amazonian history: The waves of colonisation, immigration, government-based projects (Slater 2002).

### **Amazonia: Lost Eden and the Exotic Other**

How people think about Amazonia today is an outcome of different trajectories and representations of history, images and travellers' tales of the ‘uninhabited jungle’ of rivers and rain forest. To understand the idea of Amazonia today, one need to understand some of



these trajectories and how they are figure in discourses and politics of today's Amazonia. Slater (2002) analyses the different representations that tangles together with different images, many based on the vision of Eden, making Amazonia into a state of disjuncture (Slater 2002: 8). She has argued that the narratives and images of Amazonia are fundamental for how "western" people think about tropical rain forests; as something similar to a Garden of Eden; an uninhabited paradise. "Western" notions of the Amazon is thus based upon an "Edenic Narrative" depicting the rain forest as a pristine and natural landscape, the most natural of natural places, "[...] evoking the biblical account of Eden" (Slater 1996:115). Amazonia in this sense becomes "the lost Eden"; the last paradise of complete naturalness and divine beauty, on its way to the fall from grace, as man penetrates their way into the landscape. The Edenic narrative is a kind of a two sided coin; it pictures Amazonia as the most natural of natural places at the same time as it is pictured as an empty space. Untouched nature and wild jungle gives also in idea of a place needing to be explored and conquered, as one could see in the Brazilian state-led development projects.

Throughout the shifts in history and national and international politics, the ways Amazonia was pictured reflected the way the area was used. One of the most powerful images of Amazonia from the colonial era was that of the uninhabited "jungle" just waiting for explorers and adventurers to discover it. Here is the notion of untouched nature strong, as the image mostly is constructed without any of the people inhabiting the forest. The brave travellers went on adventurous journeys into the jungle, describing the nature and the exotic plants and people they found. It was dangerous and only the bravest dared to enter the jungle as the dangers and mysteries the Amazonian rain forest contained, would conquer mankind and everyone who dared enter (Stepan 2001). This was followed by a vision of a "green hell", the uncontrollable jungle where dark people and dangerous plants and animals lived. These images had a lot to do with the shifts Europe was going through. At the time, the tropics became darker and more sinful, Europe had become a more prudish society with a greater distance between what was clean and holy and what was dirty and dark (Stoler 2002).

When the Portuguese conquistadors and adventurers started their expeditions into the Amazon, they described a "green hell", with enormous creatures, plants, insects and fierce Amazon warrior-women (the latter are said to have given the Amazon its name). The expeditions were dangerous, and those who managed to come back alive became heroes, conquering the tropical nature. As with many other places in the colonial empire, the Amazon became "the other", the opposite of the civilized Europe (Hutchins and Wilson 2010). They

expected to find something completely opposite of the European West, with “noble savages” and a tropical rainforest filled with species and landscapes formerly unknown for the Europeans. The Amazon became a place of imagination as the exciting tales of the jungle expeditions came to Europe through traveller letters and with missionaries. When people went into the tropical rainforest, the already had expectations of the wonderful magnificence of the tropics they were about to explore (Stepan 2001). Lévi-Strauss described these expectations in the following way:

I imagined exotic countries to be the exact opposite of ours, and the term ‘antipodes’ had a richer and more naïve significance for me than its merely literal meaning. I would have been most surprised if anyone had told me that an animal or vegetable species could have the same appearance on both sides of the globe. I expected each animal, tree or blade of grass to be radically different, and its tropical nature to be glaringly obvious at a glance. (Lévi-Strauss 1995[1974]:47).

As Claude Lévi-Strauss (1995) experienced in 1955 on his travel to the Amazon, his images of the tropics was built upon the notion of the exotic ‘other’, being the opposite of Europe at that time. Even though he wrote with a sarcastic view of the travellers-tales genre, he gives us a good understanding of how these representations are put to work. The notion of the “exotic other” became evident in the colonial empires, and anthropologists have analysed how, for example Europeans imagined worlds completely different from our own, as Lévi-Strauss reflected upon in his own meeting with the tropics. The natives, whether in South America, Africa, India or Asia were depicted as darker, more mysterious and opposite of the civilised, modern Europeans. Said (1979) describes how the exotic ‘Orient’ functioned as a European invention, a form of orientalism which also created and defined Europe based on contrast. The discourse worked based on a distinction between ‘the orient’ (the east) and ‘the occident’ (the west), a distinction made through the Europeans (particularly the Britain and France) during the colonial era and invented a notion of ‘the Orient’ as an exotic other (Said 1979:2-4). The cultural hegemony at stake, placing the European culture at the highest of cultures, was put into function by having an opposite, something to contrast the European cultural elite from what it was not. The representations of ‘the orient’ Said (1979) analysed, is somewhat similar to the representations of Amazonia since the colonial era. A form of Amazon Orientalism can be found in many of the narratives and tales of the area and the notion of the exotic other being opposite of Europe is strong in the Americas as well, as the colonial powers expanded.

The “othering” of the Amazon is still evident today in new discourses and representations of Amazonia, which gives a clue of how strong images and representations of places and spaces

can be. In ads for traveller's magazines the images of Amazonia is still that of a tropical rainforest, with the Amerindian tribes symbolising the exoticness of the area. Even though most of the existing Amerindian groups in Amazonia today have adapted the "modern" style of dressing, in the ads one only sees them in their "traditional" costume. After years of assimilation into the Brazilian way of dressing, the internationalisation of Amazonia and the introduction of environmental activists have led to a change. For the westerners (mainly Europeans and Americans) the loss of traditional costume was equal to the loss of cultural identity and authenticity (Friedman 1994). With this view they continued the "othering" process of the Amerindians, contrasting them once again to themselves, as if they were supposed to dress opposite of the "western" style of dressing. In political and activist campaigns the Kayapó, who also normally wears western clothes, dresses up in their traditional costume, plying out the representation the west have of Amerindians in the struggle for their rights (Conklin 1997).

### **Conflicts over land**

Brazil is an enormous country<sup>16</sup>. Today, the 10% wealthiest own 75% of the arable land and have legal titles to areas. This situation leads to conflicts, especially in Amazonia, where there are several factors one needs to understand in order to analyse the present situation. Throughout the centuries there has been a constant dispute over land and property in Amazonia, and many of the settlers and indigenous groups have had to find new land, move or find new ways of surviving (Fausto 1999). The tragic land conflict have lasted over centuries, since the colonial expansion and is now flaring up as the land reform and unequal distribution of land favours the large land owners, corporations in need of land and other capital intensive projects. The conflict has been violent since the beginning, and the number of small peasants, extractivists and immigrants being killed in the conflict is very high. Only from 2002 until 2013, over 700 people have been killed in land conflicts in Amazonia<sup>17</sup>, the majority being peasants (Global Witness 2013). Normally the peasants occupy a land area that is not used, and start growing their subsistence crops there. As the land law in Brazil allows people to occupy government or unused private land, which become legally theirs after an amount of years using the area, this is a normal way for small farmers to be able to retain a piece of land. The land owner having the rights to the area (often not legally, but bought

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<sup>16</sup> With a surface of 8 514 876 km<sup>2</sup>, Brazil is larger than the European continent.

<sup>17</sup> A majority of the land conflicts have happened in Pará, an estimate of around 400 people have been killed land conflicts in Pará from 1985-1999. Added to the numbers from 2002-2013 one can understand the .. of the conflict (Simmons et al. 2002).

through corrupt means) have to go through INCRA (the national agricultural institute), to settle who has the legal rights to the land. Sadly, as with many official institutions, this does not work properly. The large ranch owners and logging companies have in many cases hired gunmen to literally clear away obstacles, the landless farmers and the activists fighting for the land rights. Chico Mendes, the rubber-tapper leader from Acre who established a rubber-tapper reserve, was brutally shot in his own home, after conflict with a local land owner. An American nun, Dorothy Stang, who fought for landless peasants in southern Pará, was shot while walking alone through the forest (Martin 2008). The killing of popular activist, like Mendes and Stang, has become highly symbolic for the fight against the large landowners and corporations behind the brutal killing of over hundred peasants, activists and leaders in the Amazonian states.

### **Representations into actions**

Whether it is depicted as uninhabited jungle or green hell, the message of the images and narratives of Amazonia is the same; the area needs to be conquered and put to use, the resources are just lying there untouched, and withholding natural wealth. The Brazilian state had several approaches to this. One of the most remarkable projects in Amazonia was that of Henry Ford and the “American dream” rubber plantation he tried to grow along the Tapajós River in 1928. The Brazilian government gave him permission to buy a large area of land to establish a rubber plantation, extracting and processing rubber to use in his car production. They should be given a certain percentage every year of the income from this. Clearing the forest and establish a rubber three plantations the size of a small American state might seem crazy today, but it was what Ford did. The little town that formed the centre of his Amazonian enterprise was given the name Fordlandia, and the plantation covered an area of two and a half million acres. He tried to make it a small Midwestern, American town, a place of his imagination, in the untamed jungle of Amazonia. Infrastructure as a school, a hospital, a little train, a water tower, paved roads and even their own electrical plant were to make life in Fordlandia comfortable for the workers. There was even ballroom dancing on Saturdays (Grandin 2010). For some years it worked (not without problems) until nature took over. The idea had been that Amazonia had the land and resources to grow rubber trees, while Ford provided cultivation of the land and the workers living there. He believed the American way of living, with small houses, paved roads and cultural activities would make the workers want to live there, as they often came from poverty stricken regions of the North East. Even the food was American, and the workers were not completely satisfied with this. In the end, the

economy was what ended Ford's American dream in Amazonia, as synthetic rubber started to gain popularity and the rubber bust quickly ended most of the production in Amazonia. During the years of Fordlandia there were several problems caused by poor soil quality, bad planning of the plantation (he had no agricultural experts) and in the aftermath Fordlandia was declared to be a major failure (Hecht and Cockburn 1989).

### **Environmentalism and development**

Today the images and narratives describe the tropical rain forest as the provider of a large quantity of oxygen to the earth, with endangered species and Amerindian tribes at the edge of extinction (Nugent 1993). If the images include the people living in the Amazon, it is mostly the Amerindians living peacefully in their tribes, collecting plants for medical use and living in harmony with the nature (Slater 1996). These images created in campaigns to save the rain forest have become a mental image of how we picture Amazonia, especially how we need to save the rainforest and its inhabitants, the Amerindians. The Edenic narrative implies an area in need of protection from the external threats; the environmental organisations are the saviours.

An example of how this new imagery inspires action is how the Norwegian government supports the Brazilian Amazon Fund with capital when Brazil reduces the deforestation and emission from deforestation. After a period of time they measure how much emission has been reduced and then they "reward" them for the amount. The money is given to the Amazon Fund, and should be used for projects to protect the rainforest (Klima- og miljødepartementet 2014) The concern for Amazonia and the fear of its destruction is something one sees in many campaigns to stop the deforestation and large-scale extraction of resources. There is a general concern that it is our responsibility to do something, in the end all of us will suffer from the environmental damage in the long run. This notion of environmentalism, have grown stronger the latest years, and it can be seen as a philosophy and ideology as well as a life-style. Most environmentalists represent a certain group or an area, in order to protect it from outside occupation and maintain the traditional way of life.

The largest global environmental organisations, as World Wildlife Fund, Green Peace and the Amazon Fund have million worth campaigns to save a piece of land, an endangered species or an Amerindian Group from the threats they experience (Milton 1993). Together with the ideology of saving the rain forest, that we need to react in order to save the rain forest, a new discourse of environmentalism has taken place within development ideals. "Thus,

‘environmental discourse’ is not just communication about the environment, but also the process whereby our understanding of the environment is constituted through such communication” (Milton 1993: 8). An environmental discourse has a set of communicative tools shaping how one thinks and perceives the environment, and especially the damages humankind puts upon our environment. For example in Brazil the ecology movement have been influential in Amazonia; amongst many farmers I spoke to it was very normal to talk about organic farming, even though it was the same way of farming they had always done. But the rhetoric’s changed with the new concern for environment and ecological thinking.

In development projects today we hear about sustainable development, how all the projects are concerned with the ideal of making a living which does not destroy more of nature than necessary, and use natural methods in their livelihood (Goodman and Redclift 1991). Sustainable development have become the “new” way of doing development, with the vision of being able to extract resources, create economic growth and participate in the globalised world economy in a sustainable manner. In the United Nations Millennium Development Goals for 2015 number 7 is to “Ensure environmental sustainability”, and the Rio +20 conference<sup>18</sup> focuses on how to do development sustainable (United Nations 2014). In Brazil several projects have been established, especially in the Amazon to prevent deforestation, protect the environment and its inhabitants. One of the many strategies has been to establish protected areas and Amerindian reserves. However, not all the initiatives have a positive outcome and it has been discussed whether establishing protected areas are the best solution. There is a tendency to overlook the thousands of non-indigenous people also inhabiting the area. Many of the recent images of the “natural” Amazonia also have created a form of stigmatisation against small scale farmers and extractivists, depicting them as “the bad guys”. Many multilateral corporations state that it is the small-scale farmers, with their slash-and-burn techniques who are the major threat to the rain forest. They build their findings upon research taken out of the context, and also the new environmental ideology, as I will describe with some examples elsewhere in Latin America.

In the upper Amazon in Ecuador, an oil company, ARCO, have built a well to extract oil through a pipeline. Incorporating the new environmentalist ideals, ARCO launched a book picturing how petroleum technology and conservation could go hand in hand (Sawyer 2003: 70). The pictures of how the oil well and pipelines blended in with the natural landscape of

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<sup>18</sup> United Nations conference on Sustainable development, Rio de Janeiro, June 2012.

rain forest also excluded all the people inhabiting the area. Their environmental conservationism only considered the rain forest as exclusively a biophysical realm, where they, with new technologies, were able to extract oil without destroying large areas of forest. The inhabitants living in the area, who were directly affected by the oil extraction, by being evicted from certain areas, were never included. Through their strategies of creating the image of the rain forest as “peopleless”, they managed to legitimise the company’s actions in the landscape (Sawyer 2003:71). This is one of many examples of how the images created of the Amazonian rain forest legitimise actions and intrusion in a habited area. There were large consequences for the local people living in the specific areas; they were forced to move, change their livelihoods and pictured as destroyers of the forest.

Another example of how images of Amazonia have led to or legitimised actions in a contested area, is the case of El Mirador, an ancient Mayan city in a protected forest area in a Guatemalan tropical forest. Forest dwellers (mostly *ladinos* – mixed origin of indigenous and European ancestry) inhabiting the area were given concessions to extract resources sustainably, to increase state control at the same time as the people in the area functioned as protectors of the forest (Ystanes in press) In recent years however, the state and private investors wants to open up the area for eco-tourism<sup>19</sup> as part of the conservation strategy, which they mean will be a sustainable income and create prosperity for the local community. A major initiator of the project is the Global Heritage Fund, an American based organisation with the aim of protecting cultural heritage. They want to make all other activities than eco-tourism illegal, including most of the local small-scale activities. They legitimise this aim by presenting the local (and sustainable) extraction activities as leading to deforestation, while eco-tourism would prevent this. The inhabitants of the area, the forest dwellers, are pictured as illegal intruders living by poaching, trafficking and illegal timber extraction, threatening the rain forest (GHF Public Relations 2008). This image excluded the range of forest-preserving strategies by the forest dwellers, their sustainable practices in extractivism and how they themselves were concerned in protecting the rain forest from destruction (Ystanes in press). The images created by the Global Heritage Fund in their strategy to open up the area for eco-tourism, made the forest dwellers intruders in the particular image of the landscape. Whether they will succeed in their plans is still unclear. But the implications the project

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<sup>19</sup> Eco-tourism has become very popular in recent years, especially in Amazonia. This builds upon the ecological friendly tourist, going to certified ecological and sustainable tourist places. That means the tourism should not destroy nature or the local habitat, and that the local place also is involved and gain from the tourism.

would have for the locals is quite clear: they will lose their subsistence activity as an extractive community and also parts of their landscape (Ystanes in press). This is also evident in many projects in the Brazilian Amazon, where the forest dwellers – the *caboclos*, *ribeirinhos* and non-indigenous peoples - are pictured as intruders. To sum up, the images of Amazonia as a vast area of rain forest, only habited by Amerindian groups are used by several corporations to legitimise their actions in the rain forest. Taking advantage of environmental rhetoric's; "projects being carried out sustainably", the corporations manage to shape the way their projects are imagined. However, as the rhetoric's are based on images, the call for studying how these images work and understanding the actual reality of the given area will be of great importance.

An even larger symbol of the local people struggle for land is that of the Amerindian groups. Having suffered resettlement and occupation of the areas they have used for centuries, the fight for the rights of the Amerindian groups in the Amazon received international attention in the 1970's. The Kayapó Amerindian group's struggle fighting a large corporation wanting to flood their lands to build a dam became the image of Amerindian struggles. They used techniques of media and playing back the representations the West had of them, using their indigenous identity as a political tool. Concerts were arranged with the artist Sting, one of the international celebrities involved in helping the Kayapó (Slater 1996). The Amerindian group became the image and symbol of the fight against deforestations and destruction of the rain forest, and it has become a very strong and powerful symbol indeed. However, by the creation of this symbol, all those others living in Amazonia has been moved further back or even out of the image of the tropical rainforest (Nugent 1993). As with the Edenic narrative of the rainforest (Slater 2002), the Amerindians became the embodiment of the natural domain, while parts of non-indigenous population have been placed in the category of 'destructive intruders' (Ystanes in press) When Nugent was going to study the *caboclos* around the city of Santarem, he experienced this at close hand. "When preparing to go to the field, I consulted a senior Amazonianist, who was amazed that anyone wanted to spend time among 'Indian-killers'."(Nugent 1993:xvii). The *caboclos* Nugent wanted to study was seen as the intrusive elements to the Amerindian culture, and unimportant to study. In anthropology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the "exotic other" have been the most interesting object of study, and something that may have played a role in why all those others living in Amazonia have been left out of the picture.



Using the Amerindians in their campaigns, environmentalist organisations put them in a form of “endangered species” category, implying they need our help to be saved. While the protected areas of national forest and indigenous reserves have tried to protect the nature and people from invasion from outside (however, there is still illegal logging from national forest and reserves), the development of the protected areas have left out parts of the population and led to conflict in some cases. The *Flona Tapajós* a national forest reserve established in 1974 excluded several of the communities residing inside the borders of the park, which were relocated. After local struggle to remain, the management opened up for “traditional people” to reside within the reserve, opening up a new debate of who was traditional and who was not (Ioris 2005).

How we think about the nature and especially the rain forest has changed, and together with the discourse of environmentalism there are new ways emerging of how we think about the rain forest and its inhabitants. Even among the Amerindian peoples there are those who are considered more “natural” than others. Slater (1996) compares two newspaper articles concerning two different tribes in the Amazon in the struggle for gaining rights to their land. The Yanomami Indians of the upper Amazon are described as pristine Indians almost untouched by modernity, while the Kayapó of the lower Amazon are called ‘jungle maharajas’ using modern tools and exploiting their title to land to make a profit selling timber and other resources. The Yanomamis were the ones needing to be saved, and who would go well with the environmentalism discourse, while the Kayapós was in discordance with the representations of Amerindians. The images created of Amazonia excluded the group not fitting into the idealised picture, and the actions implied also excluded those “unfit” in projects and political concerns. There are several development projects concerned with environment and protection of the rain forest in Amazonia today. Some of the projects have worked out well, while others have made things worse for many groups. What is important and also criticised with these environmental projects is the construction of Amazonia as a static unit. People are divided into ‘traditional’ and ‘indigenous’ overlooking the many differences in occupation, knowledge and most of all the way many inhabitants change between many different occupations available for them (Filho 2009). The problems of such images as the representations of Amazonia is how they overlook the reality of local places and peoples, and presents the area wrongly. We need to include all the lived realities in order to build a new framework of understanding, and the complexity of the Amazonian, social landscape needs to be understood in order to carry out reasonable projects.

In this chapter I have given a background of the overarching image of Amazonia and how it influences the people living in the area. The overarching image of Amazonia have been a strong force in how our images of Amazonia have been created and maintained, and the notion of Amazonia as an Edenic Narrative have influenced peoples representations of the rain forest (Slater 2002). I have followed historical trajectories of colonial and national expansion into the Amazon, and the influences these trajectories have had upon the overarching image of Amazonia. Today, with the concern of the environment and a stronger focus on sustainable development, one sees a new shift in how the images are created, and also the consequences these shifts might have for the region. With several projects and protected areas established, I emphasized the importance of understanding Amazonia's complex social landscape; and how we need to include all the inhabitants of the area in order to provide a viable future for all the partners.

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## Chapter 3

### Cotijuba: An Island in-between

*As I continue to find my way around in Belém, I discover what is to become the main theme of my fieldwork: The constant flow of people and things between the cities and the surrounding islands. As I found my field site, the island Cotijuba, this movement between the “rural” and the “urban” became more evident, and I understood that this would be a very important part of my fieldwork.*

This chapter presents my field site, the island of Cotijuba and what I found to be an interesting theme in relation to my argument: The relationship between the urban and the rural, and how they are never truly separated at the island. I will explain livelihoods and housing conditions at the island, and relate this to the way people categorised Cotijuba as urban or rural. It will be important to understand official and local categorisations, and what impacts it might have for the islanders. I will do this by engaging theories concerning urbanisation and the tendency to separate urban and rural. Through my chapter I will emphasise how urbanisation in Amazonia does not follow regular patterns of urbanisation theories, the strong connections between the urban areas and its rural counterparts, and how they never truly are separated. I will use examples from Cotijuba related to these themes, and focus on the changes occurring at the island.

*The little boat leaves the dock and the lively fish market, on its way to Cotijuba; the little island about an hour boat ride from Belém. People sit and talk together, some are sleeping, and other read or listen to music. Crossing the bay you can get glimpses of Belém in the distance, with its skyscrapers ranging over the river. In the bay there are many boats, all from small canoes to big ships lying anchored in the middle of the bay. The small canoes and boats are also crossing over to the nearby islands. Traversing the bay, the boat glides between two big islands looking rather uninhabited. However, as the boat glides on, small houses along the riverbank comes into sight. Wooden houses built on poles in the water, with small docks and many boats. Children are playing by the water, climbing along the roots of the trees growing down into the water. The islands have a docking area, where it is possible*

*for boats to stop by and pick up people. After passing the two islands to enter another bay, with many rivers connecting further in, the boat changes direction westward, and from the distance I can see the island of Cotijuba. It is similar to the two islands we already have passed; it is mostly green and covered with threes. As we continue and I can see more of the island, what seems to be the island's centre appears; a cluster of houses and buildings, a docking area and telephone pole. The boat continues along the island, and it finally seems like we are coming to the end of the trip. Getting off the boat and up towards a little square a huge ruin of a building appears. "The juvenile educational institution" a signpost says. It used to be a big building, with many windows, covering the whole length of the squares. The building is still standing, although now it is just the skeleton of the large institution it was. I wonder how this building once looked in the days the institution was still being run. The square is round, and there are many small coffee stands around it. It is a nice area, with threes and benches to sit in the shade. There are a lot of people around, women selling food and coffee from the stalls, and most of all, motoristas, taxi drivers driving the motorbikes that can take you around anywhere. There is also a tractor with two wagons leaving a few times during the day. In front of the ruin there are several horse carts, apparently for those having more things to carry or who fear the motorbike will be a bit challenging for them. The motoristas spot us who are not from the island and come over to persuade us to go with them. I decide it is better to try the challenge at once, and chose a motorbike to take me to the house where I am going to live for the next months (from fieldnotes).*

### **Spatial organisation of Cotijuba**

The island of about 60 km<sup>2</sup> consists of different areas; a little centre, the docking area, the rural land and the river dwellings. The *centro* (centre) starts in the little docking area and is organised around the southern end of the island, functioning as the island's official centre. Compared to the rest of Cotijuba it has a rather high density of houses and shops, and a more urban structure. Around the docking area, there is a square with several small stalls, a prison

ruin<sup>20</sup> and the starting point of the main road, *Av. Magalhães Barata*, which runs through Cotijuba. It is a gravel road, only with space for two tractors to pass each other. Following the road one passes many buildings and small *pousadas*<sup>21</sup>, restaurants and small shops. There are several small clothing shops and some small supermarkets along the road, mainly selling clothes, dry food, some vegetables and hygienic products. After 100 metres one comes to a crossroad where the main road continues north, while another road heads westward to one of the many beaches. Around this crossroads most of the official buildings are situated. There is a little market selling fish and meat in the morning, some vegetable stalls, a health post, the oldest church, two schools, some repair shops and several small cafés and lunch places. If you follow the road westward you will come to the beach area, *Praia do Farol*, covering the south-western shore of the island. Between the beach and the docking area there are neighbourhoods with many small houses close together. Along the beach there were also several large *pousadas* and beach restaurants. From the main centre, the *Magalhães Barata* road continues to all the way to the northern side of the island, to *Vai-Quem-Quer*<sup>22</sup>, where I lived during my fieldwork. From this road, there are several smaller roads eastward and westward to the houses in these parts. There are no asphalt roads on Cotijuba and cars are not allowed to drive there, except the official police car. Motorbikes and small tractors have permission to drive, as well as horse carts. The main public transport, *the bondinho* is a tractor with two wagons, functioning as a bus. It has a schedule, leaving at set times throughout the day, and then every hour during weekends and public holidays. The tractor driven wagons also functioned as “school buses”, driving the kids and teenagers going to school in the centre.

The natural landscape of Cotijuba consisted of different types of soil and vegetation. There was the river surrounding Cotijuba, but also smaller rivers (*igarapes*) and lakes inside the island. The different soils in Amazonia have very different levels of nutrients and fertility, something that affects the vegetation growing in the specific soil. In Cotijuba one can both find *terra firme* (highlands) and *várzea* (wetlands) (Melo 2010). The *terra firme* is characterised by low fertility, and small cycles of regrowth. Planting in this type of soil, demands extensive knowledge of the soil quality and how to maintain the nutrients in it.

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<sup>20</sup> There used to be a prison at Cotijuba, functioning for many years. As the prison closed, the buildings functioned as a correctional institution for young men, removing them from the city. Today the buildings are just ruins, but with historical importance for the island.

<sup>21</sup> Small guesthouses with some rooms for rent, and a restaurant/bar that provide beach guests with chairs, tables, parasols and drinks.

<sup>22</sup> Literally meaning Go-those-who-Wants, which play with the fact that this was the more distanced beach, far away from the centre.

*Várzea* on the other side is of rich fertility, getting nutrients from the periodical flooding of the area. However, with the flooding one also has the risk of nutrients being washed away, as well as all the plants grown in the area (Ross 1978). The natural landscape at Cotijuba had its limitations in case of planting crops and keeping animals. Nevertheless the islanders had extensive knowledge of what to plant where, seasonal cycles and how to have fertile soils. Many had some animals, mostly chickens, but also pigs. Together with crops, plants and fishing this was the base of the food subsistence at the island.

### **Categorisation of houses**

In order to understand the different groups of islanders and some of the current categorisation, I paid much attention to the different types of houses people lived in. The house can be a very good classificatory tool; in the case of spatial division inside the house, the division of inside and outside, domestic and public and the display of the house towards the outside world (Robben 1989). Bourdieu ([1980] 1996) analyses the Kabyle house, and how it symbolises the worldview and classification of the lived world, between the men's world (outside the house) and the women's world (inside the house)<sup>23</sup>, based upon binary oppositions. Bourdieu was a major influence in studies of symbolism, hegemony and structuralism, and his analysis of houses has been important. Houses as a marker for hierarchy and social status is evident in many societies, especially the physical appearance of the house and how architectural elements can differentiate the upper strata of a society with those of lower status in the appearance of the house (Waterson 1995). I used this as a background to an overall classification of different types of houses related to socio-economic status, where I try to categorise three types of housing arrangement I found evident at Cotijuba. That is not to say however, that the community at Cotijuba was a hierarchised one, rather there was little stigmas related to class or strata. But there were some differences that one could see in the appearance of the houses and what type of family living there, especially related to livelihoods.

There are the very simple houses made of wood, palm leaves and even rubber latex. These houses were more often located in the distant part of the island, where many of the island's *ribeirinhos*, *seringuistas* (rubber-tappers) and farmers lived. Their livelihoods were normally subsistence activities, producing or catching food for the family unit. Living conditions consisted of a compound of a main wooden house surrounded by some smaller units of houses

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<sup>23</sup> I will come back to this division in the next chapter, concerning women's role in the household.

and roofs organised into different living areas. One area is for cooking, one for washing dishes, one for doing laundry, a sitting area etc. The cooking and washing area can be organised in different ways, but they normally are outside. Some houses has a water tap connected to pipes, while others only have vessels and have to collect water in barrels. They all have wooden benches to prepare food and wash dishes, the wood is anti-bacterial and also let water run through gaps in the board. The cooking area is traditionally a fireplace built up by stone bricks, and with some metal bars over. The cooking pots are placed on the metal bars, since they transfer heat. Some households have changed to gas stoves in the recent years, but many still has a fireplace as the only source for cooking. Most houses were simple furnished with a kitchen table and chairs, and it was normal to have a television and a stereo system. The traditional houses also have a large outdoor space where they have hammocks or a sitting area. Many houses are built on poles and raised above the ground, to keep the water away during the rainy season. Some of these wooden houses are in a more modern style, with some modern elements, but they are mostly built in the same pattern with an outdoor area divided into different spaces for different things.

The second category of houses is brick houses. This is the most common way to construct a house these days, and the majority of the islanders lived in this type of house. Most families living in brick houses had paid jobs besides agriculture or fishing, and also had more material possessions than those families living in the more “traditional” housing arrangements. The houses are built of bricks and cement, without paint or cement surface. Most of the houses are a quadrangle shape, with a low front wall and a tall back wall. This makes the ceiling incline towards the front, thus helping water find its way to the ground during heavy rain. Some of the houses have kitchen and bathrooms inside, while others have just one or two rooms and a kitchen area outside. Normally one would have a bench for cooking inside, and a water tap outside of the kitchen window where they do the dishes and such. The majority living in brick houses had gas stoves, electricity and was furnished with sofas, chairs, a dining table. They all had a television and a stereo system. Most of these brick houses also have an outside area with a roof, where they entertain guests and relax with the family. Some of these houses are also arranged in clusters, where most of their family also live.

The third type of house is larger, painted houses. They are made with bricks, but have made proper cement walls, tiled floor and are painted. Some of these houses are also in wood, but in a modern style, and nothing like the first category of houses. They normally had several rooms and separate kitchen and living room. Many also had a front room, used to entertain

guests. Most of these houses have a large veranda or outside area with hammocks and rocking chairs, and it is also common with decorative objects. They are mostly inhabited by people who have moved to Cotijuba in recent years, but some of the elderly also lived in houses like this, as they had worked on the house for a long period. Those living in this type of houses normally had paid jobs in Belém, and had a relatively higher standard of living than the rest of the islanders.

I also found a division of houses based on necessity and decoration. People built houses based on what was necessary; to have a roof over their head. Compared to the size of the family and income, houses were mostly constructed with an eye to fit the family's needs. But, those families having a higher income decorated their house based on wanting a nicer home, make it home more comfortable and have a decorative front room for guests. The latter can then be analysed to higher social and economic prestige; to have a decorated front room to entertain guests in, showed prestige and economic status. The front room is related to the division of inside and outside, between the domestic sphere of the family and the public sphere of the society (Robben 1989). I visited houses with very basic construction, and only one bedroom for a family of five. Still, they had a front room in the size of a large bedroom, where they normally sat if they had guests. To be invited into peoples home were a sign of respect, to be invited further in behind the front room were a sign of acceptance (see also Robben 1989). Bourdieu (1996) argues that the spatial division of the house is based on homologies, dichotomies; the division of the outside, public sphere and the inside, domestic sphere. This was evident at Cotijuba; people keep the inside of the house separated from life outside. The front room, as the first room one enters from the street, becomes a space in between; it is connected to both spheres. It also becomes a marker of socioeconomic distinction between the households who are able to afford such a room, and those who do not. This division of houses and socioeconomic conditions helped me gain a better understanding of the social organisation at Cotijuba, especially in relation to livelihoods, as each category of house participated in certain livelihoods.



## **Livelihoods and use of natural resources**

Fishing, agriculture and extractivism (extracting natural products, as rubber and *açai*<sup>24</sup>) are the most common livelihoods at Cotijuba. These are used in combination, where families both fished and had plantations of agricultural products to secure an income. The products are transported to the nearest local markets, either in Icoaraci or Belém and sold there. Some decades ago the islanders lived more isolated at the island having to make a living of the products available, while today, the rapid changes and urbanisation patterns have led to an increase of different livelihoods. Today it is very common to combine several activities, both in primary and tertiary sectors. Many islanders had small shops, restaurants, bars, and other forms of trade to maintain their livelihood. Construction work was another sector which employed many of Cotijubas residents, mostly men, in constructing buildings at the island. With the introduction of tourism to Cotijuba, a new market opened up for the islanders, and today a majority of the inhabitants are involved in the tourist market with transportation, merchandise and guesthouses (*pousadas*).

Including a range of activities to secure a livelihood is a common strategy in Amazonian, rural communities, and several studies have explored the combination of strategies rural populations use (see for example Adams et al. 2009, Nugent 2009, Harris 2009). The urban, national elite have criticised these livelihoods strategies for being un-modern and resisting capitalist interventions, but authors as Harris (2009) argues otherwise; Amazonian peasant communities have the advantage of securing an income in difficult times, adjusting to the local market's busts and booms and taking advantage of all the sectors available. This makes them able to continue their preferred ways of life, and maintain their traditional livelihoods without having to be assimilated into the capitalistic market economy (Nugent 1993).

The ways Amazonian rural communities are combining activities pertaining to different sectors is similar to the strategies of the Norwegian “*fiskarbond*” (fisherman-farmer). The coastal population in Norway often engaged in both fishing and farming in order to take advantage of different resources in their natural surroundings. The division of work was important, as the men were out fishing while the women took care of the farm and household. This was especially strong in northern Norway, amongst the coastal Sámi population<sup>25</sup>. Living

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<sup>24</sup> Açai (*Euterpe oleracea*) is a form of thick juice made from the palm fruits. The blue, large berries are pressed in a machine, and the purple juice is eaten with farinha and sugar. It was very important in indigenous and traditional communities, and still forms an important part of their diet.

<sup>25</sup> The indigenous minority in Norway

in harsh landscapes, high mountains and rough fjords, combining several sectors was a strategy to survive and maintain a reasonable income and livelihood. It was also common to work periods in tertiary sectors, as mining, road building and other paid jobs (Nilsen 1998). Living in areas with different resources available, at the same time as it is difficult to specify the livelihood towards one sector, seems to make many local communities take advantage of the several sectors of available resources. The fishermen-farmers in Norway and the islanders at Cotijuba have in common a landscape with several natural resources available. But the landscape also has its limitations; weather, seasons and soil quality make specialising and industrialising one sector uneconomic, while small-scale production of several sectors is more secure and stable.

### **Plantations and gardens**

Most of the islanders have a plantation or a garden on their land, which provides the household with both food and income. As Cotijuba consists of different soils, not all of them equally suited for agriculture; there were limitations to which crops and plants would grow there. The most common plant is the *mandioca* (*Manihot esculenta*), which is a kind of bitter cassava one has to cook properly to remove a toxicant in the plant. There also exists a similar root, *macaxeira* (*Manihot utilissima*) a type of sweet cassava, used as potatoes. The *mandioca* is widely known throughout the world from many indigenous communities. It grows well in bad soils with little nutrition, and is therefore suitable to cultivate in rainforests. The root is used for many things, and the process mainly consists of the root getting peeled, grated into a mass that is then pressed. The remaining juice is collected and made into *tapioca*, a juice they boil with spices, which is basis for many *Parense* dishes. The thick part of the water being pressed out, looks like a white, slimy mass and is also collected and used in many dishes, or dried and used as flour to make *tapioca* pancakes. The dried *mandioca* mass is fried, and becomes a crunchy mass, *farinha*, which people have on their food, in the *açai* or simply as main part of the meal with some fish or dried meat on the side. As one can see, every part of the *mandioca* is used, and the root is a very important part of the local diet.

The majority of my research participants also had gardens around their house, or land situated in an available area, where they grew *açai* palms, flowers, and several fruit trees with different fruit as; *cupuaçu* (*Theobroma grandiflorum*), *carambola* (*Averrhoa carambola*) and *taperiba* (*Spondias dulcis*). This was particularly the case for the women who stayed at home with kids or who were retired. The gardens were of great importance as they provided fruits and other crops year round, and people cared extensively for their gardens. Women shared

knowledge about the flowers and trees, as well as exchanging flowers to grow in their own gardens. How the garden looked was also important; it should be clean, without weeds, and neatly cared for. They raked their gardens frequently, and most of the gardens were very well organised. Islanders used the slash and burn technique in small-scale, burning grass and trees which occupied their gardens. The burning also provided nutrition for the soil. Daily one could see small fires in controlled areas, as the islanders worked almost every day in their gardens.

### **Tourism**

In recent years tourism has increased, and Cotijuba is a popular holiday site for locals as well as international tourists. Boats leaving every hour traversing between the island and Icoaraci (the nearest harbour with connection to Belém), makes it easy to go on a day trip to the island. People came for the beaches, to relax and drink beer. In weekends the *pousadas* would put up tables and parasols at their part of the beach, and visitors were enjoying the sun and eating. This had made tourism into a good income for many families. Many combined it with other work, and often the women run the *pousada* while the men did other things. Many islanders, especially the young ones, also worked in the bars and restaurants in weekends and holidays, and this provided them with an extra income. Transporting was a particularly good sector, the *motoristas* transporting people on motorbikes was driving constantly back and forth from the centre to the beaches, and with a set price of 5 reals (approximately 13 NOK) they could earn quite a lot during a day.

One can clearly see the range of activities and areas islanders use in their livelihoods. In recent years, Cotijuba has gone through many changes; urbanisation, increased population and especially the introduction of tourism. This has led to an increase in commercial activities towards tourists and visitors, which also have opened up for new markets and subsistence activities. However, the basis activities, agriculture and fishing still make up the largest part of the livelihoods. What has changed is the categorisation of the island, and in the next section I will explain how the categories of urban and rural are difficult in present time Cotijuba, and which implications this has for the islanders.

### **Cotijuba: Urban or rural?**

After some time at Cotijuba, I started to realise how interesting this categorisation of Cotijuba was, and how the official and the local views of whether Cotijuba was an urban or rural place was in conflict. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century classical anthropological studies focused

on isolated, “primitive” societies, often indigenous groups and “tribes” living at the outskirts of the central, “civilised” societies. There was a tendency to regard urban and rural as two separate systems, where the modern, civilised cities were the evolution from isolated rural areas. (Redfield 1956). This tendency has been criticised, as it was based on the anthropologist’s external categorisation, and not always recognised by the locals. During the 50’s and 60’s, with focus on peasant studies, especially in Latin America, the discipline changed towards understanding the relationship between urban and rural, and how they were connected. Redfield (1956) focused on peasant studies and how there always had been contact between the rural communities and the urban centres in forms of exchange. This is particularly true for Amazonia, where these two spheres overlap in many cases, and classical theories of urbanisation becomes incompatible. Firstly, as explained earlier with the overarching image of Amazonia as a tropical rain forest, the emphasis has been on the nature. The cities and urbanisation tendencies in Amazonia is not something people tend to include in their images of the region. Secondly, Amazonia have experienced a rapid urbanisation the last decades, which challenges classical theories of urbanisation and frontier expansion (Godfrey and Browder 1996:442). Urbanisation in Amazonia as disarticulated urbanisation builds upon the common view (especially amongst geographers) of Amazonia as a frontier area, being a periphery with a subordinated relationship to the capital centre and capitalist system. It is typically an area with different economic groups and sectors which gives the base for diverse social spaces, and the changes occurring in the area seldom follows the line of the centralist state. Rather it is characterised by the disarticulated urbanisation following the busts and booms of the world market and its demand for different raw material (Godfrey and Browder 1996). The river networks which established trading relations between the urban and the rural places also established contact between the two spheres. The bust and boom economy evident in Amazonia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century led to a form of urbanisation based on disarticulation; small communities becoming trading posts or small towns during the rubber boom, only to later be abandoned after the downfall of the trade. Throughout the history from the colonial expansion one can clearly see the movement that existed between the urban and the rural areas, and how they were never truly separated units.

The close links between the rural production units and the urban trade centres in Amazonia is important in the categorisation of Cotijuba as a rural place and Belém as an urban city. As Cotijuba is situated close to the metropolitan headquarter, Belém, contact between the two have always been frequent. The two were always dependent upon each other, as the island

provided the state capital with trading goods as açai, palm heart, cassava, fish, shrimps and other products, while Belém was a place to get access to goods and products unavailable at the island. With the constant movement between the city and the island the two spheres overlapped as products, ideas, people, knowledge and politics moved between them. Nevertheless, I soon realised the local categorisation of Cotijuba was inconsistent with the official (the local government), and I also experienced different views within the islanders. It was therefore important for my study to understand local and official categorisations and which implications it might have for the community at Cotijuba.

### **Official definition of Cotijuba**

Cotijuba is by the official definition part of the municipalities of Belém, and defined as a rural area, where most of the population work in agriculture or fishing.

The occupation is the main feature to characterize a rural area, whereas the other categories depend on this first, that is, since the occupation and use of the territory are conditions in defining the rurality of a geographical area. In this case it can be said that Cotijuba is an essentially rural island because people living there surviving of activities related mainly to the land and the river, such as agriculture and fishing (Martins 2003 in Melo 2010:75, my translation).

I quickly observed that this categorization was not accurate on today's Cotijuba, as a large part of the islanders work in the cities of Belém or Icoaraci, or are involved in other activities than fishing and farming. My hosts were part of this group. They had a house in Belém where they lived in the weekdays as they both worked as public servants, but spent their weekends at Cotijuba. Their dream was to be able to live permanently on Cotijuba, but while they both still worked this was difficult. So the island cannot be said to be only inhabited by 'rural population' as the movement to and from Belém was high, and over 50 % of the population worked in other sectors combined with agriculture and fishing.

According to Plano Diretor Urbano do Município de Belém and Law No. 7.603<sup>26</sup>, Cotijuba is considered a rural area (Melo 2010). In Brazil the government taxes are regulated with regards to whether one lives in a rural or an urban area. Living in an area regulated with urban taxes the electricity, sanitation, water and education are more expensive than in the rural areas, where these often lack. The laws concerning the tax regulations in urban and rural areas defined the rural areas as located outside of the urban area of the municipality (Law No. 5.172, October 25. 1966, section 1, Art. 29). The metropolitan area of Belém is 1.059,496

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<sup>26</sup> January 13. 1993, in paragraph 2, Article 152 (cited in Melo, 2010)

square kilometres, and consists of several municipalities which have their local governor and some power in local decision-making (IBGE 2014). The 42 islands surrounding Belém are part of their respective municipality, but the regulations of taxes and public concerns as sanitation and electricity remains in the power of the capital, Belém. One can quickly see the problem of being defined as a rural area at the same time as they are part of an urban municipality, because of the inconsistency in the laws. Some regulations were made based on Cotijuba as a rural area, while others were made in accordance with being a part of the municipality of Belém, and many islanders were unhappy with the discordance in the categorisations.

“Despite the island being part of the metropolitan area of Belém, our government does not see it this way. So, it is very difficult to get resources out here, such as public lighting, sanitation, health treatment and a range of other things. We have a group where we discuss these issues concerning the island, we are now trying to redeem a project called "Luz para todos", which was implemented eight years ago as a program to bring electricity to the island at low cost for rural population. However, nowadays, the electricity on the island is very expensive, we pay the rate of urban electricity, but in truth we are a rural area. The island has a good rural production of planting, harvesting, and supply of fruits and vegetables. This production is distributed to Icoaraci and other municipal centres of Belém. The real problem here is that we pay the rate of urban electricity, while the island is rural. The population is harmed by this uncertainty, especially concerning the financial resources to the Island. We do not have drinking water, sanitation, cars etc. The only thing we have here is the urban rate of electricity we pay, which is illegal! (Interview with Seu Pedro Paulo, leader of ProCotijuba).

ProCotijuba was a group organised by the residents living along *Vai-Quem-Quer*, making a living from tourism. They met once a week, and discussed matters in relation to official politics concerning the island. Some of their concerns were related to the official categorisation of Cotijuba, and the inconsistency in the laws. Here one can see some of the problems related to official versus local categorisation and how it affects the locals in different ways. Having to pay expensive electricity was very problematic for the islanders; many felt this was unfair as other public systems were regulated towards Cotijuba as a rural area. As Pedro Paulo explained, many of the public systems were still not functioning properly. There was, for example, no proper sanitation at the island, something which would start to cause serious problems if nothing was done with it. Garbage was also a problem, as many disposed of their garbage in the river or surrounding nature. Pedro Paulo in ProCotijuba explained how the population on the island had grown remarkably the last decade, and how

this would cause many problems in the future, if the public systems were not in accordance with the demographic growth.

### **Local categorisation at the island**

Amongst the islanders there existed different views, and I tried to understand this categorisation and how it affected their ways of life. This relates to my claim that the official definition was not in accordance with the local definition of Cotijuba. Depending on where people lived on the island, locals categorised the island as rural in the isolated areas, and urban in the densely populated areas.

*“Cotijuba is more rural; it has a lot of nature and tranquillity»* Seu Raymundo said when I asked them if they thought Cotijuba was urban or rural. *“You think so? For me this is like a city”* Dona Esmeralda exclaimed laughing.

I was standing in a small wooden house with one common room furnished with a bed, a table, a chest of drawers with a television, a refrigerator and a gas stove. The room opened up towards a terrace with roof where they had a fireplace and an *açaí* machine. The house was built upon poles and lay just by the river. The conversation between my research participant, Dona Esmeralda and the owner of the house Seu Raymundo, was one I had heard many times before. How they defined and thought about Cotijuba as an urban or a rural place was very different based on whom I asked. Seu Raymundo made a living of collecting *açaí* and fishing. He had a plantation of *açaí* trees, and went every morning to the market in Icoaraci where he sold them to merchants at the harbour market. His family also fished, but this was mostly for their own consumption. Seu Raymundo’s family lived in a distant part of the island, an area called *Igarape Piri*. The *Igarape* is a river going through the eastern parts of the island curving its way into the landscape, becoming a natural pond some places, and is flooded by tidewater two times a day. Seu Raymundo had lived on the island for seven years, they had earlier lived in another *Igarape*, and was used to that way of living. They lived a life that is typically of the *ribeirinhos*, living by and off the river, making a living of various sectors (Harris, 2000). I was visiting their home in company with my research participant, Dona Esmeralda, who wanted to show me the *Igarape* when I told her I was interested in learning more about the *ribeirinhos* on the island.. That Seu Raymundo had moved to Cotijuba recently from a more urban place, and Dona Esmeralda had lived there to see it change, is probably the reason why they categorised the island differently. She had lived there and seen the rapid changes taking place. Earlier her house had been quite isolated, but now their house

was surrounded by other houses and the main road passing by in the front. Earlier she and her family had known everybody passing by their house, but now with more movement of people there were many people they did not know.

*“I used to go to church every night. There were no streetlights, but I walked alone and it was not dangerous, because I knew everybody here. Now I don’t like to walk alone after dark, even though we have street lights now. But there are so many strange people these days, I only go to church in the daylight”* (Donna Esmeralda, my translation).

For her the little island was becoming more like a rural town. She had experienced all the changes and seen how the isolated streets had started to become filled with people, bikes and tourists. Rapid changes occurred after the installation of electricity 15 years ago; when the island got energy there was a wave of new migrants. More people led to increased motor bike traffic, more tourism and more commercial activity. The *centro*, however, most people agreed was more urban, as the density of houses, shops and commercial activities were larger there. There was a tendency for the islanders who had lived to see the changes felt the island was becoming more urbanised and city-like, while those moving to Cotijuba in recent years still felt the place to be a rural and calm place.

Here one can clearly see some of the examples confusing the definitions and regulations put upon the residents at Cotijuba. The government had some official definitions, but in reality they did not implement the tax regulations defined for rural areas. At the same time, the local categorisation of the islands varied, depending on who you asked. In addition, these examples have proven one of my arguments concerning urban and rural; they are not separated at Cotijuba, but tend to merge together influencing the other.

## **Merging Spheres**

Another aspect of how classical theories do not fit the reality of Amazonia is when one tends to make a separation between the urban sphere and the rural sphere, including livelihoods and subsistence activity. There is a tendency to believe in the rural areas one can only be peasant or fisher and live “traditionally” while in the urban areas one works in paid jobs and live “modern” lives. The possibility of having two spheres that can overlap and have actors moving between them is not always taken into consideration. However, this overlapping of the two spheres is what I found in Cotijuba, and one could never truly separate them. Most of the islanders in Cotijuba were involved in several activities during the different seasons; they fished when it was season for fishing, but also had small gardens and plantations or worked in



other sectors for periods. This pattern is in accordance with one of my arguments; how local strategies to maintain a livelihood are based on several sectors of “traditional” and “modern” livelihoods. There is always a movement between different ways of making a living, and the clear separation of occupations as we have in the “modern” world does not work the same way in Amazonia (Nugent 1993). I experienced this many times as I asked informants and islanders of their occupation.

“Are you a fisher?” *“No, no I am not a fisherman. I fish to get food for my family, but I also build boats, collect vegetables and fruits from our little plantation and find paid work from time to time”*. Many times I experienced I could not ask people if they were fisher or peasant, because they sometimes got offended that I thought they were just one thing. People were not bound to one economic or subsistence activity, they performed a multi-use of several sectors. In the Amazon this was also evident for urban areas and especially these places in between, the municipalities and rural places close to a metropolitan area. Here one can find all kinds of activity merged together in new ways of maintaining a living. With already established routes between the rural and the urban parts of Amazonia, the flow between these two spheres connects them together.

### ***Tranquilidade: Urban to Rural migration***

During my visits with the health agent I observed and learned about local islander’s categorisation of Cotijuba. I also paid attention to whether they had moved to the island recently, if they were born there and how long they had lived there. The majority of those I visited had moved to the island in the last decades, and had lived there between 6-20 years. Some had moved to Cotijuba from Belém or other cities in Pará, many came from other rural places. The main reason to move to the island was to get away from the city’s noise, traffic and danger. *Tranquilidade* (tranquility) was the explanation for them moving to the island, to live in a more tranquil and calm place.

*“I used to live in the city of Belém. But I became depressed and my health was not good. My doctor advised me to move to a calmer place and to get away from all the stress in the city. I moved to Cotijuba, and here I am happy. We have a nice house with a big garden, I can grow vegetables and we don’t have to worry about our safety”* (Maria, 50).

Most of those I interviewed who came to live here, wanted to live closer to the nature, to be able to have a garden to plant vegetables and fruits, and have a calmer life. Another important factor was to get away from the dangers of the city, as the crime rate in Belém has increased

much the last years, and one has to take many considerations in order to be safe. Every house has bars over their doors and windows, one have to be careful where one walks after nightfall, and the chance of getting robbed are high.

*“Here we can have the window open to get fresh air; we don’t have to bar our windows and doors because we know everybody around here. It is much safer to live here, and we can live without the fear of robbers or burglars” (Anna, 62).*

Most of my research participants emphasised the importance of safety and tranquillity; to be able to live without having to bar windows and doors, live in a calmer place and close to nature. Those who had moved to Cotijuba had this as their main reason for moving, and I got interested by this form of urban to rural movement. As mentioned with theories of urbanisation in Amazonia, the pattern in the region can be analysed as one based on disarticulated urbanisation (Godfrey and Browder 1996). But can it be said that the movement from the city to a more rural place is part of this type of urbanisation? Normally, theories of urbanisation deal with the rural to urban movement, how rural populations migrate towards urban centres in search for jobs and better subsistence activities. Urban-to-rural migration has been analysed as a turnaround in urbanisation patterns, and a new trend in urbanisation theories (Hugo and Smailes 1985). However, as there always have been movement between rural and urban areas in Amazonia, this theory might not be applicable. Studies have been conducted on movement and settlement in Amazonia and the strong pattern of rural-rural migration; peoples moving around to find land for agriculture or work (Browder and Godfrey 1997). Still, this trend of urban residents moving to rural areas for a more comfortable life might be a different pattern, as people actively choose to move to Cotijuba for its tranquillity.

### **An Island in transition**

In order to understand the transition the island has been going through the last decades, I interviewed some of the island’s elderly. Some were *Filhos da Ilha* (children of the island) born on the island, others had lived there for many decades. I wanted to understand better the changes that had occurred, and how the changes had affected the way the islanders thought about the island. Since Cotijuba was more rural 15 years ago, the life if the islanders were also what I could call more “traditional”. They mostly had a diet consisting of fish and shrimps, *açai*, *farinha* and products grown in the gardens and plantations. In a conversation with the eldest couple on the island (the eldest was 105 years!); they told me how they used to be able to collect everything they needed to survive on the island. The rivers and *Igarapes* were full

of fish and shrimps and they could get everything they needed from the river and earth. Nowadays however, they explained this had changed and it was not as much fish and shrimps as earlier. Now, they were more dependent upon getting food and things from the market or traverse to Icoarci to buy it. Other research participants also explained how the activities to gain a living had changed to more commercial activities. During a period of Japanese settlement<sup>27</sup> on the island, they got introduced to growing and selling black peppers, but when the Japanese moved on to another island they stopped it. In an interview Dona Lea, a research participant, she told me how they had an exchange system earlier at the island. They exchanged products between them; those having much fish exchanged it for *farinha* and açai, and vice versa. This system ended when the money economy took over the former modes of exchange.

Living conditions at the island had also changed. Earlier there were no streetlights, the whole island was dark after nightfall (around 18.00 in the evening) and they had to use gasoline lamps inside the houses. The road was not as big as it was today; it was basically a little path where horse carts could navigate their way through the island. Houses were situated far apart, and the island had more vegetation and was covered with bush (*mata*). The houses from this era were normally made of wood and material found on the island, or which could be transported easily. There were of course some contact between the island and the mainland of Belém as the fishers and farmers went to sell their products and bringing back food or goods difficult to get hold of at the island. But most households lived more or less a subsistence way of life and managed with what they could collect and grow on the island.

As I already mentioned, Dona Esmeralda felt the island had become more like a little town, with much more people, houses and traffic and particularly when she did not know everybody anymore. Most of the *filhos da ilha* I talked to had divided meanings concerning the changes that had taken place during the years. They talked passionately about the richness of the island and how they lived of what they collected and planted. But they also talked about the difficulties earlier; getting around only by foot or bicycle if they had, having to paddle in small boats all the way to Belém to get necessities and health care, which was unavailable at the island. Today, with hourly boats going between the island and the mainland, a health post with doctors, small shops selling necessary articles, their lives had become easier. On the

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<sup>27</sup> There are several Japanese settlements in Amazonia. They mostly worked in agriculture, and influenced the local communities in many ways. The Japanese immigrants managed to hold on to their cultural traits, and one can see many Japanese-Amazonians today.

other hand, they all mentioned the fact that there were so many people they did not know on the island today. Earlier they knew everybody, and felt the island to be very safe, while today there were so many strangers passing by, especially in the weekends and holidays. Without knowing everybody, and with the flow of tourists to the island, they were not as comfortable walking alone in the evenings anymore.

The transition taking place the last decades have been of importance to my understanding of Cotijuba in relation to livelihoods and categorisations at the island. Being a rather isolated island with inhabitants engaging in subsistence agriculture, fishing, extraction and collection, to becoming an island with over 5000 inhabitants, gives me a good insight in how small communities in Amazonia find ways of maintaining their traditional lifestyle within a modern framework. The blurred spheres of urban and rural categorisation can be related to this, as the island had strong contact with urban centres, the two spheres had always been overlapping, with the movement of people and products between the two. The people inhabiting Cotijuba were also a mixture of several backgrounds; those who was born and raised at the island, newcomers who had lived there for a long time, *ribeirinhos* and newly arrived people. Some have lived there to see the changes while others moved there from urban places. With a community based on different livelihoods and knowledge about the natural surrounding they were able to cope with the transitions taking place, and also create an active local community. They were all involved in decisions about the island as well as finding ways of improving their quality of life at Cotijuba. As they said themselves: “*Isso é nossa realidade*” – This is our reality.

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# Chapter 4

## Movimento de Mulheres das Ilhas de Belém

In this chapter I will introduce the organisation I worked with, and why a women's movement was needed at the island. I argue that women in Amazonia, and particularly non-indigenous women living in rural areas, have been underrepresented in the literature, especially concerning their role in everyday activities. I will discuss how Movimento de Mulheres das Ilhas de Belém (MMIB) became a strong and influential organisation at Cotijuba, establishing a strong and active local community. The importance of women's labour will be discussed, and I argue how women's participation in both household and commercial activities have played an important role in the merging of traditional and modern spheres. Through this chapter I will establish women's important role in Cotijuba, especially their role in livelihoods and political decisions. I will also discuss the role of a large national cosmetic company in Brazil (Natura), which gave an opportunity for rural women to earn an income and improve their life conditions. An important aspect of Natura and their policy is their way of gaining access to traditional knowledge about natural and herbal raw materials, and the way they organise commercialisation of products. The Brazilian law about access to shared benefit in relation to the extraction of raw material will also be discussed, particularly how it was implemented in a project at Cotijuba.

### **Women's invisibility in Amazonia**

If "caboclos" and traditional communities<sup>28</sup> have been invisible in the Amazonian literature, the women in these communities have been even more invisible (Siqueira 2009:242). Amazonia has become a place of imagination, and as the non-indigenous part of the populations tends to be excluded from these images, so does especially the women. The majority of the anthropologists focusing their study on Amazonia have written about

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<sup>28</sup> Traditional communities refer to the non-indigenous population of Amazonia, whether living in urban or rural areas. This distinction does not mean traditional as in non-modern, but purely as a way of distinguishing between indigenous and non-indigenous, e.g. "all those others" living in Amazonia.

“traditional population”, *caboclos* and *ribeirinhos* as a whole group, without much focus on analysing women’s participation in economic activities. Most of the studies were carried out by male anthropologists, which can explain the minimal focus on women’s role in the household, as it might have been difficult to access the female spheres. Early, classical anthropological studies, such as Malinowski’s work on the Trobriand Islands, have been criticised for the lack of women’s role in the community.

The ‘women’s point of view’ was largely ignored in the study of gender roles, since anthropologists generally perceived women as living in the shadows of men-occupying the private rather than the public sectors of society, rearing children rather than engaging in economic or political pursuits. (Weiner 1988:7).

Weiner has an important point; women have been viewed as uninteresting objects of study, and their important role in local communities have not been acknowledged. Women’s contribution to the family economy has been especially neglected. I argue through this chapter how acknowledging women’s role in creating a livelihood is central in order to understand how the relationship between modern and traditional knowledge and techniques in Amazonia, and especially their important role in the informal economy. In order to understand this, one needs to look upon the traditional gender roles and how these have changed or been maintained.

## **Gender studies in Latin America and Amazonia in Particular**

Masculinity and machismo are important themes in gender studies in Latin America, and it has been argued that they are persistent ideals of gendered behaviour. The machismo ideal of men being dominant is contrasted to marianismo – women being passive and subordinated to the man. This division have been studied extensively, and amongst feminist authors a tendency to move away from machismo and the stereotype of male dominance and female subordination have occurred (Melhuus and Stølen 1996). Other tendencies, as the division of domestic and public, where women’s role are within the household and men have power outside, is also in many gender studies concerned with Latin America. New ways of studying gender, for example homosexual identities is exemplified by Kulick’s book about travesti<sup>29</sup> identity in Salvador, with his division of male and non-male, rather than male and female

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<sup>29</sup> Travesti refers to a group of homosexual male prostitutes dressing as women, emphasising feminine bodies. However, they are not transsexual, as they do not want to *become* a woman. Rather, their masculinity is divided between male and non-male, those who penetrate other men, and those who are penetrated (Kulick 1998).

(Kulick 1997). His study emphasise the Brazilian notion of a male-based gender division between those who are men and those who are not, and is an important contribution to understand conceptualisations of gender in Brazil.

Wagley (1964) was one of the first to write extensively about non-indigenous communities in the Amazon, and he included research concerning family structure and gender relations. He explained the strong ideals of how men and women should behave; the man was the head of the family and should be dominant and aggressive while the women should take care of house and children, be passive, non-talkative and submissive. These ideals can be analysed as based on ideals of machismo and marianismo which I outlined in the beginning of this section. The man was the one in control of the economy as men were the only one's perceived to understand numbers and economic matters. They also had the privilege of being allowed (if not expected) to have non-marital affairs, while women should be virgins until they married and always stay faithful to their husband (Wagley 1964). The ideals showed a clear division between the genders and who was in charge of decisions. But as with most ideals, they were just ideals, and in reality things worked out differently in the community Wagley studied. Women had a lot to say in decisions concerning economy and business, as they often were in charge of the household and knew what was needed from day to day. They found ways to manipulate the gender ideals, as letting the man think he made the decisions while they were the "brains" behind it (Wagley 1964). The Amazonian communities have changed since Wagley studied them, gender relations are supposed to be more equal in today's Brazil. I say supposed, as the reality can be very different than what is depicted in national rhetoric's.

The division between the domestic and the public sphere still exists, however not as strong as earlier, as both genders finds new ways of manipulating the ideals. Since I was mostly with women I will focus on women's patterns of behaviour, but there are restrictions on men as well. The descriptions from Wagley's community was from an era when the traditional gender ideals were stronger than today, but as we will understand with the formation of MMIB there is still matters women want to change. Amazonian women are not submissive and have many ways of manipulating the gender ideals. However, as one can see from my examples, the manipulation is often of already accepted realms or statuses. There is a general pattern giving more power and respect to wives and mothers, as motherhood has a high status in Brazil, and is seen as an important ideal (McCallum 1999). Amongst both genders, the respect for the elderly is strong. The elderly females have a strong power within the household, but there is a division related to inside and outside the household. Women are seen

as controlling the domestic sphere, while men controls the public sphere. The house is a good example of this, as women were controlling inside the house (the domestic unit) and men controlled the outside (public unit). As Bourdieu describes with the Kabyle house, the division inside the house symbolise the gendered division of society. The parts of the house separated for women, was also excluding men. Men belonged to the outside world, women to the inside, and the spaces within the house also had restrictions related to this dichotomy (Bourdieu and Prieur 1996). Brazil is very different from Algeria, where Bourdieu formed his theory about the Kabyle house. However, there were some rooms in the Brazilian house that was clearly the women's domain, as the kitchen; while the front room was part of the public domain, where the family entertained guests (women were not excluded from the front room). Restrictions related to conduct, appearance and sexual morality, can be said to have followed this division of domestic and public in traditional gender ideals; women crossing to the public sphere and in the street are seen as "loose", and ideally they should remain virgins until married and stay within the domestic sphere. This ideal has changed a lot during the sexual revelation and modernity, and is expressed in styles of dressing for example. Today, women participate in the public sphere, have paid jobs and are just as much outside the house as men (McCallum 1999). However, by emphasising the division of house and gendered spheres, I argue some of the ideals concerning women still influence division of household and work.

Brazilian women have a say in decision-makings, and in most families I visited it was clearly the woman who was the person behind household arrangements. I talked with many women who had control over the household economy, as they were the ones supplying needed groceries. Family decisions about anything from visiting family members to buying clothes were normally taken by the mother. However, men normally had more legal rights and power in the formal sphere, as well as less strict ideals of behaviour, and one can still see a gendered division of labour in many parts of Brazil. Larger economic matters are decided by men, as shown in many studies of rural Amazonia, and they are formally the ones that should decide large matters.

### **Organisation of household and work**

In Cotijuba I observed two types of families, the "traditional", extended families and the "modern", nuclear families. As I mostly visited my informants in their homes, it was within the domestic sphere I experienced the female relationships. The extended family households were more traditional than the nuclear family households, as they built upon family patterns



and forms of family life that Wagley (1964) and Nugent (1993) describe from their work in traditional, peasant communities in Amazonia<sup>30</sup>. These families normally consisted of a couple living in relative closeness to the parents of either the man or the woman. Normally it was an old couple or a widow having one house, and then the children settled down nearby with their families. I did not discover any particular patterns related to whose family the children and their spouse came to live with, it was mostly practical reasons. The families living together always helped each other in work in the gardens and on plantations, with fishing, household tasks, caring for children and many other tasks at home and in their livelihood. If the elderly family members had difficulties carrying out household activities, their family helped them and collected fruits, held the garden and provided them with food and necessary articles. Every small family unit normally had their own house, but people tended to gather together in the evenings around the house of the elderly. Sometimes a granddaughter with children was living in her grandmother's house, as it was normal for young women to get pregnant very early without being married. This was also a good solution if the elderly woman lived alone, the granddaughter would help with chores and work in the house.

The other type of family organisation was based on younger families, often coming from the city or who lived far away from their extended family. They normally lived in single households with the nuclear family. Some also lived alone without a partner or husband/wife, and many of the women I visited were living alone with their children, without a husband or partner. Amongst the single unit households, it was clearly more common that women live alone with her kids. Men living alone normally did not have kids in their household (they often had kids living with their former partner, or who was born outside a marriage). For those living in a family either both partners worked, or the wife worked partly in a shop, *pousada*<sup>31</sup> and at home. My hosts were what I have called a modern household, and lived in a relatively equal relationship. They both shared household tasks and worked in the garden they cared for during the weekends, and I never saw any inequality between them based on gender. They were both politically active and worked as public secretaries; they had education and

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<sup>30</sup> These works were written decades ago, and while I base some of my analysis upon their work, there have been many changes in the latest years. They are however good comparisons, and shows the transition of gender ideals through the history of the region.

<sup>31</sup> Small guesthouses, often with a restaurant and bar to serve tourists and locals visiting the beaches at the island.

had been involved in several organisations and movements, so this might have influenced their way of living.

Except from the family household where women were in charge, when MMIB was founded 15 years ago, there were few political or organisational activities the women could participate in. There were established roles in the public matters as well as in many economic matters within the family, and it normally were the men who participated in meetings and organisations. In rural places in Amazonia many gendered patterns remained for a long time; it was for example only in 1988 that women could legally own land through the agrarian reform, earlier the title was beheld the men. Even with the law the general pattern today is that men have the land titles. Luckily this is slowly changing with the emerge of social movement for landless rural workers (Deere 2003).

### **Division of labour**

Theoretically, in terms of gender, the man is considered the family provider, while the woman is responsible for the housework and childcare. However, the division of labour and sharing of responsibilities with regard to production and reproduction in the household is more dynamic than that (Siqueira 2009:247).

The division and organisation of work varied extensively at the island. How to categorise them was difficult for me, as many of the categories overlapped. I did however find some patterns that I will base my analysis upon. Amongst the families I visited who worked with agriculture and with fishing there existed a division of labour. Men normally worked with the more heavy tasks in the fields, and with fishing, while women worked in and around the home, making food and caring for the gardens around their house. Many women referred to themselves as housewives (*dona de casa*); however the term does not capture their workload outside the house as well. Many women participated actively in work outside the house, normally in the gardens and with lighter agricultural tasks. Amongst fisher families I noticed women seldom worked on the boats and directly with fishing, they were more confined to the house and garden work. This included preparing fish and shrimps, as well as preparing fishing tools and fixing nets. Amongst many of the households I visited, some women also collected and processed *açaí*<sup>32</sup> (which is heavy work, as one has to climb up in the palm tree to collect the *açaí* braches), and helped their partner in the everyday work. Several women studied part

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<sup>32</sup> The blue berries growing in palm trees and an important part of their diet.

time in Belém, and worked half the day at home or had a little business at the island, and the rest of the day they studied.

I also visited many women living alone, taking care of their home, children and providing an income to live by<sup>33</sup>. Most of these women received the *Bolsa Familia* welfare payment, securing an income to families and persons who were not able to have a liveable income. As the minimal wage in Brazil is very low, women living alone had difficulties earning a liveable income, and they therefore qualified to receive the welfare payment. Most of the women had a small income, they normally had paid jobs working in the *pousadas* and restaurants or they had their own business. The majority of the women I visited also had gardens and planted many fruits and vegetables, which helped their income and household. As one can see from my examples both women and men worked in different sectors, and with activities to provide the household with an income or products to be used in the family. However, there still existed a gender-based division of labour, and differences with regards to what was categorised as work.

### **Women's labour as invisible**

There is a clear tendency that a lot of the work women do is not officially recognised as work. Rather, they are considered to be helping their husband. Amongst family production units, as family farming or fishing, the amount of work women do in the fields or directly with the production becomes invisible and not accounted for. This is evident elsewhere in the world as well, and many case studies illuminate the invisibility of women's work, especially in agriculture, fishing and other "rural" livelihoods (Fagertun 2008). The sexual division of labour<sup>34</sup>; where women and men occupy different domains of work as "naturally given" are evident in many societies. Men, as the bread-winner, have paid jobs and work in the public sphere, while women's work are confined to domestic sphere within the household (Moore 1994). This has of course changed since these patterns were first studied by anthropologists, but gender-based divisions of labour continue to exist in many communities worldwide. This division leads to women's workload becomes invisible, as they are not the bread-winners. Women work both in the house, and with their husbands; however the domestic work is seen as the women's responsibility, while the other work she does is rather helping her husband. This leads to a double work load for women, as they also have to work in the kitchen and the

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<sup>33</sup> Many were divorced or had split up from their partner.

<sup>34</sup> These domains were seen as naturally given; women are responsible for childcare while men were bread-winners and provide the family with food. For further reading see Strathern (1988) and Moore (1994).

house in general (Siqueira 2009) This was evident in many of the households I visited in Cotijuba, and it seemed to be naturalised in some ways. None of the women complained about the load of work they did, or whether they worked more or less than their husbands. One reason for this might be the extent of work women did in the home gardens. This was neither acknowledged as work per se, since it rather is part of the domestic unit of the house, and considered one of the many daily tasks women have in their household (Murrieta and WinklerPrins 2003).

The gardens surrounding the houses were of great importance to most of the families at the island. They varied in size, but most surrounded the house and sometimes also extended behind the house. Here the bush was cleared, and they had several trees, plants, flowers and vegetables. This provided the household with food, and was in some cases also a source for extra income. Many women who stayed at home did a lot of work in the gardens. Every day, there were several things to do in the gardens, and it was part of the daily work of women. The importance of the garden should not be underestimated, as it is a sustainable practice and important tradition, as well as an important factor of social organisation. Amongst the women, their garden symbolise sociality, and the exchange of seedlings and demonstrating the gardens and its new plants to each other was part of the everyday life of many women. Since it also was part of the female realm, it was an area where they had control and were the ones making decisions (Murrieta and WinklerPrins 2003). Gardening was both “work”, as it provided food and herbs, and a recreational activity, as many women liked working in their gardens, and saw it as something they wanted to do.

Some of the households also had small plantations, very often açai or cassava. I visited one woman who had a large plantation of cassava, and she was also the one doing most of the work, as her husband worked in the city for periods of time. This started to become quite common, as the breadwinner, the man, where the one supposed to provide the family with income, and most jobs were only in Belém. Because of this, many women were left with the household, and the agricultural work at Cotijuba. My research participant had to harvest and process the cassava at certain times, and did this with help of neighbour, friends and members of her church. This was heavy work, as the processing of manioc flour (*farinha*), involves several days of peeling, soaking and grating the roots. Then the juice is pressed, the mass is filtered and finally the dried mass is roasted on a homemade oven with a large iron pan on top. Friends, neighbours and community groups such as church are very important at Cotijuba, and people are dependent upon having good relations with their neighbours and

friends in order to get help with tasks related to their livelihood. Since Cotijuba no longer has a strong kinship organisation as people live more scattered around on other islands and municipalities, the family's help in livelihood activities has decreased. As a result of this, I think the importance of neighbours and the community as a unit has increased the latest years, in order to receive or provide help in subsistence activities are important in the harvest cycle for example.

By looking at certain forms of organisation within household and work one can gain a better understanding of the gender roles at Cotijuba. However, these categories are not static, and there were several exceptions to the general pattern. Since the island consisted of a range of people, activities and ways of living, in a sense of mixed community, the gender relations varied much. I visited everything from very "traditional" household with a strong separation of work and gender, whilst other families had more equal gender patterns. I talked with women living alone, providing a good living for their children and also with female entrepreneurs having their own successful businesses. The patterns and roles were different; one reason was the rapid changes in the latest years. Some of this was because of MMIB's work, and with the knowledge of how the gender patterns were earlier one understands the rapid changes occurring.

### **Being a woman in a rural community: Why MMIB became an important part of the local community**

During my stay at Cotijuba I learned a lot about MMIB, their work and history. I had several conversations with the founder of MMIB, Dona Antonia and her daughter Adriana, who is the coordinator of the association today. In communities like Cotijuba where family agriculture and fishing are important activities, the men have traditionally been those having control over the finances. This has changed rapidly the last years, as new economic activities became more common at the island, and women participated more in the informal economic sector. But some 15 years ago when was MMIB founded, things were different and many women felt they had little power over the economy and decision-making within the family and also public decisions related to the island. In family agriculture it was difficult for women to make some money of their own, as the man ideally was the head of the family and had control over the economy. The women participated just as much as the men in the work, but without the possibility of having some money of their own. In this era, there was only one organised group of producers at Cotijuba; Associação de Produtores na Ilha Cotijuba (APIC). APIC was

an association for the agricultural producers, where they discussed matters related to their subsistence activity. But the association's leader positions and formal roles were held and dominated by men, and most of the women and wives of the producers only had light administrative roles as secretaries, since they could read and write. They could not participate in decision-making, and had little power over the organisations political matters. Because of this, one of MMIB's founding goals was to give the women working in agriculture, either alone or with their husband and family, a way of earning extra money and have more power in decisions related to their work. With help from a local NGO, the Amazonian Women Forum in Pára, (FMAP) they were able to form their own association and they quickly became an established institution on the island. Originally the group was a purely women's' movement where all members were women. Later they included men in the group, however, administration and leader positions is still only occupied by women.

In the beginning they produced marmalade from local fruits and different handicrafts. They also initiated a project for the teenagers living on the island, to involve them in the production of natural paper and provide social activities for the 50 teenagers participating. Today, many of the teenagers are active members and trusted helpers with most of the activity MMIB does in the community. They held several workshops and courses related to agriculture for the members, and also for the others working in agriculture at the island. Soon they also established partnerships with local NGO's, research institutes and other organisations, who held courses or provided other forms of assistance and carried out some projects in the community. Today the association consists of 73 members and their families, in addition to the 10 persons working in the administration<sup>35</sup>. Compared to previous associations and other organisations at the island, MMIB is the major in terms of member and affiliation. In addition to being a women's movement, they also have included other areas of focus, mainly concerning improving livelihoods and social issues at Cotijuba.

There have been several changes on the island since the formation of MMIB. APIC was dissolved after some years, and MMIB soon was the largest association for women and agricultural producers at Cotijuba. As MMIB has evolved from being a women's group within a male dominated association to being the islands largest organisation and the natural centre for all the political and organisational matters related to the island, one understands their development the last 15 years has been extraordinary. I had not imagined finding such a

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<sup>35</sup> Information from Adriana Gomes, coordinator of MMIB.

strong women association on a little island in northern Brazil. Understanding the gender relations, and how a lot of the work women did in the fields, with extraction and in the production chain, was never fully acknowledged as “work” (since they were “helping” their husbands), the importance of MMIB becomes evident. As outlined above, many women were not able to have an income of their own, as the family economy often was controlled by the man of the family. However, women contribute extensively in livelihood activities, but their workload is not acknowledged. Amazonian women suffer a form of double invisibility; their work is not perceived as “work”, and women’s importance amongst non-indigenous communities are not included in studies of Amazonia. The images, as described by Slater (1996) continues to exclude large parts of the social landscape in Amazonia, especially women. In order to gain a more realistic picture of the complex Amazon region, and how livelihood strategies are important for its future, women’s contribution needs to be studied further.

### **Partnership with *Natura*: A new way**

*“After contact with Natura, we, the women saw the possibility of becoming an association. We had the will, but not the means. Natura provided us with those means.”* (Interview with Dona Antonia).

Natura is a cosmetics company, and has built their brand based on natural ingredients and used traditional knowledge in the production of their fragrances and creams. They get most of the raw materials from small, rural communities; therefore it became a natural part of their production chain to cooperate with these communities. Brazil has incorporated many laws and regulations concerning intellectual property rights and use of indigenous knowledge in commercialising products. They are part of the Convention on Biological Diversity and Union for Ethical BioTrade amongst others, who works to establish fair and equal rights for trade and commercialising of natural products based on Indigenous Knowledge and Intellectual Property Rights (meaning some has the legal rights over the raw material) (Deriani 2009). In 2001 they established regulations on Access to Benefit Sharing, through Provincial Measure No. 2.186-16, followed by several laws and regulations concerning rights to genetic resources and Shared Benefit (WIPO 2003). This means: If a company or organisation wants to extract resources based on traditional knowledge from indigenous or traditional communities, they have to acknowledge the rights of the community, value the indigenous knowledge and establish the intellectual property rights. This law was created to protect local communities

from unfair use of their traditional knowledge, and commercialising products from their community based on unequal values and payment. Every company wanting to commercialise natural products based on traditional knowledge, or which has Intellectual Property Rights over the genetic material has to follow the guidelines of Access to Benefit Sharing in the specific community. As the whole community originally has access to the raw material, the whole community is entitled to the share of profit of the product. So for Natura, the only way to get legally access to the raw material, they have to involve local communities and start projects that will benefit the whole community (Laird and Wynberg 2008).

In Natura's case they work with 26 communities in Pará commercialising plants, oils, nuts and roots for using in their cosmetic products, and have several social projects in all the communities which aim to benefit the community as a whole (Personal conversation with André, representative from Natura). In Cotijuba they are involved with MMIB in extracting and commercialising *Priprioca*, (*Cyperus articulatus*), a local root used in perfume. They also follow an organic ideology, commercialising the products in sustainable manner. That means; they only work with certified sustainable farms, they do not overextend the production and involve local peasants and member of the community who knows how to handle the produce. The partnership with Natura started in 2002, and it involved 17 families at that time. The number of families declined after a while, and today there are more or less 6 families involved in the *priprioca* planting. The partnership with Natura work at two levels, the planting of *priprioca* where Natura pays the families for the amount of *priprioca* they extract, and the social projects Natura started with MMIB in 2006 (Conversations with coordinators of MMIB).

In Cotijuba, Natura made partnership with MMIB to find a local project they could support which would involve the local community and give something back to them. Natura always establishes partnership with existing associations in the community they start extracting raw materials, and MMIB was the strongest association in Cotijuba at that time. Starting the partnership with Natura, they were the ones responsible to form a project that would benefit the whole community, and run it for the two years Natura provided means for the project.

*“The partnership with Natura helped us make a project for the island's elderly. They helped us build a centre for the elderly group, and we also have the means to serve some refreshments for the elderly when they are here. It has been a great success, as there are so many retired and elderly living at Cotijuba. Before, they sat at home and some did not have good health. Now they*



*come here twice a week, do exercise and socialise with the others. It has really improved their quality of life” (Interview with Adriana Gomez, coordinator of MMIB).*

The partnership affiliated several agricultural producers to MMIB, and many of them are still involved in decisions and development of the island, even though they might not produce *Priprioca* for Natura anymore. For the women in MMIB the partnership with Natura did not only mean they could involve local families in the project, but that they also could establish new projects which would involve larger parts of the community. As collecting herbs and natural plants is within the female sphere of work, this is a way for women to participate in the economic production sphere, and earn an income of their own (Siqueira 2009).

### **Projeto Vida e Compania**

*The little building with the purple sign showing this is the centre for Movimento de Mulheres das Ilhas da Belém, is situated a 20 minutes’ walk from the docking area of Cotijuba. There is a wooden fence going around the house, and the little gate leading into the front garden is open. As I enter and walk through the main house I can also see a neatly organised garden around the building, a kitchen and eating area, several small offices and a computer room. One of the first rooms I see has large windows, and I can see many necklaces, crochet tablecloths and flowers, handmade hats and a lot of other handmade products. From the main house there is a little path leading over to a newly built house with a white poster hanging over the door; “Projeto Vida e Compania” it says and there is a picture of the prison ruin, a typical symbol of Cotijuba. As I enter through the door, a choir of voices welcomes me with a loud “Bom dia!” (“Good Morning”). Around 30 chairs are put out in a circle against the walls and 30 elderly people are seated in the chairs. They all have a white t-shirt and cap with the same picture and text as the poster in front of the building, and they are all laughing and talking loudly. As I make my way around the circle, greeting everybody with a handshake, a hug or a pat on the shoulder they all smile and say they are glad to see me. When I have finished my greeting round, which is necessary to pay my respect to the elderly, the session is about to start. Dona Antonia says good morning and tells us about the day, and the physical educator is getting ready. He gets everybody to stand up and stretch their bodies as he starts the day’s physical exercise. Everybody starts the task with*

*smiles and laughter, as they stretch their crooked bodies. "Today we are going to do aerobics" the teacher exclaim with a little smile.*

“Projeto Vida e Companhia” (Project for Life and Companionship, PVC) is a project MMIB started last year and was a project sponsored by the Community Benefit-Sharing partnership with Natura. With their support MMIB built a centre holding open two days a week providing physical activity, health care, education, activities and most of all; a social place to meet for the island’s elderly. At Cotijuba the only restriction to participate in PVC is to be over 60, or for medical or physical reasons need exercise (Some under 60 participated because of overweight or diabetes). Every Tuesday and Thursday the centre was open, and they had courses with instructors and different projects. I participated these days during my fieldwork, and learned about the project, the people and what it meant for them to be a part of this. We learned Tai Chi, had aerobic sessions, walked and had several physical activities to improve the physical and mental health of the elderly. They shared stories and told funny jokes as well as speaking about different subjects each week. They all agreed the project had improved their quality of life and they were much happier when they participated in the group. Some even stated it was the best thing happened to them in their life. I learned by several conversations how their life on the island was. As many other Latin American countries it is common for the family to take care of their elderly, there are few nursing homes and public homes for the elderly. Families tend to live together or close to their parents so they can help each other out. And as the elderly does not work per se, they are often the ones helping looking after great grandchildren, which was most common at Cotijuba. The percentages of young teenage mothers are high in Brazil, and many girls get pregnant very early. Most of the elderly women I visited were helping their grandchildren looking after the toddlers at home, by making lunch, doing laundry and other work in the house. The men were normally released from this type of work, but worked in the garden and plantations if their health was good.

Most of the elderly were surrounded by family and neighbours and the family took care of each other. There were some who lived alone and said that this was difficult and lonely some times, and for them the PVC group was a very nice way of socialising with others. Dona Antonia also emphasised how little time the elderly had for themselves to do activities just for them and being relieved from all their obligations. That was one of the reasons why she wanted to have this project, to offer them a space just for them where they could meet peers and have some time for themselves. The PVC project also becomes an important factor in creating a collective identity at the island, being a meeting place and holding educative

lectures. As I have mentioned earlier in the chapter, being respectful towards the elderly is very important in Brazil. The elderly have a form of special status; they are very important in families and often take care of a larger household and look after grandchildren. Unfortunately they have little governmental protection, they are dependent upon family to take care of them, and there are few activities and forums for the elderly to participate in. Hence, one clearly understands the importance of the elderly group arranged by MMIB.

### **Creating an active local community: MMIB as the uniting force**

As MMIB soon became the only association on the island (APIC resolved after some years) and the group with the largest influence, they also soon became the central organisation for other activities concerning the island. There were several research projects managed by the Federal University of Para, and also other research institutions worked closely with MMIB. When there were any public meetings or matters up for discussion, MMIB's headquarter became the meeting place. During my stay there were about eight seminars held at MMIB from different institutions, several organisational meetings, and also meetings held by other NGO's having research projects at the island. Most of the courses were related to developing and improving the islanders livelihoods based on exiting knowledge and techniques. The focus was always on how to be able to maintain a living at Cotijuba, without being too dependent upon work or markets in the commercial centre of Icoaraci or Belém.

One of the most interesting projects that were taking place was the process of forming a cooperative at the island. Then they would be a formal group distributing the production and sale of the product at the market, and they would have more power over their own production. They could also establish formal deals with local distributors to buy their produce, and they would be less dependent upon the market and the prices set there. A cooperative have the advantage of being stable and robust enough to withstand large external factors in the economy. They can also provide security and gives small producers a way of organising, and not being fully dependent upon the middleman or trading agent. Being run from within a community or directly organised between the actors – the community members, they are not led by the marked-driven economy. The Brazilian government have supported and encouraged the formation of cooperatives, by fiscal intensives and several unions for the cooperatives. They also provide technical assistance, and there are several national and state associations for providing assistance in the formation of a cooperative (Deere 2003).

When MMIB started to get the idea of forming a cooperative at the island, they invited some of the producers who already were involved in MMIB and other who might be interested to have a meeting with a representative, Senõr Edovardo Shimpo, from EMATER-PA, which is the official organ for technical assistance and rural extension in the state of Pará. He provided technical assistance in the starting process, and held information meetings for those interested. It seemed like many had some doubts about forming a cooperative, and were a bit reluctant about whether they wanted it or not. There were some concerns relating economic factors, but those wanting to establish a cooperative focused on having more power over the production, distribution and sale of the products. MMIB themselves did not want per se to change from an association to a cooperative, but they provided help for those who wanted to form an individual cooperative. The cooperative would be an organic production unit concerned with ecology and being able to attract eco-tourism, and they were discussing new ideas and ways to make a living at the island. Everyone who was involved with fishing, agriculture, tourism, merchandising and other ways of providing a livelihood were welcome to join, and their idea was to form a cooperative crossing several sectors. The aim was to make livelihood and income more secure, based on the island and with the focus of providing better conditions at Cotijuba. As many islanders today were dependent upon commuting to Belém or other urban centres, the idea was therefore to create better conditions at the island.

I found the active local community very interesting. The different groups and sectors are very well organised, and the local community are active in how to have a good life on the island. They are forming groups and having meetings when there are matters they want to resolve or pursue, and new ideas and formations related to maintaining a livelihood at the island are the main motivation. Since MMIB was the organisation that united many of the producers at Cotijuba, their importance in the process of organising meetings, contact external organisations which could help and guide the actors in the process was central to the islanders. Having a large network of partnerships, with universities, NGO's and governmental institutions, they became such a central organisation at the island. Their activities involved almost all segments of the inhabitants at Cotijuba, with the general concern of creating better livelihoods and social conditions for the community. Doing my fieldwork within the organisation, and learning about women's social and institutional position at Cotijuba and in "rural Brazil", I reflected much about the influence such a strong women's organisation could have in a local community. I paid special attention to the point about the formation of MMIB within APIC (the former association of local producers) and later how APIC was dissolved.

Was there no need for APIC when they had MMIB, or did the latter eventually become such a large organisation that there was no need for two organisations? After talking to, and visiting many women at the island, I observed the strong network women were able to have between themselves. They shared knowledge, helped each other, organised their household and education of children, worked both at home, with production and in paid jobs and they had very strong opinions. Experiencing the influence MMIB had on the local community made me analyse their formation, and how especially a women's organisation managed to use their network, share knowledge and organise their work in such a way that they had influence over many political decisions taken at the island. That is not to say that men would not be able to do the same, but that the women involved were able to create an organisation based on their knowledge and position, with a strong purpose of their formation. Because of women's double invisibility, it is crucial to take note of the importance of their work and how they manage to combine efforts within several spheres. The small-scale livelihoods makes it manageable for women to participate on the same level as men, and also alone. If these were to be intensified it would become difficult for women to participate on the same level, for example to handle large machinery which is normally done by men<sup>36</sup>. The images we have of Amazonia do not include the majority of non-indigenous peoples, and women in this context become even more invisible. We have to focus more studies on this group, for as my chapter has shown women's work is important, especially in terms of knowledge and developing livelihoods. Their efforts towards creating sustainable livelihoods and incomes provide powerful examples of how community development can be achieved without depleting local resources.

In this chapter I have given a general outline of the gender ideals and practises in rural communities in Amazonia, especially how they have changed in recent years. I have emphasised how earlier studies of Amazonian peasant communities seldom focused on women and their participation in everyday activities, and the importance of including this today. During my fieldwork I participated in a women's organisation at Cotijuba, MMIB, who focused on women working in agriculture as well as improving livelihood situations at the island. I was following a group of elderly living at the island who participated in a project held by MMIB, and through that I learned about the group, the island and the social reality at place. I also learned a lot about how small, local associations as MMIB could increase and

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<sup>36</sup> I will elaborate on the issues of intensification and capital-intensive projects related to livelihoods in the upcoming chapter.

become an important organisation, both as a social meeting place but also as a factor in creating an active local community. Through their partnership with Natura they had projects concerned with extracting herbal materials to be used in cosmetic products, and I also learned about the process of extracting and commercialising raw materials being part of traditional knowledge. In accordance to the Brazilian law concerning extracting resources part of traditional knowledge and involved in intellectual property rights Natura had to do this in sustainable and ethical manners.

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# Chapter 5

## Sustainable resource management

The rural populations around Belém living of fishing and agriculture have several strategies to maintain a livelihood. They have extensive knowledge and several techniques about how to best orient themselves in their environment, which are part of their strategies for making a living in the modern era.

In this chapter I relate my empirical findings to my argument; how the rural population of small-holders and river dwellers at Cotijuba have a way of using both traditional knowledge and modern techniques in maintaining their livelihood and everyday life. I will explain how the history and specific ways of making a living has laid out groundwork to strategically orientate between the different knowledge systems and implement the different techniques based on the environment and what would work best. With extensive knowledge about agriculture, soil quality and fishing they can make a livelihood that is sufficient and also in a way ‘modern’, but based on old techniques and ways of life. I argue how these strategies and multi-use approaches are highly sustainable, but not acknowledged in the discourse of sustainable development. This again is related to the overarching image of Amazonia, and the invisibility of the non-indigenous population.

### **Modernising Amazonia**

Amazonia has often been described as the backward Brazil, never fully embracing the great modernisation projects the rest of the country was going through. It has been the periphery, never truly connected to the national, urban centres, with its rural population described as backward, lazy and stupid (Nugent 1993). Through these representations, the historical peasantry (in contrast to neo-peasants immigrated from elsewhere in Brazil) became anomalies, neither “natural” as the Amerindians nor “modern” (Nugent 1993:4-5). Even today the rural population experience stigmatisation and accusations that they are backward, poor, uneducated and “dirty”. During a course arranged by the government as part of the social welfare programme Bolsa Familia, I understood how some of these stigmas still were evident in the modern Brazil. One part of the course was about personal hygiene, and particularly highlighted the prejudice against the rural population. The course leaders educated the

recipients of Bolsa Familia about the importance of washing themselves every day, keep hair and nail clean and the importance of a good personal hygiene. Contrary to this, I experienced the islanders as very preoccupied with personal hygiene; nails and hair were the most importance signs of this. Nails were kept clean no matter if they worked with agriculture or restaurants, and the style of the hair should always be kept neat, straight and “frizz-free”. They were neither ignorant nor inattentive concerning personal hygiene; rather, it was very important in their everyday life. Nevertheless, during the workshop, they were treated as if they were uneducated about the notion of personal hygiene. The Amazonian populations as I experienced at Cotijuba are by no means backwards, un-modern, lazy or unable to develop. It is important to note that these terms are subject to interpretation; their use depends according to who has the power to define them, and how ideals are conceptualised. I will elaborate further upon this problem of definition; first I want to present some of the modernising projects and themes in national and global approaches to Amazonia.

Today, Brazil is a country referred to in development terms as an “up-and-coming” super power, with quite remarkable economic growth. It has the world’s seventh largest economy<sup>37</sup>, and many international corporations are investing large amounts of capital into business and other economic sectors in Brazil (World Bank 2012). The summer 2014, Brazil is hosting the FIFA World Cup and in 2016 they will host the Olympic games (Leira 2014). The road towards being a super power, as many development theorists call Brazil, have been long and harsh, and whether Brazil has reached its goals can be discussed. Even though they are a relatively wealthy country today, with reduced poverty, the difference between the richest and the poorest is still huge, especially in land politics. “[A] Third world county with its own internal First World ” (MacDonald 1991:2), might be a good way of describing the relation between the rich and poor in today’s Brazil.

The first large development projects in Amazonia were the PIN (National Integration Plans) projects trying to make Amazonia into a last frontier, extracting its richness in resources such as oil, mining and timber. This was part of the modernising projects the rest of Brazil was going through, a process of implementing Brazil in the world economy, climbing up from the label as a development country and becoming a modern, global nation state. The change in environmental politics partly reduced this, as large areas were destroyed through mining, extracting oil and deforestation. Still, Amazonia contains an enormous amount of richness, as

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<sup>37</sup> The World Bank measured this in 2012, so it might have changed in these two years.



the mineral resources of natural gas, gold, iron and coal (to mention some), yet to be exploited are calculated to a value of 1.6 trillion dollars (CDEA 1992:85). The area is of huge value both nationally and internationally, and several corporations and development banks are interested in it. The change in international environmental concerns changed the focus from development to sustainable development, and extracting resources in a way that ideally should not destroy the nature.

Sustainable development as described in the Brundtland report is development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. Socioeconomic development goals must be defined in terms of sustainability in every country. *Our own agenda* broadens the concept of sustainable development to include equitable growth, along with the expansion at a rate needed to generate well-being for the entire nation (CDEA 1992:57).

The Inter-American Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme, together with the Amazon Cooperation Treaty made in 1992 a report titled “Amazonia without Myths”, emphasise the environmental and developmental problems ahead for Amazonia. The title however, does not apply to the content inside the report. It focuses on how to develop the region sustainably. At the same time, the organisations behind the report are favouring capital-intensive projects, where agriculture and fishing should be intensified, modernised and capitalised. They suggest that modern technology and science should lead the way together with the local and indigenous knowledge of the environment and forest management. Areas unused should be put to use for sustainable cattle ranching and sustainable cultivation, timber production should be utilized in a sustainable manner and recovery of abandoned land was some of their suggestions towards the future of Amazonia (CDEA 1992). However, how sustainable timber production could be carried out in reality is not thoroughly explained. Neither is sustainable cattle ranching or mining, and for the average reader it seems difficult to for example cut down timber and burn large areas of land in a sustainable manner. They justify their large-scale projects by implementing a rhetorical strategy; sustainable development (Guimarães 2001). This kind of rhetoric’s also becomes part of the overarching image of Amazonia, as the trend in sustainable development has been to focus on the Amerindians as the ultimate conservators. The way sustainable development rhetoric’s describe Amazonia, is both a result of, and participates in shaping our images of Amazonia.

## **The rhetoric's of sustainable development**

The term sustainable development is repeatedly applied in projects and reports about international development. However, the term raises many questions related to its usage, which are important to clarify. Is this just a rhetorical device to justify resource extraction and capital-intensive projects? What are the real components of sustainability, and how exactly will “normal” development differ from “sustainable” development? Who are the actors behind certain sustainable development projects, and how should the local actors which are most affected by a certain project relate to the grand discourse of sustainable development? The term sustainable actually contains several forms of sustainability: Environmental, social, economic and cultural sustainability to refer to some. Within each sector, the agenda and outcome will differ greatly; sustainable production for a logging company is radically different from sustainable forest management for an environmental NGO (Guimarães 2001). Factors as the state and the global world are also important aspects within the sustainable development discourse. Should projects be lead and controlled by the state or should the world's free market set the agenda for the development in sustainable manners? There are so many unanswered questions that it becomes difficult to determine whether a project is carried out sustainably, as the term has become too complex.

“Reiterating the basic argument behind the present study, current affairs reveal that sustainable development has become such an indispensable reference in political, corporate and civil society discourse that ends up running the risk of losing much of its meaning for social change, and of being reduced in strategic importance to a simple rhetoric resource” (Guimarães 2001:44).

Sustainable development has become a strategy for corporations to justify their extraction in a certain area, and has been implemented in many ways as rhetoric's in talking about development and environment, as one could see from the “Amazonia Without Myths” report from World Bank and Amazonian Development Bank. The overarching image of Amazonia fits perfectly within the ideals of sustainable development, as the rain forest is pictured as the last “garden of Eden”, and needs our protection (Slater 1996). The Amerindian groups as the ultimate protectors of the nature also function well with these images, as long as they correlate with the representations. The example of the Yanomao and Kayapó presented in chapter two demonstrates how there are ideals of how the natural Amerindian should be; the Kayapó groups which embraced “modernism” did not longer fit within the idealised images, and were presented as “jungle maharajas” ruined by modernisation and capitalism (Slater 1996).

Will this new focus on sustainable development change the way projects have been carried out previously, or will it just be a strategy to continue the capitalist approach with the justification of being sustainable? Earlier projects supported by the World Bank loans, resulted in destruction and removing of several Amerindian tribes, as the World Bank did not follow up the environmental and human right clausal the loan came with. Instead, they gave the responsibility to the Brazilian State's agencies, which in many examples have proven to be corrupt, insufficient and involved in violations against Amerindian rights to land (Treece 1990). Many of these projects were carried out without involving the local people most affected by the projects, and without cooperating with local NGO's concerned with the changes or implications of the projects. The claims the World Bank made official in the 1980's about projects being carried out within environmental and human rights standards were lost in bureaucracy and corruption. The failures were neither included in the "Amazonia Without Myths" report from 1991.

Many projects concerned with sustainable development have the ideal of both utilising and conserving Amazonia. They are involved in conservation politics and establishment of national parks and protected areas, but also to develop the region in terms of extraction of products for global markets (Treece 1990) As I described in chapter two, the Amerindian peoples came to be seen as the perfect conservationists in the environmentalist discourse, living in harmony with nature, through conserving and managing the specific landscape (Slater, 2002). I will elaborate upon this with the notion of an "Ecologically Noble Savage", idealised by western environmentalists as "natural conservationists" (Conklin and Graham 1995). As the natives were described as the noble savages through colonial writing and in the early days of anthropology, the "ecologically noble savage" builds upon the idea of "the perfect native"; demonstrating the westerns expectation of "the others", close to nature, and never diverging from this picture. Later the ecologically noble savage was reinforced in ecological anthropology, as the "others" living in perfect harmony with nature; the ultimate conservationists (Hames 2007). Today this idea has been incorporated in sustainable development practices, where indigenous groups are seen as the "protectors" of nature. The establishment of protected areas normally includes only the Amerindian "ecologically noble savages" dwelling in the specific area. The other inhabitants of the specific protected area, the small-farmers and river dwellers, have been excluded or forced to move (Ioris 2005). The rural population making a living of agriculture and fishing in Amazonia both utilise indigenous knowledge and modern techniques; they adjust to the capitalist market and most of

their livelihood activities are carried out in a sustainable manner. The exclusion of this part of the population, has been inspired by the imagery of Amazonia, and as a consequence, unwittingly also excludes a range of activities and ways of living sustainably which would enrich the policies concerning sustainable development.

### **Local strategies as sustainable**

The poor soil quality of Amazonian floodplain (*várzea*) and dry land (*terra firme*), makes cultivation difficult. Therefore; knowledge about the soils and how to cultivate them have been important since pre-Colombian times. Amongst *caboclos* and peasants in Amazonia, shifting cultivation has been a technique to cultivate the different soils, while systematically leaving areas to rest and regain fertility. They also have knowledge of which crops are best suited for a specific soil, and when to plant them (Moran 1974). At Cotijuba I learned about people's techniques in maintaining gardens, planting crops and fishing. One farmer I visited at Cotijuba told me about the different crops he planted and his strategies to maintain the fertility in the soil. He farmed organically without chemical fertilizers. Throughout the year he changed plots, so the soil could rest and regain fertility, and he also burned some areas before the rainy season to release the nutrients in the soils<sup>38</sup>. He had several different local crops, and with the shifting cultivation he managed to have a large plantation of crops, which he sold at the markets in Icoaraci and Belém. Originally coming from Rio de Janeiro, he had to learn from the elderly at the island how to best cultivate in the local soil, he now had an extensive empirical knowledge after many years of experience. Through the oral knowledge he learned from other farmers, supplementing it with some courses in agrology, he managed to have a good crop and sustainable livelihood. He was concerned with organic farming, and had many techniques within this field. He had compost where he transformed organic material into earth, which also was a rich fertiliser. He used banana leaves shaped to small cornets to plant seedlings before they could be replanted in the fields, and thus did not have to buy plastic cups for the seedlings. He found ways of both adjusting to the ecological conditions at the island and towards the local markets. In addition, he was planning with other islanders to form a cooperative for a more secure way of producing and maintaining a livelihood.

I paid attention to the notion of organic farming; how the farmer was preoccupied with ecology and how to plant without chemical fertilizer. I also heard this several times at the

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<sup>38</sup> This is a form of slash-and-burn agriculture, which I will explain later in this chapter.

island, those wanting to form a cooperative were also planning to start an organic market to sell vegetables and agricultural products. This might be related to what Milton (1993) points out about the new idea of environmentalism<sup>39</sup> that has emerged the latest years. When a new discourse is created, like the one about environmentalism and sustainable development, the ways people think about the environment are also shaped within the new framework of ideas. Organic farming and caring about nature and environment has become an important theme in much environmental organisations, but it has also been a concern for the local population at Cotijuba. I do not have the proper data to generalise whether the organic idea is something that always have been there, or if it something that has gained importance the latest years. However, I did notice a general concern about doing things sustainably and organically, but many islanders emphasised how this was part of their local knowledge and ways they had farmed for generations.

The rural population of Amazonia, with their historical background and close links to traditional knowledge have several crops well suited for the bad soils or floodplain of Amazonia. Their diet is made up from crops and fish/meat easily accessible from their environment, and they have good techniques to maintain the crops and not overuse their resources. Instead of focusing on cash crops, as many development projects do, they should change their focus to the small farmers who live by subsistence crops and in sustainable manners (Barrow 1990).

### **The gap between western knowledge and traditional knowledge**

Contrasting indigenous knowledge with western scientific knowledge is a common separation today. Within today's development theories, environmental politics and organic ideals, the importance of indigenous knowledge is emphasised. There is a general dichotomy between indigenous knowledge and scientific (normally western) knowledge. There is a large literature on this topic, too extensive to review here in detail. I will, however, present some of the most important aspects and critiques. To simplify matters, and because the scope of my thesis is not indigenous groups, I will from here on avoid the term indigenous knowledge<sup>40</sup> in favour of traditional/local knowledge, as I found aspects in both categorisations evident at my fieldsite.

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<sup>39</sup> Essentially how humans are responsible in the quest for a reliable future. The environment is the most important eco-system or landscape surrounding us on its way to be extinguished, and environmentalists stress how we are all responsible for preventing the disaster (Milton 1993).

<sup>40</sup> There are places where I use the term indigenous knowledge; this is when it is used by authors in relation to specific arguments of theories.

Kalland (2000) stresses the limitation the term indigenous knowledge might have, as this exclude non-indigenous knowledge and local knowledge. As my fieldwork was carried out in a mixed society of traditional, modern, urban and rural people and approaches to things, calling everything indigenous knowledge will not give justice to the local knowledge systems at this place. The important distinction to discuss, is the one between scientific and local knowledge. This division of knowledge systems has a similar history and hierarchy as the divide of modern and traditional, where the modern was considered to be at the end stage of the evolution of cultures and society.

Indigenous knowledge is often seen to exist in a local context, anchored to a particular social group in a particular setting at a particular time. Western knowledge, on the other hand, has been divorced from an epistemic framework in the search for universal validity (Banuri and Appel-Marglin in Agrawal 1995b:4).

Agrawal emphasises how this is a created separation, although well accepted, and how western knowledge have been seen as the “ultimate truth” (Agrawal 1995a). The separation of scientific knowledge and local knowledge (traditional, practical, and cultural) is not only evident in global, westernised politics, but also in environmental rhetoric’s. Amongst environmentalist the indigenous (local) knowledge is seen as “greener” and in accordance with nature, while scientific knowledge is against nature. On the other side, scientific knowledge is viewed as superior, with the justification of being scientific and therefor the only dependable knowledge and a form for ultimate truth (Murdoch and Clark 1994). “The development of scientific knowledge can be portrayed as the continued attempt by humankind to gain mastery over nature” (Murdoch and Clark 1994:119). The divide between “western”, scientific knowledge and “the other’s” local and traditional knowledge was also part of the separation of society and nature. The split between “the west” and “the rest” and the notion of how “the west” had dominated nature and differentiated society from nature, while “the rest” still overlap the two realms, was one way for the scientific paradigm to justify its hegemonic power, even though it is part of political process and never really a separation (Latour 1993). It became the strongest paradigm, in which all other forms of knowledge was inferior, and was also part of the separation of society and man from nature. That western, scientific knowledge was built upon evidence and with a form of universal law establishing it as the ultimate scientific paradigm. The hegemonic power the scientific knowledge contains,

excludes other forms of knowledge as they have the superior power in defining what is proper scientific knowledge (Murdoch and Clark 1994).

The separation between scientific knowledge and traditional/local knowledge explains why the emphasis has been on the former, especially in the development paradigm. Authors as Kalland (2000), Agrawal (1995a) and Murdoch and Clark (1994) all argue how this separation have led to the exclusion of local, traditional knowledge in many projects, and emphasise the importance of changing this. The first and most important criteria in sustainable development should be the local knowledge about the nature and ecosystem, and the valorisation of the methods and techniques the local people use. This is not to say they only use “traditional” non-modern or non-technological methods; as I will argue below, the both combine traditional knowledge and implement “modern” technology<sup>41</sup> in the production.

### **Strategies to secure a livelihood: Combining sectors and knowledge systems**

During my fieldwork I realised the extensive knowledge and diversity of strategies local islanders used in their livelihoods. They had many ways of planting crops, harvesting, fishing and commercialising their products on a small-scale basis. In accordance to this, the extensive knowledge the islanders at Cotijuba had made them particularly knowledgeable in resource management and how to cultivated the land. “These modern resource managers use techniques derived from indigenous practice. Virtually all the crops are native. In a *caboclo* or *mestizo* backwoodsman still reside centuries of accumulated knowledge” (Hecht and Cockburn 1989:28). In accordance to this, the extensive knowledge the islanders at Cotijuba had, made them particularly knowledgeable in resource management and how to cultivate the land. After many visits and conversations with some of the fishers and agricultural workers I understood the range of the knowledge they possessed, and also how they actively tried out new things and were concerned about the environment and organic living. They both had embodied an extensive range of local and traditional knowledge at the same time as they embraced “modern” techniques and invented new ways of securing a livelihood and creating a market for their products. I soon learned that their way of living was both traditional and modern, and found their ways of implementing knowledge unique in a sense. With that said,

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<sup>41</sup> Technology is not modern, hence the exclamation mark. As Ingold (2011) argues, technology has come to be treated as something purely modern, affiliated with modern science. Technology has always existed, but today the technical has become that of the mechanical, separated from human experience (Ingold 2011: 296).

when I separate “traditional” and “modern”, I do not imply an evolutionary trajectory from traditional to modern. Neither do I use modern as a universal concept;<sup>42</sup> an aspiration to be “modern” separated from “traditional” through a break with past and present, which has been highly criticised (Appadurai 1996). Rather, I emphasise how there exists different knowledge systems, and while there tends to be a hegemonic separation of traditional and modern, the latter being “western” and scientific-based, I try to demonstrate how the islanders combined both, and by definition were “modern” in many ways (Murrieta et al. 2009:337).

### **Multi-use strategies**

Harris (2009) amongst others, argues how the historical and economic conditions of Amazonian *ribeirinhos* makes them well adaptive; being able to adjust to external changes without losing their daily way of life. Adaptive in this sense means they have ways of adapting to external factors as market, economy and their given environment, as part of their strategies to secure a livelihood. To confuse this with adaptation theories of cultural ecology<sup>43</sup> and the notion of how nature dictates social structure and human behaviour, would not give justice to the strategies implied by local communities in Amazonia. To say adaptive in the sense Harris (2009) does, is also to say adjusting. The riverine populations of the Amazon have always adjusted; to the river, market, political changes, movement of people and to technology. But it is not only the external factors that define the social and economic life of the *ribeirinhos*, they shape and form it themselves and find ways of manipulating the system. They are innovative in finding new ways of doing things and experimenting with techniques in fishing and agriculture, or commercial activities to supply their income.

The riverine population seem to be doing more than accommodating the prevailing demands. These people are able to not just accommodate the fluctuating markets, but also reorganize and reproduce in the new conditions in which they find themselves each time. As such they have developed a capacity to embrace the change at each new stage, without it leading to the demise of their current way of life. On the contrary, their economic openness, that is their ability to deal with rapid changes, serves their reproductive potential extremely well. For this local peasant economy is resilient enough to expand in times of relative market stagnation (Harris 2009:76).

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<sup>42</sup> Appadurai criticises the use of modern as a universal concept, based on a time-specific separation of modern and traditional, present and past. Modernisation, as globalisation has different localities and trajectories, but has largely been confined to a western hegemonic definition.

<sup>43</sup> Cultural ecology builds upon the theory of Julian Steward, where the environment laid out preconceptions for the human behaviour; culture was a result of nature. For extensive discussions see Steward (1955), Rappaport (1984) and Moran (1982).



The mode of life and always having to develop strategies to be able to continue their way of life, have given riverine population capacity to orientate in the local economy and find markets and livelihood activity that is not always formally recognised in the official economy. They can be a part of the capitalist market system, without embracing the capitalistic ideology<sup>44</sup> and changing their social organisation. “There is then a basic contradiction at the heart of modern Amazonia: it is capitalist in name and in the drive of profit and expansion, but non-capitalistic in its character and relations and in notions of ownership (Harris, 2009: 76). Amazonia today is modern and capitalist with market based production, and commercialisation of products is common. However, it is not capitalistic as it would be defined in economic theory, and some of the forces at stake are different.

There were several examples of how the islanders combined techniques and sectors in their livelihoods. Fishing and agriculture was important, but the islanders also combined tertiary sectors, as trade and tourism, in their livelihoods. Many women affiliated with MMIB (the women’s’ movement) sold handicraft at local fairs. One woman, Dona Anna had learned how to make ceramic pottery, which she sold at a little stand by the docking area. Several restaurant owners had diverse strategies for increasing their income. Seu Marajó was one of them. He owned a *pousada*, with some rooms and a restaurant. He owned one of one of the *bondhinos* the tractor transporting people around the island, and he conveniently let the passengers off outside his restaurant. He also had a natural pond on his land, which he wanted to clean and use for fish to provide his guests with fresh fish. Another restaurant owner also wanted to make a fishpond on her estate, where she planned to let the tourists fish their own fish to eat. These examples show entrepreneurs that have strategies to maintain their livelihoods, whether based on fishing/agriculture or commercialising products or running small businesses. At the same time it also shows a high participation of the local community in making a living at the island.

The islanders at Cotijuba orient their activities between traditional and modern ways of life in the intersections of urban and rural landscapes, hence my argument that the local populations have ways of using both traditional and modern knowledge in creating and maintaining their livelihood and ways of life. They are in many ways as modern as the “western” categorisation of modern, with ways of adjusting and orienting their livelihood towards external influences,

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<sup>44</sup> Nugent (1993) argues the Amazonian economic production is not capitalist, “since there is a clear separation between worker and boss and no single owner of the resources” (Nugent in Harris 2009: 76).

integration towards the global market, at the same time as they continue their “traditional” modes of living (Nugent 1993). The overarching image of Amazonia as a “garden of Eden” has prevented people from thinking of traditional communities in Amazonia as modern, as the natural aspect of the area have been emphasised. The tendency towards categorise Amazonia as either traditional/indigenous or urban, overlooks the places in between; where all these forms blend. The particular history and internal social organisation at Cotijuba gives them groundwork for being modern and traditional.

### **Local knowledge at Cotijuba**

Most of the literature preoccupied with the adaptive strategies of Amazonian peasants and ribeirinhos are mostly concerned with rural production and fishing techniques, but I will discuss how the highly adaptive pattern were visible in other ways of maintaining a livelihood as well. At Cotijuba I learned about the different strategies to provide a livelihood and maintain an income. The islanders would not call it strategies per se; it was rather knowledge being part of their culture. Barth (1995) suggests knowledge should be seen as a modality of culture, referring to peoples engagement with the world through actions. Knowledge as part of culture also acknowledges how many localities use the same knowledge but also how different knowledge systems exists within cultures and localities. Being part of their lived world, how they engaged with their surroundings and parts of embodied habits and skills, knowledge was a modality of acting in their lived world.

I have earlier mentioned Seu Raymundo, living in *Igarape Piri* making a living from the collection of *açai* and fishing. Many of the islanders shared his approach, making a living from different sectors and combining these in securing an income and livelihood. *Açai* was a particular good source of income for many islanders at Cotijuba, and the surrounding island. The *açai* palm is able to grow in floodplains and is a particular good source of nutrients (Brondizio 2009) Those who were able to have a plantation with *açai* could sell them at the market in Icoaraci (the nearest market town) and also process the blue berries into *açai* mass, a thick juice made by pressing the berries in a machine. Several small stalls around the island provided *açai* juice to the daily lunch for the islanders, this was a very important part of their diet, and families would normally buy one or two litres for consumption per day. Seu Raymundo also sold *açai* juice at the island, but he had found a new way of doing it. He made the juice at home, where they had a mechanical press, and took the readymade plastic bags of *açai* juice in a polystyrene container, and went around with his bike to sell to households. He

then was able to reach the more distant parts of the island, and also sold to elderly who had difficulties walking to the stalls.

### **Fish tanks as an example of the merging of modern and traditional**

Seu Raymundo had a fish tank on his estate, a natural pond by the river where he kept fish for consumption. It was dug out from the ground and about 3 m<sup>2</sup>, with a little channel connected to the river passing by. I was very fascinated by this tank, since for me growing up in Norway, fish tanks were part of what we would call modern knowledge. My own preconceptions about what was modern and what was traditional had made me think fish tanks were something belonging to the modern and capitalist world. But, that a natural fish tank was a very old and traditional technique of keeping fish did not cross my mind. It turned out that many of the *ribeirinho* families had used natural fish tanks for many years, and that it was a part of their traditional knowledge system and a form of adaptation to the landscape and surroundings. Seu Raymundo told me he made the fish tank just by the river so the natural flow of river water would exchange the water in the tank, and provide fresh oxygen to the fish. Seu Raymundo and his family kept fish in the tank to provide them with food, so that they were not always dependent upon going out to fish every day. It was also a very practical way of keeping the fish; if they made a good catch they did not need ice or other forms of cooling systems to preserve the fish. It was both simple and practical, and they needed no technology to keep the tank, it was all built by hand, exchanging water by the natural flow of the river.

Once I learned about *ribeirinho* families making fish tanks, I discovered this was a very popular practice at the rest of the island. Many households either had natural fish tanks, as Seu Raymundo, or they made artificial ones built by bricks. One household I visited had two small tanks; these were not connected to the river system and were dependent upon other ways of exchanging water to keep the oxygen levels proper. The owner experimented with using water plants to provide oxygen, but he said it did not work as well as he had hoped. It made the fish survive, but they did not increase, which was his purpose with the fish tank. This was also evident in other households, as fish was an important source of income when sold at markets. Some families made fish tanks to keep fish and increase the production, then sell them to the fish market in Icoaraci. Many had artificial nutrition given to the fish, to make them increase and be large enough to be sold for a good price. This was a “traditional” practice mixed together with modern techniques. It was a sustainable income, already had an established market for distribution, and I soon learned about its potential.



Fish tank built by bricks, with natural plants providing oxygen. (Photo: Yngvil S. Lien)

Ecomuseo da Amazônia is a local Non-Governmental Organisation situated in Belém, with projects in the rural municipalities and islands surrounding Belém. At Cotijuba they had already established a larger project concerning sustainable fish farming (increasing of fish for commercialising on sustainable levels), and was under my field work mapping out how many private persons were interested in creating fish tanks on their properties. They had several meetings and courses for the local population, providing information on how to construct the fish tanks and to increase fish. Their ideology was to visit communities who had the knowledge, and provide them with the technical support to establish and start sustainable fish farming in natural tanks. The project was concerned with aquaculture, and had researchers, engineers and technical workers to help establishing fish tank projects. They were concerned both with the small natural fish tanks in people's gardens or estate, but they also had larger fish farming projects where they installed pump systems to provide oxygen. In Cotijuba they first had a project in the community Poçou, located northeast and furthest away from the main road. Most of the residents here were making a living by fishing and having gardens, as well as other small jobs to support their income. When I visited, the project had already been running for over a year, and experienced positive results of the project. According to the technical assistant responsible for the fish tank project in Cotijuba, Seu Durval, the project

had proved successful and they had a big stand of fish the locals involved were able to distribute at markets.

Ecomuseo da Amazônia's aims were to give small communities new ways of making a living, combined with their traditional lifestyle. For the inhabitants of islands around Belém to be able to keep living on the islands, they held projects and research about how to maintain their livelihood, learning new techniques they could implement with their traditional ones, always in accordance with the local knowledge and ways of life. Observing the projects Ecomuseo had on Cotijuba, I have included them in this section as a good example of a local NGO who valued the local knowledge and techniques, and also saw the strategies islanders had to maintain an income. In cooperation with the local people, they had projects to develop these strategies. In the next section I will elaborate upon the traditional techniques and strategies to demonstrate how they have been used for centuries and why it is important that they are included in new projects concerning sustainable development.

### **Traditional management techniques**

Archaeological evidences of fish tanks and other ways of trapping or keeping fish, have been found in pre-Colombian societies in the Amazon floodplain. This type of knowledge have existed through many centuries and was used before the Europeans came to colonise South America (Erickson 2000). Several patterns of fishponds or handmade structures to catch fish and keep it in the pond have been found in the Bolivian Amazon, which corresponds with other archaeological findings elsewhere in Amazonia. These were techniques Amerindian groups used in securing food, and were part of techniques they used in manipulating the landscape. Darell Posey, an anthropologist who have studied extensively the Kayapó Amerindians forest management techniques and ways of life, have also discussed how the Kayapós and many other Amerindian groups managed their environment in several ways. They planted and replanted forest, cleared out fields and demarcated ecological zones based on the different type of forest, soils and plants. This also illustrates that the Amazonian rainforest is not as 'natural' as the common image presents the rainforest; rather it has been managed through centuries by the Amerindians (Posey and Balée 1989). The ways the Kayapó have managed their forest, and with their extensive knowledge about forest management, also suggests that in the future concern for environmental damage, one should focus at the already existing knowledge and techniques of managing and conserving the rainforest (Posey and Belée 1989).

### **Slash-and-burn agriculture**

Burning of the rain forest is today associated with large cattle ranchers, soy farmers and other large scale projects, which set fire to thousands of hectares of land every year. The fires can be seen miles away, and frequently come out of control. Preventing large fires is one of the major themes in environmentalist concerns, as the large scale burnings destroy the rain forest as well as letting out tons of carbon dioxide saved in the trees (Hecht and Cockburn 1989). It is important to emphasise, however, that there is another technique of burning areas to use for planting, the so-called slash and burn technique, which locals at Cotijuba also use during the agricultural cycle. This kind of manipulation of the landscape was also used by Amerindian groups, as the Kayapó, and was parts of their cycles of growing crops, trees or other plants. In the Kayapó slash-and-burn cultivation, they cleared an area and then planted manioc seeds, sweet potatoes and other plants before the burning, simply because the warmth starts the sprouting process and the ash provides nutrition for the soil. As most of the nutrients are stored in the plants, the vegetation have to be cut and burned in order for the forest to renew and let new plants grow (Hecht and Cockburn 1989:38-39) Among the Kayapós, fire shamans monitor the fires, and they take care in the time the fire is set; it should be started at the beginning of the dry season, but not when it is too dry and will become uncontrollable. The burning not only provides nutrition to the soil and starts the recovery process of the forest, it also prevent pests. With the large fires used by cattle ranchers and other large-scale developers, the main aim is just to clear the forest. Instead of letting the ground renew itself, by letting the soils rest through fallow periods it is burned again the next year, making the soil too depleted for most vegetation. Although there exists different techniques of burning areas, many environmentalists treat everything as a threat to the rain forest; some development organisations also state the small-scale slash and burn techniques are the major threat towards the environment (see for example Lininger 2011). The importance of local (and indigenous) knowledge should not be underestimated here, as the techniques makes arable land more productive.

### **Sustainable development and the exclusion of local knowledge**

With the shift towards sustainable development and emphasising indigenous and local knowledge, one can believe the problems of Amazonia are declining. This can be true, but I wanted to demonstrate in my thesis that the reality is maybe not as rosy as development agencies and international reports presents it to be. Sustainable development has many implications and challenges, as one can see through my thesis several problems arise out of

the new sustainable development politics. That is not to say that caring about the environment is wrong, or that every sustainable development project will fail. Rather, projects stand in the dangerous position of repeating failures from the past. The greatest concern is the way the inhabitants of Amazonia are pictured as either “ecologically noble savages” living in harmony with nature, or the destructors and intruders destroying the rain forest. In addition, the separation between traditional life style versus the modern way of life does not acknowledge the very “modern” way most of my research participants lived today. I argue that they use both traditional knowledge and modern techniques in their livelihood, and it is at this crossroad between modern and traditional the Amazonian societies are situated today. It is adaption, adjustment and relating to internal and external changes that can be said to have made the island into what it is today. “*Isso e nossa realidade*” – “this is our reality”, and in the easy statement lays the core of my argument. This is **their** reality; the landscape they dwell in, and which they base their livelihoods upon, through multi-use strategies and sustainable resource management. And by what I experienced, they did so quite successfully. To sum this up; the simplified imagery of the Amazonian population that centres on dichotomies such as ecologically noble savage/destructive intruder, traditional/modern, not only misrepresents this complex reality; it also carries with it problematic political consequences, such as the exclusion of whole populations and their knowledge from the design of projects and decision-making. As the empirical data I have presented here demonstrates, their knowledge is of crucial importance to the global efforts to promote sustainable development. In the following section, I will expand on this.

### **Local strategies: Combining several sectors and its sustainability**

The way livelihoods at Cotijuba included several activities, is also a way of relating sustainably to the natural landscape; as intensifying one livelihood, as for example agriculture, would lead to more forest destruction. But when local communities, as Cotijuba, have a range of activities they also let the river and forest restore, they do not overuse them and most importantly; they act sustainably. The multi-use strategies of rural communities, where they combine several activities in their livelihoods, have been argued to be particularly efficient. With several sectors contributing to a household’s economy, they are able to protect themselves from market fluctuations, they can consume a good amount of their produce, and last but not least it is conserving their particular landscape and environment (Toledo 1990). The multi-use approach contradicts predominant tendencies in rural modernisation projects, where the focus is on capital-intensive, specialised and market oriented production. One can

see this tendency in recent development projects of Amazonia, where the intensification and specialisation of sectors are emphasised as the best development strategy, disregarding the multi-use strategies Amazonian local communities partake in.

### **Fishermen-farmers and Amazonian resource-managers**

I have earlier compared the livelihoods at Cotijuba with the Norwegian fishermen-farmers (fiskarbonden), and here I will once again use the Norwegian context as an example of how specialisation and capitalisation of sectors can lead to extensive changes in local communities' livelihoods. Modernisation processes in Norway during the 1950's led to radical structural changes in the fishermen-farmers everyday activities. The Norwegian state favoured specialisation and intensification of either agriculture or fishing industry, and the ways the fishermen-farmers combined several sectors were viewed as backward and unmodern (Bjørklund, Drivenes, and Gerrard 1994). New politics led to new technology within the sectors, agriculture became more industrialised, and therefore also difficult for the women to handle while the men were fishing. Men then had to focus on one sector, either agriculture or fishing, as they were the bread-winners. This separation also led to a more general division of labour, women could no longer carry out the agriculture work and had to find other ways of providing an income. The same process appeared in the fishing sector, and overlooking the local fisher's massive protest, the Norwegian state started to modernise and industrialise the fishing sector. As the local fishers anticipated, intensification of the fishery led to decrease of certain fish stocks, and has been criticised for not being adjusted to the ocean ecosystem and in the long run very unsustainable (Nilsen 1998).

Modernisation, specialisation and intensification of one sector has proved to work against the sustainability of both the environment, local economy and cultural identity, especially amongst the Sámi fishermen-farmers in Northern Norway. Learning from this example one can clearly see the changes occurring in a local community, when introduced to specialisation and intensification of one sector. Comparing this to livelihood strategies at Cotijuba one can see similar backgrounds; the environment's limitations on the livelihoods and the prospect of what could happen in Amazonia with a capitalist, large scale approach. The soils and the river of the region cannot carry resources enough to capital-intensive sectors. "Commercial over-fishing has reduced the availability of these fish for the poor; shippers now corner the commercial catch for Manaus, Belém, São Paulo and the international market" (Hecht and Cockburn 1989:42). If these tendencies continue, exploitation of the local resources will make



the life of the local communities, as Cotijuba, difficult. The small-scale farming, fishing and combination of many sectors and activities makes certain their local resources are kept at proper levels and not forced to its limitations, and the best way to live sustainable and have a secure livelihood.

### **The sustainability of Cotijuba**

Sustainable development projects, often carried out by external agents and organisation have projects focusing in sustainable livelihoods and ways of making a living. Teaching the locals how to do things sustainably overlooks the fact that many local or indigenous communities in Amazonia already live sustainably. Much of the local knowledge and ways of making a living is both sustainable and modern, and they also have a way of adjusting to both external factors and internal organisation. Local NGO's often have a broader knowledge about the local environment and the people of the region, and the importance of their advantages should be included in larger global, national or transnational projects. Ecomuseo da Amazonia is one example of this; how they emphasised to help develop already exiting techniques and knowledge of fishing and agriculture is a good example of how projects can be carried out in cooperation with locals. MMIB, which I worked extensively with, is even a smaller and more local association established by local islanders at Cotijuba. Their work and projects involving the locals is another good example. They also used existing knowledge together with their own, new ideas and managed to create an organisation that soon became very important at Cotijuba. Their focus on women in agriculture, and also how women could generate an income through various sections was a good and sustainable way of development in their local community. Because MMIB was formed, organised and carried out at the island, with the main aim of having livelihoods and income generated at the island, without needing to supplement an income with working in the city their projects functioned in a very good way. It was led by internal factors, but with adjusting and implementing external ideas and views. They had a strong local commitment, but they also tried to reach outward and cooperate with other communities and organisations and research institutions.

Having been left out of both anthropology and development approaches, the knowledge and strategies local, non-indigenous inhabitants in Amazonia utilise could benefit both new ways of thinking about and approaching the environmental problems in Amazonia. The core of the invisibility of the Amazonian peasantry (including fishers) lays within the overarching framework of Amazonia; the Amerindian societies have been the focus of most studies, as the

“exotic other” and representing the ecologically noble savage - the societies perceived as being closest to nature and engaged in a sustainable way of life since time immemorial. This picture however, have both overlooked the many conservation strategies and manipulations of the surroundings many Amerindian societies performed, as well as the rest of the population living in Amazonia. Cotijuba was an example of the latter, with a mixed population and situated at the edge of an urban metropolis, Belém. The ways the islanders adjusted to new markets or trends, at the same time as they maintain their everyday activities as they always had performed them, with their combination of traditional knowledge and modern techniques have created a unique way of maintaining their livelihoods. Their focus has never been to intensify and specialise on one sector, they rather make a living of a range of activities. This is one of the main points towards my conclusion. The capitalised, “modernised” west tends to think in terms of capital-intensive livelihoods: If there is one sector with the opportunity to make profit, one should specify on that sector to increase surplus. Still, this breaks with the same ideal the west has, of a sustainable livelihoods or living within an environmental friendly ideology. Specialising in one sector will prevent this ideal; exploiting resources in the given sector, will work against the sustainable ideal of extracting resources without destroying the possibility of further extraction for coming generations. Rather, we should turn around and look towards the Amazonian communities, as the one I studied. Using many different activities, the resources were maintained at sustainable levels. Some were commercialised in small-scale production, whilst other were purely for subsistence and food security. Combining these with new sectors, as tourism, also provided an extra income. Using a little of many different resources, based on their extensive knowledge of their environment and its limitations they were able to live as sustainably as the so-called “ecologically noble savage”.

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# Concluding remarks

My thesis has explored how the overarching image of Amazonia presents the area as a natural landscape and a “garden of Eden”, the last paradise on earth only inhabited by pristine Amerindians living in harmony with nature (Slater 1996). These images exclude large parts of the population, at the same time as they have strong influences on development policies carried out in the area. Included in the representations is also the threat towards the ecosystem, in forms of national and international development focusing on extracting mineral resources, timber and establishing mega projects destroying huge areas of land. With the emerging environmentalism and the concern for saving the rain forest, sustainable development projects has replaced the previous interference in Amazonia, and today’s projects focus on protecting the landscape and its people.

The focus of my research has been to emphasise local livelihoods and strategies as a viable outcome for the future. My main argument throughout this thesis has been how traditional and modern knowledge and techniques merge in many ways in Amazonia. I have analysed the livelihoods and knowledge of the local environment in an island community; how they were able to maintain their local activities within sustainable levels of extraction. I found the local livelihoods based on a combination of different sectors and resources to be carried out sustainably, as the local people never over-exploit one sector, and had knowledge about the environment and the affects certain extraction would have upon it. The Amazon is today a contested area, with the threat of further destruction of land and forest. There are many forces and influences entangled in the representations of the area, and these images have influenced the way sustainable development projects have been implemented. However, as I have argued, one cannot establish projects related to the protection of the rain forest without understanding the complexity of the social landscape, particularly the people dwelling in the area. Environmentalism and sustainable future have become important aspects in the development discourse, however as demonstrated in my thesis, many non-indigenous communities have been excluded from the overarching image of Amazonia, along with their knowledge and livelihoods. These communities use a lot of local knowledge and manage their resources sustainably. Leaving them out hinders development projects to be executed in a good and locally adapted way. Environmental threats will affect everyone living in Amazonia.

Focusing on the small-scale farmers, fishermen in local at places as Cotijuba will give a better understanding and future for everyone.

In today's Amazonia urban, rural, traditional and modern spheres overlap; historically there have always been patterns of movement between them and this tendency is still evident many places. The island Cotijuba is a place where these categories are intertwined; it is a rural area with "traditional" activities as agriculture and fishing, but also with urban aspects and a combination of livelihoods within different sectors. By focusing on livelihoods and different strategies to make an income, I have been able to understand the knowledge and techniques local communities have, and how they have adjusted to external factors as environment and markets, at the same time as they continued their way of living. The importance of combining sectors in securing a livelihood, a multi-use strategy occupied by many rural people in Amazonia, takes advantage of the several local natural resources, without over-exploiting one sector. This contradicts earlier development strategies, focusing on intensifying and capitalising one sector to increase profit. Restrictions on the natural environment at Cotijuba prevented intensification of one sector; the islanders had extensive knowledge about the local environment, and knew its limitation. However, with these limitations they found other activities to combine in their livelihoods.

The livelihood activities the population at Cotijuba occupied was carried out at subsistence levels, ranging from agriculture, fishing, trade and tourism. While they focused on improving and finding new areas to include in their livelihoods, their aim was not to commercialise products on a large scale. Rather, local products from fishing and agriculture were consumed in the households or sold at local markets. One interesting finding was traditional fish tanks many islanders had, as it was both based on local knowledge and combined with modern techniques. It was an old way of preserving fish, but also with "modern" techniques, as installing oxygen pumping systems. Many islanders used the natural tanks to increase fish to be sold at local markets, and explored the market opportunities in this sector. The local knowledge derived from both traditional and modern strategies made the islanders particularly suited in managing their livelihoods without exploiting one sector; they rather found new ways to carry out their subsistence activity, as the fish tanks. I have compared this strategy with the Norwegian fishermen-farmers (*fiskarbonden*), and how they combined agriculture with fishing in small communities in Norway. This strategy provided the households with a stable income, as they based their livelihood on several sectors, and they were able to

maintain their local way of life. During the modernisation of fishing and agriculture in Norway during the 60's, the government wanted intensification and to capitalise one sector, and viewed the multi-use strategy as backward, yielding limited profit. This has been argued to lead to over-intensification of one sector, limiting the natural eco system. Local fishers and farmers were afraid of over-fishing, and stressed how intensification fishing would lead to diminish of fish stocks. Today, fishing is restricted, and many worry that continued fishing will destroy much of the marine ecosystem. The tendency to systemise and intensify sectors separately is not sustainable, as one could see through my examples. The small-scale extract of natural resources is a sustainable solution to this, which contradicts many development plans.

Working through a women's organisation, MMIB, I got insight into women's participation in everyday activities, and understood the importance of the household and the work women did. Today's Brazil has moved away from old gender ideals to a large extent, but many nevertheless continue to be relevant. As the scope of my thesis was to understand the overarching image of Amazonia, and how it affected local communities, particularly how their knowledge and ways of living were not included, I have not focused specifically on gender. Rather, I have emphasised women's participation in livelihood activities, and how they were an important part in continuing the local way of life. Women participated a lot in livelihood activities, but their workload was often not acknowledged. Much of the workload women did was confined to the domestic unit, and seen as their duty. This was partly because of resisting ideals of women belonging to the domestic sphere, while men worked in public sphere, but also because much of the work women did was seen as helping the man and family (Siqueira 2009). These ideals have changed today, but some patterns still remains at smaller level. MMIB wanted to change men's domination in decision-makings and agricultural work when they founded their association, and to acknowledge women's participation in work, especially in agriculture. Understanding their aims, and seeing the local projects they managed to emancipate, I also understood the importance of women's role in sustainable livelihoods. To include women's participation in work, one can understand their importance, especially in relation to multi-use strategies and sustainable livelihoods. Modernisation projects would change this, as much of the work women do would not be included. One could see this with the fishermen-farmers in Norway, where modernisation lead to exclusion of women in several sectors. The women's movement at Cotijuba was a good example of this, as they worked to include women in economic and agricultural activities.

I hope my thesis have contributed to a better understanding of the social landscape of Amazonia, and the complexity of people, knowledge and livelihoods. Today, with the sustainable development discourse and focus on protection and conservation of the tropical rain forest, the knowledge and livelihoods of all the different areas needs to be included in the discourse. Disentangling certain trajectories intertwined in the overarching image of Amazonia in one step towards a better understanding of the region, but further emphasis on the non-indigenous part of the population is needed in anthropological studies. The importance of studying resource management and livelihoods in local, Amazonian contexts should not be underestimated; they will provide a better framework towards future interference in the region. The discourse of sustainable development has already been established as the major development paradigm at stake in Amazonia. However, the overarching images of the area as a tropical rainforest only inhabited by Amerindian groups, has prevented a nuanced image of the sustainable livelihoods already carried out in many local non-indigenous communities. The multi-use strategies and knowledge about the capacity of a local environment, makes the people inhabiting the particular landscape into sustainably resource-managers, as was the case of islanders at Cotijuba. I call for a new framework of thinking about, and imagining Amazonia, a framework based on the lived reality of local places, and where the merging of traditional, modern, rural and urban spheres are included. This would guide future projects and actions carried out in Amazonia in a more realistic manner.

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