

King of the jungle: comparative analysis of the geopolitical narratives surrounding Fordlandia and a proposed resort park in El Mirador

Rachel Jaeger¹

¹Student Contributor, University of Denver

Abstract

Environmental geopolitics is a field of study in which narratives about the environment are analyzed to reveal the underlying motivations and objectives they support. Using Shannon O’Lear’s¹ framework of environmental geopolitics, I conduct a comparative analysis of the narratives surrounding two distinct development projects: Henry Ford’s historical company town in the Brazilian Amazon, Fordlandia, and a proposed ecotourism resort park in El Mirador, Guatemala. Analysis of Fordlandia reveals a narrative of American frontierism and a man-versus-nature perspective that served to paint the environment as belligerent and thereby justify corporate control and Indigenous assimilation. In contrast, narratives surrounding El Mirador represent the environment as fragile and in need of protection. However, this representation fuels a similar conclusion to Henry Ford’s: that external control is necessary and that local communities are not capable of being stewards of their land. Ultimately, this comparison demonstrates how enduring geopolitical narratives—whether they frame the environment as antagonistic (Fordlandia) or fragile (El Mirador)—serve to undermine Indigenous sovereignty and land stewardship in favor of foreign capitalist development goals. These case studies reveal development as an inherently geopolitical process that tends to disregard the autonomy of marginalized populations.

Keywords: environment, El Mirador, Fordlandia, Indigenous sovereignty, geopolitics, conservation

1 INTRODUCTION

In the field of environmental geopolitics, scholars explore how certain actors advance desirable place-based^a outcomes through the geopolitical narratives they present to the public¹. Analyzing these narratives and how they support particular agendas helps develop a holistic view of the cultural, political, and environmental factors involved in geopolitical issues. O’Lear identifies three common themes in environmental geopolitics: claims tend to 1) present unclear arguments about what “the environment” refers to, 2) obscure human agency and power dynamics, and 3) employ selective spatial focuses that hide larger systemic problems¹. Critical analysis of environmental geopolitical narratives involves questioning the assumptions underlying claims or arguments made by different actors and determining how they relate to their potential motivations or objectives.

^a“Place-based” describes an approach where activities, policies, or projects are fundamentally centered on a specific geographic location and influenced by its community.

Using O’Lear’s¹ themes as entry points to examine geopolitical narratives of the past helps uncover a clearer picture of the intentions and consequences behind past political decisions. Historical geopolitical narratives can then be compared to current-day controversies in the geopolitical arena, helping to clarify important questions about the agendas of different parties and their methods for achieving them. O’Lear’s¹ theme of blurred or simplistic representations of “the environment” is the most useful lens for applying the environmental geopolitics framework to these case studies and will be the central focus of this paper. Comparing the past and present reveals how enduring geopolitical narratives about the environment influence capitalist development plans and affect marginalized groups such as Indigenous peoples and small local communities. This comparative geopolitical analysis of Fordlandia and the proposed development of a privately funded park in El Mirador highlights how development, as a geopolitical process in a globalizing world, tends to disregard Indigenous peoples’ autonomy and stewardship of their land based on differing perceptions of value or power

inherent in the environment.

2 METHODOLOGY

I conducted a literature review in which I first examined the geopolitical narratives surrounding each case study, focusing on O’Lear’s¹ first theme of environmental geopolitics: unclear, blurred, or biased representations of “the environment”. I then compared the case studies to explore how long-lasting narratives about “the environment” influence development plans and marginalized communities. I first gathered basic historical and contextual information about Henry Ford’s company town, Fordlandia. I searched for the prevailing geopolitical narratives surrounding the project by reviewing archived newspaper articles, historical media, and contemporary scholarly works to determine how the endeavor was framed by primarily U.S. American audiences. This analysis involved critically examining the messaging surrounding Fordlandia to understand how narratives about the project represented and defined “the environment”, specifically the Amazon rainforest. Because the literature from the time lacks Indigenous perspectives, in this step I sought to address questions such as: what or who did these narratives neglect to acknowledge, particularly regarding Indigenous populations, culture, and their stewardship of the land? How did the framing of Fordlandia as a battle against an “unconquerable” wilderness help further a corporate and colonial agenda?

I applied the same critical analysis to the modern controversy in El Mirador, Guatemala. This process involved gathering news, interviews, and articles from the perspectives of American archaeologist Dr. Richard Hansen and the Native communities living in the El Mirador basin to identify the current geopolitical narratives at play. I focused my investigation on how Hansen and his allies blur representations of the environment to their advantage, often overlooking the successful, existing local conservation efforts and the impact that their development plan could have on local communities. I concluded my analysis by comparing the historical narratives of Fordlandia with the contemporary narratives of El Mirador. This comparative analysis serves to investigate how portrayals of the environment have changed or remained consistent over time, and how these narratives have helped to advance desirable outcomes for powerful players in the geopolitical arena.

3 FORDLANDIA: GEOPOLITICAL NARRATIVES OF HENRY FORD’S COMPANY TOWN

In 1927, Henry Ford acquired a large plot of land in the Amazon rainforest on which he intended to grow a rubber plantation that would produce latex for vehi-

cle manufacturing—the only natural resource involved in Model T production that he did not yet control². The project involved building a town reminiscent of American cities in which Ford’s plantation employees would live and work². Ford attempted to transplant the American midwest, spending millions on two towns that boasted central squares, indoor plumbing, Cape Cod-style bungalows, manicured lawns, movie theaters, golf courses, and roads hosting Model T’s². These features were ill-placed in the Amazon rainforest, presenting long-term maintenance issues for Ford and causing both physical and cultural discomfort for Indigenous laborers. Indigenous people were not forced to work for Ford, but the alternative was leaving the land they had called home for generations. While living and working in Fordlandia, workers were required to assimilate into American culture, including participating in square dancing classes, complying with alcohol prohibition and a strict bell schedule, and eating unfamiliar foods like oatmeal and canned peaches³. The Fordlandia plantation eventually failed due to leaf blight, a disease caused by monocropping rubber trees, which drove the formation of a second plantation down the river known as Belterra⁴. Efforts to recover Fordlandia were hindered by worker rebellion as Indigenous employees grew frustrated with Ford’s attempts to control their lifestyles. Belterra was eventually overcome with blight as well, and in 1945, Ford sold both plots of land back to the Brazilian government for a mere \$250,000 compared to the \$20 million he had invested over the decades⁴. Ford’s attempt to control the Amazon and its people without regard for existing systems and practices eventually resulted in Fordlandia’s downfall.

Representations of the Amazon rainforest created not only by Ford but by popular media and Western^b culture at the time reveal the colonial implications of Fordlandia’s development and suggest that Fordlandia was more than just a business venture. As Grandin² writes, the creation of Fordlandia was “billed as a proxy fight” in which Ford represented the “vigor... that defined American capitalism” while the Amazon “embodied... an ancient world that had so far proved unconquerable”². News circulated about Ford’s ambitious mission, exciting the masses. A German newspaper wrote that this was the beginning of “a new and titanic fight between nature and modern man”². An author in the Washington Post hailed Ford for bringing “‘white man’s magic’ to the wilderness”^{2,c}. Geopolitical narra-

^bAnthropologist Kwame Anthony Appiah discusses the history of the term “Western” and why it is not an accurate descriptor in his opinion piece “There is no such thing as western civilisation”⁵. Despite the inaccuracy of the term, which can be understood as a euphemism for the white, Christian, developed world of European heritage, it is used in this paper as a familiar reference to the hegemony of the aforementioned culture on a global scale.

^cFor other mentions of Fordlandia in the news, see “Ford Efficiency Scores Triumph on Rubber Farm” (1935)⁶ and Dyer (1949)⁷.

tives represented the Amazon as being a sort of “final frontier” in need of conquering and settlement, and Ford was the white American hero who would finally manage to triumph over nature.

These themes were further enforced by a Walt Disney production titled *The Amazon Awakens*, made for the U.S. Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs and released in 1944. The Office of the U.S. Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs was an agency that sought to promote economic cooperation and “strengthen the bonds” between the Americas⁸. The film provides a synopsis of the settlement of the Amazon basin, including an introduction to Fordlandia. The geopolitical narratives of the Amazon as an environmental frontier and Ford as a brave pioneer are consistent messages throughout the film. At the beginning of the documentary, the narrator claims, “The river has rich reward for all who will come...and to all mankind, a new frontier”(2:20)⁹. While discussing the deforestation along the Tapajós River to make space for Fordlandia, the narrator comments that, “Sometimes the jungle giant will stubbornly resist the encroachment of man, but it’s a losing battle”, further contributing to the branding of Fordlandia’s creation as being a fight against nature (19:04)⁹. The film goes on to say that, “The jungle falls back to make way for a model community” and that it “does its share to fulfill human needs, (24:04)⁹. These messages imply that the Amazon is somehow antagonistic or corrupting due to its wildness and that it should be tamed and made to provide for its conquerors. Furthermore, the concept of a “model community” replacing the jungle and existing Indigenous settlements suggests that the native community does not fulfill the criteria of being good or civilized. In this way, the Indigenous inhabitants of the Amazon are wrapped up in the definition of “the environment” by the geopolitical narratives surrounding Fordlandia, which ignore their autonomy and promote the idea of a “civilized” alternative.

The narrative of American frontierism in *The Amazon Awakens* fails to acknowledge Indigenous communities that had settled and were living in the Amazon centuries before Fordlandia’s development. In this narrative, man must tame the wilderness and exert dominion over the new frontier—an example of man-versus-nature thinking that has persisted in Western culture for centuries as a result of early religious and philosophical thinking^{10,d}. Indigenous settlements, cultures, and lives either remain unacknowledged or are considered part of the Amazon environment and therefore intolerable. The legacy of Indigenous displacement as a result of colonization in the Americas exemplifies the

^dThe nature-culture divide has both classical and theological origins: Socrates’ writings discuss evolutionary theory and the idea that man is unique for his higher perceptive ability, and in Judeo-Christian theology, Genesis 1 commands humankind to exercise dominion over other living things¹⁰.

environmental geopolitical narratives that accompany the Western man-versus-nature cultural tension. Clear parallels can be drawn between Ford’s company town and the historical erasure of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous biocentric^e worldviews in places like the Amazon. From the perspective of Western hegemonic culture, Indigenous people were not entitled to land that they had not tried to conquer or control in some way. Indigenous peoples value land differently, often considering nature and the environment equal in power to human society. Considering the implementation of man-versus-nature thinking in colonial histories, the discourse surrounding Fordlandia’s creation in the untamable jungle was inherently geopolitical. It further suggests that Ford intended not only to industrialize the Amazon but to colonize it as well.

Other scholars have also studied the colonial implications of the Fordlandia project. Rochat discusses Fordlandia as an example of primitive accumulation⁶ and colonial capitalism, which he claims took form through “indigenous land dispossession and exploitation of the earth”³. Bousfield interprets Fordlandia as a case study of how automation and a lack of human-nature integration are connected to the limitations of the settler colonial project^{11,f}. Both evaluations support the conclusion that Ford’s “settler fantasies of progress” drove his attempt to impose reason and control on the Amazonian jungle¹¹. Ford viewed his methods as superior simply because they were modern, American, “civilized” methods. He did not acknowledge the role that the nonhuman, vegetal world would play in his goals for Fordlandia. His monoculture plantation ignored the ecology of the rubber trees he intended to grow, leaving them susceptible to blight. He also did not acknowledge the Indigenous community’s existing way of life, choosing to forcefully assimilate them into his culture rather than respecting or learning from them. His efforts to save Fordlandia were hindered by employee rebellion as a result.

Ford prioritized an idealistic vision of transforming the untamable rainforest through his controlled system of rubber production. He relied on public support for scientific progress and the misplaced belief in the superiority of his methods to fuel his endeavor, rather than on an understanding of the Amazonian land or its people. Western assumptions of value, power, and sovereignty underlay Ford’s failure to consider the role of the natural world in determining how the human-

^eBiocentric worldviews acknowledge the intrinsic value of all life forms, in contrast to anthropocentric worldviews, which posit that human beings possess greater inherent value and that only human interests matter.

^f“Settler colonialism” refers to a form of colonialism in which settlers claim territory, displacing its original inhabitants, and establish a society to replace that which existed prior. See Schuessler (2024)¹² for a discussion of the use of this term in high-visibility modern geopolitical issues.

built environment would interface with the Amazonian environment. Told from another perspective, the story of Fordlandia's downfall is one of environmental and Indigenous resistance to settler and corporate colonialism, displacement, and erasure.

4 EL MIRADOR: A PROPOSED RESORT PARK IN THE MAYA JUNGLE

The Maya Biosphere Reserve, located in El Petén, Guatemala, is a UNESCO-recognized biosphere reserve representing one of the largest tropical forest sites north of the Amazon (UNESCO, 2024). The reserve is part of a larger forest system known as the Selva Maya and hosts an ancient Maya settlement called El Mirador. Dr. Richard Hansen, an American archaeologist who has dedicated decades of his career to studying El Mirador, has suggested that this site—rather than more well-known destinations such as Tikal—was the cradle of Maya civilization, giving it great cultural and historical significance¹³. Hundreds of Maya structures have been discovered in and around El Mirador, including pyramids and even ancient highways¹³. Hansen's plan to preserve the area has generated massive controversy in recent years: he aims to use U.S. government funding to acquire the land and develop a privately managed ecotourism resort park in El Mirador, complete with hotels, restaurants, guided tours, and even a light rail through the jungle¹⁴. Native communities are disillusioned by Hansen's proposal, claiming it is an imperialist vision that would strip them of control of their land and undo the benefits of local conservation programs. Jeff Abbott, an author for the North American Congress on Latin America, suggests that the controversy surrounding El Mirador is "the latest front in a battle between top-down and bottom-up models of development" for the region¹⁴. As with any land development program proposed for on Indigenous territories, discussions surrounding the park are characterized by charged geopolitical narratives directed related that relate directly to the environment.

4.1 Dr. Richard Hansen's Perspective

Hansen has repeatedly insisted that his only goal is to protect and preserve the Mirador Basin, framing the environment as precious and fragile in his claims. He believes the area is at risk of destruction by organized crime groups that have entered the reserve to participate in illegal economies such as logging, poaching, and drug trafficking; he feels that the proposed park will offer better regulation and protection from these intruders¹³.

When asked about his intentions, Hansen said: "I am not leading any imperialist invasion... We are simply trying to suggest that there is a viable, superior eco-

nomic alternative for the impoverished communities [in El Mirador] through controlled, restricted ecotourism, as opposed to... poaching, looting, logging, oil drilling, and money laundering by corrupt forces that do not want the conservation and protection of this area"¹³.

Hansen has also said that he does not support big capital investment in El Mirador because it would interfere with archaeological studies and harm the jungle through the construction of highways, airports, and recreation areas¹⁵. Instead, he proposes that a light rail would limit environmental impact while providing tourists with access to the basin in order to fund research and conservation¹⁵. Despite this claim, Hansen's vision for hotel and museum construction constitutes a large infrastructure investment in El Mirador which implies negative environmental consequences for the Selva Maya. Hansen further supported his argument that he aims to conserve the jungle by sharing his research findings about the collapse of El Mirador, which he believes was caused by an abuse of natural resources. His research suggests that extensive burning of wood to create quicklime, a status symbol in Maya society, led to soil erosion and contamination, creating the conditions for drought and famine¹³. Hansen claims "they stopped thinking about the future and the fatal consequences of environmental abuse" and "[he] finds it curious that... the same mentality and attitudes continue to the present day"¹³. This research finding provides Hansen with both professional and emotional credibility when he claims that his sole objective is the environmental conservation of the Mirador Basin. However, Hansen has also called El Mirador a "real live Disneyland", expressing, "We don't have to invent anything. It's all here. Animals, crocodiles, tapirs, jaguars, ruins, jungle, macaws, parrots, toucans, it's all here!"¹⁶. Referring to El Mirador as "Disneyland" indicates a desire to capitalize on the tourism value of the Selva Maya. Hansen presents opposing representations of the environment with inconsistent claims about his desire to protect its fragility versus claims of its potential economic value as a tourism destination.

To obtain the funds for his proposed park, Hansen authored a bill that was introduced to the United States Senate titled the "Mirador-Calakmul Basin Maya Security and Conservation Partnership Act of 2019". Sponsored by Sen. James Inhofe [R-OK], the bill would have "[authorized] the Secretary of the Interior to establish a Maya Security and Conservation Partnership Program" and "[authorized] appropriations for that program" had it passed¹⁷. Appropriations would have consisted of USD 12,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 2021 through 2026¹⁷. In the bill, the Congressional findings acknowledge that the Mirador Basin is a "reservoir of genetic diversity that can spark... advances in medical, agricultural, and industrial technology", representing the environment primarily as an economic and scien-

tific resource rather than inherently valuable¹⁷. The bill was proposed right before land concessions contracts in Guatemala, which are renewed every twenty-five years, were to be reviewed by the Guatemalan government¹⁴. Concession renewal offered Hansen the best opportunity to make his plan a reality as his proposed park overlapped with several areas that would be up for renewal in 2023¹⁴. The bill did not pass, meaning Hansen has not yet secured government funding for public or private entities to finance infrastructure projects in El Mirador.

Despite many opposing voices, such as a protest at the L.A. Book Festival in 2023, Hansen plans to continue trying to create a sustainable sanctuary in El Mirador through his development proposals. Some who support his cause, such as Neshá Xuncax, secretary of Maya Visión, suggest that there is a disinformation campaign against Hansen that has attempted to discredit him as an imperial intruder with hidden financial motivations¹⁵. He has even received death threats¹⁵. Hansen and Xuncax both consider that such a campaign may be in the interest of corrupt organizations that aim to prevent further protection in the area so they may continue illegally poaching or logging¹³. The complex range of interests in the area creates ripe opportunity for conflicting representations of the environment. Hansen employs varying narratives about his development plan, framing the Selva Maya as both fragile and resilient, as well as both useful and dangerous to exploit. The representation he uses often depends on his audience.

Finally, Hansen's opinion of the Guatemalans who oppose his plan is useful contextual information when considering geopolitical narratives involved in the situation. He has repeatedly suggested that resistance to the proposed park is "largely because Guatemalans are not familiar with the type of development he plans"¹⁶. In an interview with VICE News, Hansen expressed his frustration with the sentiment that he is an "imperialist gringo" and "wants to get rich"¹⁴. He went on to imitate a gesture of smoking marijuana while saying "These people are so... They don't see the way. That's one of my criticisms of the Guatemalans, there's no vision"¹⁴. Through statements like these, Hansen characterizes residents of El Mirador as careless and opposed to taking any action, which perpetuates a harmful colonial stereotype that Indigenous people are "primitive" or oppose development⁸.

⁸Hansen's comment about Guatemalans' "lack of vision" for their land is reflective of deeply rooted, harmful stereotypes about Indigenous peoples that can be traced back to colonial ideology about "lazy Indians". The "lazy Indian" myth and other stereotypes that suggest native peoples are maladjusted to modern times likely inform Hansen's biased perspective about native communities' inability to be stewards of their own land. By portraying Indigenous peoples as inherently lazy, myths like these justify colonial intervention as being necessary for progress.

4.2 Through Local's Eyes

Most of the opposition to Hansen's planned resort park is from local residents of the area. They feel that Hansen's project will replace successful community conservation efforts with an industrial tourism model that will harm their livelihoods and the environment¹⁸. Local land management programs, including the community forestry model run by the Association of Forest Communities of Petén (ACOFOP), already meet environmental goals and generate economic benefits¹⁹. Under this model, local Maya and mestizo communities live in the reserve and sustainably produce and harvest timber, latex, allspice, nuts, and an ornamental palm called xate¹⁹. Communities also successfully protect their land from fire and outsiders through patrols trained in drone use²⁰. Several studies demonstrate that Indigenous-managed land shows lower rates of deforestation and that there have even been net gains^h in forest cover within the eastern Maya Biosphere Reserve^{19, 16}. Even without government or financial incentives, Native peoples have historically protected their environments because they rely on them. Communities in the Mirador Basin are no different, and science confirms the efficacy of their management. Furthermore, large-scale tourism, even if it is intended to be controlled and managed sustainably, will increase the demand for natural resources in the area and inevitably cause harm to the environment through disturbance. Local communities worry that Hansen's plan will harm the Selva Maya rather than protect it.

Beyond environmental concerns, locals also argue that Hansen's plan will develop El Mirador, but will leave them behind in the process. If protected areas become privatized instead, Indigenous communities will lose access to the forest, which they rely on for the sustainable harvesting of wood, latex, xate, and other products for their livelihoods^{19, 18}. Iyaxel Cojtí Ren, a Maya K'iche' archeologist, expresses the concern of local communities: "...they will be excluded and become employees of the planned tourism enterprise; they would no longer be protagonists in the [Mirador Basin]"¹⁹. Hansen's project would dominate the economy and locals would be left with only two choices—work as employees at Hansen's resort park or search out new opportunities away from their home. Local communities feel as though they have no say in the process as Hansen did not fulfill his Free, Prior, and Informed Consentⁱ obligation of consulting with Indigenous peoples about any projects that would impact their land¹⁹. From an Indigenous perspective, the environment of El Mirador

^hSee CONAP & WCS, 2018²¹.

ⁱFree, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) refers to the legal framework which requires the consent on Indigenous communities before any project which will affect their territory is approved. The right to consultation is protected in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which Guatemala has signed²².

represents their livelihood and ancestral heritage, both of which they fear losing if Hansen's proposal comes to pass.

5 CONCLUSION: PARALLELS BETWEEN FORDLANDIA AND HANSEN'S EL MIRADOR

Examining the geopolitical narratives surrounding Fordlandia's development compared to Hansen's proposed resort park in El Mirador produces what seems like opposite results at first. Fordlandia was an attempt to tame the wilderness and control nature via development in the Amazon rainforest, while Hansen seemingly wants to develop El Mirador in order to protect nature. Narratives surrounding Fordlandia represented the environment as belligerent and a powerful enemy, while most narratives surrounding El Mirador represent the environment as fragile and unprotected. However, the underlying assumption of these conflicting conclusions is quite similar: in both situations, geopolitical narratives do not afford the environment or the people living there the right or the autonomy to protect their way of living.

Given the theme of "civilizing" the forest and its inhabitants, Fordlandia can be safely described as a colonial project. On the other hand, Hansen refutes any accusations of imperialism or colonial intentions, despite a number of comments that allude to his disrespectful views of Guatemalan people and excitement about a tourism industry. While he insists that his intentions are misrepresented, seeking U.S. government funding to control the land and introduce foreign influence is suggestive of a possible colonial threat, owing to the potential for displacement of local communities. From the perspective of local communities themselves, Hansen is providing them with the same two choices the Indigenous people in Fordlandia were offered: work for him, or leave. Indigenous communities are disconnected from their territory and forced to comply with a foreigner's vision for development on their land, losing power in the process as their already successful land management strategies are threatened.

The comparative analysis of geopolitical narratives surrounding Fordlandia and Hansen's proposed project in El Mirador highlights the idea that development is an inherently geopolitical process, especially in a globalizing world where foreign actors may benefit economically from subtly controlling territories that do not belong to them. Too often, Indigenous people's sovereignty and rights to their land are not recognized; instead, they are considered part of the environment that needs to be developed or changed to align with foreign, often Western, concepts of efficiency and value. Indigenous and local communities must have the right to manage their lands and homes on their own terms,

free from the imposition of Western ideals that do not align with their ways of life.

Future research could expand upon the parallels between Fordlandia and the proposed El Mirador park by applying other elements of O'Lear's¹ environmental geopolitics framework. Specifically, the influence of human agency, power dynamics, and selective spatial focus in the discourse surrounding these developments warrants further analysis. Alternatively, comparisons with other historical and contemporary South and Central American examples could reveal additional evidence of how narratives about the environment play into geopolitical issues in the region. A broader-scope analysis is also possible, examining global narratives about nature and the environment to investigate how they contribute to the marginalization of specific populations. This sweeping comparison could involve case studies from North America, South America, South Asia, and other worldwide locations.

6 EDITOR'S NOTES

This article was peer-reviewed.

REFERENCES

- [1] O'Lear, S. Environmental geopolitics: an introduction to questions and research approaches. *A Research Agenda for Environmental Geopolitics* (2020).
- [2] Grandin, G. Fordlandia: The rise and fall of Henry Ford's forgotten jungle city. *Picador* 1–18 (2010).
- [3] Rochat, M. Primitive accumulation and multinational corporations: The evolution of dispossession and exploitation in the rubber industry. *The Journal of International Relations, Peace Studies, and Development* 7 (2022).
- [4] de Souza Mello Bicalho, A. M. & Hoefle, S. W. Fordlandia and Belterra yesterday and today: lessons from failed projects of the Amazon. *Twentieth Century Land Settlement Schemes* 134–158 (2018).
- [5] Appiah, K. A. There is no such thing as western civilisation. *The Guardian* (2016).
- [6] Ford efficiency scores triumph on rubber farm. *Oregonian, NewsBank: America's Historical Newspapers* (1935).
- [7] Dyer, R. Experiment fails: Ford's rubber empire dream is swallowed up by jungle. *Augusta Chronicle, NewsBank: America's Historical Newspapers* 24 (1949).
- [8] of the President [Franklin D. Roosevelt] United States, E. O. Executive order 8840: Establishing the office of the coordinator of inter-american affairs in the executive office of the president and defining its functions and duties. *Federal Register* 6 (1941).

King of the jungle

- [9] Roberts, B. The amazon awakens. *Walt Disney Studios* (1944).
- [10] Glacken, C. J. Reflections on the history of western attitudes to nature. *GeoJournal* **26**, 103–111 (1992).
- [11] Bousfield, D. Settler colonialism in vegetal worlds: exploring progress and resilience at the margins of the anthropocene. *Settler Colonial Studies* **10**, 15–33 (2020).
- [12] Schuessler, J. What is ‘settler colonialism’? *The New York Times* (2024).
- [13] Maciel, A. & Lemus, J. J. Jaguars, narcos, illegal loggers: One man’s battle to save a jungle and maya ruins. *San Diego Union-Tribune* (2023).
- [14] News, V. Mayan ruins in guatemala could become a u.s.-funded tourist attraction (2020).
- [15] Maciel, A. What was behind the protest at the l.a. times book festival? *Los Angeles Times* (2023).
- [16] Clipston, T. Jungle theme park threatens conservation efforts. *Maya Biosphere Watch* (2019).
- [17] Inhofe, J. M. S. S.3131 - mirador-calakmul basin maya security and conservation partnership act of 2019. *116th Congress* (2019).
- [18] Abbott, J. U.s. archeologist seeks to privatize maya historic sites in the name of conservation. *NACLA* (2020).
- [19] Nazario, J. & Cherofsky, J. “the communities know we are managing the forest well”: Rainforest and sacred site in guatemala at risk of privatization by u.s. archaeologist. *Cultural Survival* (2020).
- [20] Pearce, F. Parks vs. people: In guatemala, communities take best care of the forest (2020).
- [21] CONAP & del Sistema, W. A. Monitoreo de la gobernabilidad en la reserva de la biosfera maya, actualización al año 2017. *CONAP* (2019).
- [22] Bunch, A. & Loarca, C. Mining conflict and indigenous consultation in guatemala. *Americas Quarterly* (2013).