Akinanantí
Permaculture and chacras integrales: Reciprocity to regenerate the Amazon
As in many Amazonian cosmologies, for the Shipibo people, both human and non-human. The plants and trees, the animals, with humankind. Drawing its name from the Shipibo culture, all beings that make the rainforest their home.

Emerging from this cosmology, one of the main pillars of Amazonian indigenous wisdom is the truth of interdependence: the experiential knowledge that, as individuals, we do not exist in isolation. As members of an organic community we are woven into a net of inter-being that entails mutual responsibility for the wellbeing of each other, our human kin as well as our non-human family.

In the Shipibo language, this is called Akinanantí: reciprocal, thriving community.
As in many Amazonian cosmologies, for the Shipibo people the rainforest is a vast, diverse community of sentient beings, both human and non-human. The plants and trees, the animals, the rivers and all of nature’s phenomena are interwoven with humankind. Drawing its name from the Shipibo culture, the Chaikuni Institute is committed to defend and protect all beings that make the rainforest their home.

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In the Shipibo language, this is called **Akinanantí**: reciprocity and mutual responsibility are the primary pillars of a heal-
Supporting eco-social enterprises in the Amazon

Our revolutionary initiative aims to put reciprocity and mutual responsibility at the forefront of our individual and planetary healing process. It is a call to stand together and generously give back to the Amazon, its plants, and its people, by supporting eco-social enterprises in the Amazon. These projects will provide:

- Regenerative ayahuasca production to meet the ever increasing local and international demand and counter the trend of increasing scarcity.
- Reforestation in the Amazon through productive agroforestry systems.
- Income for local Amazonian families short, medium and long term.
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- Ayahuasca production to meet the ever-increasing local and international demand and counter the trend of increasing scarcity.
Protecting the Amazon rainforest: An imperative of our times.

The Amazon rainforest is crucial to life on earth as we know it: It contains over half of the planet’s remaining rainforest habitat, produces one fifth of the planet’s oxygen, is responsible for 25% of the terrestrial absorption of global CO2 emissions and produces one sixth of the planet’s fresh water. It is the world’s premier bio-cultural diversity hotspot, home to dozens of unique cultures, mythologies and languages, as well as animals and healing plants.

Yet, the Amazon is being deforested at a massive 1.4 million hectares per year,1 facing the greatest environmental and social challenges it ever has.

This trend has been greatly exacerbated by a widespread shift away from a regenerative, interdependent and mutually nurturing forest management paradigm, developed for millennia by indigenous peoples, towards industrial models of slash and burn mono-culturing with devastating ecological and human costs.

1 https://wwf.panda.org/our_work/forests/deforestation_fronts/deforestation_in_the_amazon/
The Amazon rainforest in numbers:

1/2 of the planet’s remaining rainforest habitat
1/5 of the planet’s oxygen production
25% of the terrestrial absorption of global CO2 emissions
1/6 of the planet’s fresh water production
First world’s bio-cultural diversity hotspot
Chacras Integrales

An alternative to slash-and-burn agriculture

There is a direct link between the health of the ecosystems and the health of native human communities. Indigenous forest-management practices have ensured harmonious and balanced relationships between people and environment for millennia.
Some local people have referred to this modality as chacras indígenas or chacras integrales, a permaculture-like method based on successional poly cropping and forest management techniques.

With colonization, immigration, and westernization, the shift from abundant, sustenance-based economies towards market-based cash economies, most of those practices have been lost to the now ubiquitous and devastating slash-and-burn techniques, resulting in widespread deforestation, forest degradation, and diverse socio-environmental conflicts.

“Slash-and-burn” agriculture describes the practice where a patch of living, thriving forest, is razed to the ground and then burned. This is essential to be able to turn the nutrient-poor and acidic Amazonian soil into a yucca, plantain or maize monoculture. However, this practice rapidly depletes the soil, and unless heavy chemical fertilizers are applied, the land loses its productivity after a couple of years, eventually forcing local or industrial farmers to clear new patches of land, while the previous plot will take decades to regenerate, if at all.

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2 Chemical fertilizers might prolong the time a field is producing and increase yields in the short-term, however, they are highly detrimental to the soil and land and completely destroy it in the long run.

3 Regeneration time will depend on different factors, such as crop planted, for how many years, and the applied agricultural practices (e.g., use and dosage of chemical fertilizers). If deforestation is large-scale, without any remaining forest in the vicinity, natural regeneration might not be possible.
Our part of the solution

Remembering chacras integrales and developing sustainable agroforestry systems and successional polycultures. Our permaculture program concentrates itself along five main pillars:

1. Our permaculture centre: where we demonstrate permaculture principles, practices and technologies

2. Investigation: we generate knowledge about permaculture and best practices

3. Outreach; capacity building with neighboring communities

Permaculture proposes a radically different solution; a permanent agriculture that doesn’t deplete it, but regenerates it. Drawing from local, ancestral knowledge, at Chaikuni we advocate for sustainable agroforestry systems and successional polycultures. Polyculture is the planting of more than 1 species of crops which also involves the rotation of crops (and in some cases livestock) on a piece of land.
Our part of the solution:

Remembering chacras integrales and developing tropical permaculture.

Permaculture proposes a radically different solution; a permanent culture, a way of cultivating the land that doesn’t deplete it, but regenerates it. Drawing from local, ancestral knowledge, at Chaikuni we advocate for sustainable agroforestry systems and successional polycultures.

Our permaculture program concentrates itself along five main pillars:

1. Outreach;
2. Capacity building with neighboring communities;
3. Supporting market access for neighboring communities;
4. Environmental education;
5. Environmental education.

4. Supporting market access for neighboring communities
Since its inception in 2012, the permaculture program of the Chai-kuni Institute has been recovering and researching healthy and regenerative ways of interacting with our environment, while sharing what we learn with the surrounding communities. The Permaculture Center, situated on the land of our sister organization, the Temple of the Way of Light, is a place where local Amazonian farmers work together with colleagues from across the planet, both to innovate and to remember.

On one hand, we aim to reclaim and remember ancestral ways of interacting with and managing the rainforest, practices that are rapidly being forgotten by local farmers. On the other hand, we aim to cross-pollinate local knowledge with the best insights and practices adapted from our experience with western-style permaculture. Our aim is to promote practices that are economically and environmentally appealing to the local communities, and can eventually provide a viable, alternative paradigm to the current dominant models that are overwhelmingly taxing the local ecosystems.
How does a regenerative agroforestry system work?

Instead of slashing-and-burning the forest, forest plots are selectively cleared. Valuable species are thus preserved, while others are cleared to make space for desirable crops or for nurturing the existing plants. Cut vegetation is left on the ground, mimicking the natural cycles of the rainforest ecosystem. Species that can coexist on mutually beneficial terms are planted next to each other. A wide, diverse variety of staple crops are planted together with fruit and timber trees, as well as medicinal plants (including the Ayahuasca vine).

By creating a living, thriving ecosystem, where different crops are harvested at different frequencies and in different seasons, this method provides regular, all-year-round income to local farmers and their families.

This multifunctional agroforestry landscape simultaneously provides economic, environmental and social resilience for the local families and, if applied widely, for a whole region.
Ayahuasca plantations

Generating sustainable income.

The recent global interest in Ayahuasca has been a mixed blessing for indigenous peoples. Although in some cases it provides economic opportunities and supports the continuous evolution of their practices and traditions, it is also —amongst other issues— causing a sharp decline in the local availability of the slow growing vine.

Around cities such as Iquitos or Pucallpa —the main epicenters of the current ayahuasca boom— scarcity means that local people need to travel further and further away in order to provide for their medicines. The extent of the global demand, however, also creates vast economic opportunities: the cultivation of ayahuasca holds untapped potential to generate alternative sources of income for amazonian populations.

Between 2011 and 2017, over 1,800 ayahuasca vines have been planted on the land of the Temple of the Way of Light, some of which are almost ready to be harvested. Our mid and long term goal is to teach, support and empower local farmers and communities to acquire the skills and the knowledge necessary to implement their own projects and diversify their income.
Our goal and long term impact

We aim to lead the way into true Akinananti for our global community by promoting the regenerative cultivation of income generating local products and medicinal plants, in particular the Ayahuasca vine, as a sustainable income source for rural Amazonian farmers, and as an inseparable and essential aspect of the long term restoration of balance and reciprocity between people, society and environment.

Restoring harmonious agro-forest management practices will promote economic resilience and abundance for the local communities, as well as ensuring that sacred cultural practices will continue to thrive and expand for the sake of our future generations.
Reciprocity in Practice: become involved

To boost our project, we are organizing a world class Permaculture Design Course (PDC), specifically tailored to educate and train a core group of highly dedicated and motivated rural Amazonian farmers into the basic principles and techniques of Permaculture.

Currently, we have an agreement with Tierra Martinez from the Na’Lu’Um Permaculture Institute, one of the most experienced and renowned permaculture teachers in Latin America, to come and teach the PDC for us in May 2019. By organizing the first such PDC for local farmers, we are planting precious seeds that will bloom into successful projects of eco-social entrepreneurship. The PDC, however, will only be possible if we reach the funding goal of our campaign.
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