NTFPs in the Southwestern Amazon region: Still a Sustainable Alternative

P. Mathaess, D. Callo-Concha and O. Frör

As a research project combining different disciplines and knowledge holders, PRODIGY wants to understand the connections between nature, economy and society in the southwestern Amazon region between Peru, Brazil and Bolivia.

Our research is based on the idea that functional diversity in the soil system increases resilience to disturbances in the entire social-ecological system. Therefore, we study functional diversity in the soil and aim to understand its impact on the resilience of the economic and social systems in southwestern Amazonia.

Background. NTFP gathering, mainly Brazil nut and acai, are key components of livelihoods in rural southwestern Amazonia. Involved countries hold different economic, political and institutional conditions, expressed, for instance, in their policies on road expansion through forests -which coincide with NTFP collection sites. Hence, we analyzed time series of three key proxies between 2010-2020:

1. Brazil nut production trends grew in Bolivia, decreased steadily in Brazil and remained constant in Peru. Those trends may be considered stable except for the hype of 2016-17 where a drought hit the region.

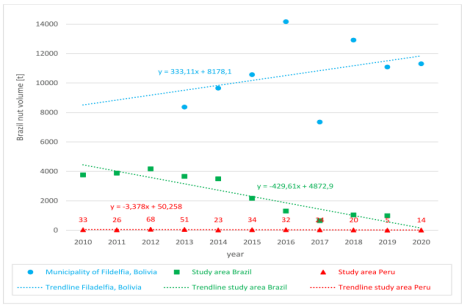

Figure 31: Time series showing the Brazil nut volumes and trends elaborated for each of the three study areas. Data sources: ABT Pando (2020); GRFFS (2020); IBGE (2020); SERNANP (2020).

Figure 29: Time series of forest cover percentages of the three study areas. Source: Own analysis based on data provided by Hansen/UMD/Google/USGS/NASA (2020)

2. Forest cover remained the highest around 97% and almost constant in Bolivia; while in Peru and Brazil it decreased steadily; driven in both cases by the prioritization and widening of other economic activities: several in Peru and mostly ranching in Brazil.

3. Road networks expanded proportionally in Peru and Brazil while in Bolivia remained greatly lower (below 0.2% of the total) and even reduced slightly -likely an artefact of increasing forest cover in the remote analysis.

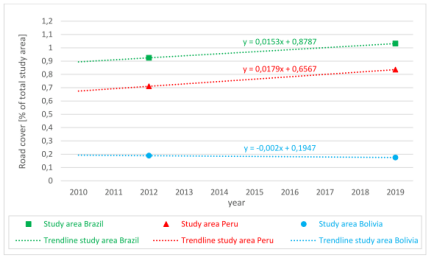

Figure 30: Time series of road cover percentages of the three study areas. Source: Own analysis based on RapidEye satellite imagery provided by Planet (2020)

Take aways:

- Possible to intensify the collection of NTFP and maintain forest cover: climate-smart extractivism
- Road network expansion not essential for the intensification of NTFP collection
- In Brazil and Peru road network extension may have resulted in further forest loss

Contact PRODIGY
Daniel Callo-Concha
E-Mail: callo-concha@uni-landau.de

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