

***The Amazon as an Anthropocene Hotspot: Harald Sioli and the German-Brazilian Scientific Cooperation on Amazonian ecology (1952–2002)***

*André Felipe Cândido da Silva*

The increase of the Amazon rainforest's devastation in the last years in Brazil, dramatically heightened during the ultra-right government of Jair Bolsonaro (2019–22), has been causing concern among specialists and the public sphere, not only in Brazil but also internationally. The discourses in defense of the Amazon are commonly infused with images like “the world's lungs,” “depository of global biodiversity,” “climate regulator,” or “reservoir of freshwater.” Such images generally derive from scientific findings divulged in the specialized or lay media and resulting from research projects developed at Brazilian institutions with foreign partners.

This research project aims to analyze the emergence of scientific findings and concepts referred to the Amazonian ecology through the career of the German limnologist and ecologist Harald Sioli (1910–2004) and the network between Brazilians and Germans built and kept by him and his disciples. The main institutional foundations in this partnership were the National Research Institute of Amazonia (INPA), the leading Brazilian scientific institution dedicated to the Brazilian tropical rainforest, and the Max Planck Institute for Limnology in Plön, Germany. Sioli's investigations showed the central role of the waters in the dynamics of the Amazonian ecosystem. How were the scientific findings of Sioli and the researchers from this network translated into concepts and images that have framed the apprehension of the tropical rainforest? What is the role played by these images in the general discourses in defense of the Amazon, and how have they circulated in international channels during the process of political globalization through which the Amazon Forest became an icon of the contemporary global environmental movement? What place did Sioli and the German-Brazilian network occupy in such international circuits? What were the negotiations, encounters, and conflicts in this bilateral scientific cooperation?

The project focuses on the period from 1952 to 2002, when the Amazon region underwent unprecedented changes in terms of ecological devastation, changes closely related to the processes currently apprehended as the Great Acceleration. The underlying premise is that the Amazon figured as a hotspot of transnational scientific networks, findings, and approaches that lay the ground for the proposition of the Anthropocene, catalyzing, at the same time, the transformations, dilemmas, and challenges of this new geological epoch characterized by the global impact of human actions on the planet.