

Chapter 25 In Brief

A Pan-Amazonian sustainable development vision



Vida cotidiana no lado Atroari da Vila de Balbina (Foto: Bruno Kelly/Amazônia Real)



THE AMAZON WE WANT
Science Panel for the Amazon

A Pan-Amazonian sustainable development vision

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Key Messages & Recommendations

- 1) The Amazon presents multiple worldviews, often antagonistic, that pose a challenge to establish a consensus regarding a common vision for the future of the region.
- 2) Historic imbalances of power have led to the dominance of monetary-centric visions that reinforced the false rhetoric that standing forests do not produce socioeconomic development, resulting in the destruction of the Amazon's ecosystems, inequalities and violence.
- 3) The Living Amazon Vision presented in this chapter results from consultations with scientists of the Science Panel for the Amazon, and is based on a set of guiding principles and values. This vision proposes a new development model that is inclusive and just, as well as socially, environmentally, and economically healthy. It recognizes the role of the Amazon in the 21st Century, and the need for economies that can sustain ecological integrity and diversity, protect human rights, and promote well-being.

Abstract Developing a clear vision is the central starting point for any action plan. This chapter reviews the main visions regarding the Amazon and proposes a Living Amazon Vision based on a set of values, principles, and knowledge systems described throughout the chapter.

The Amazon today The largest tropical forest in the world evolved over millions of years into

complex, dynamic, and heterogeneous landscapes that are essential for life on Earth (see Chapters 1-7). The Amazon is also home to a great diversity of human cultures, worldviews, languages, and customs, which developed in association with its fundamental ecosystem functions and outstanding biodiversity (Chapters 8-13). Nevertheless, the Amazon's forests and rivers have been severely disturbed, especially over the past four decades. These changes are accompanied by social inequality, conflict over land, poverty, and criminality (see Chapters 14-21). These destructive activities have deep implications for the regional and global climate (Chapters 22-24).

The Amazon we want The emerging Living Amazon Vision aims to transform the "life-blind" economic system into one that is "life-centric", reconciling economic and ecological security and prosperity with social justice, ecological integrity, and diversity, entailing a more inclusive, democratic, and participatory process of knowledge production and decision-making (see Chapters 27-34). The Living Amazon Vision represents a moonshot goal; an ambitious vision to achieve what may seem inconceivable today.

The plurality of social actors, interests, and perspectives in the Amazon The Pan-Amazonian population is a sociocultural product of the miscegenation and ethnogenesis between Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendant peoples, settlers, and migrants from different countries (see Chapters 8-

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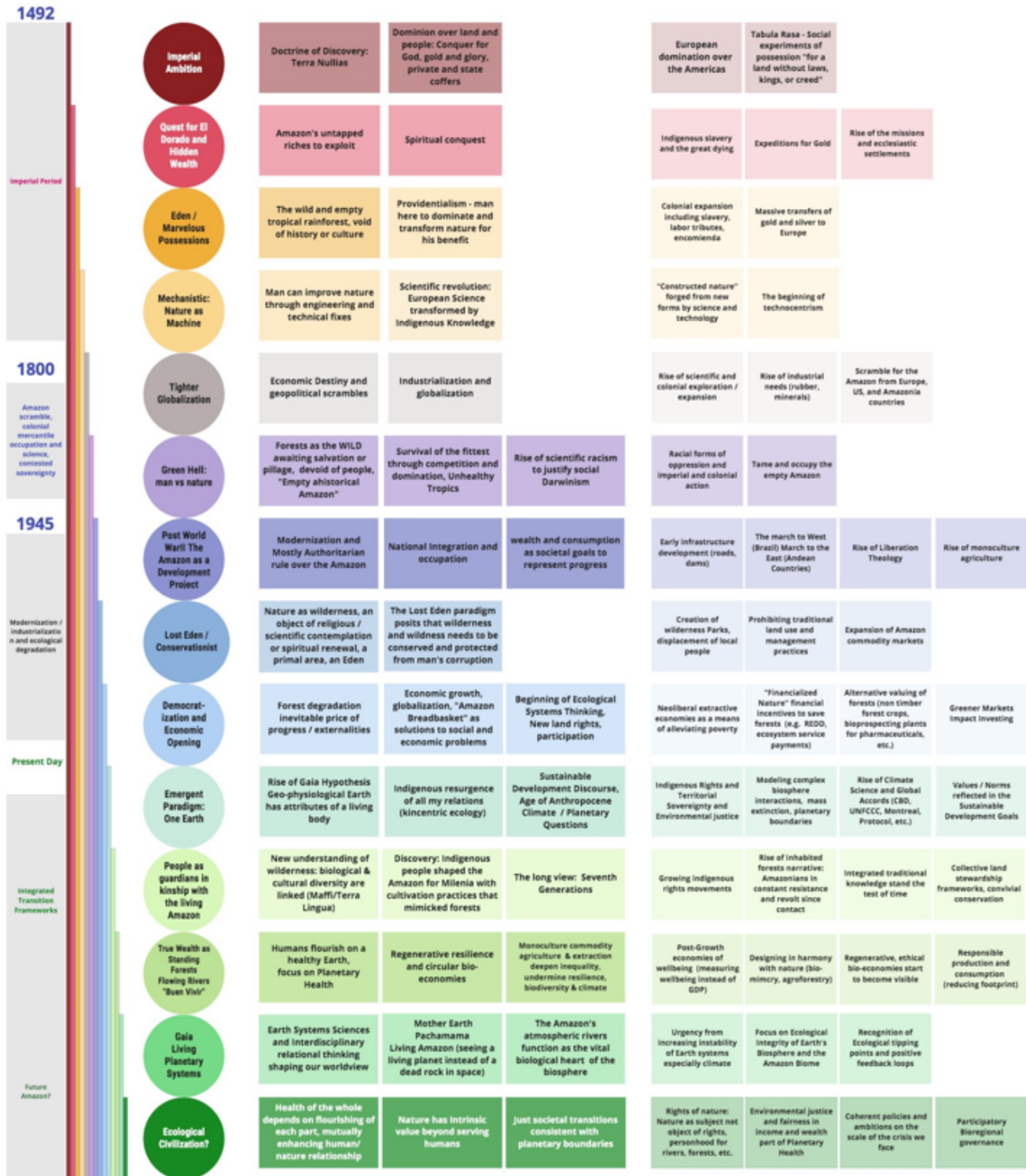


Figure 25.1 Amazon worldviews over time, emerging alternatives to historical frameworks

13). When Amazonian actors look at a forested area, they might think, for instance, of its intrinsic, spiritual, and/or instrumental value. However, historic imbalances of power and socioeconomic inequalities among different actors have led to the dominance of certain stakeholders' interests and values over others, and to the articulation of dominant monetary values in public policies and institutions^{1,2}. Over time, this reinforced the false rhetoric that standing forests do not produce development. To break this paradigm, it is imperative to recognize, negotiate, and articulate these multiple (and often antagonistic) visions (Figure 25.1).

A regional and global vision for the Amazon Destruction of the Amazon's forests and associated ecosystems has significant impacts on biodiversity as well as hydrological, climatic, and biogeochemical cycles, at multiple scales (locally, regionally, and globally). Global cooperation, robust diplo-

macy, and mutual responsibility are essential for achieving sustainability in the Amazon.

Beyond domestic investments and incentives, financial support should be mobilized from developed countries, as they have a deep responsibility both as buyers of products from areas associated with deforestation, and for their accumulated greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Companies, investment funds, and portfolios trading and utilizing Amazonian products can mobilize for sustainable production, and should provide transparent information to consumers and investors about their sourcing and investment³. Setbacks on environmental agendas can lead to restrictions on the economies of Amazonian countries, as we have seen with the Mercosur Agreement⁴.

The United Nations (UN) Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization,

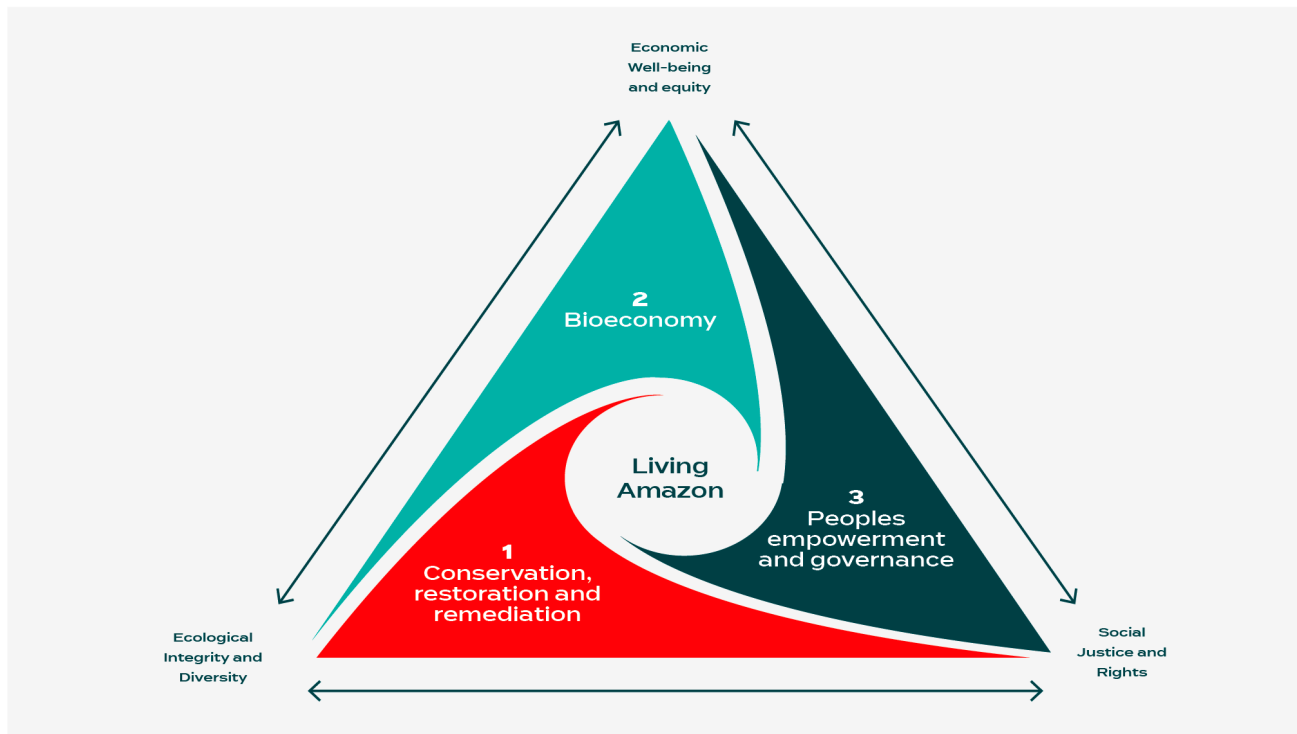


Figure 25.2 Pillars of the Living Amazon and its relation to the sustainable development tripod.

and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Paris Agreement are important multilateral agreements with significant impacts for the future of the Amazon. All eight Amazonian countries as well as the territory of French Guiana explicitly include forest protection in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement⁵. It is crucial to accommodate and harmonize trans-regional and trans-national policies to protect neighboring biomes, as they are also crucial to regional ecological integrity.

In 2019, the national governments of Colombia, Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, Suriname, Guyana, and Brazil signed the Leticia Pact, which includes commitments to share information, coordinate efforts to fight deforestation and wildfires, and restore degraded areas in the region. The role of subnational governments is also crucial. In 2014, members of the Governors' Climate and Forests Task Force (GCF) pledged to reduce deforestation by 80% by 2020 in their respective jurisdictions, contingent on adequate financing⁶. Nevertheless, subnational jurisdictions and countries have yet to meet their commitments.

All initiatives emphasize the importance of empowering Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs), paying special attention to gender equality, and of engaging the private sector in sustainable finance as key requirements to meet their goals. In addition, the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO), an intergovernmental organization formed by the eight Amazonian countries, was created in 1995 to promote pan-Amazonian coordination and encourage sustainable development and social inclusion in the region.

Experiences of sustainable development in Amazonian countries There is a long history of sustainable development interventions in the Amazon (see SDSN Amazônia 2021⁷), that could be used to pave the way for the Living Amazon Vision, including the creation of sustainable-use protected areas, integrated conservation and development projects (ICDPs), Indigenous territorial management plans, payments for ecosystem services (PES), and

REDD+, which have been implemented over the years to varying degrees of success⁸.

The governance and management experiences of Indigenous territories and collectively managed areas provide important contributions to a post-COVID-19 Living Amazon Vision. Amazon-Andes-based Indigenous philosophies and concepts have inspired local, national, and international policies and social movements, including the Rights of Nature movement and associated policies, and the *Buen Vivir* (Good Living) and Pachamama concepts and values. These have been incorporated into national constitutions (Bolivia and Ecuador), and national, regional, and local development policies and practices^{9,10}. These principles and values can be articulated with economic instruments and global policies, including agreements on climate change, environment and social governance (ESG) arrangements, and normative frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators¹¹.

The broader challenges to this agenda are the integration and articulation of conservation and development initiatives. Strategies must be founded upon solid principles and values, and articulated in solid pillars that highlight the importance of the Amazon across scales.

Principles and Values for a Living Amazon

- (i) The Amazon is the world's largest tropical rainforest. Its unique geodiversity, exceptional biodiversity, and high level of species endemism must be valued, respected, and protected.
- (ii) The Amazon provides key, cross-scale regulatory ecosystem functions, especially for climate, hydrology, and biodiversity; these form the basis of the region's water and food security, and raw materials for the development of a vibrant bioeconomy.
- (iii) Use of the Amazon's natural resources and its ecosystems must support ecological processes, functions, and livelihoods in the face of a climate crisis and an imminent tipping point.

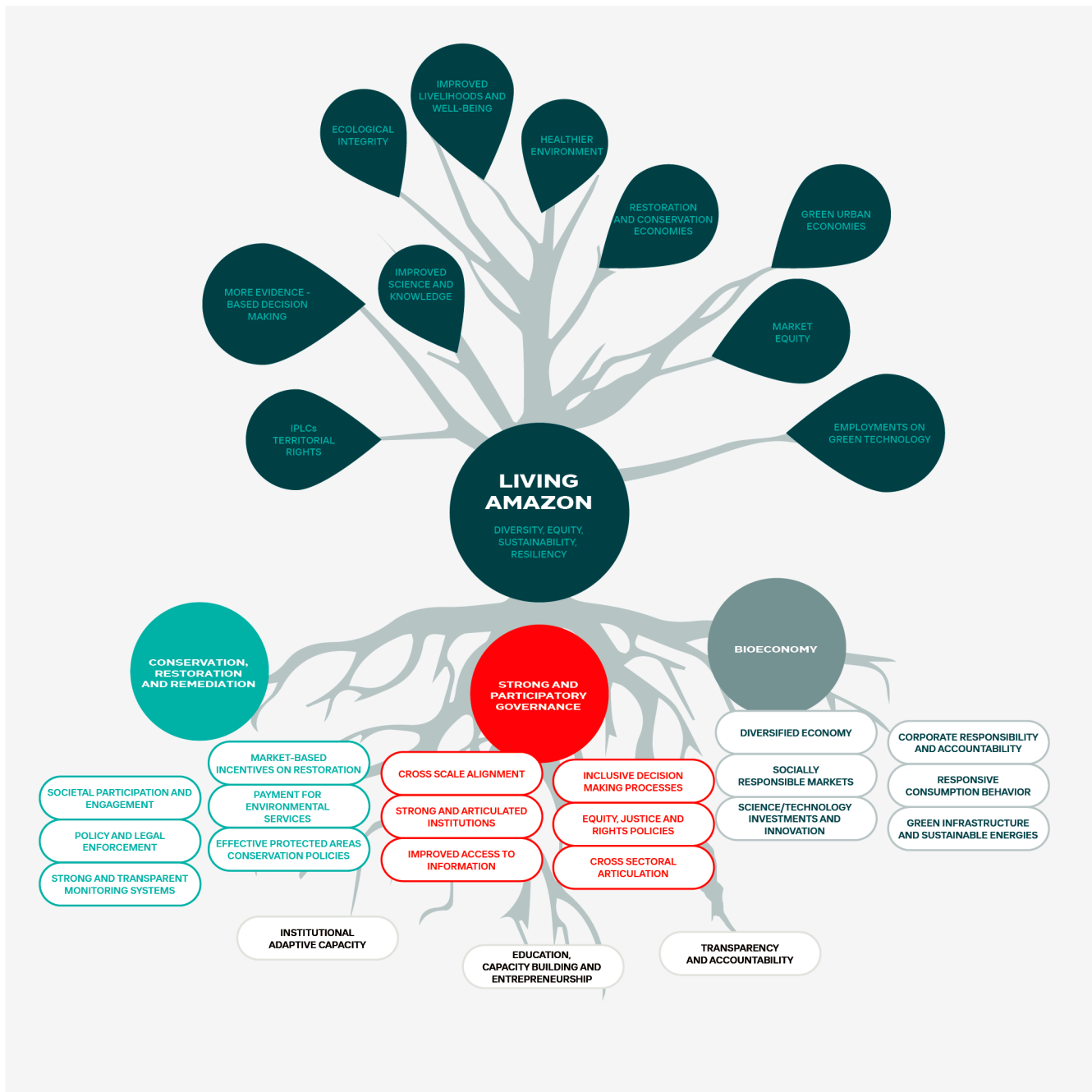


Figure 25.3 The Living Amazon solution tree

- (iv) Urban and rural areas of the Amazon must function as integrated, productive systems that promote and support a wide range of socioeconomic and ecological benefits.
- (v) Amazonian governance must include participatory processes of engagement among diverse stakeholders and across scales for the well-being of the whole.
- (vi) The Amazon houses diverse experiential knowledge systems and cultures resulting from the connection between people and nature, or biocultural diversity, which must be valued, recognized, and protected.

- (vii) Recognition of the rights of IPLCs and ensuring their access to justice is paramount to promoting well-being for all.

Pillars of the Living Amazon Based on the principles and values articulated above, we propose a strategy to support a Living Amazon based upon three pillars. The strategy is inclusive and just, and will promote healthy societies, environments, and economies.

Pillar 1: Measures to conserve, restore, and remediate terrestrial and aquatic systems (Chapters 27-29)

- 1.1 Consolidate and secure protected areas.
- 1.2 Cease deforestation and degradation of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.
- 1.3 Restore and remediate landscapes and watersheds to maximize ecosystem services.
- 1.4 Implement systems to monitor, evaluate, and hold stakeholders accountable for restoration and remediation.
- 1.5 Implement global and regional incentives for conservation, restoration, and remediation.

Pillar 2: Developing innovative bioeconomy arrangements for human-environmental well-being, standing forests and flowing rivers (Chapter 30)

- 2.1 Invest in the research, marketing, and production of Amazonian socio-biodiversity products.
- 2.2 Create fiscal incentives to engage the private sector and multilateral institutions in innovation around Amazonian products.
- 2.3 Promote job creation and capacity building for a bioeconomy based on biotechnologies adapted to the Amazon context.
- 2.4 Invest in science, education, and the creation of hubs and centers of excellence in bioeconomy technology in the Amazon.
- 2.5 Invest in rural, urban, and peri-urban infrastructure that enables multiple Amazonian communities to benefit from bioeconomy activities.
- 2.6 Decouple the notion of economic prosperity from economic growth and wealth accumulation.

Pillar 3: Strengthening Amazonian citizenship and governance (Chapters 31-34)

- 3.1 Implement bioregional and biodiplomacy (environmental diplomacy) governance systems to promote better natural resource management and strengthen human and territorial rights.
- 3.2 Promote the recognition of different identities, knowledge systems, and rights.
- 3.3 Engage IPLCs when planning policies regarding bioeconomy arrangements and the use of territories and natural resources.
- 3.4 Promote political inclusion and representation of IPLCs in the legislative branch and enhance decision-making capacity in public policy.
- 3.5 Promote intercultural education and knowledge sharing for an Amazon citizenship.

Realizing the Living Amazon Vision is not trivial. It requires the establishment of set of feasible solutions supported by political will, civil society, and private engagement.

Establishment of the three pillars will result in eight related outcomes:

- (i) Improved science and knowledge systems characterized by significant investments in innovation and in resource use efficiency. This will also yield new development practices, resources, and alternatives, as well as the formulation and selection of sustainable development policies in decision-making processes at different levels.
- (ii) Strengthened evidence-based decision-making that will rationalize and legitimize public policies and measures that contextualize natural resource utilization and sustainable human development, and apply across a broad range of social actors.
- (iii) Market equity that ensures fair distribution of the costs and benefits of socioeconomic development across different scales.
- (iv) Improved livelihoods and greater well-being so that Amazonian inhabitants have the ability to live lives they value and that promote their cultural heritage, health, access to land

and natural resources, and importantly, income generation opportunities.

- (v) Enhanced land protection, security, and territorial rights for IPLCs, safeguarding biodiversity and nature's contributions to their well-being.
- (vi) Healthier environments that will, in turn, sustain human and environmental health and well-being across temporal, intergenerational, and geographical scales.
- (vii) Green urban economies that provide greater scope for Amazonian cities to become highly innovation areas of economic prosperity.
- (viii) Jobs in green technology that will ultimately drive more sustainable, low carbon, climate resilient Amazonian economies and societies.

Conclusions Redefining true wealth as standing forests and flowing rivers is a promising framework for forward planning and implementing a life-centric economy. The COVID-19 pandemic and our global ecological crisis are giving rise to the frameworks of “planetary health”, “well-being”, and “living economies” which aim to promote human prosperity and protect the foundations of life on Earth. The Living Amazon Vision represents an opportunity for the region to be a global leader and example, recognizing the intrinsic value of nature, culture, and people in development and breaking the dichotomy between conservation and aspirations for human well-being.

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