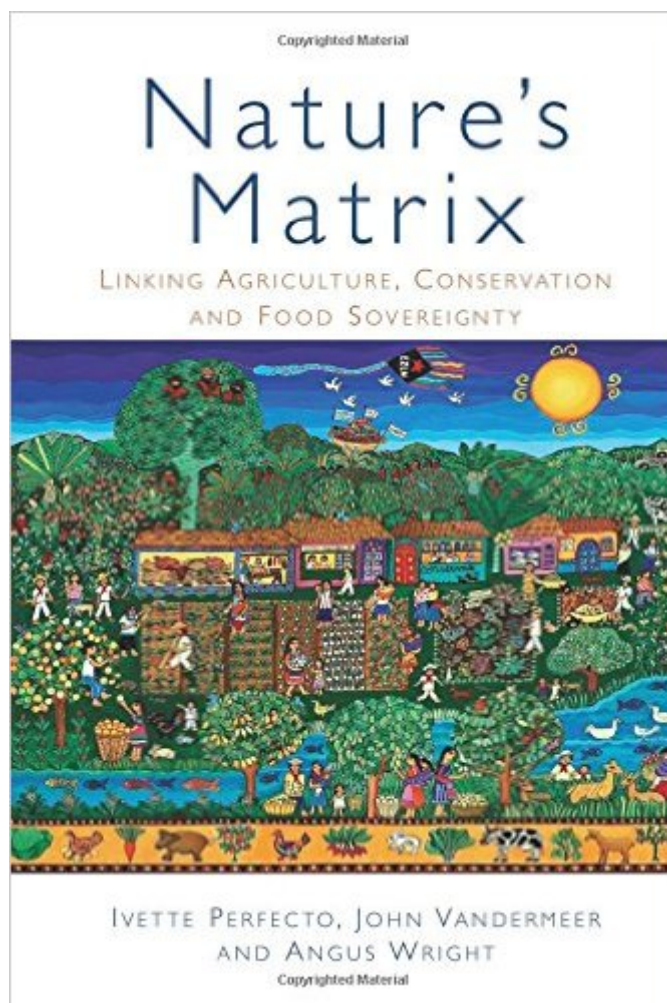


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# Nature's Matrix: Linking Agriculture, Conservation And Food Sovereignty



## Synopsis

Landscapes are frequently seen as fragments of natural habitat surrounded by a 'sea' of agriculture. But recent ecological theory shows that the nature of these fragments is not nearly as important for conservation as is the nature of the matrix of agriculture that surrounds them. Local extinctions from conservation fragments are inevitable and must be balanced by migrations if massive extinction is to be avoided. High migration rates only occur in what the authors refer to as 'high quality' matrices, which are created by alternative agroecological techniques, as opposed to the industrial monocultural model of agriculture. The authors argue that the only way to promote such high quality matrices is to work with rural social movements. Their ideas are at odds with the major trends of some of the large conservation organizations that emphasize targeted land purchases of protected areas. They argue that recent advances in ecological research make such a general approach anachronistic and call, rather, for solidarity with the small farmers around the world who are currently struggling to attain food sovereignty. Nature's Matrix proposes a radically new approach to the conservation of biodiversity based on recent advances in the science of ecology plus political realities, particularly in the world's tropical regions.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The park system is the prevailing model for biodiversity protection in the world - think Teddy R. and the US National Park Service; think Tanzania's Selous National Park, the biggest in the world.

Armed guards, strict rules, "nature here, humans there". Biologists have long recognized that local

extinctions were common, even in these big, dynamic parks, so "corridors" were the rage a few years ago, little pathways that would connect two "natural" areas to each other to allow migration (the solution to local extinction) - bridges over busy highways, for example. Most ecologists have found this approach hasn't worked. Using a dazzling array of different disciplinary perspectives (biology, history, politics, anthropology), Perfecto et al. propose a "matrix" model of biodiversity protection that recognizes humans as potential stewards of the environment right where they live and work. Conservationists, they argue, have been blind to the political realities that drive extinction in the most sensitive regions, regions that happen to be in the poorest areas of the world. They focus their attention on agriculture, which has been such a destructive force in places like Brazil. But they draw an important distinction between the Green Revolution-style industrial system usually encouraged by the global economic powers and the farming practiced by smallholders around the world. The latter, they argue, actually contribute to this matrix of biodiversity by showing more care for the land and thus conservationists should support and work closely with rural social movements that advocate for them. The book cites two large case studies from Latin America from coffee farms in Central America and cocoa farms in Brazil.

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