

EXPLORING MARKET-BASED DEVELOPMENT: MARKET INTERMEDIARIES AND FARMERS IN CALAKMUL, MEXICO*

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ABSTRACT. Market intermediaries play important roles in the development of tropical-forest frontiers but are often overlooked in the assessment of land-change dynamics. Consistent with research beyond land-change studies, intermediaries are found to be a pivotal element in land-use and land-cover change in southeastern Mexico. They have stimulated commercial chili cultivation in this development frontier, providing transportation and other services to smallholders who could otherwise not enter the chili market. This role comes at the cost of a near monopoly on chili marketing. The various roles played by these intermediaries, or *coyotes*, the means by which they operate, and the consequences for smallholders and land use are detailed for the Calakmul Municipality, Campeche, Mexico. *Keywords:* land-use and land-cover change, market intermediaries, Mexico, smallholders, tropical development, Yucatán.

Preservation of tropical forests lies at the nexus of conservation strategies and market forces. Guided by concerns about globalization, neoliberalism, sustainability, and global environmental change, various research communities have addressed the development or degeneration of tropical forests. Many researchers are particularly concerned with the ways in which tropical forest communities and their habitats are tied into the larger ecological and economic world beyond their immediate locale (see, for example, Blaikie and Brookfield 1987; Lambin and others 2001; Lawrence and others 2004). For these scholars the specific research question is often less significant than their overriding concern with how global markets reach into and threaten the viability of tropical habitats and the livelihood activities of their inhabitants. The global influence of markets is examined directly, in terms of the dynamics of commodity chains, by Jeffrey Sachs (2000, 2005), Jagdish Bhagwati (2004), and Martin Wolf (2004), and more indirectly through the remittances of migrants on their places of origin (Selby, Murphy, and Lorenzen 1990). Other scholars have explored how ramifications of entitlements (Sen 1999), social capital (Bebbington 2000), and unequal power relationships (Peet and Watts 1996; Roberts 1996; Marsden and others 1996) affect the sustainability of tropical forest ecosystems.

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