

# Chapter 31 In Brief

**Strengthening land and natural resource governance and management: Protected areas, Indigenous lands, and local communities' territories**



Manifestação dos indígenas na Esplanada dos Ministérios em Brasília (Foto: Yanahin Waurá/Amazônia Real)



**THE AMAZON WE WANT**  
Science Panel for the Amazon

## Strengthening land and natural resource governance and management: Protected areas, Indigenous lands, and local communities' territories

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### Key Messages & Recommendations

- 1) Conservation-friendly livelihoods and creative alternatives for conservation should be based and dependent on respect for the territorial rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) in the Amazon.
- 2) Strengthening regulatory frameworks and institutional procedures (e.g., surveillance and law enforcement) that protect IPLCs' land and water rights is critical to both social justice and conservation.
- 3) Acknowledging and valuing Indigenous and local knowledge (ILK) regimes and territorial autonomy is critical.
- 4) Investment plans and sectoral legislation regarding protected areas, Indigenous lands, and local communities' territories should incorporate conservation and sustainable management objectives.
- 5) No territory is an island; multi-scale connections between municipalities, states, departments, Indigenous lands, and local communities' territories should be strengthened.
- 6) Inclusive public policies related to economic development should be implemented and based on socio-biodiversity products and environmental services at the micro-regional and local scales.
- 7) Financing models associated with territorial management should ensure the direct, effective, and daily participation of Amazonian peoples and communities.
- 8) Biocultural and/or ethnoecological corridors should be implemented to connect and integrate different types of protected areas.
- 9) Connections should be strengthened between IPLCs, municipalities, and local authorities to promote networks and supply chains for agro-extractivist production and commercialization.
- 10) Community organizations and local institutions should be supported in their rights and demands, and participatory management of territories should be strengthened so that they can participate in the implementation of public policies, programs, and funds.
- 11) The contributions of Indigenous women and youth organizations to knowledge systems, territorial management, resource stewardship, and the defense of territories needs to be

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recognized, guaranteeing special support to women's participation in decision-making and management initiatives.

**Abstract** Protected areas, Indigenous lands, and local communities' territories play a critical role in holding back deforestation, maintaining regional and global climate stability, and – above all – protecting land rights. Nevertheless, these lands are currently threatened by political and economic interests that drive land speculation, agribusiness expansion, and illegal logging and mining, resulting in increasing deforestation rates. Governments are also reassessing and walking back territorial rights legislation.

**Introduction** Protected areas, Indigenous lands, and local communities' territories (under different legal tenure regimes) cover 47.2% of the Amazon<sup>1</sup> and are crucial in both safeguarding the land rights and well-being of these peoples and in meeting environmental objectives, including preventing deforestation, maintaining biodiversity and a stable climate, and mitigating global climate change (Figure 31.1, see also Chapter 16).

Drivers of deforestation in the Amazon today reflect the widespread predatory behavior and the historical perception of the Amazon as a national warehouse, a pattern once labeled “internal colon-

ialism”<sup>2</sup>. Thus, political and economic drivers do not act in a vacuum, but through discursive paradigms that try to morally justify their own individual and national interests.

Given low government investment in infrastructure and in the protection and consolidation of these diverse territories (whether they are parks, reserves, Indigenous territories, or local communities' territories), the most creative and effective strategies for protection and management come from the peoples and communities that live in them, autonomously, regardless of connection to government or civil society initiatives.

**Inspiring solutions pathways** Territorial management reaches its objectives when it reflects peoples' and communities' standards and interests, by empowering and promoting their access to and participation in the definition of procedures, instruments, and resources. In order to build fair, inclusive, and sustainable forestry management practices in the Amazon, it is necessary to foster democratic engagement in decision making, strengthen citizenship, and encourage participation. Territorial management processes implemented by IPLCs in protected areas exemplify these principles (see Chapter 10), and offer a fertile and rich collection of experiences and practices

Territorial Unit	Number of Protected Natural Areas	Protected Surface Area without overlap (km <sup>2</sup> )*	Proportion of the total protected area of the Basin	Proportion of protected area in relation to its extension in the Basin
Bolivia	81	216,322	11.9	30.3
Brazil	340	1,226,241	67.4	24.3
Colombia	39	89,091	4.9	26.0
Ecuador	26	35,487	2.6	26.8
French Guiana	5	12,685	0.7	50.7
Peru	66	203,916	11.2	21.1
Venezuela	6	23,838	1.3	46.0
<b>Amazon Basin</b>	<b>563</b>	<b>1,819,368</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>24.9</b>

**Figure 31.2** Coverage of Protected Natural Areas in the Amazon Basin<sup>1</sup>

\*Values obtained by calculation with a geographic information system, using sinusoidal projection, with meridian of -60

that are simultaneously participatory and integrative - some of which are described below.

Some key elements central to these initiatives are valuing local, natural, technical, and human re-

sources concerned with autonomy and self-support; recognizing cultural traditions and environment, and prioritizing collective well-being as defined by the peoples and communities involved. This is why such experiences reinforce the need for

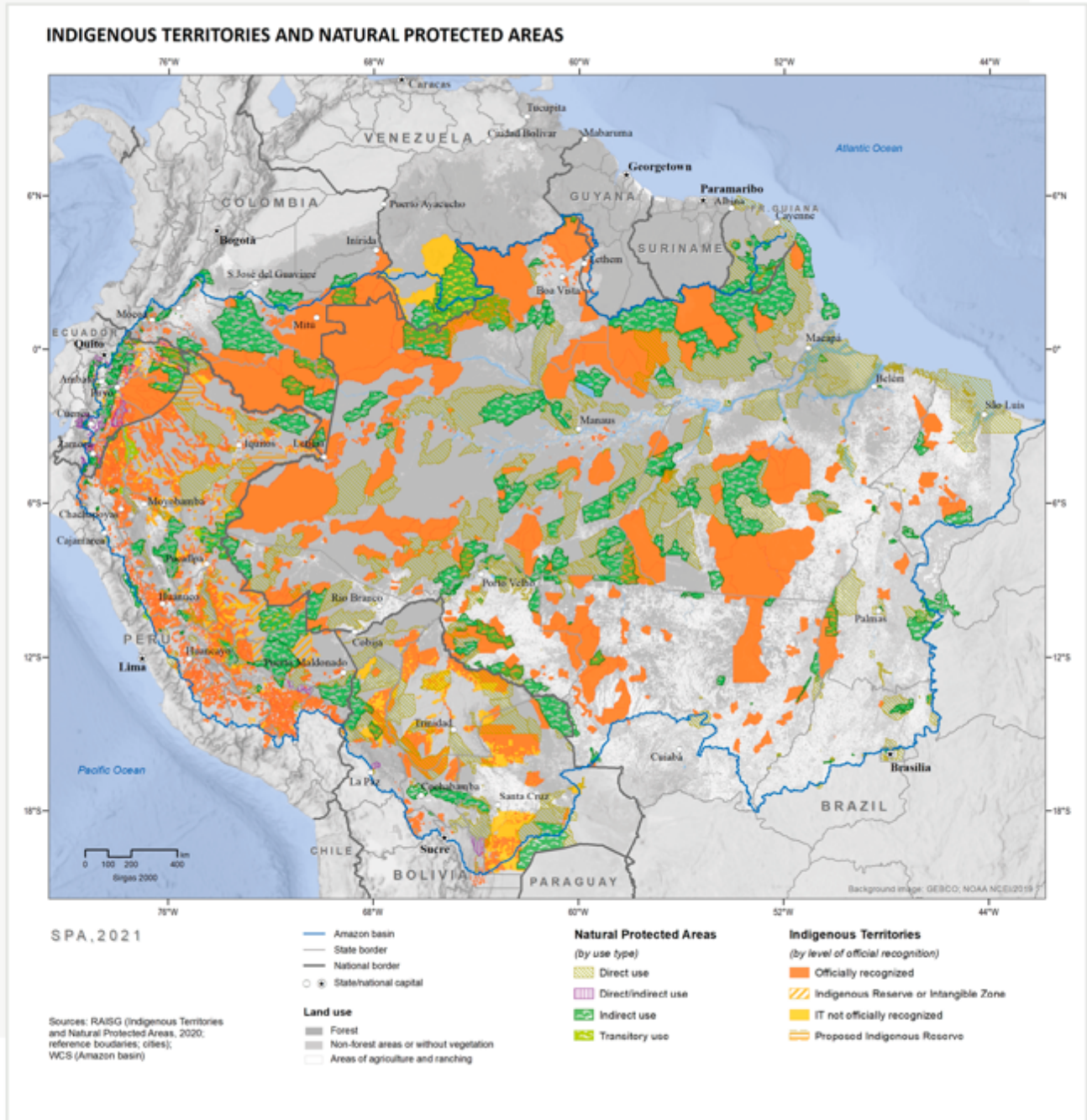


Figure 31.2 Indigenous territories and natural protected areas in the Amazon<sup>1</sup>

collective, rights-based territorial knowledge regimes; caring for and respecting the management, since territorial security is the foundation and condition for its autonomous, integrated, and participatory management. Given the threats that protected areas face, particularly the (neo)colonial pattern of development which is highly dependent on the exploitation of land and natural resources (see Chapters 14-20), autonomous management of these social territories is a step towards the pluriverse and a “world where many worlds fit”<sup>6</sup>.

**Life and Management Plans** Life plans and territorial and environmental management plans are ways of guiding the use of Indigenous territories' land and natural resources. They prioritize sustainable development, defined as meeting the current cultural, social, and economic needs of the peoples who live there while preserving the environment for future generations. A set of objectives, actions, and activities are discussed, adopted, and implemented in the short-, medium-, and long-term with the objective of managing the territory and its natural resources. These actions are based on collective management agreements that recognize cultural values and are developed through community meetings, workshops, and discussions. Socioeconomic, ecological, and cultural surveys support this process. They allow Indigenous communities to identify potential and existing threats, and organize and evaluate land use options. These plans value knowledge, experiences, and the spiritual, cultural, and material traditions of these peoples, functioning as a political and planning instrument that shapes the particular vision that an Indigenous society has of its own history and collective identity.

**Indigenous territorial management in the Greater Madidi Landscape** The Madidi-Tambopata landscape of northwestern Bolivia and neighboring Peru stretches from the High Andes to the tropical lowlands. It includes eight protected areas (five national and three subnational), eight Indigenous territories, and ten Indigenous communities.

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) has been working in this area for two decades to support efforts by Indigenous peoples to secure legal recognition of their ancestral territories and increase their capacity to manage their lands and waters. This is partly achieved by developing Indigenous Life Plans (i.e. territorial management plans) for 1.8 million hectares of titled and claimed Indigenous territory.

A rights-based approach guides the alliance between WCS and the Lecos, Tacana, T'simane Moresetene, and Pukina peoples. There is an understanding that Indigenous territorial rights are inalienable because the very existence of Indigenous people depends upon them, as well as their social, economic, and cultural development. The right to self-determination is linked to the historical imperative to reverse the effects of colonization. In this landscape, Indigenous territorial management is not a means to achieve conservation, but a partnership based on negotiation, consensus, and coordination that can broadly be described in ten steps:

1. Consolidate land rights
2. Strengthen organizations and their leadership
3. Develop Indigenous Territorial Management Plans
4. Conduct zoning processes
5. Adopt rules and self-regulate natural resource use
6. Plan for the specific management of natural resources
7. Guarantee territorial control and surveillance
8. Develop administrative capacities
9. Implement sustainable financing mechanisms
10. Develop skills for monitoring and research

**Asset-based quality of life planning and integrated territorial management for the Andes-Amazon region** The Field Museum's Keller Science Action Center, based in Chicago (United States), has developed a range of strategies

designed to generate closer alignment between conservation and local peoples' aspirations in the Andes-Amazon region. Inspired by asset-based community development<sup>7,8</sup>, which focuses on community strengths and capacities rather than deficiencies, the Field Museum developed an approach to community engagement in conservation that prioritizes the empowerment of local people.

One short-term method is the rapid social inventory, conducted as part of an integrated biological and social inventory. Social inventories conducted by the Museum and its partners identify the many ways in which local peoples rely on natural resources for their livelihoods, and protect and enhance landscapes through their way of life. The inventories also document patterns of social and political organization that can be used to support environmental protection, and highlight the spiritual and cultural significance of landscapes for Indigenous and other rural residents, drawing attention to how local peoples' attachment to place can be channeled toward support for conservation.

**Macro-territory of the People of Yurupari: Traditional knowledge as a basis for territorial management** This section is based on 15 years of endogenous research (i.e., research conducted by the Indigenous peoples themselves, specifically the Barasano, Makuna, Eduria, Tatuyo, Letuama, Tanimuka, Yukuna, and Matapi Indigenous peoples of the northwestern Amazon, with support from the Gaia Amazonas Foundation).

Indigenous peoples legitimize their systems of regulation and traditional knowledge through the development of local endogenous research programs. These programs facilitate sharing of knowledge between elders and research teams made up of young Indigenous people, guaranteeing the transmission of knowledge to new generations. It includes recording, writing, translating, and systematizing activities carried out by the Indigenous people themselves and complemented by traditional rituals. By decoding and recoding this knowledge, Indigenous peoples support the full recognition of their knowledge systems as relevant and

essential to management strategies at the territorial and regional scales.

**Autonomous community consent protocols by Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and local peoples**

Within the larger movement to realize the rights and autonomy of Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and local peoples, these communities have developed and proposed protocols for consultation and consent which national governments could adopt. These protocols specify the time, manner, place, and people who must participate in free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) processes, mainly with regard to public policies, development programs, projects, corporate activities, and legislation that affect them and their territories. Developing these protocols has also created an opportunity for Indigenous peoples and local communities to prepare themselves to effectively exercise their right to be consulted, including identifying representatives for the community and opening dialogues with the State. This helps ensure that everyone feels represented, builds consensus, and ensures that agreements are fulfilled and have legitimacy<sup>9</sup>.

**Collective fishing agreements and co-management of *piracuru* fisheries in Amazonas State, Brazil**

Co-management of fisheries has historically been built on dialogue between local<sup>10</sup> and academic knowledge, and the formalization (i.e., recognition by State authorities) of local management plans<sup>11</sup> to ensure the preservation of fishing stocks for artisanal fishing in the state of Amazonas. Since the late 1990s, fishermen from different local communities in floodplain areas, particularly the Middle Solimões region, have followed a successful management plan for *pirarucu* (*Arapaima gigas*)<sup>12</sup>. Since then, the model has been improved<sup>13</sup> and adopted in several other locations<sup>14</sup>.

**Recreational fishing and territorial management in Indigenous lands of Amazonas (Brazil)**

Recreational fishing in Brazil mostly operates without any planning, monitoring, or surveillance, within the framework of a competitive model, which has led to the overexploitation of some rivers. Collapses of many recreational fish stocks

drove recreational fishers into unexplored, remote, and exotic regions, including protected areas and Indigenous lands.

To avoid further overexploitation and promote management, the Indigenous peoples of the Rio Negro developed an innovative approach based on community consultation and the systematic measurement of socio-environmental impacts. They made specific business arrangements so that limited recreational fishing could take place under Indigenous governance, sharing economic benefits with the wider community.

**Conclusions** The territorial management initiatives presented in the previous section demonstrate one or more of the following strategies:

- Use Indigenous methods for socio-environmental assessments, diagnostics, and planning/zoning
- Construct life plans to manage the use of natural resources and establish self-governance over implementation
- Strengthen the role of Indigenous people, at the local and/or regional scale, in supporting territorial and environmental management in villages and communities
- Promote connections between local and academic knowledge, particularly to encourage innovation and the development of locally-appropriate management tools
- Create and implement local agroforestry initiatives to protect, maintain, and/or restore local agrobiodiversity
- Create and implement territorial protection plans, including local surveillance and monitoring strategies
- Strengthen Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and other local communities' associations so they can not only design and execute management plans but also advocate for public policies, such as those on education, health, or income transfer
- Create and implement protocols for effective consultations with peoples and communities

Clearly, conservation efforts in the Amazon cannot succeed without the active participation of the peoples and communities that live in the region who, through their knowledge and ways of using the territory, have developed innovative models and arrangements for the protection and sustainable development of a significant portion of the biome.

Many territories have developed and implemented innovative and/or renovated forms of governance. For those who live in them, and even for those who do not, they offer a unique opportunity to design projects to support collective well-being in a sustainable world. They supply economic, social, and environmental services that are essential to ensure peace, social cohesion, and sustainability<sup>15</sup>.

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