

9. Situating the Amazon in world politics

Manuela Lavinás Picq*

INTRODUCTION

The Amazon is not exactly the first place one looks for global politics. It exists in the popular imagination as a land without history, wild and remote, with pristine rainforests inhabited by isolated tribes in need of preservation from global forces. These depictions omit that Amazon rivers were subject to systematic human manipulation. They portray it as a pure nature capable of containing global warming, rarely remembering that Amazon rubber enabled the automobile revolution fueling today's climate crisis in the first place. There is a profound gap between what is (un)told about the Amazon and the international interactions at play on the ground.

The Amazon is too often portrayed as a uniform, unified entity, a frontier of civilization. It is commonly appraised at the margins of world politics as some apolitical Eden that resists external forces of modernization (Slater, 2002; Hutchins and Wilson, 2010). The Euro-centric gaze has continuously identified Amazonia as its quintessential other, starting with its naming. The word Amazon refers to a mythical people of female warriors living at the edge of the known world who subverted Greek rules (especially with regard to men and marriage). These untamed women living outside Greek civilization were said to cut off their right breast to be more effective in battle.¹ They embody a barbaric otherness to be conquered and civilized, and a foil for cultured (European) society.

* A prior version of this piece was published in the *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional* 2016 (59:2).

¹ In Greek, *a-mazon* means without-breast. Although the river was first named Nueva Andalucia, Frey Gaspar de Carvajal's chronicles of women warriors along the river quickly led to the naming of Amazons. English manuscripts dating back to 1611 show Captain M Morton referring to the 'river

Much of the West still imagines Amazonia as ‘wild’ despite abundant geo-archeological evidence that it is a garden in which forests and rivers have been efficiently managed for millennia (Raffles, 2002; Mann, 2005).² When politics reach the Amazon, it tends to be from ecological perspectives that emphasize how external powers use (and abuse) its natural resources. The Amazon is not perceived as a place to study matters of world politics, such as international law, because it is imagined outside the modern state.

The paradox is that Amazon experiences are, in fact, deeply interconnected with global dynamics. Moreover, although the name confers a singular entity, it is in fact a multinational region that contains many variations, a place of multiple histories. The modern world has long been influencing Amazonia, and Amazonia has, in turn, contributed much to forging what we now refer to as the global North.³ Scholars such as Susanna Hecht (2013) have sought to debunk Amazon otherness, providing close-up analyses of forestry management and insurgent politics, depicting an Amazonia more ordinary than foreign, irremediably international. Overall, however, social sciences such as anthropology have otherised Amazonia. The discipline of International Relations (IR), in contrast, made it invisible. The absence of Amazonia in what constitutes legitimate world politics seems to be the result of who defines political theory, from where, and for what purpose (Cox, 1986) rather than serious historical considerations. Depending on where one stands, it is easy to ignore a lot of the world. The omission of the Amazon is similar to that of centuries of slave trade. The region was dismissed as irrelevant to world politics in the same way that the Haitian Revolution was not recognized as a critical juncture in the international history of state-making (Buck-Morss, 2009). This invisibility speaks of the larger challenge of locating the non-core in scientific theory.

The Amazon is not at the center of the modern state, but it is constitutive of it. Although Amazonia is diverse, complex and heterogeneous, it is left invisible at the margins of global politics. The same is true in international law, a fragmented discipline that does not have a sense of the Amazon other than a positivist approach that lists a series of issues for which it offers no solution, from indigenous rights to climate

of the Amazonas’. For more on Greek Amazon mythology, see Fantham, Foley, Kampon et al (1994).

² Researchers found a set of “garden cities” built as early as 1250 in the forests of the south-central Amazon (Mann, 2005).

³ I interchangeably use global North/West/core to refer to the same locale of dominance and global South/non-West/periphery to refer to places of subalterity.

change. This chapter claims Amazonia as its object of study to unpack a logic that is symptomatic of exclusions in the study of world politics.

I work with a body of critical literature that challenges state-centrism in world politics. These critiques question the discipline's fixation on Westphalian sovereignty, positivist inquiry, and entrenched imperialism (Hobson, 2012; Jackson, 2011). They use gender and race perspectives to adopt a more expansive conceptualization of the international (Tickner, 2011; Henderson, 2013) while wrestling with the core-periphery divide that obscures the social construction of knowledge (Tickner and Blaney, 2013). I also engage literature in post-colonial international law (IL). Anthony Anghie (2004; 2006) shows the colonial origins of international law, a Eurocentric discipline still animated by the civilizing mission. He argues that sovereignty, a core principle of international politics, emerged in Europe out of European history and experience, and functions as a mechanism that excludes non-European societies. Colonial binaries such as center/periphery indicate the imperial nature of the 'development' project, one that legitimizes interventionist mechanisms in north-south relations (Tan, 2011). Third World Approaches to International Law (TWAAIL) as a material enterprise, propose a gaze from the Global South in the 'double engagement' to reform and resist international law and scholarship (Eslava and Pahuja, 2012). My attempt to revisit world politics from an Amazon perspective is inspired by these various calls to pluralize disciplinary canons. I contest the modernity/tradition binary as well as the nature/culture boundary that dismisses 'natural' places like Amazonia to the political periphery. This neglect makes it extremely difficult to appreciate what the non-core thinks about the international. Searching for Amazon perspectives on world politics, even with regard to issues that directly affect it, such as environmental change, makes one feel like Virginia Woolf looking for women in British literature. This chapter suggests that serious engagement with Amazonia might disrupt established thinking about world politics, opening up fruitful theoretical spaces.

The analysis proceeds in three steps. It first identifies international dynamics at play in the Amazon through different historical moments to show how the periphery is, and has always been, entangled with the global core. It then examines the absence of the Amazon in world politics. Critical insights on core-periphery dynamics explore why the global South remains so marginalized in processes of knowledge production. The last section argues that it is necessary to disrupt the global division of labor in knowledge production and proposes the Amazon as a fertile location for re-conceptualizing the international.

I. WORLDLY AMAZONS

The Amazon is an ecological system that covers about 40 per cent of South America. It encompasses the largest water reserve and the largest rainforest in the world, boasting unrivaled biodiversity. It is also, like Europe, a historically complex and socially porous region with geopolitical borders rather tricky to define. The Amazon River basin is shared among Brazil (63 per cent), Peru (ten per cent), Colombia (seven per cent), Bolivia (six per cent), Venezuela (six per cent), Guyana (three per cent), Suriname (two per cent), and Ecuador (1.5 per cent) (Garcia 2012). French Guiana, a French territory, also owns a little piece of it (1.5 per cent). Amazon borders are particularly porous, and it is often unclear where the Amazon starts or ends. People tend to identify as Amazonians or their ethnic group rather than their country of nationality. As a result, Amazonia is not a single referent, but strikingly diverse whether ecologically, politically or ethnically. Historically complex and socially rebellious, Amazonia has persistently resisted the homogenizing presence of states (Scott, 2009), while being nonetheless surprisingly influential in the political economy of state formation.

Amazon societies have a complex history that predates their encounter with Europe. The incorporation of cacao in societies across the Americas suggests the region has long practiced transnational exchanges. Originally from the upper Amazon (mostly Ecuador and Peru), cacao was domesticated by the Mayas before our era. By the eleventh century it was regularly consumed as far north as Chaco Canyon, in the US Southwest. Amazon archeology revealed domesticated landscapes. Terra preta, a man-made dark soil mixed with Indigenous⁴ artifacts to increase fertility, reveals anthropogenic forests throughout the Amazon (Mann, 2005). As more terra preta is uncovered, partly due to deforestation, growing geo-archeological evidence demonstrates the existence of dense, fully sedentary populations across ecological settings from Colombia to Brazil (Rostain, 2013). Settlements in pre-contact Amazonia suggest that people have been modifying their landscape for centuries (Whitehead, 2003). What appeared as wilderness to Europeans was elaborated forestry that provided food, medicine and tools to large societies. As many as one million people walked the causeways of the Beni, in eastern Bolivia, leaving waste mounds larger than Pompeii. Archeologists also found

⁴ The Chicago Manual of Style (8.41, 15th edn) indicates that names of ethnic and national groups are to be capitalized, including adjectives associated with these names. Because 'Indigenous' refers to such a group, it is capitalized in this chapter.

millennia-old ceramics in the lowlands, a 2000-year old-‘Amazonian Stonehenge’ in the Caribbean Amazon, and the ruins of a 3000-year-old house in the Andean foothills. At the time of the European arrival Amazonia was home to developed societies that used astronomical observatories (Hecht, 2013). If Europeans who first ventured down the Amazon River described large settlements it is because the region was indeed well populated.

The Amazon is a transnational space deeply interconnected with the making of modern states. By the late-sixteenth century European empires were already forging their political, legal, and economic authority on Amazon territory. The Spanish first connected the Andean highlands to the Atlantic when Francisco de Orellana traveled down the Amazon River in 1541. European explorations flourished on the valuable tobacco trade and the prospect of the Amazon River as a profitable (and safe) overland route to traffic Inca silver and gold across the Atlantic. Within a century, the Amazon River had become a focal point of European trade and settlements. English, Irish, Dutch, Spanish, and Portuguese traders and settlers were erecting fortifications on the rivers to bolster rival claims to sovereignty (Benton, 2009). In the seventeenth century, the Portuguese were busy destroying Dutch forts from the Xingú to Belém, including the monopoly of the West India Company in a region that the Dutch already called New Holland.⁵ British colonies flourished into the mid-seventeenth century, with hundreds of settlers on plantations scattered along 300 miles of Amazon rivers. They charted Amazon rivers as early as 1595 and as far as Xingú (Tyacke, 1980). By 1619, they had established the Amazon Company under Captain Roger North (Wroughton, 2006).⁶ These maritime enterprises on Amazonian rivers helped forge the British commercial empire. Sir Thomas Roe, in fact, created settlements on the Oyapok River in Amazonia before becoming ambassador to India (Beer, 1908). The Dutch West India Company and the British Amazon Company are testimony to the imperial competition at play through trade in the region.

⁵ In 1654, Recife’s Dutch colony fell to the Portuguese. Many of the nearly 5000 people returned to the Netherlands, some scattered in the Caribbean, and others migrated north to settle in New Amsterdam, i.e., Manhattan. The Dutch later ceded Manhattan to the British in exchange for Suriname. The political history of Amazonia is thus directly interwoven with US history.

⁶ In 1620, North was imprisoned and his charter recalled, then re-authorized. It survived through different patents from the British Crown, first renamed the Guyana Company, then the Guinea Company.

Amazonia became a center of territorial claims. Susanna Hecht (2013) has retraced the scramble for the Amazon because, in spite of its apparent remoteness, the Amazon is a highly cosmopolitan place at the heart of state-making. The Caribbean Amazon, which Europeans referred to as the Wild Coast, was at the intersection of a tropical 'great game' between France, England, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, native Amazonians, and Maroon communities, called quilombos. After battles for strategic trade and territorial claims on this immense terra nullius, Europeans developed legal (and extra-legal) mechanisms in an attempt to control native labor. Instead of transporting gold on rather difficult routes, European powers kidnapped natives.⁷ By the mid-seventeenth century, Spain, Portugal, and the Catholic Church were negotiating international trade agreements to regulate the enslavement and trafficking of native populations on the Amazon River. Jesuit missionaries oversaw the Indians and controlled most trade until the Portuguese Crown decided to lay claim to the economic bonanza and expelled them in 1759. The native slave economy in the Lower Amazon fueled international trade through the eighteenth century (Alencastro, 2006).

The region was entangled with Europe both commercially and politically. Amazon ports were closer and more accessible to Portugal than ports in Salvador and Rio de Janeiro, and in some ways more interconnected with the Atlantic trade flow. Separate from Brazil, the region was directly administered by Lisbon since 1621. What is today claimed as Brazilian Amazonia was an autonomous region called Grão-Pará and Maranhão during colonial rule. Portugal only united its American colonies in 1772. Even after that, the Grão-Pará remained politically, legally and economically independent for another century. Once it gained autonomy from Lisbon, the region became first an administratively autonomous captaincy and was later ruled by regional juntas. In practice, Amazonia was fully integrated to Brazil in 1855; most of the region (since Brazil's share is over 60 per cent) functioned largely as an independent country until the rubber era.

It is perhaps because the region was so economically dynamic and politically autonomous that it was also rebellious. One example is the social revolt that raged through the lower Amazon from 1835 to 1840 in what is today the state of Pará. The Cabanagem rebellion revealed the strength of insurgent citizenship in the lower Amazon (Harris, 2010).

⁷ Alencastro (2006) estimates that the number of Indigenous peoples enslaved between 1625 and 1650 in Brazil equals that of African populations brought to Brazil by Dutch and Portuguese ships in the same period.

African diasporas and Indigenous communities led the Cabanagem⁸ to defend autonomous lifestyles. Like other powerful rebellions of its century, such as Bahia's Sabinada (1835) or the Canudos war (1897), the Cabanagem contested political exclusion, land grabbing, and forced labor as much as centralized forms of authority. It opposed domination by the Portuguese monarchy as well as internal forms of colonialism under Brazil's newly formed empire.⁹ Similarly to Canudos, the rebellion successfully resisted the central government for years before being violently repressed.¹⁰ It shows that Amazonia was already at the stage of political insurgencies in the nineteenth century.

It was the rubber boom that catapulted the Amazon most forcefully to the global forefront. International demand for rubber took off at a time when the Amazon was the world's sole supplier (Weinstein, 1983).¹¹ Goodyear's discovery of vulcanization in 1839 sparked the bicycle and automobile industries, interconnecting further the European and US economies with the Amazon. As demand increased, the rubber that used to be collected by Indians was soon handled by rubber-barons who brutally enslaved local populations. By the time Hevea seeds were successfully transferred to Asia at the turn of the twentieth century, triggering the collapse of Amazonia's rubber monopoly, a violent genocide had decimated the Amazon Indigenous population and pushed survivors to nomadic lifestyles (Rivera, 1924),¹² Manaus had an opera house, and Henry Ford had tried and failed to build an industrial town on a plot of rainforest twice the size of Delaware (Grandin, 2009).

⁸ The word Cabanagem refers to the people who lived in cabanas, huts made of palm and wood, and carries negative connotations of backwardness and poverty.

⁹ Brazil was a Portuguese colony until it became the home of the Portuguese colonial empire in 1808, when the King fled Napoleon's invasion of Lisbon and settled his court in Rio de Janeiro. In 1822, Brazil declared Independence from Portugal and became an Empire until a military coup d'Etat established the New Republic in 1889.

¹⁰ Five years of civil war killed about half the population of Grão-Pará.

¹¹ The origins of the plantations producing 98 per cent of the world's natural rubber is traced to the domestication of a single Amazonian species, *Hevea brasiliensis*. See Schultes (1993) 'The Domestication of the Rubber Tree', *Economic and Sociological Implications* 52(4): 479–85.

¹² The Mario Vargas Llosa historical novel, *The Dream of the Celt* (2010), is inspired from the rubber boom, depicting international interests in the region as much of the violence that marked Amazonian societies. The extreme violence at the infamous Casa Arana, on the Putumayo River, Colombia, led to an international tribunal (Camacho, 2003).

Although the internationalization of the Amazon during the rubber boom is relatively well known, its role in supporting the Allies during World War II is less so. The Amazon became a strategic provider of rubber for the Allies in 1942 after Japan's occupation of Southeast Asia cut off more than 90 per cent of the global rubber supply (Wilkinson, 2009). The Roosevelt Administration called for a push in rubber tapping across Amazonian rainforests, and Brazil's President Getúlio Vargas responded with a 'Battle for Rubber' that shipped nearly 30,000 'rubber soldiers' from the arid northeast to rubber estates in the Amazon. The modest increase in rubber production may not have been of much significance in the final outcome of WWII. Yet this enterprise meant that North American technical advisors, Brazilian government agencies, the Roosevelt Administration, migrant rubber tappers, rubber elites, and Indigenous groups all interacted in a wartime enterprise to supply European needs in wartime. It was not the first nor the last time that global, national, and regional actors converged in the Amazon to influence world politics.

Vargas' rubber initiative is one of several monumental projects in Amazonia. The Madeira-Mamoré railroad was planned in the late-nineteenth century and construction started in 1907. The project, one of the first large US engineering projects abroad, brought over 20,000 workers from more than 50 nationalities to build 366 kilometers of railroad at the western borders of the Brazilian Amazon. Half a century later, Brazil's military junta inaugurated the Trans-Amazonian Highway, a 4000-kilometer road, facilitating communication to remote areas (which a new generation of 'adventurers' now 'explores' on bicycles). The Amazon has also seen the development of energy projects. In Brazil, the Balbina hydroelectric plant inundated 240,000 hectares in 1989; and the current Belo Monte project is the largest of 60 new hydroelectric plants. The Peruvian and Ecuadoran Amazons have been overrun by extractive oil industries since the 1970s, with China replacing the US in expanding the extractive frontier today.

This history of international interactions explains complex migration flows that inevitably diversified the population. Almost four times as many Africans as Europeans came to the Americas, and tens of thousands of them fled inland to Indigenous territory to escape slave labor (Hecht and Mann, 2012). Africans were a majority population together with the Indians, forming quilombos deep into Amazonia. The more European entrepreneurs, religious orders, and migrant workers settled in, the more Amazon populations diversified. Photographs of the Madeira-Mamoré railroad show Hindus and Ottoman Turks posing in their traditional attire against a rainforest background circa 1910. In the 1930s, Japanese

emigration focused on jute agriculture (Brasil de Sá, 2010). Today, Haitian immigrants flood across Brazilian borders to enter a booming construction economy. In parallel to migration inflows, many natives were killed by disease or enslaved, while others were forcibly displaced or escaped up tributaries. The Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA) estimates that Indigenous peoples constitute less than ten per cent (2.7 million) of the Amazon's population today.

To put it simply, Amazonians are vastly more diverse than the authentic naked peoples portrayed in black and white photo-reportages in *Vogue* magazine today. In the twenty-first century, Indigenous peoples who live on 'intangible'¹³ territories are on Facebook, successfully mobilizing information technology to defend their land from intrusive development projects such as oil exploitation and hydroelectric plants. Manaus was once the place where cosmopolitan elites built an opera house to imitate Parisian lifestyle in the rainforest. Now it is an operating base for the international drug trade. The Amazon remains at the center of a global, albeit illegal, economy as one of the world's busiest routes for drug trafficking, supplying most of the cocaine on global markets. The Western world has long been influencing Amazonia, and Amazonia has in turn contributed much to forging what we now refer to as the global North.

None of this political history would be exceptional if it were not located in a place perceived to be detached from world history. Perhaps it is clear by now that there is nothing isolated or untouched about the Amazon. To the contrary, Amazonia's international relations merit attention because they are extremely complex and far-reaching. They continue to flourish today. Over the last decades, Amazon politics became more institutionalized. Governments signed the 1978 Amazon Cooperation Treaty, whereas Indigenous peoples increasingly invoke international rights to self-determination. Given this history, it is surprising that the Amazon has not been explored more closely as a nexus of world politics.

II. THINKING THE INTERNATIONAL WITHOUT THE AMAZON

Scholars seem to consider the Amazon irrelevant to international dynamics. The Amazon is not invoked to explain world politics, international

¹³ Intangible zones are large areas of forest declared off-limits to development projects that are reserved for Amazon Indigenous peoples.

political economy, or international law. It is not part of conceptual maps in disciplines molded by state-centric approaches. This absence speaks volumes. It means that the Amazon, like other 'marginal' (natural) locations, is not considered a site where the international takes place, nor does it influence global economics or determine foreign policy. The Amazon is invisible both because it is considered a place of nature and is a territory in the global South.

The invisibility of Amazonia, and the concomitant non-place of the periphery to think the international is symptomatic of an entrenched inequality in knowledge production. Almost 60 per cent of the total literature covered by the Social Sciences citation index is authored or co-authored by scholars affiliated to the United States; all of Western Europe accounts for 25 per cent, Latin America one per cent and the entire African continent for less than one per cent (Keim, 2008 in Tickner, 2013). The construction of knowledge in the social sciences is by and large a business of the global North. As such, language functions as a key enabler and obstacle. Considering that 80 per cent of academic-refereed journals in the social sciences are edited in English (Unesco, 2010 in Tickner, 2013), knowledge production is not as universal as it considers itself to be.

There are limits for doing what is commonly identified as theory in the periphery. Foundational thinkers have emerged from the periphery, forging a forceful scholarship about developmental economics in Latin American and post-colonial studies in India. The Brazilian Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, whose concept of Amerindian perspectivism influenced Western thought, is one of the exceptions that confirm the rule. The problem is not that there is no science in the periphery; it is that science there tends to look different. The challenge is that its praxis is too different to generate interest in the core. Research produced by or in the South is often dismissed as case studies, not theory, and alternative forms of knowing the world tend to be marginalized as not constituting 'real IR' (Tickner and Blaney, 2012). The core-periphery inequality in academic production creates a conceptual and epistemological straitjacket that limits what counts as valid scientific knowledge. These asymmetries restrict political epistemology in the global South, where local scholars end up perpetuating their own marginalization. They reproduce hegemonic knowledge by engaging mostly theory produced at the core.

Today's intellectual division of labor is anchored in the global imperial order (Mignolo, 2011). The Euro-centric core is the primary site of scientific production, especially theory-building. Peripheries, in turn, offer case studies without universal reach. Scholars are aware that

journals reproduce the views, theories, and research methods that circulate in the North, giving little chance for other ways of seeing to emerge. In 1977 Stanley Hoffmann described International Relations as an American social science. Today, critical scholarship accuses IR theory of defending Western civilization (Hobson, 2012) and self-validating positivist perspectives against other methodologies (Jackson, 2011). Like English, the canonized language of IR ensures entry barriers to keep 'outsiders' at bay. At least in this field, the rest of the world seems doomed to catch up with the ideas of the North, forced to invoke its science, relate to its epistemologies and follow its methodologies if it wants to be validated. Knowledge produced in the North is universal because it circulates to be consumed in the rest of the world.

Expanding theory-making to places such as Amazonia may be a more challenging enterprise than expected. It is a practice that may not be easily transposable (that would assume a universalism of ways of making sense of the world). Scholars have stressed the significance of place for theory. Edward Said's (1983) 'traveling theory' contextualized theory to its site of production. Yet it may not be possible to democratize the production of knowledge by simply taking theory elsewhere. First, grand theory does not travel well, partly because it often fails to explain places like Amazonia. Second, and consequently, places like Amazonia end up disengaged from theory. If one challenge is that theory made in the global North is often not all that useful for understanding the global South, another one is that the global South is more concerned with practice than theory. Theory is not perceived as useful to solve 'real' issues in the periphery, which is marked by a fluid interaction between academe and government (Tickner, 2008).

This critique echoes a larger concern about the need to validate the forms of intellectuality as practiced in the non-core. Raúl Prebisch spent a life concerned with addressing tensions between centers and the periphery. In 1948 he pushed for the creation of an Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) within the United Nations in Santiago, Chile, with the overt purpose of creating a space to enable Latin American thought on development (Dosman, 2008). In the 1970s, Latin America was the sole place across the global South to develop economic theories of its own to respond to its contextual realities, with no equivalent in regions such as Asia or Africa. Later, Albert Hirschman fought modernization theorists as he insisted on the importance of the periphery generating its own theory (Adelman, 2012). Both Prebisch and Hirschman believed in the significance of producing knowledge in and for the periphery, from the ground up.

The challenge is not to take theory to a ‘new time and place’, moving it from London to Manaus. Rather, the question is whether the non-core will bother with appropriating theory as a tool to express its own perspective, or whether it is an exercise characteristic of autistic universalist efforts at the core. The solution to democratize the production of knowledge may not be to export the methodology of the core to the periphery, ‘enabling’ Latin America and Africa to do (Eurocentric) theory. It is necessary to validate the praxis and knowledge of the periphery in its own terms, even if they appear as non-positivist practices that look nothing like theory to the eyes of the North. It implies recognizing other forms of knowing, whether it is engaging reflexivity (Tickner, 2013), understanding how personal narratives influence theoretical articulations of the international (Inayatullah and Dauphinée, 2016), or validating Indigenous ways of knowing (Shaw, 2008; Beier, 2009). It also implies legitimizing case-study perspectives as opposed to mainstream forms of Grand Theory. It implies, among other things, doing political theory from the Amazon.

These considerations are valid for international law, which may be understood historically as a subsystem of liberal political theory. Anthony Anghie (2004) exposed how the colonial confrontation was central to the formation of international law, shaping international institutions as it marginalized non-European worlds. International law was a construct developed to organize relations between European powers. It invented legal concepts like *terra nullius* to steal non-European lands. Anghie (2006) tackles the core-periphery divide that shape the conceptual apparatus of international law as the dynamic of difference that separates European from non-European worlds. The European was conceptualized through a vocabulary of progress and modernity, and established itself as the pillar of the international order. The history of sovereignty is thus the history of the West, and this legal practice inevitably acquired a different form and character as it was transferred to the non-European world. Yet practices of cultural subordination continue to shape the so-called post-colonial international system. The concept of developmentalism provided new means of interventions (Anghie 2004). The acquisition of sovereignty by postcolonial states ironically provided the legitimacy to perpetuate new brutalities. The principle of *uti possidetis* (‘as you possess’) legitimized the borders of the colonizing state and, in this sense, forestalled claims of self-determination in newly emancipated post-colonial states, subsuming Indigenous peoples into new state borders. Developmentalism fuels the continuous construction of difference.

International law (IL) relies on state-centric approaches, with a positivism that seeks to represent a consensus among states. The discipline is

governed by a historically conditioned discourse molded by some basic tenets of liberal political theory. The new global economic environment, structured through international economic law further reinforces this capture of Indigenous lands such as in the Amazon where trade and investment liberalization facilitates more extraction of natural resources from what is now seen as the state's sovereign resources as opposed to the resources of the original inhabitants of the territory. The international legal framework in the area of natural resources is consistent with trade liberalization, and one of its primary objectives is to attract foreign investment and secure investors' property (Faundez, 2015). In that perspective, TWAIL scholars emphasize the materiality of international law and seek to construct new disciplinary gazes from the global South (Eslava and Pahuja, 2012).

Michel-Rolph Trouillot (2003) called on anthropology to dissolve its own theoretical premises for the field to remain viable. He invited anthropologists to break with the savage/civilized dichotomy to produce a cultural critique able to historicize their field. World politics, too, needs to radically rethink its own internal tropes if it is to remain viable. This requires a historicization of the state, of the sources of international law and a reflexive commitment to reappraise foundational stories. The plurality of experiences between the 'West' and the 'Rest' marks a structural problem of difference in studies of world politics. Perhaps non-core perspectives are simply incommensurable with those of the global North. Perhaps Amazon experiences are virtually impossible to access from the core. Yet having acknowledged our differences, our best shot is to try to subvert them.

III. WHY THE AMAZON MATTERS

This chapter posits the Amazon as an insightful periphery to think from, one that can address the core-periphery divide in the production of knowledge. Amazon perspectives may provide different ways of knowing world politics in general and alternative venues to tackle environmental change in particular.

The first reason to think world politics from the Amazon is plurality. Bringing the periphery into the core will permit us to decolonize the study of the international. It will allow untold stories to surface, and challenge conceptual foundations. It will complement new perspectives and histories to understandings of what constitutes the international, expand global praxis. To conceptualize colonial battles on Amazon rivers will, for instance, permit us to historicize (and delocalize) the formation

of European claims to sovereignty. To recognize Indigenous struggles for territoriality in international courts permits to think sovereignty in the plural. Peripheral visions can contribute alternative knowledges to break disciplinary straitjackets. A truly decolonizing scholarship must recognize the capacity of the non-core to generate theory. Yet it also means destabilizing theory as we know it. It is not sufficient to add Amazon diversity to our research agendas. Disciplines such as world politics must expand their knowledge base and turn it upside down. More than tolerating contributions from Amazonia, an effort to decolonize seeks to disarm hegemonic epistemologies and confront positivist approaches to non-Eurocentric methodologies. As we think world politics from the Amazon, we can start contesting the fabricated divide between a universal grand theory and localized case studies.

Another reason to think the international from the Amazon is that 'core' and 'periphery' are indissociable categories. One does not exist without the other; the idea of a wild Amazon acquires meaning only in relation to a civilized West. Anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff (2012) insist on theory from the South not only because African modernity has always had its own trajectories but especially because North and South are relational categories. State modernity, they claim, is the result of a north-south collaboration, a 'world-historical production' (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2012: 6). Modernity separated worlds that are, in fact, intimately linked, in which political economies are articulated. In many ways, the Europe we know today emerges out of its colonial encounters, with peripheries such as the Amazon being co-constitutive of state modernity. This is what Frantz Fanon meant when he wrote 'Europe is literally the creation of the Third World.'¹⁴

Subaltern studies were core to Eurocentric projects, even if they were not allowed to speak. Other peoples and places have always been the looking glass through which the core defined itself. The global North was constructed adopting techniques and knowledges that pre-existed in the Amazon, Africa, and elsewhere. Without Amazon rubber there would be no Fordism or polluting cars in the first place. Empty, uncivilized spaces were key to European material life (rubber) and self-consciousness (indigeneity). Uncivilized Amazonia, like Indigeneities, is part of European representations of difference. The problem with the epistemological basis of world politics is that the state is its narrow object of study. Theory-making obscures the amazons of the world. Theory has no option

¹⁴ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* in Zimmerman (2013: 333).

but to move beyond the core-periphery dynamic if it is to better see the world we actually live in.

Obfuscated knowledge impairs politics. When the Spaniards arrived in the Andes, they had their own expectations of what sacred idols should look like – man-made, anthropomorphic idols. They could not see ‘art’ that was aesthetically pleasing, and concluded that Andean idols were ‘ugly’ (Dean, 2010: 11). Spaniards were unable to apprehend rocks as Inca culture saw them (animate, transmutable, powerful, and sentient) thus failing to access the broad array of beliefs and relationships people forged with them. The inability to access meaning in Inca rock echoes a larger European inability to read the New World. Today, the study of world politics is similarly impaired; it cannot accurately understand political configurations that differ from those it has defined for itself. As Vanita Seth puts it, ‘it is difficult to speak the language of otherness when the other is virtually absent from the discourse of the self’ (2010: 38). Just as the Spaniards failed to see authority in Inca rock, the failure to see the global significance of the Amazon signals an impaired understanding of the world we are supposed to explain. A world politics of the Amazon calls for a recognition of the global South as a site of political influence as much as it challenges the canons that structure knowledge. I emphasize the significance of the Amazon in international relations not only to acknowledge the international dynamics at play in the region, but further to enable a more comprehensive way of seeing the world.

State-centrism relegates places in the non-core to the past. Enforcing the Eurocentric civilization line, Western thinkers tend to locate non-Western peoples in the European past (Helliwell and Hindess, 2011). ‘In the beginning, all the world was America’, claimed John Locke in his Second Treatise of Government back in 1690. This Western practice of temporalizing difference (Hindess, 2007) still permeates knowledge production today. It infuses economic discourse about ‘emerging’ economies and ‘developing’ societies, which evidently upset scholars such as Prebisch and Hirschman. The non-core at large is located in subaltern temporalities outside the modern temporality of the (European) state. A fundamental trait of colonial projects is to bring the ‘uncivilized’ into present time. British rule over India was tied to British time because to civilize meant, among others things, to bring others into European time (Ogle, 2015). Temporal misunderstandings between colonizer and colonized explain, for instance, how seventeenth-century history told by Portuguese and Dutch colonizers could differ so much from the one told by the cosmopolitan elites of Java (Bertrand, 2011). Dualities such as developed/developing, civilized/barbarian and center/periphery are

enmeshed in the expansion of colonial rule and still express the larger ethos of international law. The problem with a Eurocentric international order is not only that European experiences and canons frame our historical knowledge of international law today, but that it informs the future of international law and limits our understanding of the global political economy. This temporal dimension created false dichotomies between past and present, giving birth to a defective political thought stuck in the 'first in Europe, then elsewhere' (Chakrabarty, 2000).

Temporality is a key myth of modern state-making. The European dominion of the time of the state created subaltern temporalities, dislocating non-western spaces to a-temporal dimensions. Peoples outside the temporality of the state became peoples without history (Wolf, 1982). The Amazon, the Arctic, the Himalayas, the Sahara are theorized as places of nature in contrast to stateness, and as such relegated to a-temporal places beyond history-making. They are still perceived as Locke once saw America, 'before politics'. Pacha, a Kichwa word describing both time and space, collapses the 'here' into the 'now,' making time and space two aspects of one single concept. Space is embedded in temporality; location determines time. Kichwa, the most spoken Indigenous language in the Americas, situates time. Eurocentrism, too, tends to situate people's space in time, especially 'other' people in past times. The hegemonic temporality of the state defines present time, leaving that which is 'apolitical' outside the pacha (time/place) of the modern state.

This articulation between time and space shapes world politics. It is this political understanding of temporality that enabled the doctrine of discovery. European monarchies and the Catholic Church invoked the concept of terra nullius to grab lands 'without a past' from Mexico to Australia. In 1550, the Valladolid Debate between Bartolomé de las Casas and Sepulveda argued about whether Indigenous peoples had political autonomy, and therefore history. Then, as now, Indigenous peoples have to prove their political existence to claim authority over their land. This is clear in current Australian and US law, which require that natives prove their history through state documentation in order to acquire authority over their ancestral land. Indigenous peoples have to make their own history commensurable to the temporality of the state to exist politically. In other words, recognition of political history brings recognition of political territory. Time and space are central elements for critical inquiries seeking to restore the invisible peoples (and places) without history. This is why the Amazon is a strategic place to think stateness, sovereignty, and territoriality.

Most immediately, Amazon perspectives bring new blood in critical currents to further expand the borders of what constitutes legitimate sites of the international. They can free state-centric disciplines of further theoretical inbreeding. It answers calls on what territoriality may look like when practiced in the non-core. Amazonia offers an unusual periphery to expand the horizons of non-core thought while contesting the disciplinary imperialism of state-centrism. Further, the Amazon is a place where epistemological breakthroughs are possible when trying to rethink stateness. The idea of an Amazonian world politics proposes to anchor theory-making in area studies, blurring a long-standing disciplinary divide. It responds to scholarly calls to think ourselves beyond the nation and to look within it (Chatterjee, 2010) and to reach beyond the inadequacies of the European nation-state (Chakrabarty, 2000). Breaking away from dominant patterns of knowledge production requires alternative histories to open up our imagination. Following critical scholarship that established the limits of seeing through the lens of the state (Scott, 1998), we need to complement reconceptualization with praxis.

Theoretically, Amazon territoriality disturbs scholarly assumptions about the international. No one government adequately represents the region internationally, yet it is embedded in global flows, financial and atmospheric alike. The global is deeply imbricated in the multiple territorialities of the Amazon. The Amazon is both a co-producer and a solution of the global climate crisis. It was Amazon rubber that enabled the car revolution in the North and Amazon crude oil that now fuels the climate crisis. The Amazon is also at the heart of the solutions to tackle planetary crises, not only because it represents the lungs of the planet and a depository of biodiversity for future generations, but also for the environmental practices it has successfully maintained. Amazon territoriality does not fit within neat definitions of state sovereignty, and for this reason it permits alternative forms of seeing world politics. The Amazon lies outside the boundaries of theories of the international, yet is constitutive of the international system. The region is central to world politics not only historically, but also in its theoretical and political construction.

One way to think the Amazon is through Andrew Zimmerman's (2013) proposal of a multi-sited historiography. Multi-sited research, he argues, can bring together on a single scale what other approaches may distinguish as abstract theory and concrete reality. A multi-sited IR encompassing Amazonia could offer an opportunity to employ specific modes of inquiry to contribute to global understandings (ethnography in the world system to ethnography of the world system). It implies more than bringing the international to the Amazon; it means using Amazonia as an

analytical category in the construction of theory. Such an approach also permits us to move beyond the immediacy of our different experiences in the core and the non-core (Scott, in Zimmerman, 2013: 337), allowing us to escape the trap of thinking in terms of incommensurable experiences.

Further, an Amazon-based approach to world politics could provide alternative ways of conceptualizing nature in debates about climate change. There are some problems in the way the global North conceptualizes nature. Take, for instance, two scenarios of North American environmentalism and recent debates on the Anthropocene. One concentrated on the conservation of 'wild' landscapes, protecting Indigenous Amazonians for being part of wild rainforests. The others posits Amazonians as part of the human species that is generating irreversible climate change. In both cases, Amazonians are portrayed as lacking agency in a sort of conceptual absolutism. Neither perspective acknowledges the complexity of their agency. Perhaps integrating international perspectives from natural peripheries like the Amazon (and the Sahara and the Arctic) is one way to expand existing ways of seeing the climate change debate. Perceptions of a wild Amazon betray the divide between politics and nature and the difficulty the West/global North has in conceptualizing a post-enlightenment relationship between men and nature. An Amazonian world politics defies the enduring antithesis between state and nature. Bringing the Amazon into the international will not only shed light on invisible histories and emancipate scholarship. It can also inspire new ways to bridge the North-South divide on environmental policy.

CONCLUSION

The Amazon is a resourceful space from which to think about world politics as well as international law, two disciplines that maintain a strong state-centric approach. In *Songlines*, Bruce Chatwin tells of invisible pathways across Australia that Aboriginals sing into existence. This chapter is an invitation to write other sources of the international into existence. First, Amazonia is all too international to remain invisible in the study of world politics. Second, the proposal to rethink IR from Amazonia responds to an epistemological impasse in the discipline. Scholars are unable to see the Amazon because the non-core is dismissed as irrelevant to scientific theory. The Amazon is a strategic site to debunk conceptual dichotomies because it reveals their embeddedness. The call to think the international through the Amazon is an effort to rescue the Amazon from historical oblivion as much as one to free conceptual tenets from hegemonic processes of knowledge production.

REFERENCES

- Adelman, J (2012) *Worldly Philosopher: The Odyssey of Albert O Hirschman*, Princeton: Princeton University Press
- Alencastro, L F (2006) 'Le Versant Brésilien de l'Atlantique-Sud: 1550–1850,' *Annales* 61(2): 339–82
- Anghie, A (2006) 'The Evolution of International Law: Colonial and Post-colonial Realities' *Third World Quarterly* 27 (5)
- Anghie, A (2004) *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Beer, G L (1908) *The Origins of the British Colonial System 1578–1660*, New York: Macmillan (reprint)
- Beier, J M (2009) *International Relations in Uncommon Places: Indigeneity, Cosmology, and the Limits of International Theory* New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Benton, L (2009) *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires 1400–1900*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Bertrand, R (2011) *L'Histoire à parts égales*, Paris: Seuil
- Brasil de Sá, M E (2010) *A Imigração Japonesa no Amazonas a Luz da Teoria das Relações Internacionais*. Manaus: FAPEAM
- Buck-Morss, S (2009) *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*, Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press
- Chakrabarty, D (2000) *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton: Princeton University Press
- Chatterjee, P (2010) *Empire and Nation: Selected Essays*, New York: Columbia University Press
- Comaroff, J and Comaroff, J L (2012) *Theory from the South: Or How Euro-America is Evolving Towards Africa*, Boulder: Paradigm Publishers
- Cox, R W (1986) 'Social Forces, States, and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory' in Keohane, R *Neorealism and Its Critics* New York: Columbia University Press
- Dean, C (2010) *A Culture of Stone: Inka Perspectives on Rock*, Durham: Duke University Press
- Dosman, E (2008) *The Life and Times of Raúl Prebisch, 1901–1986*, Toronto: McGill-Queen's Press
- Eslava, L and Pahuja, S (2012) 'Beyond the (Post)colonial: TWAIL and the Everyday Life of International Law' *Journal of Law and Politics in Africa, Asia and Latin America*, *Verfassung Und Recht In Übersee* (vrü), 45(2)
- Fantham, E, Foley H P, Kampon, N A et al (1994) *Women in the Classical World*, Oxford
- Faundez, J (2015) 'Governance of Natural Resources in Latin America: Is the Commodities Consensus an Answer to the Policy Space Conundrum?' Legal Studies Research Paper No. 2015/18, University of Warwick School of Law
- Garcia, B (2012) *The Amazon from an International Law Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Grandin, G (2009) *Fordlandia: The Rise and Fall of Henry Ford's Forgotten Jungle City*, New York: Metropolitan Books

- Harris, M (2010) *Rebellion on the Amazon: The Cabanagem, Race, and Popular Culture in the North of Brazil, 1798-1840*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Hecht, S (2013) *The Scramble for the Amazon and the 'Lost Paradise' of Euclides da Cunha*, Chicago: Chicago University Press
- Hecht, S and Mann, C C (2012) 'Where Slaves Ruled' *National Geographic* 221(4)
- Helliwell, C and Hindess, B (2011) 'The Past in the Present', *Australian Journal of Politics of History* 57(3)
- Henderson, E A (2013) 'Hidden in Plain Sight: Racism in International Relations Theory' *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* (26)1
- Hindess, B (2007) 'The Past is Another Culture' *International Political Sociology* 1
- Hobson, J M (2012) *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics: Western International Theory, 1760–2010*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Hutchins, F and Wilson, P (eds). (2010) *Editing Eden: A Reconsideration of Identity, Politics, and Place in Amazonia*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press
- Inayatullah, N and Dauphinee, E (2016) *Narrative Global Politics: Theory, History and the Personal in International Relations*, New York: Routledge
- Jackson, P T (2011) *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations: Philosophy of Science and Its Implications for the Study of World Politics*, New York: Routledge
- Mann, C C (2005) *1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus*, New York: Vintage Books
- Mignolo, W (2011) *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* Durham: Duke University Press
- Ogle, V (2015) *The Global Transformation of Time 1870–1950*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press
- Raffles, H (2002) *In Amazonia: A Natural History*, Princeton: Princeton University Press
- Rivera, J E (1924) *La Vorágine*, Barcelona: Red Ediciones (reprint 2012)
- Rostain, S (2013) *Islands in the Rainforest: Landscape Management in Pre-Columbian Amazonia*, Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press
- Said, E W (1983) *The World, the Text and the Critic*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press
- Scott, J (2009) *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*, New Haven: Yale University Press
- Scott, J (1998) *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, New Haven: Yale University Press
- Seth, V (2010) *Europe's Indians: Producing Racial Difference, 1500–1900*, Durham: Duke University Press
- Shaw, K (2008) *Indigeneity and Political Theory: Sovereignty and the Limits of the Political*, New York: Routledge
- Slater, C (2002) *Entangled Edens: Visions of the Amazon*, Berkeley: University of California Press

- Tan, C (2011) *Governance Through Development: Poverty Reduction Strategies, International Law, and the Disciplining of Third World States* New York: Routledge
- Tickner, A (2011) 'Retelling IR's Foundational Stories: Some Feminist and Postcolonial Perspectives' *Global Change, Peace and Security* 23(1)
- Tickner, A (2008) 'Latin American IR and the Primacy of lo Práctico' *International Studies Review* 10
- Tickner, A (2013) 'Core, Periphery and (Neo)Imperialist International Relations' *European Journal of International Relations* 19
- Tickner, A and Blaney, D L (2013) *Claiming the International*, New York: Routledge
- Tickner, A and Blaney, D L (2012) *Thinking International Relations Differently*, New York: Routledge
- Trouillot, M (2003) 'The Savage Slot,' in *Global Transformations: Anthropology and the Modern World*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Tyacke, S (1980) 'English Charting of the River Amazon c.1595–c.1630' *Imago Mundi: The International Journal for the History of Cartography* 32:1
- Weinstein, B (1983) *The Amazon Rubber Boom: 1850–1920*, Stanford: Stanford University Press
- Whitehead, N L (2003) *Histories and Historicities in Amazonia*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press
- Wilkinson, X V (2009) *Tapping the Amazon for Victory: Brazil's 'Battle for Rubber' of World War II*, Unpublished PhD dissertation
- Wolf, E R (1982) *Europe and the Peoples Without History*, Berkeley: University of California Press
- Wroughton, J (2006) *The Routledge Companion to the Stuart Age, 1603–1714*, New York: Routledge
- Zimmerman, A (2013) 'Africa in Imperial and Transnational History: A Multi-Sited Historiography and the Necessity of Theory' *The Journal of African History* 45(3)