

**Amazônia in the American Mind:
An Analysis of the U.S. Rainforest Movement**

by

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Thesis

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores two central questions.

1. How well does the U.S. rainforest movement address issues of power and of sustainable human integration in the Brazilian Amazon region? 2. To what extent is the U.S. rainforest movement's ability to successfully address these two issues effected by the Images of Eden, Wilderness and El Dorado?

Chapter One makes the case that addressing the two central factors of power and of sustainable human integration are prerequisites to any long-term solution to deforestation in the Amazon. These two issues and provide a suitable index for evaluating the effectiveness of the U.S. rainforest movement dedicated to saving the rainforest. Chapter Two demonstrates the influence of Images on perception and thought and how they often are translated into actions. The role of Images in institutional cognition is provided as a model for understanding the way Images might influence institutions such as the rainforest movement and its component organizations. Chapter Three examines the historical origins of the Images of Eden, Wilderness and El Dorado. It shows how the dual legacies of U.S. exploitation of Brazil (along with most of Latin America) symbolized by the Image of El Dorado and of the Western nature/culture dichotomy symbolized by the images of Eden and Wilderness have been passed down to the modern U.S. environmental movement. This makes the case that it is probable that the U.S. rainforest movement may have problems dealing with both power and human integration in the Brazilian Amazon. Finally in Chapter Four, the two central questions of the thesis are applied in an analysis of the movement itself; the rise of the movement, a profile of the groups involved, the public representations of the Amazon and the strategies of the movement are examined. The Conclusion describes the pattern by which the Images of Eden, Wilderness, and El Dorado are used consciously in the public representations of the Amazon and how they unconsciously influence the organizations and their activities. Finally the Recommendations suggest that the movement abandon the use of these Images and utilize more self-representations by the Brazilians. Suggestions as to how to make the organizational strategies better address the issues of power and sustainable human integration are provided.