# The Commodification of Nature:
# Power/Knowledge and REDD+ in Costa Rica

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## ABSTRACT

Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+) is a carbon trading program intent on mitigating or reversing carbon emissions from forestry in the global south. REDD+ was negotiated at the 2005 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and is coordinated by the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), administered by the World Bank Group. In this project, I explore REDD+ activity in Costa Rica, drawing on Michel Foucault's concept of governmentality. Costa Rica became a participant in the FCPF in July of 2008. Since then, indigenous peoples throughout the country have contested the program. This project is a single-case study of the Bribri contestation of REDD+ schemes, one of the larger indigenous communities in Costa Rica. Many Bribri argue that REDD+ disrespects their worldview and further endangers their local rights to land and forestry. This project argues that REDD+ and Bribri have different perceptions of nature, enabling disagreement on REDD+ goals. Whereas REDD+ perceives nature as commodifiable for the purposes of neoliberal climate policies, Bribri express a spiritual, harmonious relationship with nature. I conclude by noting that REDD+ can pose negative implications for indigenous life and culture. This is not only because REDD+ draws external and domestic actors to land and forestry for incentive-based purposes. But also because REDD+ defines 'rightful behavior' among forestry resources, challenging indigenous conceptions of environmental management. However, the Bribri are resisting REDD+ imposition and, particularly, the program's external governing of indigenous behavior among forests.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+) is a global initiative intent on reducing carbon emissions from forestry. After it was negotiated at the 2005 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), REDD+ soon gained the participation of many countries throughout the global south. In this project, I explore REDD+ activity in Costa Rica. Ever since Costa Rica became a participant in July of 2008, indigenous peoples throughout the country have contested the program. This project is a single-case study of the Bribri opposition towards REDD+. The Bribri express that REDD+ disrespects their worldview and, particularly, their traditional knowledge of environmental management. This project argues that REDD+ and the Bribri harbor different views of nature, leading to disagreements on REDD+ goals. While REDD+'s perception of nature is market-oriented, the Bribri envision a spiritual, harmonious relationship with nature. Though REDD+ intends to promote better management of forestry resources, it can threaten traditional indigenous practices on reserves. This project concludes that REDD+ can pose significant risks to Bribri life and culture, especially to their local rights to land and forestry.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Research Objectives

This project investigates Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+[1]) activity in Costa Rica since the country became a participant in the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) in July of 2008. REDD+ is a voluntary international carbon trading scheme, supported by the United Nations. It was negotiated at the 2005 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and is coordinated by the FCPF, administered by the World Bank Group. This scheme intends to mitigate climate change by reducing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere through the mobilization of private capital investments in clean energy technology, sustainable agriculture and forestry (FCPF, 2008). REDD+ quantifies $CO_2$ and oversees carbon sequestration initiatives, which is the long-term storage of atmospheric carbon dioxide by way of trees, grasses and other plants through photosynthesis. REDD+ targets the nations of the global south, since the program conceives them to be 'under-developed'. In Costa Rica, the Payment for Ecosystem Services Program (PES system),[2] coordinated by Fondo Nacional de Financiamiento Forestal (or FONAFIFO), is the systemic foundation for REDD+ schemes. This system, based on the principle 'whoever contaminates, pays', offers financial incentives to farmers or landowners in exchange for the management of their land to generate environmental services.

In Costa Rica, REDD+ has the potential to reshape indigenous forest conservation practices by alienating them from environmental decision-making. REDD+'s governance of

[1] The '+' was later added to REDD to represent the additional effort to "foster conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks" (FCPF).

[2] The PES system is also known as the PSA (*Pago por Servicios Ambientales*) system.

nature, or conservation spaces, beyond national borders and the constellation of international actors it accrues makes such reshaping possible. The following research question drives this project: *How does REDD+ both create and govern conduct in Costa Rica?* Michel Foucault's concept of governmentality, applied as a critique of "neoliberalism," is a useful framework for analyzing REDD+ activity. I use governmentality to help identify and interpret power relations at the local, national and international level, which the presence of REDD+ schemes, and principles of sustainable development, brings to bear in Costa Rica. For the purposes of this paper, I understand neoliberalism as "the elevation of market-based principles and techniques of evaluation to the level of state-endorsed norms" (Davies, 2014, 24). For William Davies, neoliberalism attempts to "replace political judgment with economic evaluation, including, but not exclusively, the evaluations offered by markets" (2014, 21). Furthermore, "the state does not necessarily (or at least, not always) cede power to markets, but comes to justify its decisions, policies and rules in terms that are commensurable with the logic of markets" (Ibid, 24). It is the marketization of local environments in Cost Rica by REDD+, in relation to non-market indigenous practices, that I critique through Foucault's notion of governmentality.

The REDD+ program emerged from the framework of sustainable development. The *Brundtland Report* (or *Our Common Future*) suggests "humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, 8). Furthermore,

> The concept of sustainable development does imply limits - not absolute limits but limitations imposed by the present state of technology and social organization on environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities. But technology and social organization can be both managed and improved to make way for a new era of economic growth (Ibid, 1987, 8).

The UN's *Agenda 21* acknowledges that "we are confronted with a perpetuation of disparities between and within nations, a worsening of poverty, hunger, ill health and illiteracy, and the continuing deterioration of the ecosystems on which we depend for our well-being" (1992, preamble). However, the "integration of environment and development concerns and greater attention to them will lead to the fulfillment of basic needs, improved living standards for all, better protected and managed ecosystems and a safer, more prosperous future" (Ibid, preamble). *Agenda 21* attests that no nation can do this alone, but "together we can - in a global partnership for sustainable development" (Ibid, preamble). This paradigm is the leading "global framework for international cooperation" (IISD, 2018). REDD+ is a climate policy that intends to promote sustainable development in developing areas, continuing this international norm.

The idea of sustainable development is not a universally applicable concept. Above all, it lacks a concrete, coherent definition (Death, 2010; Dryzek, 2013; Gunder, 2006). Carl Death acknowledges that 'sustainable development' is often "criticized for being too vague, full of contradictions and of doubtful scientific value" (2010, 36). Still, it is a strong *discourse* among the international community, which "has dominated the politics of environment and development since the publication of the Brundtland Commission's report" in 1987 (Ibid, 36). Building on Death's understanding, I approach and understand the framework of sustainable development as bringing "the entire planet into focus as an object of government" (Death, 2010, 37). Sustainable development is currently enmeshed in the current neoliberalization of global climate politics. The global north, with the UN, World Bank, and other institutions in tow, understands international carbon markets to be a viable response to climate change and a way to achieve 'capacity building' in developing areas.

## 1.2 Project Overview

In chapter 2, I examine the theoretical and empirical literature. The theoretical literature introduces Foucault's concept of governmentality and how leading theorists have since extended this concept to environmental politics and policy. Furthermore, I establish governmentality as the project's analytical framework. REDD+, itself a neoliberal climate policy, is capable of extending 'economic analysis' to non-economic domains. It is also capable of creating environmental subjectivities and governing the 'conduct' of populations in order to meet market-based objectives. In this project specifically, I note that REDD+ envisions indigenous, or Bribri, behavior among forests that is coherent with the logic of markets.

The empirical literature not only introduces REDD+ and its aims. It also demonstrates the program to be a new form of power and knowledge the global north extends to developing areas. Here I also demonstrate Costa Rica's structural changes toward sustainable development. The creation of Costa Rica's National Park System, the country's involvement in the 1980s debt crisis, and the effects of numerous environmental laws passed in recent years all contribute to Costa Rica's acceptance of sustainable development, or, specifically, incentivized environmental policies. The history covered in this section ranges from the early 1800s to 1997, or the year a new forestry law created the Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) program. I conclude by presenting the project method, methodology and limitations.

I examine and exemplify in chapter 3 both REDD+ and Bribri discourses. This chapter comprises the project methodology. I note distinct features of each discourse. I locate REDD+ discourse in the framework of sustainable development. The Bribri discourse, by contrast, suggests a spiritual, harmonious relationship with nature. This specific discourse challenges, or disturbs, market-based logic – suggesting this logic is not applicable to nature. In this project, the

Bribri represent the indigenous discourse. The Bribri, along with the Cabecar, live on roughly 80 percent of the total indigenous land in Costa Rica (Murillo *et al*, 2013). They are also the tribe most targeted under REDD+ plans. I conclude chapter 3 by recognizing that REDD+ constructs nature in a manner that enables the commodification of nature. Alternatively, the Bribri express a cosmologically oriented discourse that denotes a respectful, caring relationship with nature. These divergent views held by proponents of REDD+ and the Bribri make way for the possibility of tension.

In chapter 4, I look to the emergence of REDD+ in Costa Rica. Costa Rica negotiated for REDD+ to be nested in the PES system. Thus, Costa Rica's PES system holds important implications for REDD+'s success or failure in the country. In chapter 4 I also outline the recent history of the Bribri contestation of REDD+. These recent innovations in Costa Rica's environmental sector have unsettled the Bribri communities who perceive the prospect of REDD+ as additional efforts to commodify nature and disrespect indigenous worldviews. I conclude chapter 4 by recognizing that REDD+ has the potential to marginalize Bribri knowledge(s) which complicates their participation in local environmental decision-making. REDD+ privileges scientific and technical knowledge which culminates into governing institutions, external and domestic, guiding the conduct of the Bribri among natural resources. However, the Bribri, or at least their more vocal members, are resisting REDD+ schemes.

I conclude my project in chapter 5. I acknowledge what is occurring between REDD+ and the Bribri in Costa Rica is far from over. Sustainable development is the dominant discourse, while the discourse expressed by the Bribri is significantly weaker. Yet, the Bribri's situation is not written in stone. The Bribri are voicing their concerns to the Costa Rican government, as are other indigenous peoples elsewhere in Costa Rica. I note it is possible the Bribri *could* be open to

participate in REDD+. But this is contingent upon REDD+ proponents, both external and domestic, significantly changing schemes to ensure respect for Bribri cosmology and better security for collective forestry and land rights. However, Bribri participation is *unlikely* to occur given the international prominence for REDD+ and the centralized focus of commodifying nature inherent within the program. Therefore, REDD+, in its current state, will continue to pose a threat for Bribri livelihood and culture.

# Chapter 2: Governmentality, REDD+ and Linking Sustainable Development to Forests in Costa Rica

## 2.1 Governmentality, Environmental Politics and Policy in Costa Rica

Foucault began to formulate the concept of 'governmentality' in his 1977-78 lecture series, entitled *Security, Territory, and Population*, at the Collège de France (2007). Foucault saw governmentality as "an activity that undertakes to conduct individuals throughout their lives by placing them under the authority of a guide responsible for what they do and for what happens to them" (1997, 68). Later expanding on this 'art' of government in his 1978-79 lecture series *The Birth of Biopolitics*, he states, "The state is not a cold monster; it is the correlative of a particular way of governing. The problem is how this way of governing develops, what its history is, how it expands, how it contracts, how it is extended to a particular domain, and how it invents, informs, and develops new practices" (2008, 6). For Foucault, a certain mentality, which he deemed governmentality, "had become the common ground of all modern forms of political thoughts and action" (Rose *et al*, 2006, 86). Foucault traced the origins of this mentality to changes in the Christian pastorate, as well as to new diplomatic-military techniques and the emergence of police. These developments led to the governmentalization of the state (Foucault, 2007). Governmental power gave "rise to an art of conducting, directing, leading, guiding, taking in hand, and manipulating men, an art of monitoring them and urging them on step by step, an art with the function of taking charge of men collectively and individually throughout their life and at every moment of their existence" (Foucault, 2007, 165). This art of conducting individual's conduct began to be undertaken by political institutions (Foucault, 2007). When defining governmentality, Foucault understood it as an "ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific,

albeit very complex, power that takes the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument" (Foucault, 2007, 108). Moreover, Lövbrand *et al* state, "[governmentality] is a field of enquiry that problematizes the collective and often taken-for-granted systems of thought that make governing strategies appear natural and given at certain times in history" (2008, 8). Rather than reducing political power merely to actions of a state, governmentality recognizes that heterogeneous forms of authority "govern at different sites, in the light of different principles, knowledges and practices" (Ibid, 2008, 8; McGregor *et al,* 2015).

Critical to 'governmentality' is the notion of knowledge as power, and how governing entities use this power/knowledge. In an interview on the subject of geography, Foucault stated that

> Once knowledge can be analyzed in terms of region, domain, implantation, displacement transposition, one is able to capture the process by which knowledge functions as a form of power and disseminates the effects of power. There is an administration of knowledge, a politics of knowledge, relations of power which pass via knowledge and which, if one tries to transcribe them, lead one to consider forms of domination designated by such notions as field, region and territory (Foucault, 1980, 69).

For Foucault, knowledge and power are inexorably linked. This correlates with what Foucault understands to be the 'problem of government'. Foucault writes, 'government' "did not refer only to political structures or to the management of states; rather, it designated the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed – the government of children, of souls, of communities, of the sick" (Foucault, 2002, 326) Furthermore, "to govern, in this sense, is to control the possible field of action of others" (Foucault, 2002, 341). Regarding *who* is governed, Foucault states that "one never governs a state, a territory, or a political structure. Those whom one governs are people, individuals, or groups" (Foucault, 2007, 122). Ultimately,

governmentality refers to the emergence of governmental rationalities that extends toward shaping the conduct of populations.

Although Foucault did not use the concept of governmentality to address human-nature relations per se, many scholars have made the theoretical connection to environmental studies (Agrawal, 2005; Luke, 1999; McGregor *et al*, 2015). There is, then, a broad literature that addresses "the implications of Foucault's thought for environmental politics" (Death, 2011, 3). Yet, there is a great deal of diversity in governmentality research and applied use. Timothy Luke, for instance, investigates 'green governmentality'. He focuses on how states, and international bodies like the Brundtland Commission, grew aware of social and economic vulnerabilities to environmental factors and, in response, designed the discourse of sustainable development (1999, 38). This discourse "tells us that today's allegedly unsustainable environments need to be disassembled, recombined and subjected to the disciplinary designs of expert management" (Ibid, 142). Luke locates governmentality as an "enviro-discipline," a concept that "expresses the authority of eco-knowledge, geo-powered forces to police the fitness of all biological organisms and the health of their natural environments" (Ibid, 146). Concerning green governmentality, Stephanie Rutherford more recently contends, "Corporations, all levels of government, scientists, United Nations organizations, and global think tanks have all inserted themselves into the game of speaking for nature" (2007, 295). Through this speaking for nature, global environmental responsibility shifts onto the population (Luke, 1999; Rutherford, 2007; Paterson and Stripple, 2009; Soneryd and Uggla, 2015). Similarly, Carl Death locates a broad form of 'eco-governmentality' in international environmental summits. Death uses governmentality to investigate the "modes in which rationalities of power/knowledge have governed and conducted politics in different contexts and at different times" (2010, 16). He argues that environmental

summits, particularly Johannesburg and Copenhagen, fail and are instead an exercise in theatricality. Summits, he argues, project power from a distance by way of "discursive horizons of intelligibility, or expectations of behavior" (Ibid, 5). Arun Agrawal identifies 'environmentality' in his study of Kumaon, India. By environmentality, he refers to "the knowledges, politics, institutions, and subjectivities that come to be linked together with the emergence of the environment as a domain that requires regulation and protection" (2005, 226). Moreover, environmentality studies investigate the ways expert formations of knowledge construct nature and deem it manageable by experts. These 'experts' are generally from the global north (Ibid). In advocating 'econom entality', Timothy Mitchell argues that the future governs subjects. He writes "the government of the present… would come to operate within a new metric of temporal change, the measurement of growth" (2014, 484). Through the example of energy (particularly oil), Mitchell shows that econom entality grew out of the economic representations, measurements and calculations of the future, or what essentially became the economy which governed populations in the present. Econom entality emerged through new forms of political reason and calculative practices that came to form the economy and bring the future into politics (Ibid).

*Sustainable Development and Neoliberal Climate Policies: A Governmentality Perspective*

Sustainable development, fractious as it may be in definition, has one especially strong feature as a discourse. It anticipates the need for a global 'conduct' that brings about positive environmental outcomes. This ideal conduct, or ideal population behavior, not only mitigates environmental problems, but also helps achieve 'development'. Sustainable development suggests helping those adversely affected by climate change and 'bettering' developing areas to achieve 'sustainability'. It envisions "the creation of a much more complex global system with

many contradictory trends working simultaneously in favor of conservation and waste, ecological care and anti-environmental neglect, social change and institutional inertia" (Luke, 1999, 135). This idea of sustainable development underpins, or provides the general theme behind, initiatives such as REDD+ or similar climate policies. Through the discourse of sustainable development, "the identification of problems and construction of solutions exemplify expertise and constitutes the boundary between those who are positioned as trustees, with the capacity to diagnose deficiencies in others, and those who are subject to expert direction" (Astuti and McGregor, 2015, 2276). Policies born from this framework often "privilege those with scientific or technical knowledge and marginalize those without it" (Ibid, 2276). In short, sustainable development-based programs, such as REDD+, envision the creation or reorientation of the conduct (or behavior) of societies in a manner that supports the global north's ideas of 'capacity' and 'development'. These particular programs impose differing understandings of the environment and also advance modes of 'acceptable' knowledge(s) or behavior pertaining to environmental well-being, often onto developing areas.

Ideas associated with neoliberalism have greatly influenced global climate politics, specifically responses to adverse environmental conditions (Kopnina, 2017). With the rise of REDD+ among other schemes, 'economic analysis' has extended to domains where it otherwise may not have occurred or met resistance. What Foucault calls "American" neoliberalism seeks to "extend the rationality of the market, the schemas of analysis it offers and the decision-making criteria it suggests, to domains which are not exclusively or not primarily economic" (Foucault, 2008, 323). Neoliberal climate policies recognize nature as a governable or manageable entity, susceptible to market-based logic. Like sustainable development, neoliberal climate policies include a certain conception of societal conduct. They also favor scientific or technical

knowledge – or knowledge capable of complying with the logic of markets. This 'economic analysis' finds "its points of anchorage and effectiveness if an individual's conduct in question reacts to reality in a non-random way. That is to say, any conduct which responds systematically to modifications in the variables of the environment, in other words, any conduct… must be susceptible to economic analysis" (Ibid, 269). Concerning governmentality, it "has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument" (Ibid, 108). Moreover, "an omnipresent government, a government which nothing escapes, a government which conforms to the rules of right, and a government which nevertheless respects the specificity of the economy, will be a government that manages civil society, the nation, society, the social" (Ibid, 296). Foucault shows that this neoliberalism applies, "or tries to apply economic analysis to a series of objects, to domains of behavior or conduct which were not market forms of behavior or conduct" (2008, 268).

*REDD+ and Governmentality*

Analyses of REDD+ using Foucauldian governmentality are not new, as other studies have suggested the presence of expert knowledge(s)/power resulting in the creation of subjectivities and the governance of a population's conduct (Aguilar-Støen, 2015; Lansing *et al*, 2015; McGregor *et al*, 2015). Ultimately, "REDD+ introduces new governmental rationalities – ways of constructing, valuing and governing forests – in which forest carbon is used as a standard to measure a country's performance in keeping its tropical forests intact and defines the financial rewards the country will receive" (Astuti and McGregor, 2015, 21). Mariel Aguilar-Støen theorizes that governmental and academic institutions behind REDD+ strategies create standards or norms of behavior that interject into areas where REDD+ strategies exist (2015). REDD+ is

also theorized to be a form of neoliberal governmentality (Astuti and McGregor, 2015; McGregor *et al*, 2015). Principle actors, such as the FCPF, seek to 'govern' the behavior of forest stakeholders and forest carbon by putting a price on carbon and creating financial rewards for improved forest management (Astuti and McGregor, 2015; Paterson and Stripple, 2009). REDD+'s aims reflect the "diversity of actors with different amounts of power/knowledge involved in REDD+ arenas" (Aguilar-Støen, 2015). Lohmann, attesting to these actors involved, writes that carbon trading schemes take cues from "experts within the financial sector, NGOs, think tanks, university economics departments, government lawmakers, certain business sectors, law and consultancy firms, and the United Nations system" (2011, 94).

REDD+ is "one of many components of the complete climate policy debate" (Barquin *et al*, 2014, 36). The UNFCCC is "the overall policy framework for intergovernmental efforts to address climate change" (Ibid, 36). Importantly, "only governments (country parties) can make decisions at the UNFCCC, but many other organizations (e.g. NGOs, indigenous peoples representation) can participate to observe and influence the decision-making process" (Ibid, 36). In this context, REDD+ is a "centrepiece in a complex array of institutions and technologies currently under construction with the aim of bringing forests under a regime of marketised carbon governmentality based on two political technologies: treating deforestation as a result of the misallocation of capital and the absence of adequate financial incentives" (Adelman, 2015, 199). The program comprises many different international, domestic, and 'secondary' actors (corporations and businesses) that, in applying a range of social and environmental technologies, enable the reshaping of forest governance (McGregor *et al*, 2014). Of course, "different standards have different foci, but all require time, resources, and expert knowledge to implement, and each involves distinct methodologies, and monitoring and verification procedures" (Ibid,

145). In many countries, REDD+ "is the main, if not only, way they can significantly reduce emissions and thus benefit from international financial flows" (FCPF, 2008, 8). While this is not necessarily true of Costa Rica given the PES system (an already incentivized approach to halting deforestation and forest degradation), the country still adopted the REDD+ program. Through this market-based approach, "REDD+ turns indigenous peoples and nature into permanent providers of environmental or ecosystems services" (Yánez, 2017). Thus, "REDD+ not only contributes to further loss of peoples' rights and worsens climate change, but it also violates the rights of nature" (Ibid, 2017). In sum, my use of governmentality in this project interprets REDD+ as having the ability to govern through expert and technical formations of knowledge, to deploy monitoring and verification processes (surveillance) to ensure participation, and to direct behavior toward market-based ends.

## 2.2 The REDD+ Program and Indigenous Controversy

REDD+ was negotiated at the 2005 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), launched in the 13th session of the UNFCCC, administers the project. The project became operational in June of 2008 with several pilot projects. The Kyoto Protocol along with other "regional, subnational and national governance and policy efforts have been partially successful in initiating greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation, global emissions increased by 29% between 2000 and 2008. Furthermore, 2010 had been identified as the year with the highest ever carbon emissions" (Lederer, 2012, 107). This increase was largely related to "carbon intensive growth in emerging economies," (Ibid, 107) though emissions from agriculture and deforestation contributed. Regarding deforestation, scientists claim "12–17% of global anthropogenic GHG emissions can be directly attributed to tropical deforestation" (Ibid, 107). For this reason, the international community

considers Reducing Emissions from Degradation and Deforestation (REDD) a valuable, effective mitigation method. REDD+ projects operate within a global carbon trading market. These carbon trading markets are "developed through projects where part of the return on investment comes in the form of carbon 'credits' which accrue by virtue of the carbon emissions saved by the project" (Paterson and Stripple, 2009, 3). Corporations can buy "credits" to reduce their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by investing in sustainable forestry projects elsewhere. The FCPF holds that REDD+, due to the financial investments, will bolster economic and agricultural sectors in developing countries. Moreover, it will address key drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and has the added bonus of alleviating poverty while promoting biodiversity (FCPF, 2008). It is also argued to be a low cost option for decarbonization (FCPF, 2008). Since REDD+'s negotiation, the FCPF selected 47 different developing countries to become "REDD+ Ready," which denotes the initial design and planning of REDD+ schemes. The 'Readiness Mechanism', which references potential REDD+ strategies in a given country, is designed to "assist developing countries to reach a capacity level at which they will be ready to participate in a future system for positive incentives to REDD" (FCPF, 2008, 2). Furthermore, REDD+ has a clear global reach and is uniquely positioned to "act as a non-partisan broker for governments, civil society and the private sector" (UN-REDD Program, 2011).

REDD+, however, is currently one of the more controversial programs to come out of the UNFCCC negotiations (Carbon Trade Watch, 2013). Critics, ranging from scholars to indigenous communities, identify REDD+ as merely a neoliberal climate policy. As they see it, REDD+ is nothing more than a program that allows corporations and landowners to profit from the situation of climate change. In turn, it distracts from administering true mitigative responses (Carbon Trade Watch, 2013; Lohmann, 2009; TNI, 2013). This is because REDD+ is "embedded

in the logic that environmental destruction can be compensated for somewhere else it acts to reinforce the underlying drivers of deforestation and climate change" (Carbon Trade Watch, 2013, 3). Corporations, predominantly in the global north, continue 'business as usual' behavior since "credits" offer a way out of environmental responsibility. As Larry Lohmann contends, carbon trading and offsetting is nothing more than a new attempt to profit off of "some of the more hidden aspects of the infrastructure of human existence" (Lohmann, 2009, 34). The underlying issue of the FCPF's REDD+ scheme, and carbon trading in general, is the neoliberal mentality that drives it (Carbon Trade Watch, 2013). The actors behind REDD+, the FCPF, UN, FONAFIFO and others, recognize that globalizing capitalism is the cause of climate change. However, they also believe it to be the fix. In contrast, critics, namely some civil society groups and indigenous communities, argue that further commodification of the forestry sector would lead to enhanced destruction of forests and the creation of more plantations (Carbon Trade Watch, 2013; Lederer, 2012). Some proponents of REDD+ have argued that it is the most important mechanism that the international community has to fight climate change. The struggles of REDD+, in this view, are technical issues rather than fundamental flaws in design (Lederer, 2012; Dooley, 2009). The technical issues revolve around institutional capacity to implement schemes, proper financing, clear legal claims and effective monitoring (Lederer, 2012).

REDD+ (among other PES and carbon trading schemes) has received major criticism by indigenous communities worldwide since REDD+ activity can affect them the most (TNI, 2013; Carbon Trade Watch; 2013). Indigenous communities contest that REDD+ demonstrates clear inattention to the consultation processes alleged by its promoters to be central to schemes (Franco, 2014; TNI, 2013; Carbon Trade Watch, 2013). The consultation processes, along with negotiations involving strategy implementation, have proceeded mostly without indigenous input

(TNI, 2013). Indigenous communities "have tried, so far with very limited success, to be an official and recognized part of these proceedings – not only because they are often particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, but also because they are significantly impacted by the decisions made and actions taken under the UNFCCC" (IAITPTF, 2007, 5). In some cases, REDD+ strategies have resulted in land grabs and involuntary resettlement (Franco, 2014; Carbon Trade Watch, 2013). More commonly, indigenous populations contend REDD+ alienates or marginalizes indigenous voice from local environmental decision-making (Aguilar-Støen, 2015). REDD+ initiatives do call for a collaborative process in negotiations. However, governing entities of REDD+ have instead demonstrated a strong top-down approach within many of the partnering countries.

### *REDD+: Knowledge and Power*

On both the global and domestic scale, REDD+ devalues indigenous knowledge and traditional forestry provision in favor of expertise. [3] It aims "to produce docile subjects who will act according to shared values and ethics that are considered to be in the best interest of society" (Astuti and McGregor, 2015, 2275). REDD+ is tied to a carbon economy that favors neoliberal and technocentric values. These values place serious obstacles in the way of traditional ways of thinking and managing conservation spaces (Bailey and Wilson, 2009). Under the guise of agricultural and forestry care, with the ambition to minimize GHG emissions globally, the constellation of actors under the banner of REDD+ can disrupt and guide indigenous forestry use. REDD+ lends different 'technologies' (scientific or technical rationalities – or "knowledge management" by the FCPF, dissemination of best practices by REDD+ administering agents,

[3] These expert forms of "knowledge" I identify can be comprised of governments, NGOs, research institutions, multilateral financial institutions, or corporations.

monitoring and verification processes, among other features) that work towards directing indigenous behavior in local environments. Since the Indigenous, or the 'forest peoples', live among forestry, REDD+ can greatly affect their livelihood and culture. As in Costa Rica and other areas, "REDD+ is still rolling out" and "different actors are entering the policy arena and trying to shape their space and influence the policy process" (Bastakoti and Davidsen, 2017, 3). Consequently, indigenous peoples are often relegated to 'influences' or 'observers' rather than key decision-makers. This is because 'expert' forms of knowledge and (indigenous) traditional forms of knowledge, when sought, are measured by 'rigorous' analysis that determines which form is most viable for participation in the carbon market. In other words, REDD+ utilizes, or extrapolates, expert knowledge(s) that create norms regarding the use of conservation spaces.

## 2.3 Costa Rica: Sustainable Development as a New Environmental Paradigm

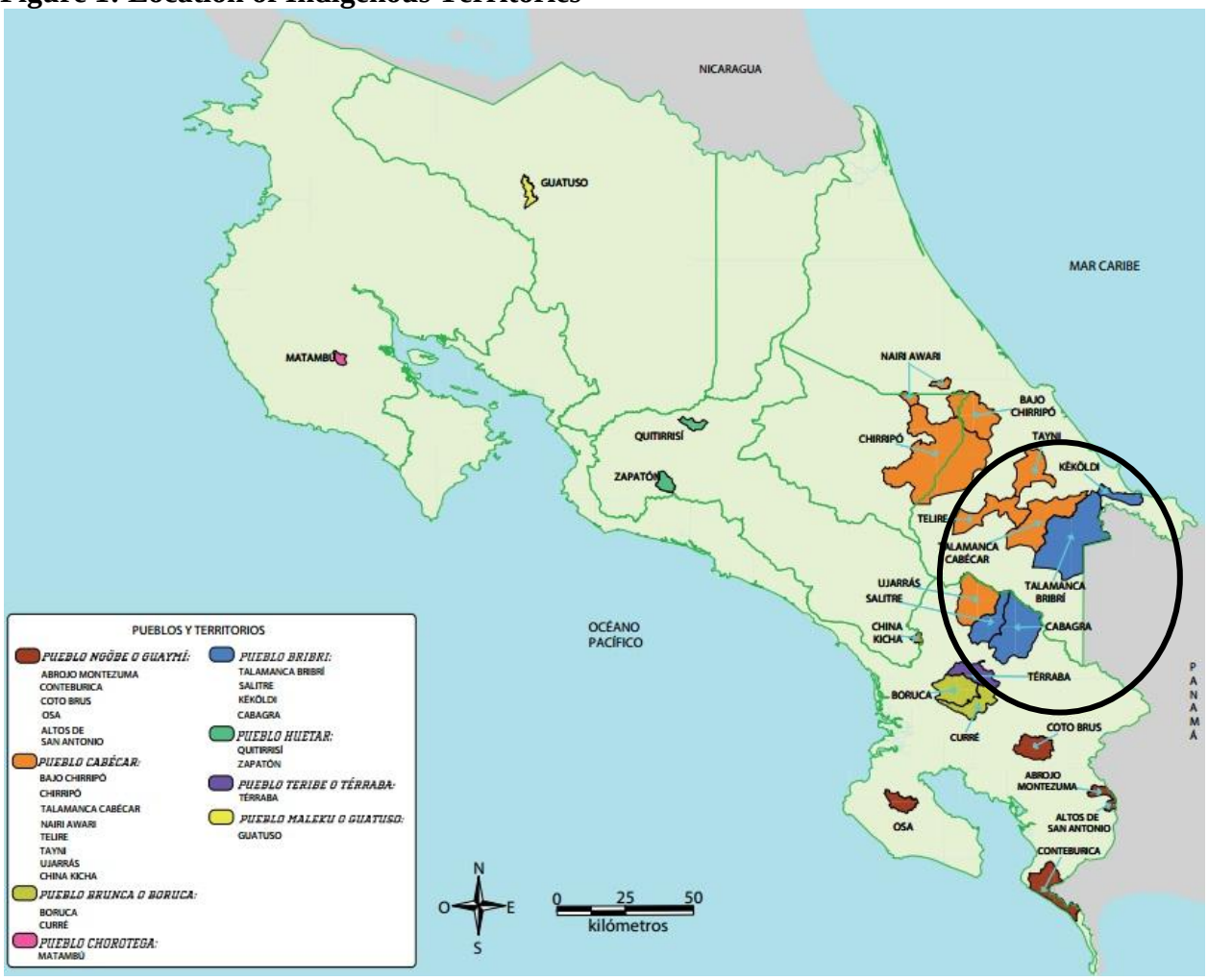
In the last few decades, Costa Rica's approach toward environmental governance changed (Edelman, 1999; Isla, 2015). This transformation is "characterized by a process of progressive neoliberalization" (Fletcher, 2013, 160). In many ways, this transformation reflects the change in global climate policy standards (Ibid). Although domestic concerns, such as a recent history of deforestation, certainly helped influence Costa Rica's shift in environmental policy, external, northern influence also played a role. As proponents of sustainable development herald, Costa Rica is an environmental "pioneer". Some, such as Katrina Brandon, note that uplifting Costa Rica as a model of environmental governance is ironic (2004). Since the Cold War to the present, Costa Rican environmental governance has been markedly complex (and often troubled). This is not solely due to Costa Rica's paradigm shift towards sustainable development. The country's governing entities of the environment, MINAE (Ministry of Environment and Energy) and SINAC (National System of Conservation Spaces), have a history of being underfunded, lax, or

ignorant of environmental laws and regulations. This has enabled issues, such as illegal logging, prospecting, and even squatting to persist in conservation spaces. This history of Costa Rica's governance is not divorced from issues among indigenous peoples. These issues often involve indigenous land tenure and, according to indigenous attestation, non-indigenous negligence of their cosmology. This history from the 1980s onward helps to understand the indigenous situation amongst Costa Rica's paradigm shift. And it also informs the present Bribri contestation of REDD+ schemes.

*The Indigenous Peoples*

In Costa Rica, there are eight different indigenous peoples. These are the Bribri, Cabécar, Brunca, Huetar, Maleku, Ngöbe, Teribe and the Chorotega. The Costa Rica Indians have never been a homogenous people, as they are mostly distinct both culturally and politically (Biesanz *et al,* 1999). As of today, there are a total of 24 different indigenous territories that account for around 6.7-7% of the national territory (Biesanz *et al,* 1999, 110; IWGIA, 2017). These designated reserves cover 334.447 hectares (MINAE, 2017, 21). Of the 4.5 million that comprise the Costa Rican population, a National Population Census stated there are 104,143 indigenous people in Costa Rica, with 48,500 actually living in territories (Ibid; Gimlette, 2013). Overall, estimations suggest the Indigenous make up close to 2.4 per cent of the total population (IWGIA, 2017). Most of the indigenous peoples in Costa Rica maintain "a cultural, philosophic and socioeconomic relation with forest resources" (MINAE, 2017, 21). Additionally, around 60% speak their ancestral language. As MINAE notes, 55% of Bribri speak it, Bruncas 6%, Cabécares 88%, Chorotegas 0.4%, Huetares 0.4%, Malekus 68%, Ngöbes 78% and Teribes 10% (Ibid).

**Figure 1: Location of Indigenous Territories**




Source: Instituto nacional de estadística y censos (INEC). *Mapa 2011, Territorios indígenas*. http://www.inec.go.cr/cartografia. Fair use determination attached.

The Bribri are one of the largest ethnic groups in Costa Rica, followed by the Cabécar. Together, these tribes live in 11 different territories, or 80% of total indigenous land (Murillo *et al* 2013; The REDD Desk, 2015). The estimated Bribri population on reserves is 11,500. Other estimates however portray the population closer to 35,000 (Parker, 2017; Intercontinental Cry, 2017). There are four Bribri reservations in total, as shown in Figure 1. These reservations consist of the Talamanca Bribri and Këköldi on the Atlantic watershed, and the Salitre and Cabagra on the Pacific watershed. Like most indigenous populations in Costa Rica, the Bribri live in communities isolated from the rest of Costa Rica's population, deep in the rainforest

(Outward Bound, 2015). This isolationism leads to them sometimes referred to as "the hidden people." This isolation from the larger Costa Rican society also allowed them to maintain their language, culture and religion over time. Still, some integration with society inevitably occurred.

Indigenous territories are among the poorest in the country, with the Bribri having the lowest income per capita (Murillo *et al*, 2013; Hall, 1985). Throughout the years, the Indian population saw a rapid transition from a tribal to a peasant society (Hall, 1985; Barry, 1989). Their marginal economies are mostly tied to seasonal and subsistence agriculture, hunting and gathering (Biesanz *et al*, 1999; Murillo *et al*, 2013). As MINAE estimates, concerning the indigenous peoples on reserves, "62.8% performs some sort of productive agricultural activity; 13% worked on crops during the last year; 11% own cattle, pigs, poultry, others for self-consumption; therefore 63% have performed at least one agricultural activity" (MINAE, 2017, 21). Furthermore, "Of the 7,204 indigenous agricultural employees, 88% are male and 12% female, and the position they occupy in this activity corresponds to 2% employers, 69% self-employed workers and 20% employees of private companies" (Ibid, 21). The Bribri specifically produce more than 120 wild and domestic crops. These crops include corn, beans, root crops, palm, coffee, medicinal plants, commercial and construction lumber among others, though bananas and cocoa are their primary cash crops (Outward Bound, 2015). Due to isolation and an independent nature, indigenous peoples often have limited access to education and healthcare. Shamans are also widespread amongst reserves.

In Costa Rica, the history of indigenous territorial rights is especially complicated. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, invasions of indigenous land by non-indigenous were prominent. In 1841, a previously established system of communal Indian territories was abolished (Biesanz *et al*, 1999). This abolishment continued, and legitimized, numerous incidents of land grabbing

since non-indigenous understood these territories to be "coffee land" (Ibid, 110). Coffee, at this time, transformed Costa Rica's national economy. The agricultural frontier, however, slowly diminished. Indigenous territorial rights were finally recognized in 1956. In 1977, the Indigenous Law officially created indigenous territories. Since then, "more than 300,000 hectares have been registered in the names of indigenous peoples and communities" (IWGIA, 2017). This makes up the 24 indigenous reserves today.

However these designated lands were never regularized by governing institutions. As the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs' 2017 edition of *Indigenous World* acknowledges, "The 1977 Indigenous Law establishes a budgetary precept exclusively for the regularization of the indigenous territories but in the four decades that have passed since its entry into force, this budget has never been allocated" (2017, 152). This would come to create complexity, and trouble, for both indigenous governance structures and indigenous relations with governing entities. As the IWGIA further acknowledge,

> Land invasions continue and indigenous production systems have been destroyed by the plundering of settlers, who transform the forests into pastureland for their cattle. More than half the area of some territories is now occupied by non-indigenous settlers. The state has tolerated this invasion of indigenous land, and the Indigenous Development Associations – legitimized by the state – have registered outsiders as indigenous so that they are able to occupy the lands. These actions have resulted in serious conflict, are preventing indigenous territorial governance and human development, and form a backdrop to the poverty and social exclusion of indigenous peoples (Ibid, 153).

In recent years, government studies on the regularization and reorganization of indigenous lands occurred, especially on farm holdings. But financial resources were, once more, never allocated to the process by the Costa Rican government and indigenous farm holders never saw compensation for non-indigenous settlers (Ibid). Indigenous leaders demanded information on this, but it was not given (Ibid). Invasion of Indian reserves by "squatters, banana companies, gold prospectors, and timber poachers continues" (Biesanz *et al*, 1999, 111). Also, "outside

agencies, foreign and governmental, by selecting residents other than traditional leaders as conduits for funds" (Ibid, 111) have provoked conflict within indigenous reserves (a situation that occurs in the current PES system).

Many of the territorial issues the Indigenous experience stem from their structure of governance, though not exclusively. As Murillo *et al* write, "the indigenous governance system of indigenous territories simulates a democratic system with three clear structures: The General Assembly, The Board of Directors of the Association of Integral Development (ADI), and the Committees of Communal Support" (2013, 37). Costa Rica's 1977 Indigenous Law, the one in which created indigenous territories, also established ADIs, or Development Associations (Asociaciones de Desarrollo Integral) (Baker, 2014, 2). These ADIs operate as

> the political and executive body and is legally recognized as the local government both by national and international legislations, including the Convention 169 of the International Work Organization. In the General Assembly only individuals who derive from the mother clan and are at least 12 years old may participate, and they may be eligible to be representatives. In some territories both parents need to be indigenous for individuals to be considered part of the territory. Land within the territories is neither public nor private but communal. Inhabitants within territories could possess and usufruct pieces of land but they do not have the land title, only the ADI does. Indigenous land cannot be seized or alienated but can be traded within members of the same territory (Ibid, 37).

But the established ADIs are controversial among the Indigenous, especially Bribri. They are "often criticized as a non-traditional organizational system imposed upon indigenous peoples, and it is suggested that the ADIs are not always representative of the entire population of the territories or their traditional governance structure" (Baker, 2014, 6). Five indigenous territories refuse to even participate in the ADIs structure. This system of governance often problematizes indigenous participation in Costa Rica's PES system, discussed in chapter 4.

*Costa Rica's Embrace of Sustainable Development*

Prior to the Cold War era there were few environmental laws in Costa Rica. As Sterling Evans writes, "As in most countries, conservation policies in Costa Rica were a mid-to-late-twentieth century phenomenon. While there were no actual national parks in Costa Rica until 1970, some earlier measures had attempted to deal with preserving parts of the nation's natural heritage" (1999, 53). The few laws that did come to exist in Costa Rica were mostly ineffective due to non-regulation by the government. Many of the early laws attempted to set aside tracts of land for protection, with one of the earliest laws dating 1863. For example, in 1906, the Legislative Assembly passed Law No. 36, which attempted to create a general national forestry policy (Ibid). It was essentially aimed at limiting the clearing of trees. However this law failed because of vagueness and consequently no national policy was set. This came to characterize other environmental laws created throughout the 1920s up to the 1950s. During this time, many policies tried to create 'protective' spaces, but, again, the government administered little protection. These spaces were generally forested areas, a few being near Poas and Irazu volcanoes (Ibid). Thus, it was government vagueness, disinterest, or insufficient resources that rendered environmental laws ineffective (Ibid). This continued regulative failure of protected spaces by the government allowed environmental abuses, primarily deforestation, to continue by squatter farmers and families. But this began to change with the passing of the Law of Land and Colonization in 1961. As Evans writes, the law was important for it "delineated which areas of the country were not open for agricultural colonization" (Ibid, 60). This law established 'national reserves' in Costa Rica. These reserves could not be "colonized, fenced, or plowed, used for any construction, or used to cut wood. And the law made very clear that any and all lands not under

the title of private ownership legally belonged to the state" (Ibid, 60). This set the stage for the 1969 Forestry Law, which initiated the change in Costa Rica's environmental sector.

"Participants in, and students of, Costa Rican environmental policy making agree that the Forestry Law of 1969 was the key to future conservation successes" (Ibid, 65), writes Evans. Indeed, this Forestry Law was "called the "principled milestone," the "transcendental step," and the turning point" in the country's conservation history, the Forestry Law's impact on the rational use of the forest resources cannot be underestimated" (Ibid, 65). The establishment of 'national parks' is, by many accounts, the capstone of Costa Rican environmental policy (Ibid; Isla, 2015; Salazar, 2004). This law was not merely established to protect flora and fauna in different areas, but also to provide opportunities for recreation, tourism, and scientific research (Evans, 1999). After the passing of the law, Costa Rica established a National Parks Department and the General Forestry Directorate (DFG), a division of the Ministry of Agriculture (MAG), hired Mario Boza to head it. Having attended a one-month training seminar in Aspen, Colorado, and, at the same time, writing a thesis on the development of national parks in Costa Rica, Boza helped to establish Santa Rosa National Park. As of today, there are 26 national parks in Costa Rica. Both national parks and biological reserves account for "11% of the country and 21% of forest cover" (Corbera *et al*, 2011, 314). Robert Fletcher acknowledges that at this time, Costa Rica's approach to environmental governance represented a "command and control 'fortress conservation' model" (2013, 160).

Costa Rica's involvement in the 1980s debt crisis drastically affected the country's approach toward environmental governance. It was, perhaps, this moment in Costa Rican history that most shifted its framework toward sustainable development (Fletcher, 2013; Isla, 2015; Lansing *et al*, 2015). As Lansing *et al* write concerning Costa Rica in the 1980s, the country

"was managing a tripartite set of financial, geopolitical and ecological crises that set the context for the subsequent development of its PES program, which serves as the precursor to the establishment of a carbon offsetting market [REDD+]" (2015, 203). Beginning in 1979, a severe economic crisis hit Costa Rica. And in 1981, Costa Rica declared moratorium on its debt payments (Evans, 1999; Lansing *et al*, 2015). "Characteristic of most of the Latin American world, Costa Rica went into deep financial debt as a result of overextended loans from international banks. Unable to service the notes, Costa Rica became one of the seventeen most highly indebted nations of the world and had the highest per capita debt in Latin America" (Evans, 1999), writes Evans. What followed were three rounds of structural adjustments by the World Bank and IMF in 1985, 1988 and 1993 (Fletcher, 2013; Lansing *et al*, 2015). Fletcher contends that these adjustments by the World Bank and IMF "spurred pronounced neoliberalization in a variety of sectors" (2013, 160). Throughout the 1980s, "this Costa Rica indebtedness was used by the United States to impose USAID as a direct agent in the political economy and ecology of Costa Rica" (Isla, 2015, 48-49). It was through these events that Costa Rica's environmental sector was largely 'neoliberalized'.

Ana Isla, in her work *The Greening of Costa Rica*, notes the importance of a 1988 conference entitled 'Conservation Strategy for Sustainable Development' (or ECODES) organized by USAID. The World Commission on Environment and Development, or the *Brundtland Report* (1987) influenced USAID which led it to organize ECODES (Isla, 1025, 48-49). ECODES was important for several reasons. First, it was at ECODES that northern powers offered sustainable development as an answer to Costa Rica's troubles. Although those at ECODES recognized "development aimed at economic growth and capital accumulation had caused Costa Rica's debt crisis, increasing levels of poverty, dispossession, deforestation, and

water poisoning," economic growth for capital accumulation was offered as a cure (Ibid, 50). What ensued were new environmental priorities, involving a "reconfiguration of Costa Rica's territory through neoliberal conservationist concepts of enclosure and preservation" (Ibid, 50). Though protective spaces were not new in Costa Rica, this marks the point Costa Rica's conservationist model of management and control, under sustainable development, extended to international actors (Ibid). Under this newer conservationist model, SINAC (National System of Conservation Areas) was created. SINAC, in turn, divided the country into *eleven* different conservation areas: Guanacaste, Arenal-Tempisque, Arenal-Tilaran, Arenal-Huetar Norte, Cordillera Volcánica Central, Pacífico Central, Tortuguero, La Amistad Caribe, La Amistad Pacifico, Osa, and Isla del Coco. SINAC also created MINAE (The Ministry of Environment and Energy).[4]

Second, it was at ECODES that debt-for-nature exchanges were decided upon to help establish sustainable development in Costa Rica (Isla, 2015; Lansing *et al*, 2015). As Lansing *et al* explains,

> Debt-for-nature swaps began in the early 1980s when large conservation organizations began to leverage a developing country's debts to raise funding for conservation. These swaps are modeled on debt for equity swaps, a process whereby an investor, such as a commercial bank, will purchase a part of a firm's discounted debt on the secondary market and then exchange the debt for an equity interest in that firm (2015, 205).

"The protection of natural resources through central management is very costly," as Isla writes, "because it involves acquiring land, hiring personnel to protect and control areas, and training staff to oversee administration and infrastructure" (2015, 53). These debt-for-nature exchanges, accompanied by donations by international institutions, would help fund global and national partnerships concerning public-private land conservation. This was all primarily decided by

[4] As Ana Isla identifies, "MINAE was set up to manage the conservation areas through these regional offices and to set policies for the use of energy, natural resources, mines, and water" (Isla, 50-51).

northern powers (Ibid; Lansing *et al*, 2015). Debt-for-nature exchanges occurring in Costa Rica linked the aspect of financialization to forestry management. It was this form of leverage that "enabled conservation groups to introduce a complementary rationality to the state and development agencies' market-based approaches. This is a rationality of 'securing' nature "through financial leverage" (Lansing *et al*, 2015, 205). The promotion of Costa Rica as an "environmental pioneer" by USAID and WWF was, in part, to obtain international money (Isla, 2015). In Costa Rica, there have been two generations of debt-for-nature exchanges. The first generation began in 1987-88 and the second occurred in the 1990s. This latter exchange, specifically, became a financial tool to swap loans for sustainable development (Ibid).

Not unrelated to debt-for-nature exchanges or the future PES system, NGOs became increasingly abundant in Costa Rica (Evans, 1999). Indeed, NGO influence on Costa Rican conservation efforts is vast. Evans writes that "local groups, national associations, and international environmental organizations play a vital role in monitoring the government and working to lobby for (and to fund) conservation efforts in Costa Rica" (Ibid, 198). Some of the prime NGOs that had, or currently have, a presence in Costa Rica include Conservation International (CI), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), and the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) among others (Fletcher, 2013). Many of these, and some lesser known NGOs, play a direct role in climate mitigation and adaption projects. From the 1980s onward, "a substantial percentage of the nation's conservation began to be undertaken through an extensive network of private nature reserves, owned by both NGOs and discrete individuals" (Ibid, 161).

Despite the debt-for-nature swaps, push for sustainable development, and other environmental laws in Costa Rica, deforestation continued throughout the 1980s. The situation

soon became an environmental crisis. During the 1970s and 80s, the country experienced some of the highest rates of deforestation in the world (Lansing *et al*, 2015). This led the World Bank and USAID to eventually take notice (Sassen, 2014). These two entities released two reports in the years of 1989-1993 that "reflected an evolution in thinking towards forest protection, and that shaped a particular conception of the market value of Costa Rica's forest" (Lansing *et al*, 2015, 203). USAID developed a forestry project entitled FORESTA in 1989. This labeled current land use practices as an impediment to export-led economic growth (Ibid). This project helped Costa Rica better exploit "commercially viable strands of forests in a sustainable way" (Ibid, 204). USAID, however, recognized the need for 'government subsidies' for the forestry industry to survive (Ibid; Isla, 2015). In a statement released by USAID in 1989, they express,

> It is unlikely that an enterprise, which manages forests on a sustainable basis could be financially viable in Costa Rica without some kind of government subsidy…because of the special features of forestry, such as its multiple benefits, which are not adequately valued in our economic system and its long time horizon, many forest activities merit government subsidies (1989, 26).

This recognition by USAID, and the history of Costa Rican environmentalism and continued forest loss, paved the way to the establishment of the Payment for Ecosystem Services Program (understood as the PPSA, PSA, or PES system) in the country. The PES program was introduced in the wake "of a third SAP under the supervision of the World Bank" and "signified an intensification of this neoliberalization within the environmental sector" (Fletcher, 2013, 161). Apart from the National Park System, the PES program, developed in 1996, is one of Costa Rica's prime environmental initiatives. Currently, the FCPF understands the program to be the perfect base on which to nest REDD+ schemes in Costa Rica.

Another prominent issue in Costa Rica, not unrelated to other historical situations in the least, is the laxness of Costa Rica's environmental governance and, particularly, the amount of

environmental laws in existence. Despite Costa Rica passing numerous environmental laws, environmental degradation still occurs. As Frankie *et al* states, "Costa Rica has followed the general global trend, despite the importance that environmental issues have gained, by allowing the destruction of biodiversity to continue at an accelerated rate" (1999, 181). In Costa Rica, "environmental destruction is, at least in part, the product of poor interpretation and lack of enforcement of the laws and public policies themselves" (Ibid, 181). These environmental laws are often hindered due to a lack in clarity, inadequate resources (budget and human), or inefficient follow ups and verification processes by governing institutions (Ibid). The sheer amount of environmental laws passed in Costa Rica also adds to the difficulty in regulation. Julio Bustos, in recognizing this proliferation of laws, writes that "the existence of a law for practically every environmental problem (forest laws, water laws, biodiversity laws, and so on) has led to an entanglement of laws that are often redundant, contradictory, and ambiguous and thus hinder cooperation between institutions and limit effective action" (Bustos, 2004, 289). To date, there have been more than 8,000 laws passed which are currently in force (Ibid). As Bustos contends, with such a high number of laws in Costa Rica it suggests that

> The solution for every problem is "passing a law" or increasing the sanctions provided in the existing laws. Whether these laws are in agreement with previous legislation is rarely considered, much less the requirements to put these laws into action, such as the economic and technical resources for their application, the establishment of specialized tribunals, and the instruction of judicial representatives in charge of administering justice in environmental matters (Ibid, 289).

With numerous laws in Costa Rica and minimal enforcement, it allows for loopholes which enable perpetrators of environmental damage to continue.

## 2.4 Governmentality as Method

To answer the research question of how REDD+ both creates and governs conduct in Costa Rica, I use a qualitative approach designed to enable contextual and historical richness (Yin, 2016).

The project is a single-case study of REDD+ in Costa Rica and the Bribri contestation of that scene. This method (single-case) is "justifiable under certain conditions – where the case represents a critical test of existing theory, where the case is a rare or unique event, or where the case serves a revelatory purpose" (Yin, 2009, 44). The case of REDD+ as an example of governmentality in Costa Rica falls within Yin's justifiable, single-case study conditions.

The project does hold certain limitations. First and foremost, Costa Rica is dissimilar to other "REDD+ Ready" countries given its conservation efforts prior to REDD+. For this reason, REDD+ schemes in other developing areas may be more stringent or prominent since Costa Rica stands apart. While it yet still draws a constellation of similar *external* actors to Costa Rica, the domestic institutions behind REDD+ are different. This allows the REDD+ landscape to be different among countries. This most likely translates into differences in the 'governing' of indigenous conduct among countries, since the domestic sphere is vitally important to REDD+ schemes. In short, while this project gives insights into the relationship between REDD+ and indigenous peoples, my results are not intended to be generalizable.

Second, the project utilizes Bribri discourse. While there are similarities among the indigenous communities, there are also differences. Some of these differences among the communities may be contradictory to Bribri discourse. The Bribri have been the most outspoken community regarding the PES system and REDD+ implementation. But the Bribri discourse does not represent *all* indigenous peoples in Costa Rica, just as it does not represent *all* Bribri. This Bribri discourse is merely a sample of one indigenous discourse challenging REDD+, albeit a large sample. This is not to say that similarities do not exist between indigenous tribes however, as similarities do exist. For example, the Cabecar tribe, the other largest indigenous group in Costa Rica, shares certain religious beliefs with the Bribri, notably belief in Sibù. Sibù,

a demigod who created the earth, is paramount to Bribri culture and cosmology. But despite the potential project limitations, the project can still yield important and theoretically rich insights into how REDD+ creates and governs conduct in Costa Rica, and potentially beyond.

## 2.5 Discourse Analysis as Methodology

Discourse is the structured ways of speaking, thinking, interpreting, and representing things in the world. As John Dryzek understands it, discourses form stories (2013, 17). Moreover, discourses "construct meanings and relationships, helping define common sense and legitimate knowledge" (Ibid, 9). Discourse analysis opens up representations built by language and framing, and potentially challenges "norm-forming" discourses. This project deconstructs and studies two different discourses. The two discourses considered are the environmental discourse(s) generated by REDD+ and the Bribri. REDD+ discourse can affect the institutional and social dimensions in Costa Rica, which can have a large effect on the status of indigenous peoples and traditional knowledge. I situate REDD+ in the *sustainable development* discourse, though competing discourses are visible (Death, 2014). Entrenched within this discourse is also the neoliberal, or market-based mentality that REDD+ strategy promotes. In the climate solutions proposed by REDD+ for developing countries, the framework is organized around "expertise" in the market economy. This "expertise" is also responsible for the dissemination of "best practices" for local environments. Ultimately, "the deployment of technical and scientific concepts and vocabularies, most of which are poorly understood by non-REDD+ forest stakeholders, has become a powerful tool in legitimizing and envisioning the program" (Astuti and McGregor, 2015, 26). REDD+ discourse allows for nature to be both commodified and, subsequently, managed. In contrast, indigenous discourse, represented in this project by Bribri, is mostly enveloped in spirituality and equality, having little to no themes of commodification.

In the two discourses, I look for signs of commodification in REDD+ and signs of cosmology from the Bribri. Thus, I examine empirical sources for language that exemplifies: (1) recognized or constructed entities, (2) assumptions regarding relationships, (3) agents and motives, as well as (4) thematic or rhetorical devices. While these elements may help to construct the overall discourse, they may also help reinforce it. To better theorize governmentality in Costa Rica, the deconstruction of environmental discourses by critically evaluating these different elements is an important procedure. Of course, the specified elements are also interrelated. Computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) helped to sort through primary sources to discover specified elements of REDD+ and Indigenous discourse.[5] This software was used to better identify and interpret language patterns and terminology, specify discourse themes, and analyze texts for theoretical strength.

[5] The CAQDAS Software utilized is Atlas.ti

# Chapter 3: Two Differing Constructions of Nature

## 3.1 REDD+ Discourse: Nature as Commodifiable

**Table 1: REDD+ Discourse**

| | **REDD+ Discourse** (Sustainable Development) |
|---|---|
| **1** | **Recognized/Constructed Entities**<br>• Nature - commodifiable<br>• Markets - viable response to climate change<br>• Indigenous Peoples/Knowledge - harmful (or) *potentially* useful |
| **2** | **Assumptions Regarding Relationships**<br>• Vulnerability/Incapacity of Developing Nations<br>• Indigenous Lack in Technical Skill or Management<br>• Hierarchy of Knowledge - Expertise > Traditional Knowledge |
| **3** | **Agents and Motives**<br>• FCPF, The World Bank, UN, FONAFIFO, etc: development<br>• Corporations/Businesses: self-interest<br>• Indigenous Communities: tradition |
| **4** | **Thematic or Rhetorical Devices**<br>• "Knowledge Management"<br>• "Expertise"<br>• Carbon as Controlled |

* Table 1 is inspired by Dryzek's identification of common environmental discourse themes (2013, 138).

*1) Recognized or Constructed Entities*

As John Dryzek notes, "different discourses see different things in the world" (2013, 17). So it is with REDD+ and Indigenous discourses. REDD+, as shown in Table 1, represents nature as a commodifiable entity. The FCPF and those involved with REDD+ acknowledge two principle aims. First, REDD+ aims to respond to global climate change through halting deforestation and using forestry resources for the purposes of carbon capture and storage (Environmental Defense Fund, 2018). Second, it aims to 'build capacity' in developing areas. This capacity building

objective is in unison with the agenda of sustainable development, a norm among the global north (FCPF, 2008; EDF, 2010). Both of REDD+'s aims are contingent upon a certain construction of nature. And this REDD+ construction presents nature as manageable and having market value.

REDD+, along with the international community, understands that "forests play an important role in the carbon cycle; trees absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere during photosynthesis and transform it into biomass. When deforestation and forest degradation occur, the carbon stored as biomass changes back to carbon dioxide and returns to the atmosphere" (Barquin *et al*, 2014, 22). The FCPF and others believe forests to be a "sink" (absorbing carbon dioxide) and a "source" (emitting carbon dioxide)" (Ibid, 22). The Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) suggests that "any realistic plan to reduce global warming pollution sufficiently - and in time - must include the preservation of tropical forests" (2018). REDD+ is such a plan.

This understanding of forestry resources (and nature in general) can be profitable. REDD+ policies "provide important economic incentives for forest conservation" (Ibid). In REDD+ and similar schemes, markets are "made to work for the environment" (Newell and Paterson, 2015, 24). As promulgated by the FCPF, UN, World Bank, and others, REDD+ helps produce resilient communities. The program accomplishes this by using forestry resources as a method of "carbon capture," whereby investments in conservation (through carbon markets) enable sectoral growth. So it is carbon markets that lend to 'capacity building' in developing areas, enabling this goal of 'resiliency' or 'resilient' communities.

*2) Assumptions Regarding Relationships*

REDD+ organizes knowledge around expertise in the market, portraying market-based principles as a natural response to climate change. This presents a clear hierarchical structure of knowledge.

REDD+ schemes expressively favor 'expertise', comprising knowledge that is either market *valuable* or market *viable*. This is visible in REDD+'s 'importation of best environmental practices' approach. In this approach, REDD+ affiliated agencies compare strengths of schemes in different areas, enable the environment for success, lend technical support, and mobilize scientists and experts for capacity building (UN-REDD Program, 2011). The FCPF, the coordinating agency behind REDD+, self identify as "knowledge management" (2008, 37). This knowledge management role is understood as "the systematic organization and dissemination of knowledge for a set of stated objectives" (Ibid, 37). The FCPF's objective is "to achieve systematic, consistent development and transfer of information necessary for participant countries to implement REDD activities under then FCPF, in a wide range of biophysical and socioeconomic country settings, to meet stakeholder, market, and Bank oversight requirements" (Ibid, 38). The FCPF synthesizes and applies knowledge more effectively, supports the generation of new knowledge, disseminates existing and new knowledge to clients, and evaluates performance of FCPF programs and implementations (Ibid). Integral to REDD+ is also the skill or 'expertise' of external and domestic actors. These generally include the UN, World Bank, domestic institutions, NGOs, and Academia among others (Ibid; UN-REDD Program, 2011; Rietbergen, 2015). Thus, the discourse of REDD+ represents a need for "expert administrators" (Dryzek, 2013, 16).

REDD+ often portrays developing nations, including indigenous peoples, as vulnerable to climate change, deforestation, and forest degradation. Thus, it utilizes a theme of state and (indigenous) population *susceptibility*. The FCPF understands that "it is often the poorest that are most susceptible to the adverse effects of climate change, reducing deforestation provides an opportunity to simultaneously tackle the problem at its source whilst helping to promote the

resilience of those most vulnerable to climate change" (The REDD Desk, 2016). UN research concurs "indigenous peoples are among the first to face the direct consequences of climate change, owing to their dependence upon, and close relationship with the environment and its resources" (Rodriquez, 2018).

REDD+ does recognize indigenous traditional knowledge and forestry methodology. However, it is often presented by language that portrays ineptness or non-expertise. In *The Knowledge and Skills Needed to Engage in REDD+: a Competencies Framework,* a primer developed by Conservation International for USAID, it mentions some specifics on indigenous peoples and decision-making. Conservation International writes,

> In the face of global climate change and its emerging challenges, it is essential that decision-makers base policies and actions on the best available knowledge including scientific and traditional knowledge that will provide a crucial foundation for the mitigation actions and community-based adaptation strategies that will influence local livelihoods, security and well-being (Barquin *et al*, 2014, 128).

Indigenous knowledge is recognized as an important feature in scheme implementations, as much documentation published since 2008 mentions (FCPF, 2008, FCPF, 2013; MINAE, 2017; UN-REDD Program, 2011). Indigenous peoples, as too local communities, are "key actors in the movement to make REDD+ effective, efficient and fair" (Barquin *et al*, 2014, 128). The FCPF even acknowledge that "forest-dependent indigenous peoples and other forest-dwelling stakeholders in REDD are critical participants in efforts to address deforestation and degradation, since they possess unique knowledge about ecosystem-specific sustainable forest management and conservation" (2008, 40). However, the "participation of indigenous peoples in debates and decisions related to climate change and land use depends especially on their capacities to understand the basic technical and socioeconomic issues associated with REDD+ as well as its significance in relation to their territories and culture" (Barquin *et al*, 2014, 128). Furthermore,

> Recognition of traditional practices may be identified by participating countries for inclusion in their Readiness Plans and REDD Strategies. Some REDD strategies also may be crafted to directly build on sustainable social and land management practices traditionally in place. Traditional systems may serve as pathways to more sustainable practices for recent immigrants to the forests from more market-based, and more forest consumptive, economic systems (FCPF, 2008, 40).

Of relevance here is not what the language includes, but rather what is absent or vague. There is no mechanism that makes REDD+ adhere to traditional formations of knowledge, neither in this initial *Idea Note* nor throughout REDD+ primary documentation. While REDD+ suggests traditional knowledge is important to schemes, it often represents this knowledge as a potential *influence* rather than *requirement*. As the FCPF contend, "whether to implement at a national level or through sub-national ER Programs is the sovereign decision of each country and should take into account several factors, including: the need to capture and preserve traditional, including indigenous, knowledge about and practice in forest use and conservation" (2008, 31). Participant countries are to implement Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). The use of "depends" and "may" in the rhetoric shows no strict adherence to the protection or use of indigenous knowledge. This vagueness can portray indigenous peoples as potentially less than environmentally conscious, lacking in skill, or inadequately caring for the environment. Moreover, coupled with REDD+'s inclination toward expertise, it can marginalize indigenous knowledge as non-relevant in comparison. Ultimately, this understanding extends to REDD+'s portrayal of indigenous agency and reinforces the elevation of 'expert' actors.

*3) Agents and Motives*

Stemming from the hierarchical knowledge structure, REDD+ orchestrates a diverse set of actors with different accompanying motives. The UN, FCPF and The World Bank, local governing

institutions, the Secretariat[6], NGOs, Academia[7], among others all act as primary actors in REDD+ since 'expertise' (or managerial capability) is mostly found within these institutions. These *first tier* actors "contribute their diverse and complementary fields of expertise and mandates" to schemes, for the purposes of resiliency and development (UN-REDD, 2011, 20). REDD+ also casts secondary actors by way of carbon markets. Thus, what I delineate as *second tier* actors comprises the private sector. Corporations or businesses, looking to offset their emissions for industrial practices, become these secondary actors by way of self-interest. By investing in the carbon market, they help bring about REDD+ objectives. These actors can continue unabated industrial practices since emissions can be 'offset' by way of a project, or scheme, in another, often distant location.

REDD+ portrays indigenous agency in a similar manner to indigenous knowledge. It tends to devalue the environmental role of indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples are often relegated to playing the role of a vulnerable people, less than environmentally conscious people, or environmentally destructive. They are often belittled, if not treated as peripheral actors, since traditional knowledge may not correspond with more scientific or technical accounts. It is often the primary agencies (FCPF, UN, World Bank, MINAE, FONAFIFO, and others) and not indigenous populations that contribute expertise (UN-REDD Program, 2011). As the FCPF suggests, indigenous peoples need training for forestry provision. The FCPF "anticipates the need to design standardized training for technical service providers, providing technical

[6] The Secretariat is "comprised of a FONAFIFO coordinator, social experts, an MRV coordinator, and a communications specialist" (Baker, 2014, 5).

[7] In Costa Rica specifically, 5 academic institutions play a role (Barquin *et al*, 2014, 21). These are The National University (UNA), State University for Distance Learning (UNED), the University of Costa Rica (UCR), the Technological Institute of Costa Rica (ITCR) and the National Technical University (UTN), the National Centre for High Technology (CENAT) and the National Commission for Forest Sustainability (CNSF). These academic institutions, as a part of REDD+ strategy development, attempt to "stimulate social development and to raise the spiritual, intellectual and technical level through the projection of knowledge, directed studies and research" (Ibid, 21).

assistance, tailored to country conditions for participant country staff and relevant stakeholders" (2008, 40). These relevant stakeholders include indigenous territories. The FCPF does recognize the economic situation that most indigenous peoples experience. They state that "many forest-rich countries are also among the poorest in the world. Forest resources directly contribute to the livelihoods of 1.2 billion people living in poverty and indirectly support the natural environment that nourishes agriculture and the food supplies of nearly half the population of the developing world" (Ibid, 1).They also understand that forests are a means of income, employment, and even subsistence for rural poor and for national economic development broadly (Ibid). However,

> Lacking viable alternatives, poor people often convert forests into farms that soon become unproductive due to degraded topsoil conditions. This process destroys sustainable sources of timber and related forest products that offer long-term stability and exchanges them for short-term income generation. Finding new funding sources to tackle deforestation and degradation also holds promise as a tool for reducing poverty among forest-dependent people and promoting their sustainable development (FCPF, 2008, 1).

MINAE states more directly that indigenous peoples, due either to governance structure or land tenure issues, provide a potential reason for continued deforestation. Thus, deforestation in reserves, or conservation spaces, "is related to the lack of control by indigenous peoples of their entire territories, as well as lack of ability by the State to avoid irregular land-titling by invaders in indigenous territories. This is done by irregular purchase of land and is enhanced by the lack of a mechanism to recognize land titles which is managed by indigenous peoples" (MINAE, 2017, 28).

*4) Thematic or Rhetorical Devices*

REDD+ discourse often deploys many themes or rhetorical devices that normalizes carbon markets and the notion of 'expertise' among conservation spaces. The stated understanding of forestry resources, or forests being a "sink" and "source", reinforces the idea of the environment

as ‘manageable’. This is also seen when REDD+ utilizes terms such as “leakage,” “additionality” and “permanence” to represent GHG emissions. This manner of characterizing carbon establishes “particular ‘truths’ about forest carbon, asserting that it can be controlled and calculated, thereby making its management appear achievable and commonsense” (Astuti and McGregor, 2015, 27). Representing nature in this way can also influence the recognition that carbon markets, as a means of controlling carbon in an incentive-based manner, offers a viable or “realistic” response to climate change. This rationalizes carbon markets. Moreover, this way of representing the environment can blur the ability to see forests as subsistence for some or natural splendor. Instead, forestry resources are seen to be viable for capitalistic, or profitable, ends.

The REDD+ program often uses “expertise,” “scientific,” “technical" and other similar jargon in project strategies. In principle, REDD+ schemes throughout the global south tend to call upon “technical” advisory panels (FCPF, 2008, 21), “technical experts”[8] (Barquin *et al*, 2014, 13; The REDD Desk, 2017), “international experts or scientists” (UN-REDD Program, 2011, 17 & 20), “gender” experts (Ibid, 133), scientific experts (Ibid, 127; FCPF, 2008), among other categorical forms of ‘expertise’. This language can invoke, and even reinforce, the notion that northern policies are more viable than non-northern techniques. Furthermore, it can enhance the idea that only experts can effectively care for local environments, driving structural differences in knowledge. Perhaps even more egregious, it can marginalize indigenous communities as inept managers of forestry resources. REDD+ strategy rarely gives concrete language to recognizing indigenous knowledge. Ultimately, the themes and rhetorical devices utilized by REDD+ demonstrate the deployment of neoliberal logic (Newell and Paterson, 2013).

[8] Barquin *et al* state that technical experts are “Government and private sector experts that design and guide implementation of REDD+ activities” (Barquin *et al*, 2014, 13).

## 3.2 Bribri Discourse: A Cosmological Construction of Nature

**Table 2: Bribri Discourse**

| **Bribri Discourse** (Cosmology) | |
|---|---|
| **1** | **Recognized/Constructed Entities**<br>• Nature - religious observance<br>• Markets - misaligned response to climate change<br>• Indigenous Peoples/Knowledge – experienced |
| **2** | **Assumptions Regarding Relationships**<br>• Indigenous Resiliency<br>• Skilled Traditional Methodology<br>• External 'Expertise' Not Necessarily as Valuable |
| **3** | **Agents and Motives**<br>• FCPF, The World Bank, UN, FONAFIFO, etc: commodification<br>• Corporations/Businesses: self-interest<br>• Indigenous Communities: environmental caretakers |
| **4** | **Thematic or Rhetorical Devices**<br>• "Worldview"/"Spirituality"<br>• "Rights"<br>• Subservience to Nature |

* Table 2 is inspired by Dryzek's identification of common environmental discourse themes (2013, 138).

*1) Recognized or Constructed Entities*

The Bribri, one of the largest indigenous populations in Costa Rica, present a construction of nature enveloped in cosmology or spirituality, suggested in Table 2. Bribri cosmology influences their understanding of, and interactions with forests. It also informs their distrust of REDD+ among other schemes that seek to commodify forestry resources and land. This cosmological construction often makes them opposed to the commodification of the environment, which "takes place when an economic value is assigned to something which was not previously considered in economic terms and then is standardized for making it possible to trade in the

market" (Carbon Trade Watch, 2015, 7). And they often understand 'carbon markets' to be "a way for polluters to make more money out of the climate crisis" (Ibid, 7).[9] For Bribri, belief in a harmonious relationship with nature is deeply rooted. According to their cosmology, the forest is sacred. Porras and Picado note that the forest "is the place where Sibù (the main spiritual being) created the universe, and with it corn, the origin of the Bribri peoples" (2016). A Shaman from Talamanca expresses that "this land is alive, it is not dead! It lives everywhere in the Talamanca range, in its headwaters… Sibù left this source so it could nourish all the cultures" (Dunlop, 2008, 159). The Bribrí envision the Earth and its ecosystems as a sacred living being named Iriria.[10] They believe every object, even the plants and trees, to have a supernatural guardian. These guardians allow the Bribri to both hunt and kill animals and even use forest resources for sustenance. For Bribri, forest provision is of utmost importance. Everything within them "is considered sacred and therefore is respected and cared for. Using traditional methods, they hunt only what they need for subsistence. They take from the forest only what is necessary, without a market-oriented vision" (Porras and Picado, 2016). In *Iriria Niña Tierra*, a recent documentary that sheds light on Bribri culture and environmentalism, one Bribri member states that when he speaks of ecology, "I'm talking about a part of me" (*Iriria Niña Tierra,* 2013). Evident within their discourse is an entirely different construction of nature than envisioned in REDD+. In contemporary climate policies "forests have become natural capital for sale on Wall Street and other financial markets, but in reality they are much more" (Isla, 2015, 103). The Bribri narrative attests to forests meaning more.

[9] This information is derived from workshop booklets developed by the Indigenous Environmental Network. These booklets are utilized to inspire discussion among Indigenous communities and educate them regarding the science and purposes of REDD+ schemes. This particular booklet is entitled *What is REDD+: An Introduction to Forests and Climate Change*.

[10] Iriria is the earth goddess in Bribri religion, she is Sibù's niece whom Sibù sacrificed to transform her into the earth.

*2) Assumptions Regarding Relationships*

Bribri portray themselves as having a natural, caring relationship with nature. Their discourse denotes strong value in their traditional knowledge and methodology. Bribri culture is also matrilineal. This is due to the expressed belief in Sibù (Mother Earth). In an interview with one Bribri matriarch, Noemy Blanco Salazar, she states "we are heirs of life; we have to assume this mission that Sibù proudly entrusted, with dignity. We must strive to build valuable ways [of being] for society. Mother earth energy is the force that grows in our spirit" (Parker, 2014). Bribri communities attempt to live out this matriarchal vision of society, relegating actions toward forestry provision. This matriarchal vision influences a strong Bribri commitment to environmental care, as caring for the environment is understood to be caring for the "Earth Mother" (Ibid).

Bribri reject 'expert' knowledge(s), or at least knowledge directing their environmental management. They resist hierarchical knowledge structures that schemes like REDD+ portray. Bribri have a disinterest in the global north dictating environmental norms, particularly norms that devalue their historical experience. They dictate that corporations and governments instead should "change their extractive practices and learn from forms of care towards life" (No-REDD, 2016). They contend that "the forest is purely natural and we have been caring for it for thousands of years. At no time can anyone from the outside tell us that they are wiser than us, to know things and take care of things" (Ibid). They also believe REDD+ and similar projects "violate the right that Sibù left us" (Ibid). This is a testament to how Bribri perceive the roles played by the international community, particularly the ones behind REDD+. This often translates into Bribri believing the global north to be self-interested and offering misaligned climate policies that do not help current climate ills, nor achieve any semblance of sustainability.

*3) Agents and Motives*

Bribri believe they play a vital role in forestry provision. They perceive their methods as life-enhancing. In contrast, carbon trading projects are considered potentially life-destroying due to the market or 'factory' like mentality (Isla, 2015). Bribri often represent indigenous peoples as members of nature, rather than triumphant over it. They express a view that situates their actions (or livelihoods) in a position that actively helps, rather than harms, the environment. This also entails a perception of Bribri resiliency. As some Bribri contest, "We don't want to depend on any external entities. We want to depend on our own way of working" (Rodriguez, 2018). In reference to attempts or projects that commodify earth, one Bribri leader, Don Timoteo Jackson, stated that "We must keep fighting. We must not sell mother earth" (O' Grady, 2007).[11]

Bribri also demonstrate skepticism of actors that promote the commodification of the environment. In recent Bribri declarations against REDD+, they argue REDD+ sells the "air we breathe to the highest bidder" (No-REDD, 2016) and disrespects their "worldview" or "Mother Earth" (Ibid, 2016; Porras and Picado, 2016). When speaking of indigenous rights, Don Timoteo Jackson stated, "We have no rights to anything below the ground and no rights to anything above the ground. There's no profit. We have no autonomy" (O' Grady, 2007).With the prospect of REDD+, they would "no longer have the rights to what we had before, like the plants for our medicines, for our houses and for many other things" (No-REDD, 2016). Bribri discourse is highly suspicious of the notion of 'self-interest' found within carbon markets. This suspicion is not only of governing institutions, but also the private sector REDD+ brings to Costa Rica (Carbon Trade Watch, 2015).

[11] This interview was in reference to the DR-CAFTA, although the Bribri were fighting 'development' in general.

*4) Thematic or Rhetorical Devices*

Bribri also portray clear thematic devices that suggest closeness with nature, if not a clear understanding of subservience to nature. Bribri, often regarding the environment as "Mother Earth" or locating spiritual entities in nature like the "Earth Goddess" herself, (Porras and Picado, 2016), denote a harmony with the environment. As the Bribri declared in 2015, "the care of forests is a right and duty of every person and institution, for the Bribri people the use of natural resources in medicine, housing, education, spirituality and in life in all its complexity, are cultural and traditional conceptions" (Bribri Declaration, 2015). Furthermore, "harmony with nature means a lifestyle and a complex religiosity in indigenous peoples" (Ibid). Forestry provision is closely associated with Bribri culture and 'spirituality'. This thematic 'closeness' with nature also contributes to Bribri opposition of neoliberal climate policies.

Bribri remark that REDD+ poses a threat toward indigenous "rights," as do other indigenous communities in Costa Rica (Bribri Declaration, 2015; Yanez, 2017). The Bribri want REDD+ schemes, and the PES system too, to not only enforce or recognize indigenous rights, but also respect them (Bribri Declaration, 2015). These rights are closely associated with the Bribri "worldview." As suggested in the *World Rainforest Movement*, "rights" are not static, rather they "are a process: in historical, political, social and natural terms" (Yanez, 2017). The Bribri claims of "rights," taken together with their cosmology, convey not just "governance, bureaucracy, or institutional engineering" (Ibid, 2017) but also the security of culture, religion, and the political specifics of indigenous tribes. In short, securing these "rights" entails a protection of overall culture, livelihood, and indigenous futurity (pertaining to tribal customs). Therefore, "rights" for Bribri go beyond mere territorial recognition, though territorial rights are "a collective right that people have been demanding for decades" (Ibid, 2017). This theme is of

prominent concern for current REDD+ developments in Costa Rica, as defusing the tense situation entails recognition that indigenous peoples desire this from REDD+ (Ibid, 2017).

It is important to recognize that, just as not all proponents of REDD+ may hold similar views of sustainable development, some members of the Bribri community may not adhere to this cosmological construction of nature. This means that some members of the Bribri community may not act in the best interest of nature. Regarding indigenous cosmology, Bribri integration with the larger society does occur. Moreover, Roman Catholicism is the dominant religion in Costa Rica (Barry, 1989). As Biesanz *et al* write, "Some four out of five Costa Ricans say they are Catholic" (1999, 229). This Catholic dominance leads to some Bribri incorporating monotheism into their religion, which directly challenges their traditional spiritually. Some, of course, abandon Bribri cosmology altogether in favor of Catholicism. In addition, while many Bribri appear adamant in stopping REDD+, some may contend it is best economically for REDD+ schemes to continue as planned. The current PES system, when distribution is fair among indigenous reserves, offers valuable economic resources for indigenous members. This is a persuasive situation given that the Bribri are among the poorest in Costa Rica. Still, other members of the Bribri community may care less what happens either way. In any case, many Bribri, due to indigenous isolationism or commitment to Bribri traditionalism, maintain many of the historical features of Bribri culture discussed. This greatly informs Bribri contestation of REDD+ at present.

## 3.3 The Makings of Tension

REDD+ and Bribri discourses are contradictory. This gives rise to tension between the two entities. As seen in Bribri discourse, this tension could arise not only because of inattention to 'rights', but also because REDD+ 'economic analysis' (or market-based logic) is often, more or

less, not found in their worldview. Of course, exceptions occur. Bribri generally oppose the commodification of nature, or strategies that put "a price on nature in the form of species banking and conservation finance" (Kopnina, 2017, 24-25). For the Bribri, there is a spiritual and intimate connection with the surrounding environment, as suggested by the belief in both Sibù and Iriria. Ultimately, Bribri oppose REDD+ imposition particularly due to this extension of 'economic analysis' in their local environments. But they also oppose on the grounds of potential consequences REDD+ can render to their livelihood and forestry use.

The discourse of sustainable development (and thereby REDD+) has international prominence. Yet, this analysis demonstrates Bribri offer an alternative environmental discourse. One principally opposed to REDD+. Moreover, the Bribri believe they are more than competent in forestry provision. Despite REDD+ having international prominence, the Bribri situation in Costa Rica is not written in stone. The situation between REDD+ and Bribri, rather, reflect the signs of a dominant discourse of environmental management imposing on a weaker one.

# Chapter 4: The PES System, REDD+ and Indigenous Resistance in Costa Rica

## 4.1 The PES System and the Emergence of REDD+ in Costa Rica

Costa Rica, as suggested by the FCPF, is at "the forefront of biodiversity conservation and natural resource management" (the REDD Desk, 2015). Furthermore, the country is "a pioneer at the global level in the use of market mechanisms to reduce deforestation" (Ibid). The Payment for Ecosystem Services Program (PES system), introduced in chapter 2, is the most well known of Costa Rica's environmental policies, though the National Park System is a close second. Under PES, "Costa Rica pays private owners of forest to conserve forest or allow it to regenerate in return for the ecosystem services they produce" (Ibid). Forestry Law No. 7575 in 1996 created this policy, and it was first put in use in 1997 (Baker, 2014; Barton *et al*, 2009; Daniels *et al*, 2010). The PES system sanctions the payment of forest conservation or reforestation incentives to four environmental services (FONAFIFO, 2014). These four services are the *mitigation of greenhouse gases*, *protection of water sources for urban, rural and hydroelectric purposes*, *protection of biodiversity*, and the *protection of ecosystems, life forms and scenic beauty for tourism and scientific purposes* (Barton *et al*, 2009; Daniels *et al*, 2010). Though deforestation is still an issue in the country, the PES system is credited with slowing it (Corbera, 2011). The history of the PES system in Costa Rica, as the FCPF see it, positioned Costa Rica as a clear candidate for development of a national strategy for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+). Due to the 'successful experience' of the PES system, coordinated by FONAFIFO, the FCPF identified it as a foundation on which to nest REDD+ schemes (Baker, 2014; Lang, 2016). As a Bank Information Center (BIC) case study concludes, "this accumulated experience, coupled with high institutional capacity, makes Costa Rica a REDD+ forerunner

with the potential to generate important models and set precedents" (BIC, 2014, 5). Costa Rica entered into negotiations with the FCPF in 2008. REDD+ developmental plans – or the REDD+ Readiness phase – ensued soon after. The country hopes that the REDD+ project "will be able to maintain at least 600,000 hectares under the existing PES program, add another 750,000 hectares of forest, and restore forest cover in 12 percent of the national territory that is currently dedicated to other uses" (World Rainforest Movement, 2015, 18). MINAE, in noting desired country outcomes from REDD+, stated in their ER-Program assessment that the goal "is to achieve a low carbon economy" (2017, 7). REDD+, along with the PES system, is meant to help Costa Rica become 'carbon neutral' by 2021.

Literature on Costa Rica's PES system remains an ambiguous, under researched area as it pertains to socio-economic implications. This is important for the system holds immense implications for the viability of the REDD+ program in Costa Rica. Many studies of the PES system focus solely on environmental outcomes rather than social dynamics (Arriagada *et al,* 2015; Bornor *et al,* 2017). Studies that have attempted to measure social implications have often been accused of selection bias towards large forest owners, or those of a comparatively favorable socio-economic profile (Bornor *et al,* 2017). A "poor [PES] design could lead to wasted financial resources and potentially adverse environmental or social outcomes, for example, through unintended effects on human behavior" (Ibid). Some studies indicate that there could be possible risks in nesting REDD+ initiatives in the system, as REDD+ has the potential to "crowd-out" conservation attitudes (Corbera *et al*, 2011; Rosendal and Schei, 2014). REDD+ schemes call for, and consume, a vast amount of resources in order to meet market demands. As Rosendal and Schei warn, "forest rich countries would be well advised to step back and consider what interests

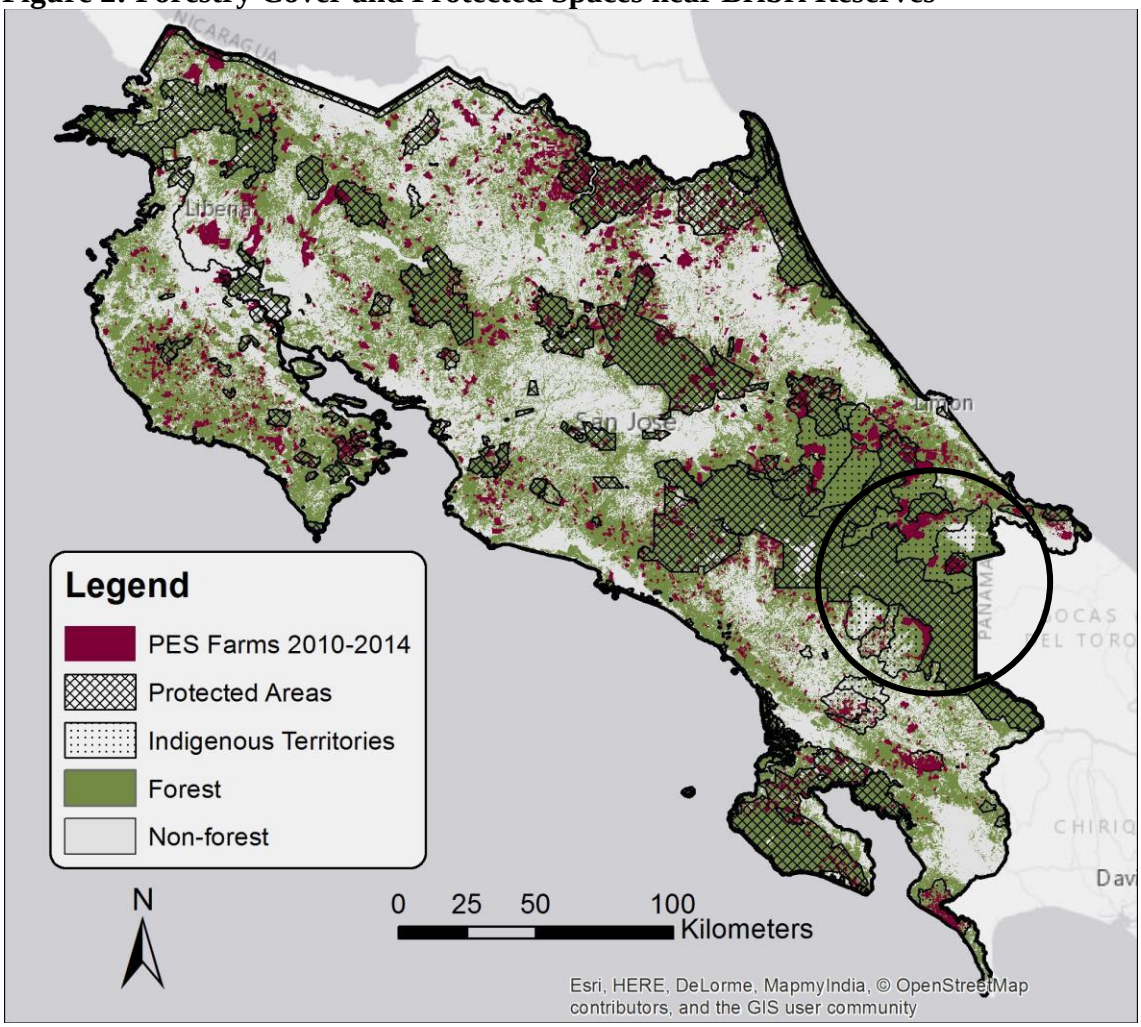
are behind REDD+ and how it might affect their own priorities and policies" (2014, 81). Nevertheless, Costa Rica adopted REDD+.

During the period of 1997 – 2012, FONAFIFO signed "12,528 contracts with private landowners and indigenous communities for a total 934,274.6 hectares" (BIC, 2014, 5). Out of the 24 indigenous territories, 21 participate in the national PES program. This is due to the substantial forest resources held by indigenous territories (Ibid), as demonstrated in Figure 2. Indigenous participation in the PES system offers "a source of important resources" and often "constitutes the primary source of government support to a given territory" (Ibid, 5). The Indigenous, however, often have a particularly troublesome experience in the PES system. This is largely due their governance and representation structure – the ADIs. FONAFIFO negotiates with ADIs (Rozas, 2012). The ADIs are also attached, in turn, to the National Indigenous Council (CONAI)[12] (Ibid). Since the PES system requires land titles, the ADIs act as a legal representative and receives the payments. FONAFIFO and SINAC do not have strict requirements for how money should be invested within territories (IWGIA, 2017). This can allow for conflicts on indigenous reserves. While there are successful cases of fund distribution, in certain territories groups have appropriated and managed funds very subjectively, showing favor to families closest to them (Rozas, 2012). This has been particularly prominent in reserves belonging to the Ngöbe ethnic group (Ibid). It is this indigenous history, situation, and governance structure that intersects with Costa Rica's changing environmental sector. As Rojas *et al* contend, the PES program, and now REDD+, not only creates competition for access to economic resources, but it also affects the "cultural level because the use of forests in these

[12] This is an agency in charge of managing indigenous issues and their relations with public institutions (Rozas, 2012)

communities has always been free, collective and outside the commercial sphere because nature is not a commodity" (2003).

**Figure 2: Forestry Cover and Protected Spaces near Bribri Reserves**




Source: MINAE. *2017 ER-Program to the FCPF Carbon Fund.* April 24, 2017. P. 11. Bribri reserves circled for emphasis. Fair use determination attached.

Costa Rica, recognizing the potential of REDD+ schemes, has gone forward in achieving REDD+ Readiness status. The REDD+ Readiness phase "is the first phase of REDD+ where countries design their national strategies and action plans with all relevant stakeholders, build capacities for REDD+ implementation, work on policies for forest governance, and initiate demonstration activities" (Barquin *et al*, 2014, 40). REDD+ strategy is defined as "a package of long-term policy interventions often developed through a multistakeholder process. These often

have the goal of serving as a common agenda for achieving GHG emissions reductions and promoting forest governance" (Ibid, 40). As MINAE stated in the *ER-Program Assessment*, an assessment completed in preparation of REDD+ Readiness,

> The ER-P heavily relies on the prohibition to convert forests to other land uses, but also seeks to strengthen the Protected Areas System to guarantee the conservation of critical biodiversity and the Payment for Environmental Services (PES) program as a policy instrument to guarantee forest conservation and carbon (C) stock enhancement through reforestation, tree plantations, agroforestry and silvopastoral systems (2017, 8).

In choosing designated areas for REDD+ schemes, FONAFIFO identified one area inside the *Bribri de Talamanca* reserve (Kill, 2015). Thus far, there are six PES projects within indigenous reserves under consideration for REDD+ implementation. These six projects add up to a total of 3,308 hectares of indigenous territory (Ibid). The Bribri territory identified is among the most densely forested areas in the country (Ibid), seen in Figure 2. Within this reserve, the PES System and REDD+ could incorporate 60.9 percent of it (Ibid).

## 4.2 Bribri Contestation of REDD+

The Bribri express the most disdain for REDD+ schemes, though other indigenous communities subjected to REDD+ also express concern (Porras & Picado, 2016; Kill, 2014). Primarily, they have expressed frustration with REDD+'s lack of consultation regarding implementations (Porras & Picado, 2016; Kill, 2014). Though REDD+ plans have been in development since 2008, Bribri express that the governing entities have ignored stipulations of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (Porras & Picado, 2016). FONAFIFO, the agency tasked with implementing the national REDD+ strategy, plans to implement schemes between 2016 and 2020. Though "a consultation process with indigenous peoples is expected to occur, it should have happened prior to the current implementation process" (Porras and Picado, 2017). In 2009, 2012, 2013, and 2015, REDD+ moved forward with various institutional preparations for incoming REDD+

strategies. Throughout the years, the same indigenous story regarding lack of consultations occurred. The various programs, appointments, and initiatives were "developed without people knowing where it originated, who was involved, or how agreements were reached" (Ibid). Indigenous communities do have representatives (through ADIs). But, as many Bribri claim, communities are still in the dark about what has transpired since there has been little to no relay of information. The Bribri's "central claim questions the legitimacy of these projects, which are imposed by international bodies and directly oppose their customs and worldview, especially their care and respect for nature" (Ibid). Members of the Alto Durigna community (within Bribri territory) expressed hesitation towards REDD+ after it placed 1000 hectares of their land under consideration. In response to the encroaching project, they stated that "the forests in this area are not merely forests; they are sacred sites for our peoples" (Ibid, 19; Rozas, 2012).

In October of 2015, numerous Bribri, along with a few other tribes – primarily Cabecar, marched on the Presidential Palace to deliver the following statement:

> REDD disrespects our worldview by placing a price on and commodifying our forests, our sacred sites, our rivers and all beings that inhabit them… We demand that our way of taking care of forests be respected, as it goes far beyond projects that come from outside. Those projects divide the fabric of our ancestral communities, which has enabled the mountains to remain intact today. As indigenous peoples we say: We cannot sell the air, the water, gold or the mountain… if we drain the lifeblood of the forest, it will die (Lang, 2016).

This was the biggest demonstration against REDD+ by the Bribri to date, though it was not the last and not the only time the Bribri spoke out publically against the program. Despite this statement to stop REDD+ activity, Costa Rica's Presidential Palace responded that "REDD will happen, because it will" (Porras and Picado, 2017; Kill, 2016). Moreover, in this march the Bribri denounced "the true culprits of the climate crisis: governments and corporations" (Porras and Picado, 2016). In the following year, on July 1, 2016, 400 people from 23 different Bribri

communities met in Suretka, Talamanca to deliver a statement opposing REDD+. Before this gathering, there was brief consideration by FONAFIFO, MINAE and the Secretariat of reorienting REDD+ in reserves to contain an indigenous-based REDD+ plan. Indigenous communities met this with frustration. As they expressed, proponents of REDD+ still did not consider socioeconomic realities in the reserves and, specifically, indigenous spirituality. Thus, in Suretka, the Bribri rejected "any protocol of consultation, formulated with cultural mediators, network of associations, Association of Integral Development or others, in participation with FONAFIFO and MINAE, since it does not contemplate a process of good faith, traditional figures and knowledge of the peoples involved, evidently violating the spirit of the Convention No. 169" (Declaración Territorio Bribri Libre de REDD+, 2016). Furthermore, they did not accept any changes to REDD+ since it "runs over the rights of the [indigenous] peoples throughout the process" (Mendez and Picado, 2016; Mendez and Cambronero, 2016).This statement delivered by Bribri is also echoed in a statement to the UN by different indigenous communities worldwide (the Bribri were a part of the ensemble). Delivered by Calfin Lafkenche of the Mapuche Nation in Chile, the indigenous communities collectively state:

> We are here today in the UN to stop the offensive of the Green Economy and its market systems of carbon trading, carbon offsets, the Clean Development Mechanism, and REDD+, which constitute a new form of colonialism and have caused conflicts, forced relocation, threats to the cultural survival and violations of the rights of Indigenous peoples, especially the rights to life, to lands and territories, and to free, prior and informed consent (No-REDD, 2016).

As of July 2017, a Costa Rican progress report identified that consultations with indigenous peoples were progressing well, but some further work was still needed (MINAE, 2017). However, the report conflicts with many claims made by indigenous communities, specifically the Bribri, of never receiving proper consultations.

*Ineffective Consultation: Two Potential Reasons*

The resounding issue the Bribri express (among other indigenous tribes) involves REDD+, and by extension MINAE, FONAFIFO, and other domestic institutions, not consulting indigenous communities on project developments properly. Interestingly, REDD+ proponents believe consultation processes are going well, despite some work needed. But meanwhile, indigenous peoples claim consultation processes have been ineffective or absent. As Bribri specifically claim, 'non-consultation' can upend or threaten indigenous livelihood. There are *two* potential reasons behind this miscommunication, one offered by the Bribri and one from REDD+. Of course, both possibilities could be equally valid.

As suggested by the Bribri, a document entitled *Caravana Climática* acknowledges that one small indigenous sector, in the South Caribbean region, has engaged in REDD+ strategy since 2008 (Kill, 2015). Thanks to the involvement of this indigenous sector, "the government says it is a participatory process" (Ibid, 19). The indigenous communities "are concerned that this sector has created consultation processes, but they have not been developed with the prior, free and informed consent or involvement of all the indigenous communities in the country" (Ibid, 19). Furthermore, it contends that "in Talamanca, the REDD mechanism appears to be implemented by indigenous officers involved with the state institutions without the free, prior and informed consultation of the communities" (Ibid, 2015, 19). This situation is further acknowledged by a member of the Bribri, of whom stated that "there's been an inclusive process in certain territories but that hasn't been the case for ours in Buenos Aires [Costa Rica] and the rest of the Southern region" (Rodriguez, 2018). The Bribri concern is that if it is not institutional factors restricting the flow of information, it is that domestic entities (MINAE, FONAFIFO and others) have taken the words of a few and applied it to many calling it 'consent'. Of course, this issue also correlates

with further indigenous concerns involving ADIs and 'institutional officers' in general. Some communities suggest ADIs are ineffective in representation. The ADIs, consisting of representatives from most every indigenous territory, are usually reduced to the sole indigenous voice in scheme negotiations. This leads some indigenous peoples to wonder if they are inadequately represented (NO-REDD, 2017). The Bribri Declaration mentions that since communities "are unaware of the entire REDD + process" it undermines Convention No. 169 since it requires the "active participation of communities according to their traditions, constant communication between the parties, appropriate cultural procedures, information on possible risks including environmental risks, health and culture (Bribri Declaration, 2016). The Bribri stated in response that "using our right of the consultation itself, we decided to reject the REDD+ project" (Ibid).

Proponents behind REDD+ maintain that effective consultation has occurred, but representation in indigenous communities is problematic. Regarding FPIC, Conservation International recognizes, as does the FCPF, that "FPIC is not explicitly required under REDD+" (Barquin *et al*, 2014, 80). It is, however, "recognized and/or required by international instruments, including ILO 169, UNDRIP, UN conventions—including the CBD and implementing mechanisms including UN-REDD—and voluntary standards such as the Climate, Community and Biodiversity Standards and REDD+ SES" (Ibid, 80). However, and a part of what proponents of REDD+ claim to be problematic by indigenous governance structure,

> FPIC is influenced by national legislation and local context. While there is no universal definition of FPIC, increasingly multilateral, bilateral and private donors are requiring the application of elements of FPIC. Some countries and institutions interpret and apply FPIC as Free, Prior and Informed Consultation. It is important that all stakeholders, including government, indigenous people, communities and others who are impacted—agree on how FPIC will be implemented in the specific national and local context. It is also important to establish a clear mechanism for discussion and resolution of issues that may arise in the application of this process (Barquin *et al*, 2014, 80).

The REDD+ program recognizes a need for the adherence to International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention No. 169 and other similar measures of indigenous protection (Barquin *et al*, 2014, 73). Of course, REDD+ does not implement this, rather Costa Rica – FONAFIFO and MINAE – is to do so. However, based upon preliminary and ongoing assessments orchestrated by REDD+ facilitators (externally hired), indigenous governance structures (and representation) have been problematic. Though indigenous representatives have been involved since the beginnings of REDD+ in Costa Rica, assessments have stated "the same people were not always involved, which led to information gaps" (Barquin *et al*, 2014, 16). Furthermore,

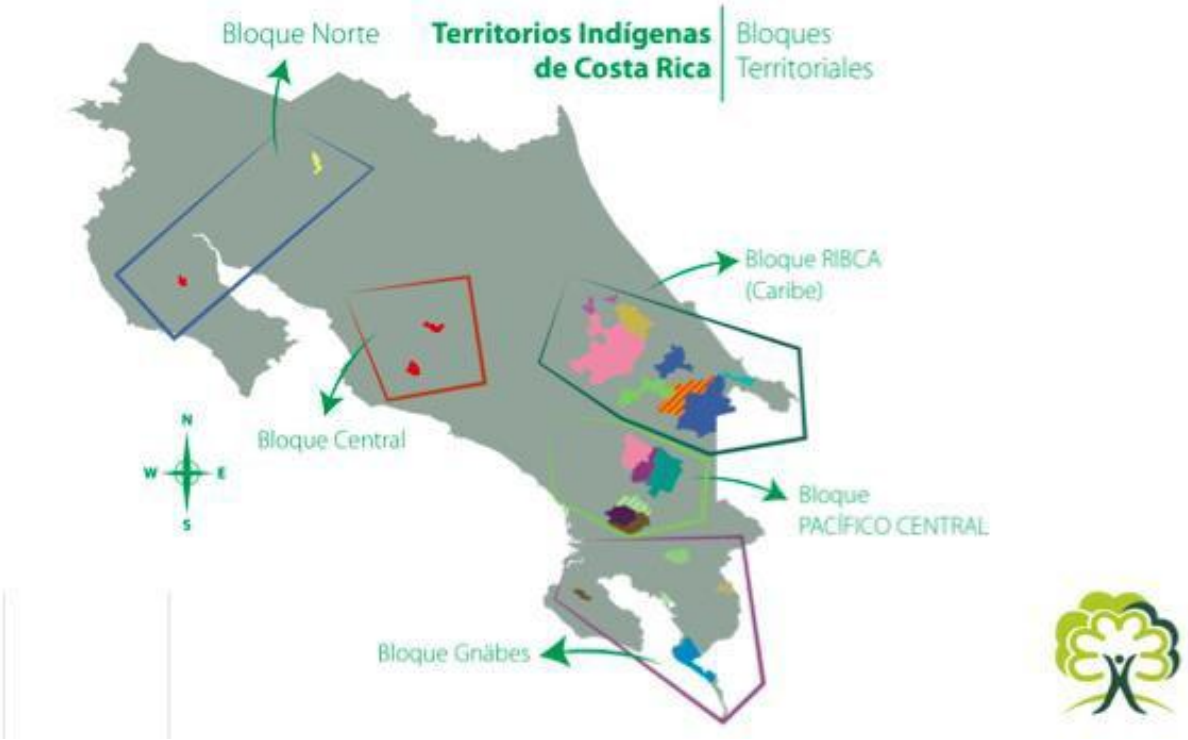
> The readiness phase started in 2008 and throughout this period the representation of the participants from organizations has been changing for various reasons. This leads to a skewing of the quantity and quality of the information, processes and priorities of those who attended the events on behalf of the sector. Another assumption was that the participants handled all the content and terminology of the 34 assessment criteria. For this reason, some adaptations had to be made to end with a consensus on the self-assessment of the sector throughout the readiness phase of the REDD+ Strategy (Ibid, 16).

FONAFIFO did contact different indigenous groups from different territories (Rozas, 2012). They recognize that "any policy or mechanism related to indigenous groups in Costa Rica must first go through a consultation process aimed at preserving their autonomy" (Ibid). For these reasons, MINAE, FONAFIFO and other institutions utilize such groups as RIBCA.[13] As MINAE explains, "Indigenous peoples created four territorial groups, defined according to their geographic location, culture, political vision and worldview. At the same time, they created a direct communication channel with the Presidency Minister form Government, with a defined agenda, REDD+ being one of the items" (MINAE, 2017, 53-54). RIBCA was one of these four groups, outlined in Figure 3. RIBCA, otherwise known as Red Indígena Bribri y Cabecar, has

[13] The Indigenous Bribri-Cabecar (RIBCA) "was created in 2005 to promote the integration of the Indigenous territories of the Atlantic Region of Costa Rica" (Mesoamerican Alliance of People and Forests, 2018). http://www.alianzamesoamericana.org/ribca/

played a leading role in pre-consultation processes (The REDD Desk, 2015). It "represents eight territories and is one of five blocks of indigenous territories, which together group the 24 Indigenous Territories (TI) in Costa Rica" (Ibid). Specifically, RIBCA helped draft consultation plans, develop dialogue systems and overall organizational structures pertaining to indigenous representation. RIBCA devised "a pyramidal representation system that was adopted by the other participating blocks," or other indigenous territories (Ibid). However, these representative structures, or the ADIs and RIBCA, are ever-changing in membership. Within these structures, none of the indigenous "roles are full time and all are voluntary" (Ibid). REDD+ proponents acknowledge this causes confusion regarding schemes among indigenous communities.

**Figure 3: Indigenous Representation Groups – Identification of RIBCA Territory**




Source: MINAE. *2017 ER-Program to the FCPF Carbon Fund.* April 24, 2017. P.52. Fair use determination attached.

## 4.3 REDD+ in Costa Rica: Defining 'Rightful' Behavior

There is clear on-the-ground tension between indigenous peoples, especially Bribri, and REDD+ in Costa Rica. As seen in Bribri demonstrations, there is deep skepticism of REDD+ due not only to issues of land tenure but also differences in worldview. While some Bribri would be open to schemes if communicative channels were better conducted, some still disagree with REDD+ in principle. Nevertheless, REDD+ is quickly becoming a staple of Costa Rica's environmental sector. Costa Rica's National Climate Change Strategy (ENCC), drafted in 2009, "sets the direction that Costa Rica will follow to reach its goal of carbon-neutrality by 2021, divided into six strategic areas: (i) mitigation of greenhouse gases; (ii) climate change adaptation; (iii) MRV; (iv) capacity building and technology transfer; (v) financing; and (vi) public awareness and behavior change (The REDD Desk, 2015). REDD+, as MINAE understands, can help to meet these aims, coupled with the current PES system. As Astuti and McGregor write however, REDD+, in general, is "gradually evolving from its initial proposal to reduce emissions from land-use change and the forestry sector into a multifaceted scheme to govern human–forest relations" (2015, 21). This is the case for REDD+ in Costa Rica. As some indigenous leaders acknowledged in the early stages of the program, "it was a very complex and technical process, and would present a challenge to guarantee the indigenous peoples' full understanding" (MINAE, 2017, 52).[14] Moreover, in Costa Rica and elsewhere, "actors seek to benefit from the program and are using it to reshape or legitimize socioecological processes in line with their own worldviews" (McGregor *et al*, 2014. 151). Through REDD+, governing institutions such as

[14] In response, indigenous leaders, or those of RIBCA, proposed the *cultural mediator's program*. As MINAE states, "cultural Mediators are indigenous people, who have been trained in matters related to REDD+ capable to provide the simplified information in their own language" (2017, 52). This program is meant to open communication channels between the indigenous and REDD+ developmental plans. These communication channels included "banners, local media (radio) and dialogues among the community during the pre-consultation workshops. This initiative was implemented in the five indigenous blocks, according the organization structure defined" (Ibid, 52).

MINAE or FONAFIFO seek the objective of capacity building and carbon mitigation. Secondary actors, such as businesses or corporations, maintain a distant, self interested position whereby schemes offer a means of carbon reduction for industrial practices. Indigenous populations may want to improve economic situations or, in contrast, have no involvement with REDD+ at all. This largely characterizes REDD+ complexity in action. Still yet, REDD+ "involves recourse to scientific knowledge and the use of statistics, mapping technologies, satellite images and computer modeling to construct truths about the environment and prescribe appropriate conduct for populations to act upon" (Astuti and McGregor, 2015, 21). By the accruement and need of a vast array of actors with differing motives, and the pivot toward technical and scientific accounts, REDD+ provokes tensions among its on-the-ground schemes with indigenous peoples. This is especially possible since indigenous peoples have trouble understanding schemes, or stand principally opposed to the idea behind REDD+ in the first place. Ultimately, REDD+'s technical specificity, reliance upon expert formations of knowledge, and verification of behaviorisms can challenge indigenous knowledge and forestry use.

Not only this, the hierarchical structure of the REDD+ program creates difficulties for indigenous peoples. At the external level, the FCPF is the managing entity that dictates best environmental practices to ensure 'best' outcomes for the program. At the domestic level, MINAE and FONAFIFO (taking cues from the FCPF, UN, and others) manage national strategy and overall scheme implementation. Concerning scheme verifications, MINAE specifies that FONAFIFO, the coordinating agency, works closely with the National Center for Geospatial Information (CENIGA) (MINAE, 2017). To best ensure scheme verification processes, FONAFIFO "will establish a technical group of experts" (Ibid, 108). These experts are "composed of the National Meteorology Institute, FONAFIFO, SINAC, CENIGA and other

agencies, as necessary" (Ibid, 108). Furthermore, relevant statistics, processed data, and operational specifics "would be provided by the competent institutions on REDD+ issues" (Ibid, 148). Therefore, relevant knowledge pertaining to REDD+ development in Costa Rica is held, managed, and analyzed by institutions ranging from the FCPF to MINAE or FONAFIFO, as also NGOs and academic institutions when found to be relevant. The control of knowledge production and dissemination "is an important factor in shaping who will participate in REDD+ debates and how, the direction REDD+ takes nationally and locally and at some point in the future" (Aguilar-Støen, 2015, 41). Also, knowledge production and dissemination is "central to assess the actual outcomes of the schemes implemented on the ground" (Ibid, 41). This structural perspective of REDD+ 'knowledge management' shows that the devaluing of indigenous knowledge is possible, especially when technical and scientific specificity is an elevated desire by REDD+.

As MINAE attests, "Costa Rica has been a strong proponent of green, sustainable and resilient development, particularly in regards to the protection of natural resources, forests and their environmental services" (2017, 7). Costa Rica reflects current norms in global climate politics. REDD+ stems from a broader neoliberal approach whereby the market economy is perceived as a viable solution to mitigating climate change globally, while also thought to strengthen economic and agricultural sectors in developing areas. REDD+ draws upon or produces expert formations of knowledge and applies or disseminates "best" conservation practices for populations to adopt and uphold. With REDD+ elevating market values in Costa Rica, it can marginalize indigenous knowledge and impose new forms of conduct altogether coherent with market-based logic. In Costa Rica, there are "new environmental subjectivities – involving identifiable roles, norms, behaviours and practices – people are encouraged to adopt in

relation to forests as a consequence of REDD+. Such subjectivities are a form of self-government, which in the case of REDD+, encourage forms of conduct guided by concerns about conserving forest carbon" (Astuti and McGregor, 2015, 23). Moreover, REDD+ constructs *ideal* conduct, by way of this 'economic analysis' and imposed market-based conservation practices, which it (consisting of the FCPF, FONAFIFO, MINAE, and others) manages and monitors[15]. This *ideal* REDD+ conduct involves behavior that helps to achieve sustainable, market-based ends.

But as seen in the Talamanca region and the President's Palace, Bribri resist REDD+. It is, of course, not solely ideological disagreement (or conflicting worldviews). Indigenous peoples of Costa Rica often experience problems of laxness from the country's environmental sector. This contributes to problems associated with incentivized schemes aimed at sustainable or economic development (accruement of potentially harmful actors – logging, mining, etc). Although, the plethora of environmental laws Costa Rica passed were often commensurate with the country's adaptation to sustainable development. As Foucault acknowledges, "Government must accompany the market economy from start to finish" (2008, 121). Moreover, "one must govern for the market, rather than because of the market" (Ibid, 121). Many of the environmental laws passed in the country focus on eliminating environmental damages (Salazar, 2004). As Costa Rica's environmental sector continued to mirror global climate policies, more laws ensued. Of course, Costa Rica recognized the dire situation deforestation and forest degradation posed; this was, in part, the reasoning for such laws. But these environmental laws were generally passed also with the intent to protect 'conservation spaces'. And it is these 'conservation spaces'

[15] FCPF states in the memorandum that a "key element of Readiness is the design, development, and, possibly, implementation of an integrated system of measurement, monitoring and verification (MMV) of emissions from deforestation and forest degradation at the national scale" (FCPF, 2008, 24) However, it could also monitor and evaluate "the effects of REDD Strategy implementation beyond climate change mitigation, e.g., livelihoods, biodiversity, rural development, forest law enforcement, etc" (Ibid, 24).

that are often made to work for eco-tourism or incentive-based purposes. Laws ranging from the creation of national parks to the current PES system serve to enhance Costa Rica's prominence in this newer paradigm of environmental governance – governance the FCPF admittedly admires.

But ultimately, the Bribri oppose the 'conduct' that REDD+ imposes. They resist on the grounds of a differing worldview, security of indigenous culture, and recognition of a complex history of territorial abuses by non-state actors (enabled by weak national governance). But most importantly, as Bribri contend, REDD+ introduces new challenges and new problems to indigenous ways of life and specifically threatens their relationship with the natural environment. Thus, Bribri demonstrate that "even in the most unequal situations of relations of power, those subjected to power exercise some choices" (Darier, 1999, 17).

# Chapter 5: Conclusion

## 5.1 REDD+ and the Bribri: A Situation Far From Over

The events discussed in this project have yet to conclude. And given the affinity for carbon markets among the international community, these events are far from over. This is not only the case for Costa Rica, but in many countries of the global south. As Newell and Paterson acknowledge, "When we accept the need for a serious and radical move towards a decarbonised economy we also need to be clear how this will happen and the time-frame within which it needs to happen" (2010, 184). Carbon markets, and carbon trading schemes in general, whether wanted or not, are currently the international community's major response to climate change, deforestation, and forest degradation. REDD+, only but one method in the broader debate on how to reduce climate change, has become a key international strategy "to halt land-use change in developing countries and involve them in climate mitigation efforts" (Corbera *et al*, 2011, 302).

Indigenous peoples throughout the developing world are resisting REDD+ for reasons similar to the Bribri of Costa Rica. Of course, REDD+ projects differ among developing countries since domestic institutions play a vital role. And in some countries, indigenous peoples back scheme implementations (and this does occur elsewhere in Costa Rica). Still, schemes have caused much controversy among indigenous communities, with widespread opposition to projects. If REDD+ desires the inclusion of indigenous communities, more work to secure collective land and forestry rights for indigenous peoples needs to occur. In Costa Rica, the Bribri believe they have valuable knowledge regarding sustainable practices. If REDD+ continues to devalue this Bribri role among forests, then opposition of REDD+ schemes by Bribri will likely continue. As Rojas *et al* contend, "If the interests of local communities and

indigenous groups are truly at the heart of [REDD+], the solution should be to advocate comprehensive public policies that promote community control over their territories" (2015). Such mechanisms are currently in place, the most prominent being the ADIs, as discussed in chapter 4. From the perspective of the Bribri, these need to be strengthened by REDD+ and domestic institutions in order to achieve a more direct indigenous control of forests and biodiversity in territories. This strengthening of ADIs can enable the Bribri (and other communities) to exercise their "collective rights of autonomy and control over their lands and territory according to their worldview" (Ibid). Given the participatory nature of REDD+, Conservation International even acknowledges "it is necessary to continue working on improving the themes of gender, power, rights and markets and to complement legal and organizational frameworks" (Barquin *et al*, 2014, 31).

REDD+ is still relatively young, as are other similar programs. After years of policy negotiation, REDD+ is "still being debated politically and scientifically" (Astuti and McGregor, 2015, 24). And, "it is an incomplete project, continuously being rearranged and modified" (Ibid, 24). Despite REDD+ malleability, the attempt at governing forestry use has been a persistent feature of the program thus far in Costa Rica. This is due to the project goal of commodifying carbon and reorienting lifestyles in support of incentivized approaches towards forestry management. As discussed, the program elevates 'expert' knowledge(s) over indigenous formations. Consequently, the program's aims *can* enable the governing of indigenous conduct according to neoliberal logic. Therefore, REDD+ holds immense importance for indigenous livelihoods and culture. As this project illustrates, 'power' here is not necessarily a state or government entity enforcing rules over individuals, but rather "acting through all such subjects,

shaping not only their behavior but their internal rationalities, identities, what they fundamentally regard as 'normal' behavior" (Patterson and Stripple, 2010, 19).

Yet, the participation of Bribri in carbon markets is not out of the question in Costa Rica. Although many of the Bribri remain adamantly opposed to REDD+ schemes, some recognize the financial benefits that climate funds enable. Leví Sucre, a Bribri leader, recognizes that climate change "is having serious impacts on the food security of indigenous communities" (Rodriquez, 2018). As climate change worsens, so does the issue of food security among indigenous communities (especially given the isolated nature of these reserves). Incentivized schemes, such as REDD+ and PES, represent a means of improving their situation (or economic status). But Sucre acknowledges that indigenous "access to international climate funds to provide cash for needed changes is "an almost impossible task"" (Ibid). Speaking on REDD+ and PES, Sucre stated they have "too many limitations and they ask for too many things; starting with understanding how these things even work in the first place. In the end, the funds are created but never really reach us" (Ibid). Since these mechanisms prove difficult for Bribri, some members of Bribri different communities posit the need for an indigenous based-climate fund. This recently led to the creation of the "Mesoamerican Territorial Fund", which they hope will soon receive international funding (Ibid). This was developed in the hopes of avoiding mechanisms like REDD+, since this program specifically "provoked tensions in the relationship between communities" (Ibid). Most importantly, this new climate fund "will aim to finance adaptation projects that protect the food security of indigenous territories… using traditional knowledge they have acquired through the years" (Ibid). While they are dismissive of REDD+ technologies, they want "to incentivize the use of technologies that don't erase our culture" (Ibid).Therefore, some Bribri do partially accept neoliberal climate policies, as long as these

techniques do not undermine or threaten indigenous livelihood and culture. Importantly, in this proposed climate fund, Bribri have direct control of scheme operations. Of course, these Bribri do not represent *all* Bribri, as many still remain altogether opposed to marketised policies.

Though REDD+ has challenged relations with indigenous communities worldwide, it has not caused irreparable damage with the Bribri. While there is a portion of the Bribri community who argue no REDD+ version is acceptable, others are less adamant. For these Bribri, participation could be contingent on REDD+'s capacity for on-the-ground changes in territories. Given the young life-span of REDD+ and its ability to modify schemes, changes to schemes *can* happen that *could* benefit more involved – as proponents of REDD+ proposed before. The question is if adequate changes can, or will, occur. It is possible that if respect for traditional methods, security of collective land and forestry rights and equal awareness and participation are taken as serious objectives by REDD+, the Bribri *may* be open to schemes. As Biesanz *et al* contend, "Many Indians see their problems as solvable, not as an inevitable fate to which they should passively succumb. Some add that Indians have much to teach other Costa Ricans about cooperation, herbal medicines, and ecology, which they can do only if their cultures and reserves were protected" (Biesanz *et al*, 1999, 113). But if REDD+ continues its present course, it is unlikely REDD+ can win over the Bribri. And given the centralized focus of REDD+ schemes and the many actors involved in REDD+ operations, it is probable REDD+ will not radically change from its present form. For Bribri, their cosmological worldview is fundamental to their perception of the environment, and it informs their livelihood among reserves. Therefore, it is unlikely any REDD+ form, with the central goal of commodifying nature, can appease Bribri communities fully. In short, both the proponents of REDD+ and the Bribri perceive nature differently. And if Bribri or indigenous peoples elsewhere support the program, it is often for the

financial opportunities available through schemes. Ultimately, the Bribri exemplify the unlikelihood of REDD+ and indigenous peoples co-existing without some element of disagreement, given their divergent views on natural resources.

## 5.2 Questions for Further Research

With REDD+ being relatively new to the international scene, research on indigenous peoples and their involvement or reaction to such schemes is still emerging. Thus, there are still significant questions pertaining to REDD+ strategies and indigenous communities, both in Costa Rica and elsewhere. Following the conclusion of this project, there are several important questions for further research. First, is it possible REDD+ draws too many intermediaries to the fold limiting indigenous management of territorial resources? Or, can there be a version of REDD+ that does not endanger indigenous use of natural resources? Second, and not unrelated to the first, can a version of REDD+ ever be compatible with indigenous, or even Bribri, cosmology since schemes center on the forests' value in storing carbon? As suggested, there is some Bribri acceptance of neoliberal climate policies, but this acceptance often includes elements of indigenous control of schemes. Meaning, policies generally accepted by the Bribri are those conducted on their own terms, for reasons of ensuring, or maximizing, benefits from these projects. Third, REDD+ and similar schemes present neoliberalism (or neoliberal climate policies) as a natural response to environmental degradation, but is it? The Bribri, in contrast to REDD+, provide a narrative that gives a different take on nature and, specifically, a different take on nature's ability to be incorporated into markets. Therefore, what REDD+ may present as *natural* (e.g. the management of carbon, financial incentives attached to local environments, and other REDD+ aims), may be *unnatural*. And fourth, can the UN, World Bank, or other

institutions ever be on board with indigenous concerns and desired changes involving REDD+ given the power asymmetry between them?

It is clear REDD+ and similar schemes are here to stay. Thus, currently, forest protection by the international community is "premised on the process of commodification" (Kopnina, 2016, 30). Future research could shed light on possible avenues by which to achieve some reconciliation between REDD+ and indigenous peoples. Or, similar to this project's conclusion for the Bribri, future research could *further* show that REDD+ and indigenous peoples are, most likely, non-compatible because of fundamental differences in worldview.

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# Glossary of Terms

**ADI**, or the Asociaciones de Desarrollo Integral, is the Indigenous structure of governance on reserves. This system was established by Costa Rica's 1977 Indigenous Law, the one in which also created indigenous reserves. This structure also accompanies The General Assembly and Committees of Communal Support. However, the ADI is the primary structure that is "legally recognized as the local government both by national and international legislations, including the Convention 169 of the International Work Organization" (Baker, 2014, 37). The ADIs among reserves are also the entity that MINAE and FONAFIFO primarily interacts with.

**Carbon Offset** refers to a financial instrument aimed at reducing greenhouse gas or carbon dioxide emissions. As Newell and Paterson specify, "one carbon offset credit represents the reduction of one metric unit tone of carbon dioxide or its equivalent in other greenhouse gases (2011, 191).

**Carbon Sequestration** refers to long-term storage of atmospheric carbon dioxide. Carbon is taken up by trees, grasses and other plants through photosynthesis. In short, it is the process of removing carbon from the atmosphere and into storage by way of forestry resources.

**Emissions Trading**, also known as cap and trade, is a market based approach to control pollution or mitigate environmental issues, primarily climate change. It allows "those reducing greenhouse gas emissions below their emission cap to use or trade the excess reductions to offset emissions at another source inside or outside the country (Newell and Paterson, 2011, 193).

**FONAFIFO**, Fondo Nacional De Financiamiento Forestal (or the Forestry Financing Fund), is the entity that coordinates the PES system and REDD+ schemes in Costa Rica. FONAFIFO has coordinated the PES system since its establishment in 1996.

**FCPF**, or The Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, is administered by The World Bank and oversees REDD+ schemes in developing countries. The FCPF acts as "knowledge management" pertaining to REDD+ schemes.

**MINAE**, or Costa Rica's Ministry of Environment and Energy, is Costa Rica's primary governing entity of the environment. This department oversees the management of natural resources and environmental protection and conservation in Costa Rica. This entity is also known as MINAET, or the Ministry of the Environment, Energy and Technology.

**PES**, or Payment for Ecosystem Services (or alternatively, Payment for Environmental Services), are financial incentives offered towards farmers or landowners in exchange for the management of their land to achieve ecosystem services. Payment is, of course,

conditional on conservation objectives met. In Costa Rica, the PES system also maintains the principle of "whoever contaminates, pays".

**REDD+**, or Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation, is a voluntary global carbon trading scheme, coordinated by The Forest Carbon Partnership (itself administered by the World Bank Group). The program targets the global south and seeks to mitigate or reverse carbon emissions stemming from forests. The + designates additional goals of fostering conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks. Essentially, REDD+ "creates a financial value for the carbon stored in forests by offering incentives for developing countries to reduce emissions from forested lands and invest in low-carbon paths to sustainable development" (UN-REDD Program, 2011).

**RIBCA**, or Red Indígena Bribri y Cabécar, is a joint representation structure by Bribri and the Cabécar. This "was created in 2005 to promote the integration of the Indigenous territories of the Atlantic Region of Costa Rica" (Mesoamerican Alliance of People and Forests, 2018). RIBCA "represents eight territories and is one of five blocks of indigenous territories, which together group the 24 Indigenous Territories (TI) in Costa Rica" (Ibid). This representational structure helps to draft consultation plans, develop dialogue systems between Bribri and Cabécar with the Costa Rican government and steer organizational structures pertaining to indigenous representation.

**SINAC**, or National System of Conservation Areas, is Costa Rica's governmental entity responsible for overseeing public lands.

**UNFCCC**, or the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, was signed in 1992 at the Rio summit by upwards of 150 countries. It sets a framework for intergovernmental efforts to tackle the threat of climate change. The goal is the 'stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system'. 192 countries have since ratified it.