

APPENDIX 5

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN COLONIST SETTLEMENTS IN EASTERN AMAZONIA

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Abstract

This study presents a profile of women's contributions to frontier smallholder agriculture in Eastern Amazonia, Brazil. Through a detailed study of two communities in the Marabá region, women's participation in agricultural activities and the wider community is analysed. Results suggest that women's participation in agriculture has always been limited, even in their areas of origin, but that they become more involved at the beginning of the colonist phase due to the critical need for their labour, and in relation to the stage in the family life-cycle. Thus a decline in women's involvement in agricultural activity over time in colonist settlements is not indicative of a "housewifisation" process, but a shift back to a "normal" state of affairs where women largely perform domestic work within the agricultural system. Activities within the farming systems are found to be strongly gender segregated. In addition, women's representation at community and regional institutional levels is also examined, finding low levels of participation and empowerment, and a debilitating lack of investment in women's initiatives.

1 Introduction

Women's invisibility and subordination within Latin American society have been well-documented (Álvares and D'Incao 1995; Radcliffe 1993). Since Boserup typified Latin American agriculture as 'male' in 1970, there have been few changes to the perceptions of the low involvement of women and the high degree of dependence upon their male counterparts in the farming system (Boserup 1970). Current research into colonist livelihoods in Amazonia focuses on proposals for agroforestry, commercial fisheries, extractivism, and more sustainable modifications to current land uses (Richards 1997; de Reynal et al. 1995; Clüsener-Godt and Sachs 1995; Anderson 1990). However, none of these studies have addressed an aspect that in other developing countries is incorporated into almost every agricultural development initiative: the crucial role of women within the agricultural system.

Recent research into colonist farming systems has found that women play an essential and changing role in agriculture during the family's struggle to survive within the difficult conditions of the Amazon frontier (Thapa et al. 1996; Meertens 1993). This study analyses the role of women within these colonist settlements and examines how far-reaching the effects of the women's movement have been towards empowerment of the marginalised.

This paper focuses on two issues. Firstly, it examines the structure of gender roles within the colonist farming system. Secondly, it explores the ways in which women represent themselves at community and institutional levels. The case study is based on two colonist farming communities in Pará State in Eastern Amazonia: Maçaranduba and Nova Canaã.

The study seeks to address three principal questions:

- What is the distribution of activities of household members? Is there a gender division of farm activities, roles and responsibilities within the communities?

- How have women's roles changed since migration? How do these roles continue to evolve in response to internal and external factors?
- What is the institutional and community support available to women? How do women's activities in the household and the community relate to their empowerment, both at a personal level and at a wider level?

The paper comprises five sections. The next section summarises the key areas of literature that inform the study. This is followed by results from the research, focussing firstly on farming systems and gender division of activities on farms, and secondly on an analysis of women's activities in the settlements. Finally these results are discussed in the context of other Amazonian studies, investigating women's empowerment in the communities and the potential for the empowerment of women through existing institutions and women's groups.

2 Gender Issues and Amazon Colonisation

2.1 Colonisation in Brazilian Amazonia

In the Brazilian Amazon, colonisation has been stimulated by government objectives and the availability of extractive resources such as rubber, brazil nuts, gold, diamonds and timber. Government policy towards the settlement of frontier Amazonia¹ has fluctuated in response to strategic and political motives, causing great variations in types and mobility of capital investment. Historically, Amazonia exemplifies Massey's (1984) theory of "layers of investment", where the structure of local economies are a product of the combination of layers of successive rounds of investment and forms of activity.

Since the 1960s, colonisation in Amazonia has occurred both spontaneously and as a result of planned colonisation programmes. Under the auspices of "Operation Amazonia", initiated in 1966 to stabilise the nation's borders, the military government encouraged the settlement of Amazonia through the introduction of large-scale livestock ranching (Browder 1988; Pichón 1997). This project was supported by the improvement of government-subsidised infrastructure, such as the Belém-Brasília Highway built in the 1960s. Much subsequent colonisation focused on both this new highway and two subsequent highways completed during the 1970s: the TransAmazonia and the BR364 (Figure 1) (Richards 1997).

The National Integration Plan (PIN) (1970-1974) brought a change in policy towards settling the landless in response to political pressure, freely distributing 'unoccupied' land through the Institute of Colonisation and Agricultural Reform (INCRA)

¹ Frontier can be defined in three ways: physically as "the physical edge of a settled area" or in terms of resources as "the boundary between alternative definitions of what resources are to be appropriated and by whom" (Schmink and Wood 1992: 19) or as a shifting phenomenon, a "transitional process whereby specific new territory is incorporated into an economy" (Almeida (1992) cited in Richards 1997 p. 4).

(Macdonald 1981). However, with demand for land far outstripping supply, spontaneous settlement of previously unpopulated areas soared (Schmink and Wood 1992).

By 1974, a shift in development priorities back to ranching and large-scale mineral extraction through the POLAMAZONIA project led to the forced removal of many of these small farmers from land they had spontaneously settled and a decrease in assistance offered to settlers (Schmink and Wood 1992). Peasant rebellions in protest of the lack of land were widespread in Amazonia. The democratic government, elected in 1984, continued policies of decreasing social expenditure, causing isolation of colonists through lack of technical assistance, commercial networks and basic infrastructure (Rodrigues et al., undated). Simultaneously, large-scale development projects such as the Tucuruí Dam and the Grande Carajas project have been heavily subsidised and supported by government. The bias against smallholders is perpetuated through such policies, and is recognised by colonists in the Eastern Amazon region.

Amazonian Farming Systems

The fluctuating policy climate has created instability for most settlers in the region. Land speculation and large ranching interests have forced peasants by economic or violent means to move further into the forest to seek cheaper land (Fearnside 1989; Faminow 1998). Additionally, Brazilian law implicitly encourages deforestation through favouring those who can demonstrate land occupancy and improvement² (Faminow 1998). This has perpetuated slash and burn agricultural practices in the region's farming systems.

The peasant pioneer cycle described by the World Bank (1992, in Pichón 1997 p. 68) suggests that peasant farms pass through a series of stages of land-use in Amazonia. The cycle is initiated by deforestation and annual crop production, followed by perennial crop growth with fallowing or pasturing of exhausted croplands, thus causing further encroachment on forested land. Pichón (1997) criticises the model for its overdependence on the limitations of natural resources, demonstrating that institutional factors and household factors may also significantly influence deforestation and agricultural cycles (see Figure 3). This is reflected strongly in Krantz's definition of farming systems as:

“...the entire complex of development, management and allocation of resources as well as decisions and activities which, within an operational farm unit or combination of units, results in agricultural production, processing and marketing of products”(Krantz 1974 p. 1).

² Deforestation rates are hotly contested, but recent estimates by the FAO between 1980 and 1990 are an annual rate of 0.6% or 3.7m ha.

Figure Map of Brazilian Amazonia, showing major cities and roads
(Source: Richards 1997)



Figure 2. Map showing Marabá and the two study sites
(Source: LASAT 1998)

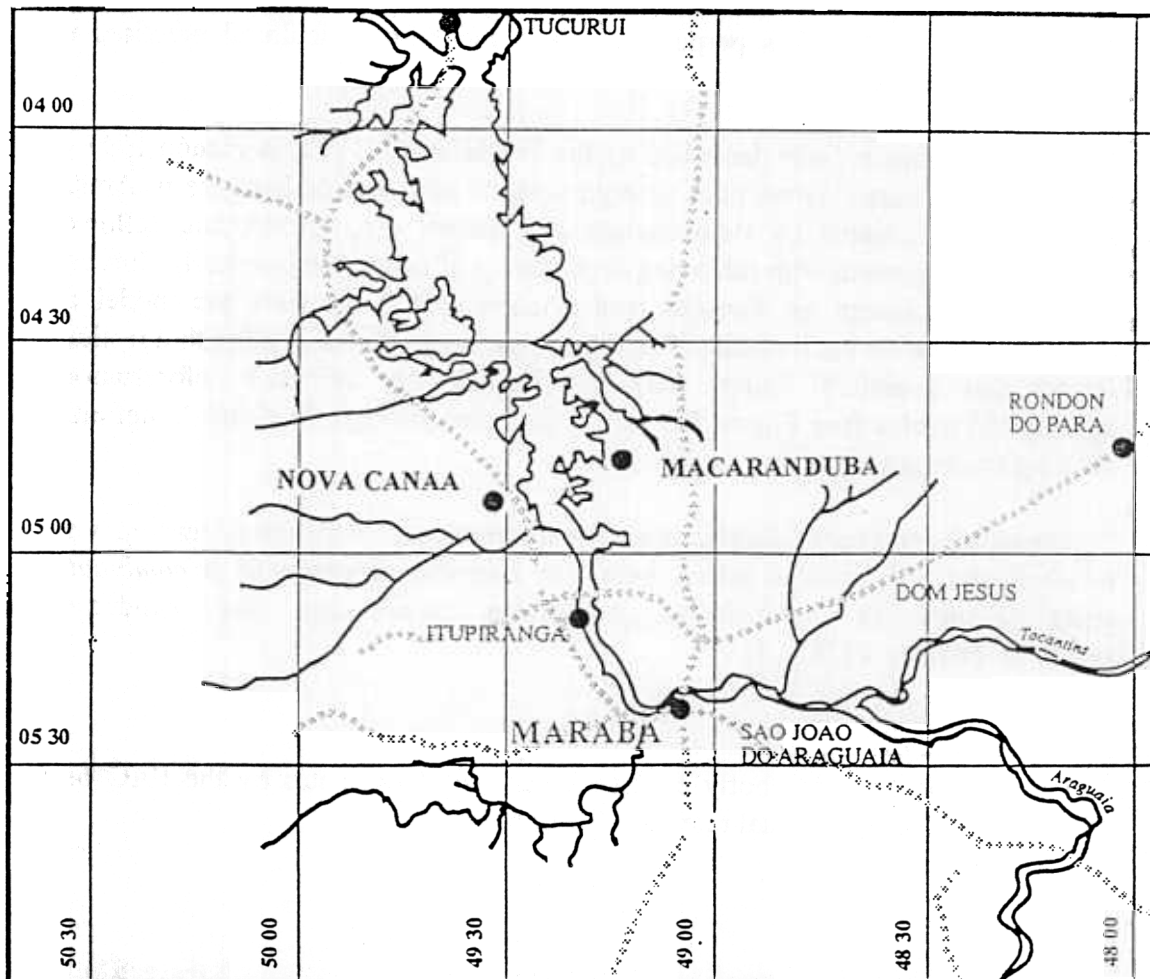
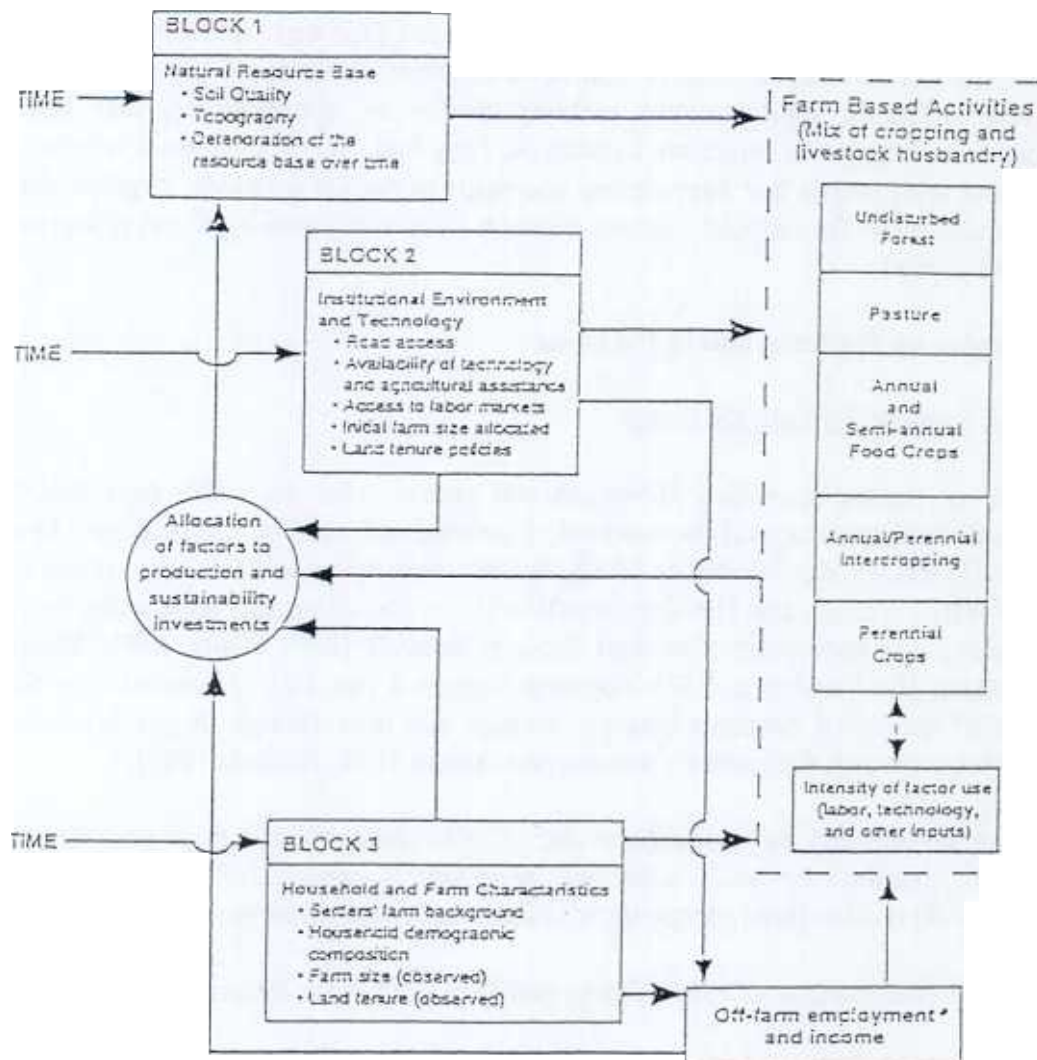


Figure 3: Conceptual Framework for understanding colonist households (Source: Pichón 1997)



Muchagata's research (1997), based in the Marabá region, identified three phases of colonist farmer settlement that reveal the dynamics of the physical and socio-economic factors of farmer's livelihood strategy:

1. 'installation' (0-4 years) with high dependence on forest extractive goods, and high dependence on labour as income source
2. 'system diversification' (4-5 years) diversified food crops, and selling of surplus in the market, with some pasture
3. 'system specialisation' (5-14 years) with emphasis on cattle pasture, crops serving only for subsistence.

In summary, development in Brazilian Amazonia has not followed a smooth trajectory. Waves of frontier development have consisted of three elements of the population: smallholder colonists, entrepreneurs seeking investment opportunities, and large businesses following government tax incentives. They had diverse objectives, resource uses and land use patterns that have shifted according to market demands. In particular, the pattern identified for colonist farmers shows a shift in reliance on forest resources to cattle and capital.

2.2 Gender on the farm and in the home

Gender and women: defining the issues

The history of the incorporation of women and gender since the 1970s as a central concern in development is well documented elsewhere, and need not be rehearsed here (see Moser 1993). Policy initiatives of equity, anti-poverty and efficiency, known as the WAD/WID (Women and Development/Women in Development) approaches have been criticised for their women-centred focus (Cornwall 1997; White 1994; Moser 1993). Instead, the Gender and Development approach has shifted emphasis to the perception of the social relations between women and men, though in practice most gender projects are still focussed on women (see Afshar 1998; Kardam 1997).

Gender can be defined as "*socially-produced individual character...a property of collectivities, institutions and historical processes*"(Connell 1987). Gallin and Ferguson (1992) outline three components of the concept of gender as:

- i) a *social construction* of roles, access and intra-household dynamics (Poats et al. 1988).
- ii) a *politicised social relation* based on the belief that household strategies and patterns of allocation necessarily embody relations of power, domination and subordination (Sen 1990; Wolf 1990; Stichter and Parpart 1988)
- iii) *gender and power*: perceiving women as social actors in systems who can *empower* themselves to form resistance, solidarity and collective actions, thus mobilising for change (Afshar 1998; Gallin and Ferguson 1992; Marah and Taqqu 1986).

This last point requires clarification of the terms "*power*" and "*empowerment*", as used in this study. Lukes (1974) radical conception of power included 3 dimensions, or viewpoints. These included firstly, the dimension of the power holder during decision-

making; secondly, those with the power to set the agenda of decision-making, and lastly, the power to normalise a particular view through social conditioning (i. e. creating a “false consciousness”. Connell (1987) describes a combination of the second and third dimensions in her useful understanding of social power as “*the ability to impose a definition of the situation, to set the terms in which events are understood and issues discussed, to formulate ideals and define morality, in short to assert hegemony*”. Empowerment is now understood to encompass not only ‘*power over*’ (subordination), but also other forms including ‘*power to*’, ‘*power with*’ (group power) and ‘*power from within*’ (spiritual power)(Afshar 1998).

The most useful framework for this study is a gender analysis framework. Gender is a key factor in the divisions of labour, rights and responsibilities in a community, and affects the management of local systems for sustainable livelihoods and equitable development (Rocheleau et al. 1996). Developed as a modification of the USAID Harvard Framework, a gender analysis includes the roles, responsibilities and power that gendered actors possess, taking into account age, ethnicity and social class (Schmink in MERGE 1996). It involves the interactions of socially defined roles of men and women. Gender analysis also functions as a tool in increasing participants’ self-awareness of community and the recognition of women as stakeholders, thus performing an advocacy role (Poats et al. 1988).

A separate framework was developed by Moser (1989), extending Molyneux’s (1985) concept of practical versus strategic gender needs and interests. This considers two areas not covered by the modified Harvard/FSRE framework that contribute to studies of intra- household and community relationships:

- i) Community roles and the direct relationships between men and women (bargaining power and empowerment).
- ii) Organisational and institutional constraints to gender-sensitive decision-making (Goetz 1995; Kabeer 1994; Stewart 1994 cited in MERGE 1996).

These considerations are incorporated into the research questions below.

Women, the environment and agriculture

Many studies have investigated women’s involvement in many aspects of farm systems work, management of natural resources, resource decision-making, community organisation and technological innovation (for example Ahmed 1985; Carney 1988; Collins 1991; Evans 1988; Jackson 1993; Kandiyoti 1985; Owusu-Bempah 1988; Poats et al. 1988; Shiva 1989). These have demonstrated that women’s involvement in agriculture, and the recognition of their contribution, varies widely across the world.

However, agriculture in the Amazon has been subjected to little gender analysis, in contrast to its importance in agricultural studies in South-East Asia and Africa. Even the most recent reports concerning Amazon colonist development do not consider the issue of gender (Faminow 1998; Pichón 1997; Richards 1997). However, the body of case study evidence about women in the Amazon is steadily increasing, with researchers beginning to collaborate through joint publications (Álvares and D’Incao

1995; D’Inçao 1997), regional women’s conferences, and this year the first International Amazonian Women, Environment and Development Conference. Several key issues emerge from the current case study literature available concerning women in the Amazon region.

Firstly, case study evidence shows a variation in women’s participation in agriculture in the Amazon region. Women’s activities range from raising cattle and farming (Meertens 1993; Colombia), to small livestock responsibilities and agricultural work (Pichón 1997; Ecuador) and to almost complete female exclusion from farm work in a process Townsend (1993) named *housewifisation*, identified in Colombia. According to Townsend, ‘housewifisation’ is the process of women’s loss of access to economic activity and full time involvement in social/ biological reproduction. This is reflected in the perception of women as ‘unproductive’ population in some Peruvian frontier communities, resulting in a trend of female out-migration (Radcliffe 1993). Meertens (1993) notes that women’s degree of participation in agriculture varies over time. Thapa et al. (1996) find that women with young children are more likely to be involved in agriculture, and less likely to work in agriculture if more of the land is put to labour extensive uses such as cattle farming. Additionally, where a significant part of the family income is derived from off-farm activities, there may be less need for women to farm their land (Buttel and Gillespie 1984 cited in Thapa et al. 1996).

Secondly, several studies find that women’s independence decreased in many areas as a result of migration. Women have little access to land title or credit in the Andean colonised regions (Deere and Leon de Leal 1982; Townsend 1993; Hamilton 1986 in Townsend 1993). In addition, migration can lead to a decrease in the financial and social resources that women can draw upon within the networks of their families and communities, with a consequent loss of responsibility and independence (Hamilton 1986 cited in Townsend 1993). Silva (1993) found that decision-making within the household in South East Pará is very biased towards the male head of household. However, Molano (in Townsend 1993) argues that women’s bargaining power will actually increase due to the increased dependence on women’s household reproductive labour within colonisation’s high-risk environment.

Thirdly, gender and women’s issues have not been mainstreamed in recent development projects such as the construction of the Itaparica dam. Here, women received no formal recognition within the projects, and were excluded by the types of irrigation technologies that were introduced (Scott Parry 1996).

Fourthly, women’s participation in rural women’s groups in colonist settlements is weak. Women’s initiatives have focused on both strategic and practical needs. Many women identify social isolation as a cause of difficulty (Campbell 1996). However, the most successful initiatives, according to Miranda (1996 in Simonian 1998), have been based around increasing income with projects of *babaçu* or other forest product processing.

Lastly, women’s invisibility in many communities is noted, despite the significance of their work burden and contribution to economic well-being of the family. For example in the fishing industry in northern Pará, women are actively involved in both fishing and processing but their participation is not recognised as productive in the community

(Maneschy 1995; Maneschy et al. 1995; Álvares 1997b). Carneiro (1981) writes of one Amazonian colonist rural settlement that women's invisibility is socially constructed as they have no women's space for social activities, and are excluded naturally from public activities. This is echoed by Guerro (1991) concerning the low participation of women in syndicates: women are too busy at home to become involved, and masculine resistance to women's participation is high.

The Women's Movement in Brazil and Pará

In contrast to the lack of empowerment shown through the evidence above, the women's movement in Brazil has had strong support in the past. The movement has its roots in the period of military rule 1964-85. It was reinforced in the mid-1970s by popular movements for human rights and social improvements, the initiation of the Worker's Party (PT) in 1980, and the democratic movement since 1985 (Küppers 1992). The 1988 Constitution is one of the most progressive in terms of commitment to women's equality but most of the provisions have not yet been operationalised.

Currently, there are approximately ten women's movements in Pará whose aims are "*to struggle against domination, social exclusion and oppression*" (MMSP 1998). The Women's Movement of Rural and Urban Areas (MMCC) was one of the first, founded in the late 1970s, and co-ordinated the First Congress of Women in Northern Brazil in 1985. The Women's Movement has always been strongly linked to Marxism. The South East region has its base in Marabá, and has a broad range of activities including brazil nut processing, palm processing and rural workers rights support (Álvares 1997).

In short, colonist families in the Amazon area are working within several shifting external constraints of natural resource base, government policy initiatives, and capital investments. This presents a dynamic background for the analysis of gender issues at the forest-agriculture interface. Gender analysis in other areas of Amazonia has revealed a diversity of levels of involvement in agriculture, but little information is available concerning women's empowerment within the communities and their institutions. This paper investigates these areas further.

2.3 Implications for Research Questions

Regarding women's activities in agriculture, the research firstly seeks to analyse changes in women's influence and occupation in agricultural activities since migration, and to verify whether the factors contributing to participation in agricultural work are dependent on the family life-cycle, or other factors. Gender roles, access to resources and intra-household dynamics within colonist farming systems will be investigated, with an awareness of relations of power inherent in the particular forms of household allocation.

Secondly, what are the links between involvement in agricultural labour and women's empowerment? Does involvement in what is perceived to be a male area of employment lead to an increase in status of women, and thus an increase in bargaining power? If not, what factors can be identified as increasing women's empowerment in these communities? Is there a role for women's groups in these communities?

Thirdly, what is the level of involvement of women in the community decision-making process? This will be explored through analysis of women's involvement in both community meetings and the new agro-extractivist project in one of the communities.

3. Colonist Farming Systems

3.1 Study Methodology

Two localities were investigated in the study: Nova Canã and Maçaranduba (Figures 1 and 2). The localities were chosen for three reasons. Firstly, Nova Canã is an older, well-established settlement whilst Maçaranduba is relatively young, providing potentially interesting contrasts in the analysis. Secondly, Maçaranduba is the subject of a new agro-extractivist project, which is bringing its own dynamic of change and provides an arena for the study of the relationships of social power within the community. Lastly, these communities are the subject of ongoing agronomic study by LASAT, where gender analysis could contribute to the body of research.

Fieldwork was undertaken in two communities in Pará State in Eastern Amazon over a period of three weeks. Field work consisted of in-depth interviews of a total of 20 women, and discussions with key informants. Interviews were also carried out in the municipal town of Marabá with leaders of women's groups and representatives of women's issues in larger organizations.

In addition, staff from a number of institutions in Belém provided information about current projects and research concerning gender issues in Amazonia. These included the Anthropology Department of the University of Pará in Belém, the Centre of Amazonian Studies (NAEA), Research Institute of the Amazon (IPAM), Poverty and Environment Program in Amazonia (POEMA) and the Museu Goeldi Research Institute.

3.2 The farming systems

Nova Canã is an older, more well-established community than Maçaranduba, which has retained strong kinship ties since its initial settlement by several families who were neighbours in their place of origin. All except two of the women interviewed were married, and all lived in small family units that sometimes included an elderly relative. Both communities are very poorly served by infrastructure, though Maçaranduba is considerably more isolated. Figure 4 gives a summary of key characteristics of the study areas.

Changes in land use in the last 23 years in the community sites are visible from LANDSAT data, showing increases in pasture in the Nova Canã area to nearly 20%, whilst it remains at 10% in Maçaranduba. There is also a significant difference in the levels of deforestation, with 71% forest remaining in Maçaranduba in 1996, reflecting its pioneer status, and only 38% forest remaining in Nova Canã in 1996 (see Figs. 1 and 2) (Source LASAT 1998).

Figure 4: Key Characteristics of the Two Study Areas

Characteristic	Nova Canaã	Maçaranduba
Years since first colonisation	25 years	17 years
Average residence period	13 years	6 years (but 50% < 3 years)
Remaining Forest Cover	38%	71%
Road Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 km to nearest road • one ‘taxi’ owner - weekly trips to nearest town. Mainly use horse/mule • all year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15-20 km to nearest road • no vehicular transport - use horse / mule • very difficult during rainy season
Percentage who have moved at least once before settling here	42%	67%
Origin of Families	Mainly Bahia	Mainly Maranhão
Settlement history	Spontaneous	Spontaneous
Kinship networks	Strong	Weak
Community Facilities	Catholic Church Protestant Church School to Grade 4 (approx. age 10-11) Health worker Village Shop No electricity	Catholic Church School to Grade 4 Health worker (sporadic) No electricity

Figure 5: Percentage of Land under Different Uses in Nova Canaã Area³

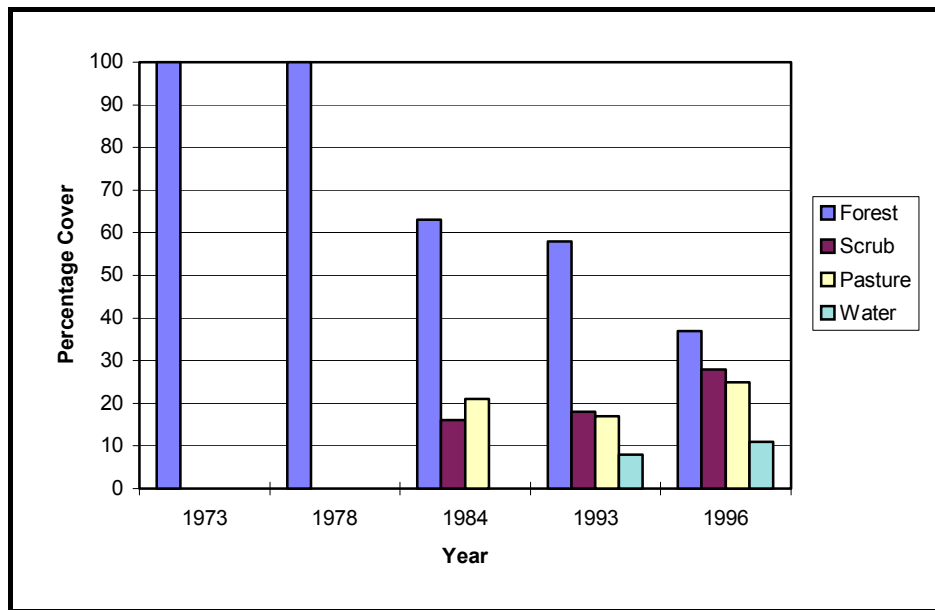
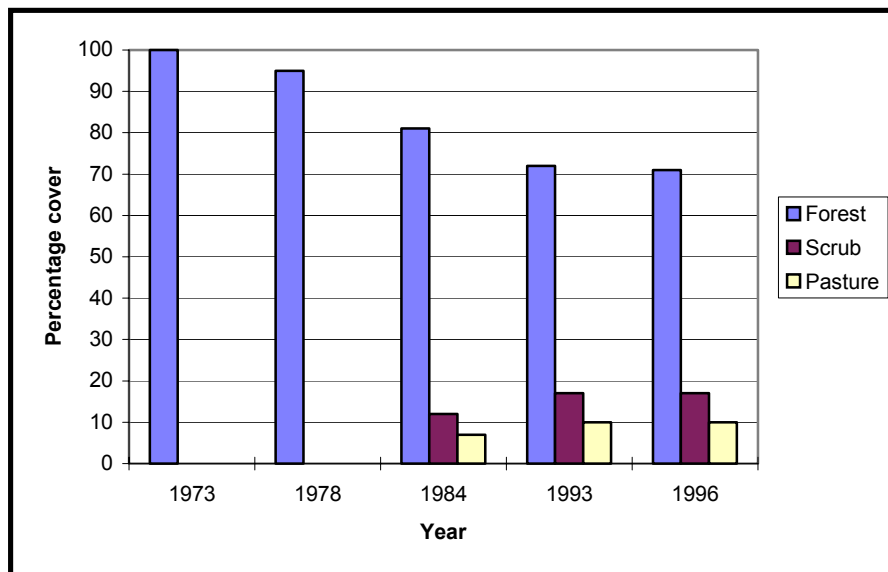


Figure 6: Percentage of Land under Different Uses in Maçaranduba Area



(Source: LASAT 1998)

³‘Scrub’ figures also include cropped land, both of which are indistinguishable in the LANDSAT data

Figure 7: Migration History and Occupations of Female Respondents in Nova Canaã

No.	Age	MS	State of Origin	Occupation in State of origin	Arrival in Pará State	Occ. in Pará State	Arrival Nova Canaã	Occupation in Nova Canaã	Did she work in the fields on first arrival? Reason for change, if any.
1	52	W	BA	Hw/ag	1973	hw/lab	1997	hw/art	Yes - stopped when oldest reached 13
2	36	M	BA	Hw/ag	1975	hw/ag	1980	hw/art	Yes - but stopped due to demands of childcare
3	29	M	BA		1967	hw/ag	1987	hw/ag	Yes - now only plants vegetables
4	40	M	SP	Factory			1996	hw	No - small children to care for
5	52	M	BA	Hw/ag			1976	hw/ag	Yes - stopped when sons old enough to work
6	32	M	BA	Sch/hw;			1976	hw/ag	Yes - stills work in roça despite having small children
7	40	D	BA	Hw	1978	Hw/ag	1991	hw	Yes - but hires labourers now
8	55	M	BA	Hw			1974	hw	Yes - but stopped due to heart problems 6 years ago
9	27	M	BA	Hw			1993	hw	Yes - but now she is too ill
10	30	M	BA	Sch/hw	1978		1986	hw/teacher	Yes - stopped as teacher now, and hire labour
11	17	M	NC				1980	hw	No - small children

Key:

M	Marital Status	BA	Bahia	lab	paid farm work
S	Status	MA	Maranhão	sch	school
M	Married	CE	Céara	hw	Housework
W	Widowed	SP	São Paulo	art	artisan crafts
D	Divorced	ag	agriculture	pol	politics

Figure 8: Migration History and Occupations of Female Respondents in Maçaranduba

No.	Age	MS	Origin	Occupation in State of origin	Arrival Pará State	Occ. in Pará	Arrival Maçaranduba	Current Occ. in Maçaranduba	Did she work in fields on first arrival? Reason for change, if any.
12	27	M	MA	Hw/ housemaid	1990	hw	1996-7	hw	Yes, but small children now
13	30	M	MA	hw	?;Vila Lima	hw/ag	1993-4	hw/teacher	Yes - but not any more as teacher
14	58	M	MA	hw			1981	pol/hw	Yes - now works in politics
15	24	M	MA	sch			1981	hw	Yes - but small children now
16	43	M	BA	hw/ag	1986	hw/lab	1989	hw/ag	Yes - but wants to stop
17	25	M	Belém	hw			1996	hw/ag	Yes - harvesting only
18	21	M	MA	sch/hw	1985	hw/ag	1997	hw	No - young children to care for
19	48	M	CE	hw	1988	hw/ag	1997	hw	No - it's the men's job
20	42	M	BA	hw/ag	1977	ag	1997?	hw/ag	Yes

Key:

M	Marital	BA	Bahia	lab	paid farm labour
S	Status	MA	Maranhão	sch	school
M	Married	CE	Céara	hw	Housework
W	Widowed	SP	São Paulo	art	artisan crafts
D	Divorced	ag	agriculture	pol	politics

Using Pichón's conceptual framework outlined previously, farming systems consist of a variety of interactions between five key factors: the *natural resource base*, *institutional environment*, *farming activities*, *household and farm characteristics*, and *off-farm income and employment*. The farming systems in the two communities are described in terms of these five elements.

Climate and Natural Resource Base

The Marabá region has a tropical humid climate with average temperature of 26°C and a unimodal annual distribution of rainfall giving defined rainy and dry seasons (Muchagata 1997). Average rainfall is 2000mm per year. Soils are variable in the region, are suitable for slash-and-burn cultivation, and originate from schists and granites. Forest products provide a wealth of natural resources for the households and potentials for commercial use where forest remains.

Institutional Environment

In neither community is there mechanisation of agricultural activities, nor any form of technical assistance (i. e. agricultural extension). No one in Maçaranduba has received agricultural credit, and most are unaware of its availability. However, they have received money from the agro-extractivist project in return for their agreement to adhere to its objectives. In contrast, in Nova Canaã almost all respondents are aware of agricultural credit, but only three households in the community have received it. The money is officially allocated for seed purchase to grow manioc and banana, but in practice it is usually used to buy cattle, perceived to be a more secure investment.

Without exception, it is the men who visit the market about once a fortnight to purchase household goods such as oil, sugar, coffee and soap. Women usually leave the communities only in the case of serious family illness, and once or twice a year to buy clothes for the family. Thus women's mobility and social networks are extremely limited.

Farming Activities and Farm Characteristics

The size of land plot owned in Nova Canaã is variable, ranging from 4 to 40 hectares. In Maçaranduba, the size of land plots is variable, up to 100 hectares. A rotational slash-and-burn system is followed with new clearances for agriculture every one to three years, with additional land clearance for pasture. A wide variety of crops are grown in both communities including rice, beans, maize, manioc, squash, banana, potatoes, *inhame*, coconut, sugar cane, and onions. Several farms have fruit trees or shrubs growing mango, *cupuaçu*, oranges, *graviola*, cashew, lemon and guava, amongst others, with one farm in both communities growing coffee. The majority of crops are used for subsistence purposes, but excess from Nova Canaã is sold in the local markets. Half the households in Nova Canaã and just under half those in Maçaranduba have either zero or one cow, the rest have between two and seven, except one with 41. They are used for milk for children, or milk and cheese for family and neighbours if there is surplus. The large cattle owner sells the cheese commercially.

Off-Farm Income and Employment

Male off-farm agricultural employment within the communities is common among men, either for wage or exchange labour. In Nova Canaã two thirds of the households,

and in Maçaranduba over half of those interviewed sell agricultural labour, mostly seasonally. In other households men work full time on their own farms. However, employment opportunities for women are scarce. Prior to their arrival, only four women respondents had paid employment⁴. Currently two women are employed as part-time teachers, receiving the minimum wage, and two receive occasional payments from rush mat weaving for neighbours.

Initial results from a study of incomes in the communities show wide variations of average monthly incomes ranging from R\$75 to R\$760 in Nova Canaã (Marcia Muchagata pers. comm.). Some of the families also received substantial financial support from sons or daughters living outside the community (Respondents 1 and 5). For example, Respondent 5 received R\$200 one month from his son, which was 53 per cent of his monthly income.

3.3 Gender Divisions within the Farming System

“A woman is a housewife and only knows how to do one thing”
(Respondent from Nova Canaã)

Although this woman’s view is quite negative, regarding women’s multiple tasks within the household as just ‘one thing’, it also reflects women’s perception in the communities that their function within the farming system is only that of the housewife. The study of women’s participation in the household farming system reveals a more complex scenario. This is analysed below from two perspectives: firstly by gendered participation in agricultural and household activities, and secondly by ownership and decision-making practices at the household level.

A gendered pattern of farming activities throughout the year collated from 6 other localities in the Marabá region described women and men as the ‘main performers’ of several agricultural activities, including harvesting, fishing and wood collection (Muchagata 1997). However, the female respondents in Nova Canaã and Maçaranduba claimed to be only minor participants in most agricultural activities.

Gender specialisation by task

The percentage of women participating in most agricultural activities in the communities is low in comparison with male participation in agriculture (see Figs. 9 and 10). The most common activity for female participation is harvesting, with the major participation of 35 per cent of women in Maçaranduba, and the minor participation of about twenty per cent of women in both communities⁵. Men’s farming activities typically include the heavier tasks of land clearance, often undertaken in groups (*mutirões*). Strong gender segregation is apparent in livestock care: men look

⁴ Their previous occupations are as follows: Respondent 1: paid agricultural labourer; Respondent 4: full-time factory worker in São Paulo; Respondent 12: housemaid, and Respondent 16: farm labourer

⁵ The categories of ‘major’ and ‘minor’ participation were designated through enquiring who did the most of each activity, and whether the other members of the household also did that work. Obviously the categories are qualitative and very dependent on personal perceptions of the interviewees.

after cattle (only one female respondent had this responsibility), whilst women manage small livestock (pigs, chickens and guinea-fowl).

Men are responsible for the heavier manual work in the house, such as house building and maintenance, and sometimes the rice husking. Women perform the great majority of food preparation tasks, housework and child care in both communities, aided in some cases by children. However, tasks which require foraging or collection outside the house (fuel, water, forest products and hunting) have a more diverse gender allocation. A higher percentage of forest production collection activities (fruits, wood, fishing and hunting) occurs in the younger community Maçaranduba, as would be expected (See Figs. 9 and 10).

The “help” of children was significant in the farm system. Both sexes collected wood and water, and girls tended to help more in the house with cooking, cleaning, washing and child care, whilst boys, particularly as they grew older, helped their fathers in the fields. In Nova Canaã there were several households where adult males remained on the farm helping their parents in agriculture. Females who have finished school (aged 12 years and over) remain working on their parents’ farm until marriage.

The majority of women (75 per cent) undertook a greater role in agricultural activities immediately after their initial arrival in the communities than they did a few years later (see Figures 7 and 8). Whilst it is evident that women’s participation over time decreases in frontier settlements, the reason they gave for this was not the need for extra agricultural labour at the onset of the colonisation, but was concerned the stage in the family life-cycle. In Maçaranduba women explained that young children were prohibitively time-consuming to care for, making women unable to work in the fields. In Nova Canaã this was also the most frequent explanation given, but other reasons given included children being old enough to work in the fields instead of their mother, and illness.

Figure 9. Farming Activities by Gender in Nova Canãa

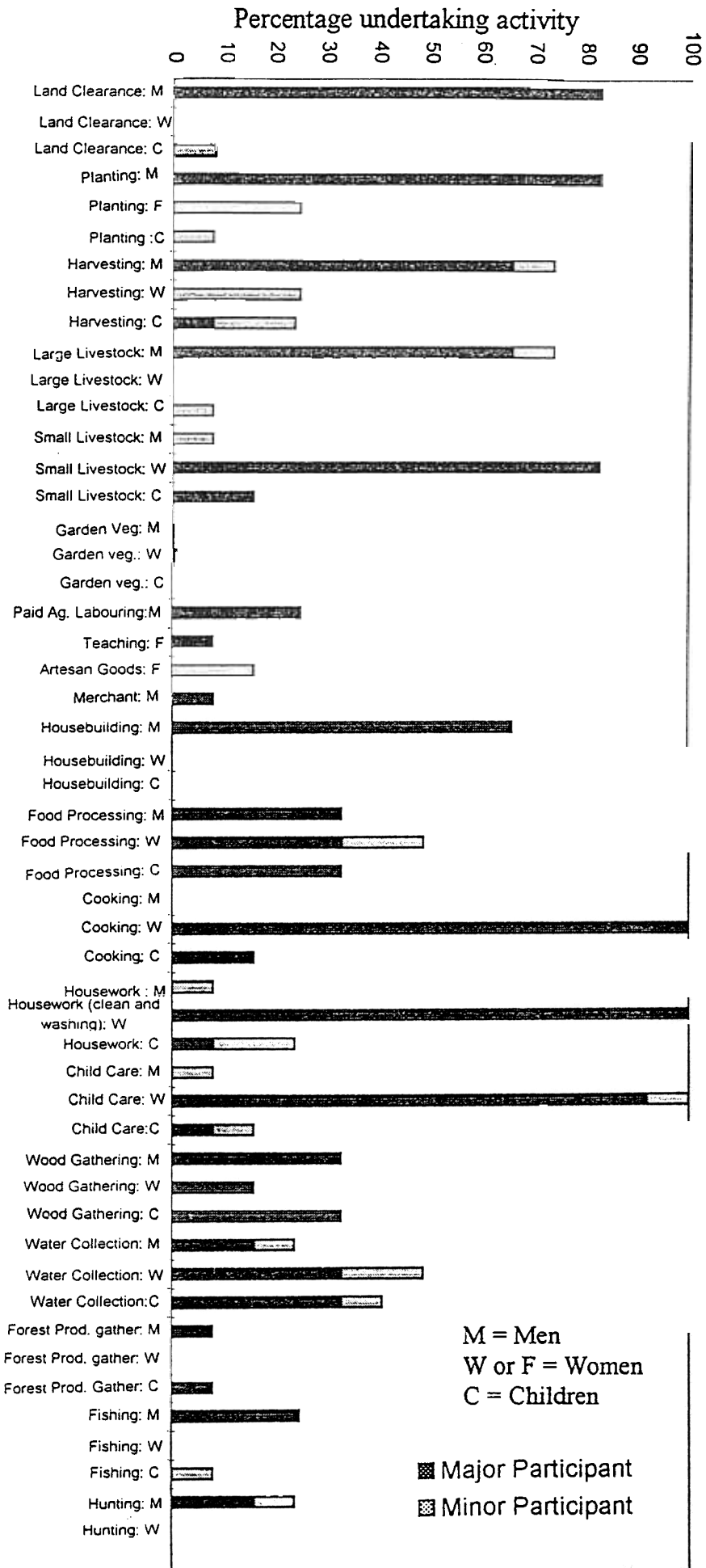
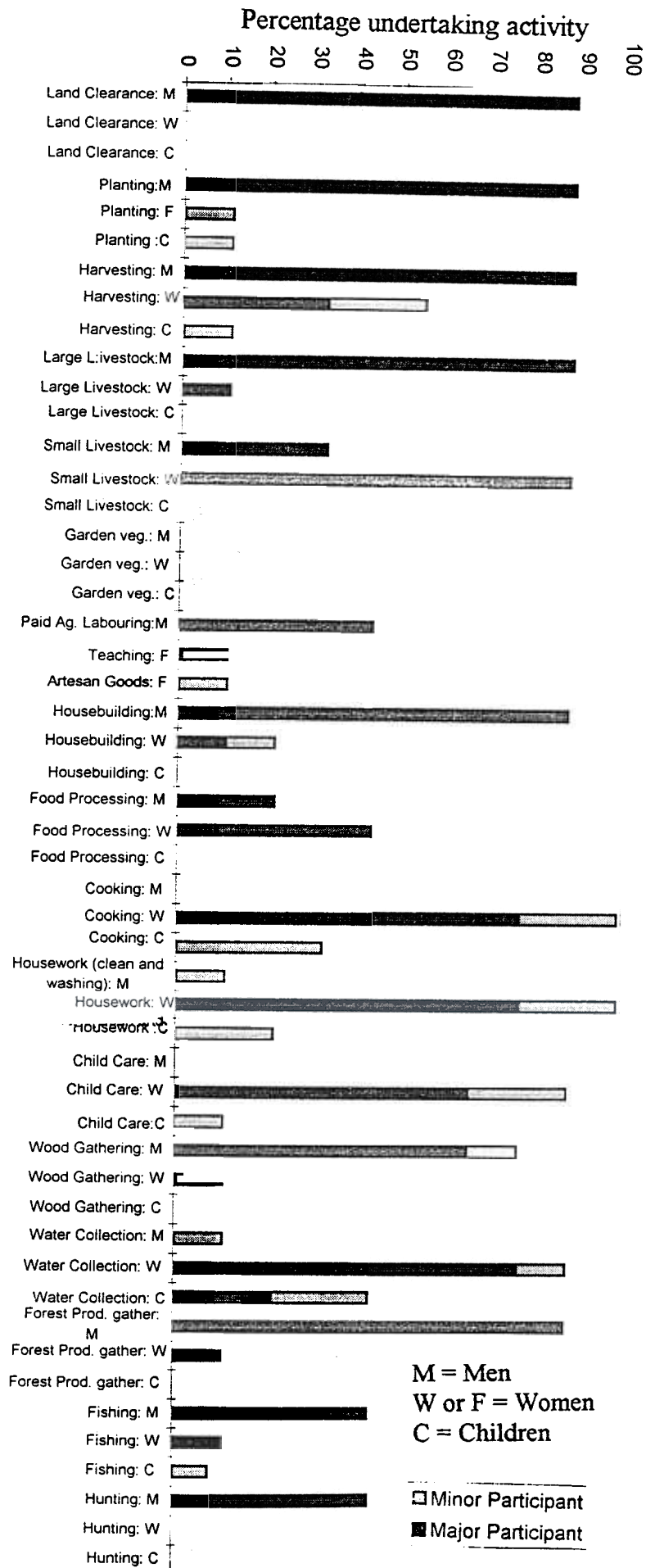


Figure 10: Farming Activities by Gender in Maçaranduba



Gendered Ownership and decision-making

Men are the owners of land titles in both communities. All of the houses are owned by the men except one in Maçaranduba, where the title deeds of the house have been passed to the only daughter. This exception occurred as the parents, being pensioners, are ineligible to collect credit handouts from the agro-extractivist project that are owed to the holder of the title deeds. The male domination of both the house and house-ownership was demonstrated when one (male) key informant drew a map of the community in Nova Canaã, and identified houses by the names of the men only. (See Appendix 1).

Kabeer (1998) distinguishes between significant and less significant decision-making within households in her analysis of measures of empowerment. Within the case study communities, this useful distinction revealed that all significant decisions concerning migration and the household are made by men in the communities. Men make the decision to migrate in the families. Whilst presumably the wives were consulted at some point, the current situation is that several of the women are unhappy living in these communities, and wish to return to either their city of origin or to their family 'back home'. They said they only stay because of their husbands wishes, or because he has family there. All intra-household decisions about agricultural strategy, market purchases and livestock marketing are made by the males. Women make decisions about household food consumption. They often have no access to cash, nor need for it: cash is controlled by the men.

In summary, it was found that the communities, and in particular Maçaranduba, are isolated and receive very little external support. A strong gender division of activities was apparent, with few women participating in agricultural activities and few men performing household reproduction activities, although children's help is significant in some activities in both areas. Women were found to be more involved with agricultural activities in Maçaranduba than Nova Canaã. Men dominate 'important' decision-making concerning initial migration, decisions to remain in the community, and the livelihood strategy that the family adopts after migration.

4 Women's Community and Political Involvement

If women's participation on the farm is limited and they appear to be marginalised economically, and are physically and socially isolated, then how does this translate to the community level? The other dimension of women's participation in frontier is explored through women's involvement in community and politics, and their perceptions of the most pressing needs for the community. It finds that although women contribute to other community activities such as the church and group *mutirões*, they participate little directly or indirectly in community decision-making.

Group *mutirões* and the church are the two principle non-political activities in which adults of the community are involved. *Mutirões* are workgroups undertaken by men either working in agriculture or on a community project (such as road maintenance), in return for food provided by the owner of the property (or, in the case of community projects, by everyone)⁶. Women are generally responsible for preparing the food, but

they say that they enjoy the *mutirões* “because they are fun, and it’s like having a party” (Respondent 3). In this way *mutirões* can be seen as a welcome change from the routine of daily tasks centred on the household. However, women’s contribution to this activity is perceived to be less important than that of the men’s who are doing the ‘real’ work.

The Catholic church is a focal point for the community in both locations. Literate women are involved in church activity, where some read passages during mass and take responsibility for church maintenance. Services in both communities are held by males in the absence of a visiting priest.

Women’s groups

There are no active women’s groups in either community. However, in Nova Canaã a group existed for a period of 2 years five years ago. The group collected money for a social fund to support those who were ill in the community, ran a cooking course and taught natural remedies, but the group disintegrated when its leader left. In both settlements, women spoke of the need for greater community mobilisation. As one woman commented, “*Women are weak here [in Nova Canaã], and they are uninterested...here in the village they have little spirit and willpower*”. Many women in both communities expressed a desire for a women’s group to teach natural medicines or sewing/crochet or to increase the “spirit” of women. This reflects women’s desire to strengthen their morale as well as to obtain more practical benefits regarding welfare and income generation-potential as well.

Political Involvement

The amount and type of female participation in community meetings indicates the influence that women have in decision-making. Not only is attendance necessary, but active participation and vocalisation within the meeting, with the result of being able to shift the agenda and decisions in women’s interests. In these communities, most women do not even attend group meetings. One respondent from Nova Canaã perceives that “*meetings are for men*” though she is discontent with this situation: “*I don’t like the fact that it’s always men who go to the syndicate meetings*”. However, only two women from Maçaranduba go to meetings regularly, one of whom is an active member of the left wing party (PT) as well as the district’s church group and the nearest town’s women’s group. This woman has a respected status amongst women in Maçaranduba. She tries to represent women’s interests in meetings and encourages women to join in the meetings. Nearly all women have attended meetings in the past, sometimes on behalf of their absent husbands. However, it is clear that the experiences do not encourage women to participate further. One woman from Maçaranduba explained the reasons: women in her community “*are afraid to speak out. . . they are shy and will always say ‘I don’t know’ to any serious question. . . they need more education, something to increase their confidence*”. Other reasons for non-attendance include: inability to leave children/house unattended, inability to read, too busy, or meeting being held too far away. Women may also choose to avoid meetings because they perceive them to be a waste of time. Several men and women expressed this

opinion about the syndicate meetings, complaining that the government never took any notice of them.

Several studies have shown that women can influence decisions outside the household through their husband's representation (Knop and Knop 1994). However, in these communities, many women said that their husbands did not even ask them what food purchases were required from the market, so it is unlikely that women would have much influence in other matters. The decision to migrate was always taken by the male, and several of the women who expressed dissatisfaction with their lives in the communities remained there only because of their husband's desire to stay. Thus it can be expected that women have little ability to influence their husband's actions at the community meetings.

5. Housewifisation or Empowerment?

This section examines the evidence of women's roles in the frontier communities to assess women's status within the household and the community, and women's movement initiatives in the area. First, women's roles in the farming system will be examined with relation to evidence from other Amazonian communities. Secondly, the effects of changes in women's status and power since migration are analysed. Thirdly, the role of women in organisations and development projects in the area is assessed, finding women's issues to be highly undervalued. Finally, the current status of women's groups within colonist settlements in the region is explored.

5.1 Women in agriculture: a temporary occupation

Many of the findings of this study are reflected in studies of colonisation in other parts of Amazonia. Women in the two communities have little access to land title or credit, as in other cases of Andean Amazonian colonisation (Deere and Leon de Leal 1982; Townsend 1993; Townsend 1995). Women's participation in agricultural activities is significant though limited mostly to gender-specific activities such as small livestock raising, in contrast to other studies where women's activities were much broader and involved cattle raising and farming (Meertens 1993). Women's increased responsibility in farming in one case was connected to the historical legacy of male out-migration for logging work (Cayres pers. comm.), which does not affect these communities in question.

Meertens (1993) observed the tendency for women's involvement in agriculture to decrease over time in frontier communities due to family life cycle changes. This research has found that women spend less time in agriculture in response to two events in the family life cycle: the need to care for very young children, and, later, when children are old enough to help on the farm.

The term "*housewifisation*" was identified by Townsend (1993) in Colombian migrant households. It is the trend from female participation towards female exclusion from agricultural work within colonist households over time after the initial arrival. The term it implies that it is normal for women to work in agriculture, and that they undergo a process of decreasing participation as they become more "housewifised".

Evidence from this study shows that this is misleading terminology. In fact, the majority of the women in this study were housewives in agricultural communities *before* they migrated, and their participation in agriculture is a *temporary* measure in response to critical labour demands during the first few years after settlement. After this time, or when the female has small children to care for, or older children to replace her labour, the female works less in the fields. Thus women present a critical source of temporary labour for agriculture at critical times of labour shortage.

Women's Empowerment: the Individual and the Collective

Rowlands (1995) defined empowerment within a development context as “*a process whereby women become able to organise themselves to increase their own self-reliance, to assert their independent right to make choices and to control resources which will assist in challenging and eliminating their own subordination*”.

From the analysis of the two communities, women have displayed little evidence of empowerment on an individual level. They have asserted few rights over their location, nor their occupation. There are few options available to them. Their role is critical to the sustenance of the communities, and tightly defined within the cultural norms of gendered roles. This extends to the low participation of women in community meetings, where prescribed cultural gendered roles dictate that meetings are for men. However, at an individual level, some women appear empowered. The community spokesperson is the best example of this. She is guaranteed an income from the state, being a pensioner, and is a dynamic and active member of many political and church groups, despite her illiteracy. Her views are outspoken, and she expressed a strong desire for a women's group in Maçaranduba to support and motivate the other women. In her past she had lived and raised children alone, and had worked in a factory to support herself whilst separated from her husband. This history of financial independence is unusual amongst the women of the communities, and may be responsible in some part for her degree of autonomy now. There is also a belief in the strength of individual agency being powerful enough to precipitate action. As one respondent commented: “some people have the strength and will to do things here: others don't”.

At the collective level, several women expressed the desire to have women's groups to increase their “spirit”. Evidently they perceive that women's groups could provide an arena for relaxation and morale-strengthening within the community as well as the provision of potential alternative sources of income.

Links between agricultural activities and empowerment

There appear to be few links to agricultural activities undertaken by women and their empowerment as per the definition above. Women tend to be involved in agriculture for a short period of a few years, meaning that their role is always subordinate the male who is more knowledgeable and makes all the farming decisions. Thus they have no opportunity to be self-reliant, make choices, or to control the resources. Whilst Molano (in Townsend 1993) argues from her research in Amazonia that women increase their bargaining power through undertaking agricultural work in colonist communities, it is

evident that this must be viewed within the specific social and cultural context of the type of agricultural work performed, and the level of responsibility, autonomy and respect that it commands. The fact of involvement does not necessarily mean empowerment.

5.2 Changes since Migration

There are three major changes perceived by the women in the communities since migration: increased physical and social isolation, decrease in access to external employment opportunities and a decline in access to facilities. The question of employment opportunities is outlined in more detail, as this is a common form of intervention by women's groups in Amazonia.

The investigation found that women have almost no access to income generated in the farm system, nor to income earning opportunities. Case studies in other countries have found that women's earnings are equated to the amounts of respect and bargaining power they have within the household and the community (Sen 1990). Some of the women suggested that they would like to have access to income-generation opportunities through training courses. This could provide them with an income and hence a valuable opportunity to increase their bargaining power. However, one member of the STR (Syndicate of Rural Workers) in Marabá said that women's involvement in income-generating babaçu processing projects in the Pará region had not brought the respect of the males of communities as it is perceived as "women's work". This also reflects other studies where women's involvement in homeworking for cash did not improve their status, whereas external factory work does (Kabeer 1994).

Unfortunately there are no opportunities currently for women in these communities to be involved in an income-generating project based outside the home. In addition women are restricted from access to market or employment in the nearest towns due to the prohibitive distances from the nearest road (6km or 16km) and multitude of household duties.

In addition, some women found it very frustrating to be dependent on their husband, particularly those who had been financially independent prior to migrations. For example one respondent had been self-supporting through worked in a factory in São Paulo until her marriage and migration with her husband to this new land. This is perhaps the most visible indicator of some form of disempowerment in these communities. *Housewifisation* is a reality for these women who had been productive jobs prior to their settlement in these communities. However, the majority did not express discontent with working in the home, but many felt they had lost independence through their increased physical and social isolation.

5.3 Gender mainstreaming in institutions

"People, especially poor women, are capable of promoting their own development if their own efforts and initiatives are recognised and supported. The first steps must be to build an infrastructure, the context in which women can feel some sense of control over their lives"(Antrobus 1987 p. 112 cited in Kabeer 1994).

The 1990s have seen the emphasis in women's issues shift to the institutionalisation of gender issues in development planning and policy in a process of mainstreaming (Moser 1993). According to Moser (1993) this has been hindered by reticence in national ownership of gender equity issues and the lack of trust between governments and civil society, including women's NGOs in developing countries. In turn this has led to a focus on policy-making rather than the slower and more difficult process of transforming organisational culture and practice at all levels (Kardam 1997; Gallin and Ferguson 1992). It is the current attempts at mainstreaming that this section will analyse, both at the level of regional politics and within the agro-extractivist development project that is directly affecting Maçaranduba.

It could be expected that those institutions that deal with the marginalised and disempowered would champion the cause of marginalised women in Pará, such as those within the colonist communities. However, according to a representative of the STR (Rural Worker's Union), the reality of entrenched *machismo* within Brazilian society's institutions is the greatest hindrance to addressing women's issues. She believes that the STR and the MST (Landless Movement) both suffer from this, and whilst she campaigns strongly for recognition of women's issues, the men in the directorship disregard women's concerns. One active female member of the PT (Partida Trabalhadora- left wing political party) did not agree the women's issues should be differentiated from other wider struggles of the Worker's Party, showing lack of awareness of issues particular to women or women's subordination within society. However, certain other institutions do offer support for women. The CPT in Marabá (Pastoral Land Commission), for example, offers its limited human and physical resources for women's groups.

Agro-Extractivist Project

As gender and conservation issues are receiving much international stimulus in development, it would follow that these would form an integral part of the agenda for conservation projects. However, no attempt has been made to incorporate gender recognition or concerns into the project design. Although leaders of the meetings are aware that women will scarcely participate if they attend the meetings at all, they have explored no alternative means to access women's views. This needs to be addressed urgently.

In addition, the project has given a cash sum to the heads of household in payment for agreeing to farm and exploit forest resources sustainably. It is therefore assumed that household heads will spend the money in the interests of the whole household. However, recent evidence from peasant household studies has refuted this 'beneficial dictator' hypothesis of neo-classical economic household models. Studies have shown that the household head will monopolize on assets, food, prestigious goods and leisure time (Kabeer 1994). In addition, the gender of the person earning income has a systematic effect on the patterns of resource allocation within the household (Thomas 1990 in Kabeer 1994). Thus women's interests may not be served through this distribution of payments.

Rural Women's Groups

Regional networks in Pará for women's groups have a strong history. With support from the CPT (Pastoral Land Commission), urban movements in nearby Palestina and São Domingos became strong, with women from the Marabá region also taking part in the wider political guerrilla warfare of the peasants in Araguaia. The MMCC was founded in 1985, encompassing the micro-region of Marabá city and countryside, and the MMSP started in 1989 as a regional network to include all the urban and rural areas of Southern Pará. However, although support was strong to start with, based on a militant style of feminism, women's groups seem to have waned in membership, and co-ordinators of the groups have said they find it difficult to keep the group to a coherent aim.

This militant feminism has not reached the rural communities. In Maçaranduba, as one respondent commented, "*women don't think about their rights*". Discussions with leaders of several women's groups in the Marabá region have revealed that it is difficult to sustain women's participation and motivation for women's group activities. Women's memberships are low and opposition from husbands is high, according to the leader of the Vila Nova Women's Association. In addition, they lack institutional support, materials and human resources and transport and access to rural communities. In the Marabá region, rural women's organisations are very aware of the large numbers of communities that they cannot reach. The co-ordinator of several rural women's community projects said that they were seriously under-funded and had so few staff that "*it is not worth it in time or money to go to some of the communities further away*". Maçaranduba falls into this category, being difficult and expensive to access as it is not served by public transport. However, the potential for development of income-generating opportunities in Nova Canaã is much greater, particularly because the community is more compact and the networks much tighter.

Women's group co-ordinators continue to stress the urgency of more strategic projects to tackle the issues of domestic violence and increase women's awareness of their rights that have been strengthened through the Social Laws of 1988. However, there are few projects which focus on women's 'empowerment', and even less which focus on focus on the problem of the lack of empowerment of both men and women in colonist communities.

Conclusions

This study has sought to investigate the role of women in Amazonian colonist farming systems, by analysing divisions of labour, lifestyle prior to migration, and institutional and community support available for women.

Women's role within the farming system was generally as a domestic housekeeper and childrearer of the family. Women's work is used in the fields at critical times: during the initial setting up of the farm, and during harvest-times. In addition, many women help in the fields in the interim period between their childrens' first years after weaning and when the eldest can work in the fields, replacing her labour. Women's

time is spent on domestic duties within the house, including caring for small livestock. Men, in contrast, perform agricultural activities, look after large livestock and go to market to make family purchases. Women, generally, have a low level of participation within the politics of the community, looking after the children and the household upkeep instead. The exceptions to this rule occur as women have a set of personal circumstances where they were more educated or financially independent prior to arrival at the settlement, and retain an interest and involvement in the politics of the community.

The study found that women are disadvantaged within the community in various ways: Firstly, women are much more financially dependent on their husbands for money and have no access to income generating activities. Secondly, women are physically and socially isolated both within the house and within the community, a state which is exacerbated by the political difficulties of the agro-extractivist project in one community. Thirdly, within institutional and political channels women are extremely unwilling to participate and therefore their views are not heard or acted upon. Even within a recent programme for conservation in the area, there is no recognition that women are a special group whose needs must be assessed separately, nor any provision for accessing their opinions.

There are no mechanisms at present that will encourage women to support themselves more, or to have a voice in the community. Responsibilities in the household are a time-consuming constraint. Initiatives in this area could be carried out in a number of ways. Firstly, at the level of the individual and household, the provision of a means of income generation for women could give them a greater sense of independence and security, and may lead to a more favourable perception of their activities and contribution to the family, as well as increased personal confidence. Secondly, at an institutional level, a shift in the current social construct of male dominated meetings towards more egalitarian participation would increase the influence and sense of ownership women feel regarding issues discussed. At present, most women are interested in improving health care, education and communications in the communities, but can vocalise their opinions at meetings only through their husbands. An excellent opportunity for attempting this shift in one community could be the forum of the agro-extractivist project, which is currently unaware of the need to incorporate women into its decision-making. Finally, the involvement of women's groups from nearby towns also seems a potentially great source of support for the women in these communities. These women's groups have a wealth of ideas to develop, but suffer from male opposition and a lack of funding.

Appendix 1: Sketch Map of Nova Canaa



Rodovia TRANZAMAZÔNICA Km 92
 (Transamazonian highway Km 92)

NOVA CANAÃ drawn by NENGA 31/7/98

Appendix 2 Women's Group Activities in Southern Pará

Location	Activities	Key Problems	Info Source
MST Fazenda Baberindus	Women's rights within MST meetings; Religious work	Lack of financial support, membership and education of staff	MMSP document
Itupiranga	Religious work; garden project (with CAT)	Lack of support and membership	MMSP document
São Domingo	Women's Association: crèche; sewing and embroidery courses		MMSP
São Domingo	STR: women's rights and empowerment		MMSP
Araras	Agro-extractivism: cupuaçu processing to make sweets; women's rights participation in credit and STR	Membership; Meetings only in town, not rural area due to financial and organisational constraints	MMSP
Marabá - rural	MMCC: credit, health and empowerment	lack of focus of work / meetings macho culture of STR	Digé MMCC community posting
Marabá - urban	Participate in syndicates and associations; women's advice - drugs, prostitution; Women's Association not every political: crèche, cheese making and sweets	Tensions with other groups in Southern Pará over lack of strategic interest in women's rights displayed by current AMM.	Lady Oliveira, AMM President; Robertinha Saude, teacher, PT activist; Raimundinha Solino, STR secretary and MMCC secretary
Parauapebas	Health, contraception and women's rights		
Jacundá	Health and bioenergetics; Women's group: medicines, sewing, knitting, crochet and painting courses		
Nova Ipixuna	Women's Association: sewing course, natural medicines and women's cancers	Hard to organise meetings outside of the town; Few women leading the group	
Palestina	babaçu processing for soaps and palm oil; cupuaçu; hammock making		
São João de Araguaia	cupuaçu processing		
Tucuruí	women's rights; hammock making, artesan goods (tablecloths, paintings, carpets); natural remedies and health		
Vila Nova	<i>babaçu</i> processing	husbands forbidding women to get involved	

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