Wrong remedy for change

An institutional ethnography of Nicaraguan civil society workers’ perceptions on REDD+

Julie Kalveland

Master’s thesis in sociology

Department of sociology and human geography

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

Autumn 2015
Wrong remedy for change

An institutional ethnography of Nicaraguan civil society workers’ perspectives on REDD+

Julie Kalveland
Abstract

In 2013 Nicaragua was granted funding to start preparations for a national REDD+ strategy. REDD+, “reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation in developing countries”, is a global climate mitigation initiative. The initiative is focused on reducing the impact of climate change through forest conservation activities in developing countries. REDD+ is a market-based instrument, and through forest conservation developing countries are going to achieve so-called carbon credits that will be a part of a carbon market. Nicaragua has one of the highest deforestation rates in Central America and figures high up on lists considering vulnerability to climate change. While research about REDD+ has been carried out in other Latin American countries and on projects based on similar mechanisms in Nicaragua, this thesis explores the first steps towards REDD+ in the Nicaraguan context in the eyes of civil society representatives. The study is informed by institutional ethnography (Smith, 2005) and the data material is based on REDD+ research literature, Nicaragua’s formal application to start REDD+ activities, and on qualitative interviews with employees and volunteers in Nicaraguan organizations working on topics related to forest and climate change. Interviews were carried out during a 2 month stay in Nicaragua in the spring of 2015.

Based on my data, REDD+ is seen as a wrong remedy for change and met with ambivalence among the Nicaraguan civil society workers. This can be understood as a result of the coordination that the civil society workers experience both from international and national level, and reflects deeper structural conditions in the difficult relationship between the Nicaraguan civil society and the Nicaraguan state. By carrying out a sociological analysis inspired by institutional ethnography, this thesis explores the meeting between global initiatives and national conditions and shows that institutional ethnography can be a useful perspective in research on global governance.
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I want to thank all the informants, all the generous people who took time from their busy schedules to share their knowledge and perspectives with me. I know many of you are more used to asking the questions than answering them. And I know that some of you found it hard to see how your particular problems in Nicaragua could be an interesting topic for a thesis. I hope this thesis will give you a sense of recognition, of “stating the obvious,” but I also have a hope that it may be a way of emphasizing the importance of your perceptions and experiences. I would also like to thank all the people I have talked to that are not included in a visible way in the analysis. The knowledge provided by you helped form the project and my own experience. And to all the people I met during my stay in Nicaragua, thank you for bearing over with my at times stuttering Spanish phrases. The Nicaraguan hospitality has eased this research process and I am very grateful to those who took a special interest in my project and provided me with information to help me proceed.

Sandrine Fregui-Gresh, thank you for helping me in realizing this project and starting the journey, making contacts and not least introducing me to the competent environment at the Nitlapan institute, which I became very fond of. Gert Van Hecken, thank you for sharing your contacts and experience on environmental policy in Nicaragua, as well as encouragement at the time when it was most needed.

I am also indebted to the Centre for Development and the Environment (SUM) at the University of Oslo (UiO). Mariel Aguilar-Støen, thank you for always keeping an open door, helping me with translation and generally having faith in my project. Maren Aase and Desmond McNeill, thank you so much, being the SUM Research School assistant had a big impact on my life as a master’s student. And to all the people at SUM for always making it fun to hang around, not the least the other master’s students and all the people cheering a poor master’s student on. What more can one ask for?

Karin Widerberg, for daring to take on a student that wanted to do something completely different, quite difficult and far away, for providing me and my peers with the insights from a strand of sociology that is really for the people, and for providing all the help I needed to come through - even across country borders.

Economical contributions to the research project has been provided through travel stipends from C.H. Homans legat (foundation), The Department of Sociology and Human
Geography at the University of Oslo and the Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund (Lånekassen).

I also have to thank all the wonderful people that have cheered me on, family, friends and fellow sociology students. Silje Andersen, thank you for all the constructive criticism at the right time and for understanding my motives for the study better than the most. Liv, Pranav, Marit, Ingeborg and Kristina, this would not have been possible without all the readings, teacups, shoulders, late night Skype conversations and possibly not without the cute .gifs either. Thank you.
# Table of Contents

1 Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1
   1.1 The climate negotiations ....................................................................................... 1
   1.2 REDD+ ..................................................................................................................... 1
   1.3 Nicaragua: Vulnerability and environmental governance ...................................... 2
   1.4 The interrelations between climate change and poverty ........................................ 3
   1.5 Standpoint: Civil society workers as intermediaries .............................................. 4
   1.6 Problematic: The research questions ..................................................................... 5
   1.7 Social relevance of the study .................................................................................. 5
   1.8 Structure of the thesis ............................................................................................. 6

2 Theoretical approach and methods .............................................................................. 9
   2.1 Prelude: Project motivation .................................................................................... 9
   2.2 Institutional ethnography as research approach ................................................... 11
      2.2.1 On institutional ethnography and the choice of doing an institutional ethnography study ........................................................................................................... 11
      2.2.2 Theoretical basis: The ontological foundation of institutional ethnography ..... 12
      2.2.3 Implications for the research process and data material .................................. 14
   2.3 Data presentation 1: Textual material .................................................................... 16
      2.3.1 Institutional ethnography and texts ............................................................... 16
      2.3.2 On the text material ...................................................................................... 18
      2.3.3 Data selection and collection ......................................................................... 19
      2.3.4 Analyzing text: Institutional discourse and institutional captures ................. 20
      2.3.5 The researcher's position and ethical considerations .................................... 20
   2.4 Data presentation 2: The experience material ....................................................... 21
      2.4.1 Standpoint, work knowledge and institutional discourse ............................... 21
      2.4.2 On the interview material .............................................................................. 25
      2.4.3 Point of departure and selecting informants .................................................. 27
      2.4.4 Conducting interviews ................................................................................. 30
      2.4.5 On the reflective data material: The researcher's position ............................. 30
      2.4.6 Analyzing and presenting the experience material ....................................... 33
      2.4.7 Ethical considerations .................................................................................... 36

3 Nicaragua: A short historical trajectory ...................................................................... 39
   3.1 The Caribbean Coast ............................................................................................... 40

4 REDD+ literature and critical perspectives ................................................................. 43
   4.1 The REDD+ idea .................................................................................................... 43
      4.1.1 A fresh approach ............................................................................................ 44
4.2 The REDD+ reality: How has REDD+ turned out so far? ........................................ 47
  4.2.1 The missing agreement .................................................................................. 47
  4.2.2 Market-funding and controversy .................................................................. 48
  4.2.3 From national to local .................................................................................. 48
  4.2.4 From idea to reality ..................................................................................... 49
4.3 Critical perspectives ......................................................................................... 50
  4.3.1 REDD+ on the ground ................................................................................. 50
  4.3.2 Contesting the “facts” .................................................................................. 53
  4.3.3 Rereading REDD+ from a different angle ................................................... 54
4.4 Summary........................................................................................................... 55
5 The Nicaraguan ENDE-REDD+: The institutional captures of the proposal ......... 57
  5.1 The institutional discourse of the template ..................................................... 57
    5.1.1 Institutional captures in the R-PP ............................................................... 58
  5.2 The textual opposition of the finished proposal ............................................. 59
    5.2.1 ENDE-REDD+ ......................................................................................... 60
    5.2.2 Recommendations for dialogue ............................................................... 62
    5.3 Summary ....................................................................................................... 62
6 Wrong remedy for change: The experiences of the intermediaries .................... 63
  6.1 REDD+: The disparities between global initiatives and local conditions ......... 63
    6.1.1 Cattle raising or a “significant” benefit .................................................... 64
    6.1.2 The small producers cannot afford REDD+ ........................................... 66
    6.1.3 “Top-down” rather than “bottom-up” ....................................................... 67
  6.2 ENDE-REDD+: Opposition and funding ....................................................... 67
    6.2.1 The resistant government: ‘What is the REDD+ animal?’ ....................... 67
    6.2.2 “Participation” or “true participation”? ................................................... 68
    6.2.3 Distribution of funding: “Who ends up with the money?” ....................... 70
  6.3 ENDE: “Why is it moving so slowly?” ............................................................. 71
    6.3.1 Intro: The presentation that never was ..................................................... 71
    6.3.2 A politicized country .............................................................................. 72
    6.3.3 Cattle, timber and the government ............................................................ 73
    6.3.4 The Nicaragua Canal: An explanation? .................................................... 74
  6.4 Wrong remedy for change .............................................................................. 76
    6.4.1 Coordination from international and national level .................................... 76
  6.5 Reflections on seeing REDD+ through the eyes of the intermediaries ............ 77
    6.5.1 The background material: The stylized story .......................................... 77
    6.5.2 Internal difficulties ................................................................................... 78
    6.5.3 What they all want: Adaptation ............................................................... 79

X
Institutional ethnography and “governmentality”: Comparing two approaches to the study of global governance ................................................................. 81

7.1 Global governance – the claims of the research approach .............................................. 82
7.1.1 Governance as process, more power to non-state actors and less to the state.... 82
7.1.2 How my findings relate to the global governance claims ......................................... 83

7.2 Governmentality perspective vs. institutional ethnography perspective .................... 85
7.2.1 The research lens: Governmental rationality or ruling relations ......................... 85
7.2.2 Agency: Civil society as “autonomous subjects” or “knowers” .............................. 86
7.2.3 Research: Part of the governmental rationality or a “map for people” ............. 88

7.3 Benefits of applying institutional ethnography in global governance studies ........ 89

8 Concluding reflections ........................................................................................................ 91
8.1 Main findings ......................................................................................................................... 91
8.1.1 How is the Nicaraguan REDD+ scheme perceived by civil society workers? .. 91
8.1.2 In what way are their perceptions and experiences affected by the coordination incorporated in REDD+ from international and national level? Why is there ambivalence towards REDD+? ......................................................................................................................... 92
8.1.3 Using institutional ethnography to study global environmental governance..... 92
8.2 Reflections on the analysis ............................................................................................... 93
8.3 Wrong place at the wrong time? On writing about a field in motion ....................... 94
8.4 Further research: From the global to the local................................................................. 95

Bibliography .............................................................................................................................. 97

Appendix 1: Request: Participation in research project .......................................................... 103
Appendix 2: Interview guide .................................................................................................... 105

List of Figures
Table 1: Brief comparison of REDD+ and ENDE.................................................................61
1 Introduction

In 2013 the Central American country Nicaragua was approved a grant to start preparations for REDD+, a global climate mitigation initiative. Climate change is a growing concern worldwide. Our epoch in time is increasingly being referred to as the “anthropocene” and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has stated that “it is extremely likely that human influence has been the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20th century” (IPCC, 2013, p. 17). Climate change has proved to be the dark side of the industrial revolution, emissions from fossil fuels and other types of pollution are now threatening our future. The question being put forward, directly or indirectly, is this: How can the world meet the challenge? The answer is a complex one, but solutions that have been claimed to be able to solve at least parts of the problem, have been put forward.

1.1 The climate negotiations

In 1992, countries joined an international treaty, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), to cooperatively consider what they could do to limit average global temperature increases and the resulting climate change, and to cope with the impacts that were by then inevitable (UNFCCC, 2014). The objective of the UNFCCC is to “stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that will prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system” (UNFCCC, 1992). The parties to the convention have met annually since 1995 in Conferences of the Parties (COPs) to assess progress in dealing with climate change. One of the outcomes of the negotiations has been the Kyoto Protocol which legally binds developed countries to emission reduction targets. There are now 195 Parties to the Convention and 192 Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (UNFCCC, 2014).

1.2 REDD+

RED, as the initiative was first called, was proposed at COP-11 in Montreal in 2005 by the governments of the forest-rich countries Costa Rica and Indonesia. They requested that “Reducing Emissions from Deforestation (RED) in developing countries and approaches to
stimulate action” be included in the agenda. It was proposed that developing countries could gain access to carbon markets by producing credits from “RED activities”. By making the forests more worth in carbon value than as industrial products, this system would incentivize the protection of forests. The issue received extensive support and Parties generally agreed on the importance of the issue in the context of climate change mitigation (GCP, 2014). Since then the concept has grown and both the name and the scope has expanded. In 2007 the RED became REDD as the Bali Action Plan, formulated at COP-13, included forest degradation (the last D) (GCP, 2014). Furthermore a year later the plus was added. This was to signalize a stronger commitment, that the so-called “co-benefits” of forest conservation, like protecting biodiversity and livelihoods, were to be included on an equal footing with carbon functions (Aguilar-Stoen & Hirsh, 2015). It is now possible for developing countries to seek funds to start “REDD+ activities.”

1.3 Nicaragua: Vulnerability and environmental governance

Nicaragua is one of the poorest countries in Latin America (Nicaragua R-PP, 2013). Although the situation has improved recently, approximately 42 percent of the country’s 6 million inhabitants still live below the poverty line and one out of every seven live in extreme poverty. Indigenous peoples and ethnic communities, who account for approximately 5 percent of the total population, have particularly experienced deprivation and social exclusion throughout the country’s history (Nicaragua R-PP, 2013). The Global Climate Risk Index analyses to what extent countries have been affected by the impacts of weather-related loss events such as storms, floods, heat waves et cetera. Nicaragua is ranked the fourth most vulnerable country in the world after Myanmar, Honduras and Haiti (Kreft, S., Eckstein, D., Junghans, L., Kerestan, C. & Hagen, U., 2014).

Nicaragua has one of the highest deforestation rates in Central America (FAO 2010). Approximately 30 percent of the country is covered by forests. Of that share, 98 percent are natural forest (Nicaragua R-PP, 2013). Environmental legislation in Nicaragua is relatively recent, as is the case for many other Central American countries. After the war in the 1980s, political focus was directed towards agrarian reform and development (Van Hecken, Baestiansen and Huybrechs, 2015). The strong focus on agriculture, however, promoted the advance of the agricultural frontier. The advent of conservation efforts on a global scale also
also affected Nicaragua, and the country began to develop conservation efforts and natural reserves. The conservation efforts have relied on a centralized, top-down, command-and-control approach to natural resource management, where the main emphasis has been on the restriction of the use of certain resources and the creation of protected areas (Munk Ravnborg, 2010). But despite these efforts few results are to be seen. Previous research finds that this is due to limited human and financial resource which have “hampered institutional presence and vigour” in the field (Van Hecken, Bastiaensen and Vásquez, 2012, Van Hecken, Baestien and Huybrechs, 2015). However in the 1990s, there was a development from “fences-and-fines” approaches to a focus on decentralized and community-based natural resource management, and today we see a turn towards market-based approaches. Almost half the forests are in the possession of indigenous communities, while 35 percent are held by private owners. Much more than 50 percent of the recent deforestation in Nicaragua has occurred in indigenous territories (Nicaragua R-PP, 2013). While research on REDD+ has been carried out in other Latin American countries, and on projects based on similar mechanisms in Nicaragua, this thesis explores the first steps towards REDD+ in the Nicaraguan context. Furthermore the country is proposing to carry out a particular version of REDD+, a “non-market” REDD+ strategy.

1.4 The interrelations between climate change and poverty

Many have branded climate change as our first ever global problem, a problem that affects all humans. Whereas the world has never seen a world war, including all countries, climate change is a common threat – apparently. But despite the fact that climate change is a global problem, it is a well-known fact that the effects so far are, and also in the near future will be, more severe in some areas than others. Not only is there a difference in where and who climate change will strike, but it will be most severe to the areas and the people who are the most disadvantaged. As noted by others, “[i]t is a grim irony that those who suffer most from climate change are generally those that are already among the poorest in the world, and have done least to cause the problem” (McNeill, 2013, p. 216). In other words, the people in poor countries we often refer to as “developing countries” or “the South.” Because the changes are more urgent in the South – while the contamination is mostly, at least historically, the responsibility of the “North,” traditionally rich industrialized countries – the answer to the
question “what will we do about it?” relies to a strong degree upon the relationship between the North and the South, and climate mitigation initiatives have from the beginning been closely related to development aid (McNeill, 2013). Development aid was, with the backdrop of centuries of colonization, first seen as a sort of transitional payment, to help “develop” the “underdeveloped countries.” During the 1980s and 1990s the aid agenda expanded to incorporate new issues, such as gender, governance, human rights and also the environment (McNeill, 2013, p. 218). With the introduction of climate change mitigation initiatives such as REDD+, some argue that this could mean a possible “leveling” of the field between the North and the South:

The North now needs the South in a way that it did not before. Development assistance has never been merely altruistic; many would justifiably argue that a good deal of aid was, and still is, not charity but payment for services rendered, such as political support in international relations. But payments by rich countries to induce poor countries to reduce emissions are manifestly, and indisputably, payments for services rendered (McNeill, 2013, p. 220).

1.5 Standpoint: Civil society workers as intermediaries

A wide range of organizations, from international NGOs, to national networks, smaller local organizations or even research institutions, have been crucial in implementing development projects in rural parts of Nicaragua in the past. In investigating the Nicaraguan REDD+, I choose to examine the process from the perspective of Nicaraguan civil society organizations within the sphere of environmental and climate change related topics. I here apply civil society organizations as a broad term, referring to organizations that are working on environment-related topics. This means that I include organizations on the basis of their objective and no other denominators such as size or whether they employ professionals or are based on volunteer work. By using the terms perspective or stand point I mean that I will rely on the practices, experiences and concerns of people representing the organizations to give a presentation of the REDD+ process.
1.6 Problematic: The research questions

REDD+, is based on a “global” concept, developed in documents, and set to be carried out under local conditions in developing countries. This is an explorative study with the aim to inquire how possible future initiators of REDD+ in Nicaragua perceives the initiative. The main research question is: **How is the Nicaraguan REDD+ scheme perceived by civil society workers?** And **on what way are their perceptions and experiences affected by the coordination incorporated in REDD+ from international and national level?** There are also questions that have developed during the study and that the study gives a compounded reflection of: **Why is there an ambivalence towards REDD+?** Since I am applying a research approach, institutional ethnography, which is rarely used in global governance studies, reflections on the relevance of this approach in further research is also an important part of this study.

1.7 Social relevance of the study

First, this study is a contribution to the research on REDD+ in Nicaragua. The process is in its initial phase and there are no former studies particularly designated to this specific initiative in a Nicaraguan context. An important objective of the study is to provide the actors involved in this work and other interested parties with a synthesized presentation. This presentation can be compared to the type of map you could find in a shopping mall, a representation that provides information on “where we are now”, how different institutions are situated with respect to each other, but also including obstacles along the way. Second, the study is also a contribution to the research literature on REDD+ at large. Because a lot of the text produced on the topic of REDD+ is very “technical” and “complex,” it has been an underlying objective to present REDD+ in an easily – or as easy as possible – and understandable manner. Third, the threat of climate change begs for a global solution to avoid a crisis, or at least to lessen the impacts. As REDD+ is one of the proposed solutions that could help mitigate climate change, we need to know if and how it works. This study will not provide an answer, but it will give a contribution to broaden our understanding.

Environmental governance is not a common topic for sociologists, but I find that environmental governance opens a space for defining problems and solutions which raises important questions for a sociologist, such as: **who** is able to define **what** at which time and place? And also: How are global agreements defined on a local level, and what does that tell
us about the link between the global and the local level? Since sociology in general, and institutional ethnography in particular, is not a common approach for studying global environmental governance I will also here attempt to emphasize the relevance of this particular approach for future studies.

1.8 Structure of the thesis

The overall structure of this thesis is as follows: In the first part, chapters one to three, I present the background for the study. The next part (chapters four to six) contains data analysis. In the third part of the thesis (chapter seven) I examine how the use of institutional ethnography can contribute to the research on global governance, by contrasting this approach with a governmentality perspective. The last part of the thesis (chapter eight) offers concluding reflections.

Part one (the background chapters) contains the topic of the thesis, the theoretical framework and methods applied and the country context. In this chapter, chapter one, I give a brief introduction to the topic of the thesis, as well as present the research questions of the study. In chapter two I depict the theoretical foundation and the methods applied. This is a study guided by the framework developed by sociologist Dorothy E. Smith called institutional ethnography. Because one objective of the thesis has been to investigate if institutional ethnography could be a useful framework for research within the chosen field, I have focused specifically on elaborating how institutional ethnography affected the way the research was planned and carried out. Chapter two also presents the data material. The data material consists of text material and what I have chosen to call the “experience material:” interview material and reflective material. Chapter three gives a short presentation of Nicaragua’s recent political history.

Part two contains the data analysis. Chapter four contains a text analysis of REDD+ literature. This chapter serves as an introduction to the coordination and relations of power that surrounds the REDD+ initiative. I first present how a proponent and research institution producing research on REDD+ presents REDD+ and the development of the concept. Then I present two selected critical perspectives on REDD+, and do a critical reading of the presentation of the concept. Chapter five contains a text analysis of the proposal to start developing a REDD+ strategy handed in by the Nicaraguan state. This analysis acts as an
introduction to the Nicaraguan REDD+ process and the next chapter based on the experience material. In chapter six I present the analysis of the experience material.

In part three of the thesis (chapter seven) I compare my research approach, based on institutional ethnography, to a theoretical approach to the study of global governance, a “governmentality” approach. This section I want to highlight how my approach differs from a theoretical approach and what might be gained from applying an institutional ethnography perspective in global governance studies.

The last part of the thesis (chapter eight) offers concluding reflections. Here I summarize the main findings of the study, comment on the challenges of studying a “field in motion” and I provide some reflections on possible future research.
2 Theoretical approach and methods

This chapter presents both the theoretical foundation for the study and the methods applied. I have deliberately chosen to take the reader through the choices I have made in chronological order. I knew from the beginning of the project that REDD+ is a challenging topic, both because of the complexity of the conceptual models behind it and because I wanted to explore it from a national level. A lot of things can change over the course of a research project, and, as others, I have both experienced the joys and curses of the unpredictable nature of a fieldwork setting. Some things ended up the way I expected, some didn’t. Most choices were followed naturally from my approach; others were based on advice or practical necessity. Therefore I find this to be the best way to make the reader access my position as a researcher along the way of producing this thesis. Introducing the chapter I first present my own motivation for carrying out the project. In the second part of the chapter I elaborate on institutional ethnography as approach, before I emphasize how I have used key concepts within institutional ethnography as guiding points in entering the field of research, both through the text data collection and the interview data collection. Institutional ethnography sets forth criteria for data collection and data analysis, and this study does not adhere to them all. In presenting key concepts I will account for how the study adheres to the institutional ethnography criteria and how it differs from the “classical” institutional ethnography. The presentations of data collection also include the practicalities of when and in which way data was collected, as well as reflections of the role of the researcher and ethical considerations in collecting and presenting the material.

2.1 Prelude: Project motivation

This master’s project has had a long journey, figuratively – it has changed fundamentally both in topic and scope – and geographically – from a desktop in Norway to Nicaragua, the capital Managua and the small cities of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua. Along the way I’ve had to make many choices. When I started working on my master’s project I had several spheres of interest. I had stayed and travelled in Nicaragua for several months a couple of years back, and wanted to write something about what life is like in a so-called “poor” country. I thought that my previous experience from meetings with activist organizations and locals in rural
parts of the Caribbean Coast would be valuable to such a project.¹ When I was in Nicaragua the first time, I also became aware of how changing weather conditions affected people in a more impactful way than what I was used to living in Norway, and that this happened on a regular basis. During the rain season some roads get totally impassable and communities can get isolated if the weather is so bad that traveling by water is deemed unsafe. I knew that climate change is changing the weather conditions around the globe and wondered if I could see what was being done to avoid the damage in Nicaragua. As a side-interest, or a backdrop for the choice of study, I was also interested in knowing more about projects funded by Norway. After considering and reconsidering different options, I found that the Norwegian climate budget was channeling money into organizations working with REDD+² and that Nicaragua had been given a grant by the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility to start a developing a national REDD+ strategy.

When I decided on putting the REDD+ framework at the center of this project, I knew next to nothing about REDD+. I had read the acronym time and time again. I had often heard it mentioned alongside the Norwegian climate budget, but had never really gotten a grasp of what it entailed other than some sort of forest initiatives that could be defined as gains for the global environment. Starting my work on this thesis I knew that international climate policy has been criticized for being focused on “rich” countries, with a high level of carbon emissions, paying “poor” and vulnerable countries to carry out programs to mitigate climate change, in essence leaving the poor to take action for the problems created by the rich. I was interested in using a sociological lens to look at how the projects relate to the local conditions, that are often complex, and how the projects are perceived “on the ground”. The quest being to show a piece of a huge puzzle, an internationally concerted organization of actions up close, and trying to flesh out some of the possibilities but also the practical challenges and ethical discussions that comes with the initial steps of implementation of an international climate policy.

As I started reading research literature on environmental issues, climate change and market initiatives I also found it difficult to find sociological studies and so I wanted to add sociological perspectives to the field of research and bring a study from this field of research into the sociological literature.

¹ I stayed in Nicaragua for four months in the beginning of 2013 through the Norwegian activist organization LAG (Latin-Amerika-gruppene) learning about the autonomy process and current politics.
² Norway has pledged up to three billion NOK a year to REDD+ (Regjeringen, October, 2015).
2.2 Institutional ethnography as research approach

In this section I will present the starting point of the study: the research perspective. First a general introduction to institutional ethnography is given and the reasons why I chose to use this perspective. Then follows a presentation of the theoretical foundation of institutional ethnography and the main implications for the research design, and lastly a paragraph on using institutional ethnography as a guide in data collection. This whole section forms a basis for understanding the next sections presenting the data material, where key concepts within institutional ethnography are applied in the collection of the data material.

2.2.1 On institutional ethnography and the choice of doing an institutional ethnography study

Institutional ethnography (IE) is a theoretical and methodological framework for qualitative studies, developed by sociologist Dorothy E. Smith (Smith, 2005). IE is an answer to critique of mainstream ways of carrying out sociology and social sciences. The framework must both be understood as a sociological theory of the social (ontology) and as a description of how a sociologist can understand the social (epistemology). But, even though this framework involves a certain way of doing sociology, IE can hardly be said to be something completely different from other ways of doing sociology. What IE provides is a theoretical foundation combined with a set of conceptual tools that helps orientate the researcher’s gaze. IE is a starting point, independently of whether the researcher chooses to carry out observations, analyse texts or do interviews.

I chose to study REDD+ from the entry point of institutional ethnography (IE). There are a number of different ways of studying a global initiative like REDD+, even if one limits the scope to qualitative methods. Many researchers adhere to the tradition of political ecology (see e.g. Adger. Benjaminsen, Brown and Svarstad, 2001, Fairhead and Leach, 2003, Escobar, 2008, Aguilar-Støen and Hirsch, 2014). I am greatly indebted to researchers working within the scope of political ecology. As I see it, political ecology and institutional ethnography have many similarities when it comes to the investigation of modern governance structures and their effects, but as I thought that institutional ethnography could contribute to an even stronger focus on the local situation and what people are actually experiencing and doing when it comes to global environmental governance, I was curious to see what I could find
with an institutional ethnography approach. I knew that institutional ethnography has mainly been applied to explore power and governance in Western societies, and I wanted to find out if it could prove to be a fruitful approach also in studies in developing countries. There are already some institutional ethnographers working on other policy-related topics in countries in the South and I believe that a study of REDD+ starting from the perspective of institutional ethnography can add to our knowledge of global environmental governance.

2.2.2 Theoretical basis: The ontological foundation of institutional ethnography

IE has its roots in feminist sociology and builds on important insights from standpoint theory and constructivism. IE is a critique of theory-driven sociology. First, because it – by means of the way it is carried out – doesn’t assess the way people do things. Theory-driven sociology has an inscribed tendency to find what is already conceptualized. In this way local positions, perspectives and experiences not only succumb to the original concepts, but are also made invisible. In an interview, Dorothy E. Smith puts it like this:

*It is a problem that comes to light when you take up sociology from a woman’s standpoint. It is the problem of how sociology for the most part is put together, of how it looks at people from the point of discourse and seeks to explain how their behaviour is shaped in return. There is a very different possibility of trying to develop a sociology that looks at the society from the point of the people and their experience of it. Institutional ethnography picks up this idea, to explore the institutional order and the ruling relations from the point of view of people who are in various ways implicated in and participated in it (Smith in Widerberg, 2004, p. 183).*

What Smith is pointing to here is that by taking the standpoint of women, she saw the problem with how sociology portrays the society. This is a critique of how sociologists often strive to portray the world through an “objective” gaze, which presupposes that there exists an objective and true presentation of reality that is not affected by how the researcher or the reader is situated. As Widerberg (2008) points out, Smith’s critique of sociology is similar to that of Pierre Bourdieu. They both hold that sociology needs to be understood in its context, related to both cultural and historical context. If not, “there is always the risk that, without being aware of it, we read our own position – and ways of relating to and understanding the

---

3 Grace (2013) has called his research “transnational institutional ethnography.” Grace uses his study of “model laws” regarding HIV/AIDS as a case. In this study he did research in a range of countries from North America, to Europe and Africa to track the creation of these laws.
social – into ‘the object’, as if it was a part of the object itself instead of a result of our relation to it” (Widerberg, 2008, p. 316). Both Bourdieu and Smith see this as a problem with the way sociology has developed and is practiced today, but they find different solutions to this problem. Bourdieu proposes and has developed theoretical concepts of substance to inform and guide empirical investigations. Dorothy E. Smith on the other hand, has focused on developing a distinctive method of inquiry (Widerberg, 2008, p. 316). In other words, Smith argues that this insight should affect the way we carry out sociological studies, and institutional ethnography is an attempt to “develop a sociology that looks at the society from the point of the people and their experience of it” (Smith in Widerberg, 2004, p. 183). The ontology of IE is that the social is understood as people’s ongoing activities under specific material conditions and “how activities are coordinated” (Smith, 2005). This leads us to the other part of the critique of theory-driven sociology, which is that it also misses the connection in which relations of ruling affects how people do what they do. Relations of ruling, or ruling relations are:

[the] extraordinary yet ordinary complex of relations that are textually mediated, that connect us across space and time and organize our everyday lives – the corporations, government bureaucracies, academic and professional discourses, mass media, and the complex of relations that interconnect them (Smith, 2005, p. 10).

Ruling relations are the coordination that we experience and contribute to in our everyday lives. This coordination is what institutional processes consists of and the object of study for institutional ethnographies. And, as I will elaborate on shortly, texts play a very important role in how such coordination happens.

To sum it up the ambition of institutional ethnography is of a double character: The ethnographical objective is to give broad ethnographical descriptions of peoples activities and relations, to render visible how things are being done. And the institutional objective is to map and display how this activity is coordinated and connected to relations of ruling. Widerberg puts it like this:

---

4 The notion of ruling relations within institutional ethnography has some similarities with similar notions of networks within political ecology, e.g. the way Fairhead and Leach (2003) uses the notion of “vortex”. Both concepts are focused on power and the distribution of such in networks/organizations. Where I see that the concepts differs is in that, the concept of ruling relations have a specific emphasis on the textual communication that makes these networks possible.
The politics of a method of inquiry of this kind [institutional ethnography] is not to explain people’s behaviour or in any other way to make them the object of research. It is instead to explain to them, and to ourselves, the socially organized powers in which our lives are embedded and to which our activities contribute (Widerberg, 2008, p. 317).

The objective of IE is to explain to both people and the researcher themselves, how “socially organized powers” enters into our lives and how we contribute to this coordination. Based on this understanding of what can be investigated empirically, Dorothy E. Smith promotes a certain method of inquiry, IE.

2.2.3 Implications for the research process and data material

When institutions are said to be the object of study, one often thinks about one specific institution, a hospital, a school or other. But institutional ethnography “does not aim to understand the institution as such, it only takes the social activities of the institution as a starting point” (Widerberg, 2004, p. 182). An institutional ethnography is never confined to the specific institution under investigation. Institutional ethnography is a study of institutional processes and elsewhere Smith writes that institutions are better defined as “functional complexes.” This means that the focus of the study is on “the observables of organizations and discourses that are focused on functions such as education, science, law, health care, government, corporate profitability, and so on” (Smith 2005, p. 68). In this study it is actually hard to pin down one specific institution, if not the total complex of global environmental governance or the different institutions that operate within it. But the focus is not on specific organizations or institutions, but rather on what happens in and around them, the coordination that affects them.

The overall research perspective of this study is based on the ontological basis of IE, which I have already presented: Knowledge is produced socially and is socially organized. And the coordination of the social cannot be divided from human beings and their activities. The epistemological consequences of this are that the social is something that can only be studied through focusing on what is being done and how it is being done. The practical implications being that the researcher has to start where people are and study people as “knowledgeable practitioners” or “knowers” (Smith, 2005, p. 9). In this study civil society workers are reckoned as knowledgeable practitioners within the REDD+ process.
Before I proceed I will give an example to illuminate the difference between an IE approach and a different approach. A study where the informants are the object of study could for instance be a study of the strategies the informants apply within the REDD+ process. From this the researcher would make a typology of the informants, for instance categorizing them in groups such as “active participants,” “reluctant participants,” “protesting participants” or other. Here the objective of study is the work of the informants but it is the individual way of working that is the focus. This could give an interesting study, but it would be an analysis of people. A shortcoming with this approach is that the people the researcher has talked to might not be representative for the group that the researcher wants to study. It could also be perceived as an intruding analysis by the informants – they may not identify with the position they are designated. Institutional ethnography solves these problems by shifting the focus from the people to the work they do. In approaching people as knowers, the aim is for the researcher to learn from the people. As the focus is not on the people, but their work, which is regulated by specific ruling relations through the texts and institutional processes that they are involved in, it is still important for the institutional ethnographer to ensure variety among the informants. One is however not looking for typologies, but rather getting an understanding of the general, what all the informants are experiencing of conduct and coordination. This approach also limits the risk that the informants will disagree with the analysis, as a good analysis will not focus on each informant in particular, but on general themes and threads, informed also by variety and variation.

Institutional ethnography understands the social as people’s ongoing activities under specific material conditions and “how activities are coordinated” (Smith, 2005). The researcher is no exception. Instead of trying to “leave the researcher out”, institutional ethnography acknowledges that there is no such thing as “objective research” as every research project is carried out by actual people with actual experiences. The experiences of the researcher are accounted for as a part of the data material.

As I have tried to show here, institutional ethnography is a research perspective that builds on a specific way of understanding the social and social knowledge, that maintain certain research “guidelines” in investigating the social. So far I have accounted for the foundation and implications of institutional ethnography in general, but not the practical implications in carrying out research and how choosing IE as a guiding perspective has affected this particular study. The rest of this chapter will elaborate on these topics, as I present the data material that the study is based on.
2.3 Data presentation 1: Textual material

In this section I present the textual material the study is based on. First, the way institutional ethnographers understand texts and the implications for research on texts, before I go on to present the text material that I have chosen to incorporate in the study and the way this was done. Then I elaborate on how the analysis of the texts was carried out and account for my own position, the researcher’s position in carrying out textual analyses. Lastly, I comment on ethical considerations.

2.3.1 Institutional ethnography and texts

Documentation through text is a very important part of policy-making and policy implementation. Dissemination of texts gives a possibility to ensure coordination and accountability. Texts are also important reference points for actors within the specific field of interest, and offer the possibility of following a process without participating in the process personally. Texts play a very important role in how coordination happens. All these qualities are a result of the inherent properties of texts, and what makes text interesting to include in an institutional ethnography alongside interview material. DeVault and McCoy (2006) writes this about texts:

*When institutional ethnographers talk about texts, they usually mean some kind of document or representation that has a relatively fixed and replicable character, for it is this aspect of texts – that they can be stored, transferred, copied, produced in bulk, and distributed widely, allowing them to be activated by users at different times and in different places – that allows them to play a standardizing and mediating role (DeVault and McCoy, 2006, p. 34).*

A text is something that has a relatively stable nature, it can be reproduced, distributed and *activated by people* at different times and in different places. The notion of text can also include for instance drawings, photographs and recordings, but much institutional ethnographic research has focused on standardized text used in professional and bureaucratic settings (DeVault and McCoy, 2006, p. 34). The texts analyzed in this study are also of this character.

Texts are also central to understanding power distribution. Including texts in the data material and seeing what texts do, expands the scope of the study from what is locally observable and makes it possible to observe the relations of ruling from the local to the
translocal level as sequences of action between the different levels (Widerberg, 2004, p. 181). By including texts in ethnographies, the ruling relations are made ethnographically available, which radically widens the possibilities of the ethnographer.

*Through the text you have a way to explore how the translocal and extralocal is actually produced in local settings were people are, in their bodies and particular settings, which at the same time can be connected up because we are reading the same text (Smith in Widerberg, 2004, p. 180).*

Texts are a tool to ensure coordination across different contexts – that coordination from higher levels, the translocal and extralocal, affects the localities of people’s lives. This however, Smith adds, “does not mean that we all read [a text] the same way (Widerberg, 2004, p. 180). Smith has introduced the notion of *text-reader conversation* to recognize the theory that has come out of French post-structuralism (and mentions Roland Barthes as an example) “which states that a text only becomes what it is in the reading, the text is never the same” (Widerberg, 2004, p. 180). This establishes the significance of different readings of an identical text and a fruitful starting point for an ethnographic approach. This way of using text as data is different from e.g. discourse analysis. Here the text is studied as a part of the social and as actions that lead to other actions. Studying text through how it gets activated, the researcher is able to focus on “how the text enters into the organising into sequences of action in multiple different sites” (Widerberg, 2004, p. 181).

**Starting from above, starting with text**

Often institutional ethnographers will start with talking to the informants to map their textual references. I have instead chosen to start with the textual landscape, with the literature on REDD+. I made the choice to start from above because of the complexity of the topic. I didn’t feel like I could ask my informants about REDD+ without actually knowing what the REDD+ initiative entails. “Reducing emissions...” is understandable enough, but what type of action would it require? What are the premises for such action? These were some questions I started out with. Also I knew that my informants would likely be well-educated and experienced with any specific project terminology. I wanted to meet them at a level where I could understand how they positioned themselves and their references. As I will show in the first text analysis, acquiring knowledge of “what REDD+ is” would be easier said than done.
The choice of starting with the texts was also based on the essential role of texts in creating a notion of the initiative REDD+. REDD+ is a policy initiative developed through the United Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), what is more commonly referred to as the climate negotiations. These are complex bureaucratic processes producing massive amounts of texts. For REDD+ as a concept to exist, as a starting point for action, the projects referred to as “REDD+” have to have some similarities that categorize them as REDD+, and such criteria are often laid out in text. The coordination that makes REDD+ possible is to a large degree based on the production of text and the dissemination of texts. The foundation of my informants’ actions and relations to the concept REDD+ is mediated through text. The texts accounted for in this thesis are as the object of study to the same degree as the informants’ stories, and a part of the data material of the thesis, because they are an important part of making REDD+ actionable. By looking at REDD+ both through texts produced by proponents and facilitators of the initiative, as well as the actual experiences of civil society workers in a REDD+ participant countries the overall aim is to untangle the ways in which the texts ‘at the top’ overlook or objectify, to use the institutional ethnography term, the national and local experiences of the ‘intermediaries’ that relate to the people on the ground.

2.3.2 On the text material

The textual material of this study consists of two analyses of text. In the first text analysis I have chosen to focus on the CIFOR book *Analysing REDD+: Challenges and Choices*. CIFOR, the Centre for International Forest Research, is a proponent and a research institution producing research on REDD+. CIFOR has produced three compilations of REDD+ research, and this book is the most recent, published in 2012. Then I present two selected critical perspectives on REDD+ and do a critical reading of the presentation of the concept. The critical perspectives are represented by contributions from two recently published books (2014): *Environmental Politics in Latin America: Elite Dynamics, the Left Tide and Sustainable Development*, the chapter contribution by Mariel Aguilar-Støen and Cecilie Hirsch, and *Anthropology and Nature*, the chapter contribution by Signe Howell.

The second text analysis is based on the proposal to start developing a REDD+ strategy handed in by the Nicaraguan state to the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, the Readiness Preparation Proposal, in short the R-PP. The analysis, oriented towards identifying
*institutional captures* (presented and discussed below), acts as an introduction to the Nicaraguan REDD+ process and the chapter based on the interview material.

### 2.3.3 Data selection and collection

The texts presented in the first part of the analysis were acquired as a part of the preparatory work before the interviews were carried out. Even though REDD+ is a relatively new initiative, the research literature on REDD+ is already massive, both in terms of theoretical contributions describing and/or discussing the idea behind the concept and empirical studies of the process of developing or implementing REDD+ in different locations. The research literature is also diverse in terms of disciplines presented. In this thesis I promote sociological perspectives on REDD+, in particular an institutional ethnographic perspective. This starting point has guided my choice of text material for the first text analysis. First I present a “mainstream” presentation of REDD+, the book *Analysing REDD+: Challenges and Choices*. CIFOR is considered an influential source of REDD+ information and its books are counted as important references within the REDD+ universe. The two other texts present the two important building blocks of institutional ethnography: power relations and coordination, and ethnography. The power critical contribution is based on studies in the tradition of political ecology, “REDD+ and forest governance in Latin America. The role of science-policy networks” in the book *Environmental Politics in Latin America: Elite Dynamics, the Left Tide and Sustainable Development* represent a critique towards proponents like CIFOR, based on studies of knowledge access and science-policy networks. The last text, “Divide and rule: Nature and society in a global forest programme” in *Anthropology and Nature* is based on in-depth ethnographical studies of REDD+ in Indonesia.

Data collection was carried out by using the University of Oslo Library (Signe Howell’s book chapter), through other researchers (Mariel Aguilar-Støen and Cecilie Hirsch’s book chapter) and through internet access (the CIFOR book is available on the CIFOR web page and the R-PP is available on the web page of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility). Textual resources were mainly acquired before the interviews were carried out. The texts acquired beforehand were re-read after the interviews.
2.3.4 Analyzing text: Institutional discourse and institutional captures

The concept of a text-reader conversation recognizes reading a text as an actual interchange between a reader activating of the text and her or his responses to it. Text-reader conversations take place in real time, in the actual local setting of their reading, and as moments in sequences of action. Noticing how people go about activating texts help us to escape our experience of them as inert, enabling us to see them as embedded in social relations and, hence, as being in action (Smith, 2005, p. 228).

The two text analyses presented in this thesis, both take the form of text-reader conversations. Though reading and analyzing I “activate the text” (Smith, 2005, p. 101-121). In studying the institutional discourse I have specifically focused on finding what Smith calls institutional captures:

Institutional capture is that discursive practice, regulated by the institutional procedures of text-reader conversations, through which institutional discourse overrides and reconstructs experiential talk and writing (Smith, 2005, p. 119).

Institutional captures are categories made to activate certain understandings by the readers. But when I read the texts, as I am not acquainted with the institutional discourse, I find big empty categories that I cannot make sense of myself, as shown in chapter five and, as elaborated on in chapter six, I used these categories as starting points in the interviews with the informants.

2.3.5 The researcher’s position and ethical considerations

My position as a researcher has been an important part of the text analyses. I use myself as a reader to access the texts and the information of the text. The position as a social science researcher, with some previous knowledge of Nicaragua, but without previous knowledge of REDD+ is my starting point. I do not consider there to be specific ethical considerations regarding the text analyses. The texts I have used are all available to the public.
2.4 Data presentation 2: The experience material

The second bulk of data material I have chosen to term the “experience material.” The experience material was collected during my stay in Nicaragua. This data material consists of both interview material collected in the interviews with the informants and reflective material, data collected through my own experience as a researcher during the stay. This categorization of the material is in line with the institutional ethnographical insight that we are people with a specific position within the social that we are investigating. My analysis was guided by both the interview data and the reflective data. In the following section, I first present three key concepts within institutional ethnography and their implications for the research design, before I go on to present the interview material study and the way it was collected. Then I go on to account for my own position in a presentation of the researcher’s position and the reflective material. After this I elaborate on the analysis of the experience data, as well as the way I have chosen to present it here. I also comment on ethical considerations regarding the experience material.

2.4.1 Standpoint, work knowledge and institutional discourse

“Standpoint,” “work knowledge” and “institutional discourse” are key concepts I have used to guide my research gaze in the planning and collection of interview material. Here I account for the use of these concepts and how they relate to my data material.

The standpoint of civil society workers

An institutional ethnography usually begins by locating a standpoint in an institutional order that provides the guiding perspective for the study (Smith 2005, p. 32). Standpoint is a term rooted in feminist sociology. The feminist movement raised a critique of the so-called “objective” scientist, who would more often than not be a man. One example of this would be promoting the notion of herstory, as much as history. Institutional ethnography was first introduced as “a sociology for women” (Smith, 1987). But the aim of institutional ethnography, and the notion of standpoint is now expanded (Smith, 2005, p. 10). What institutional ethnography aims to do is to “establish as a subject position for institutional ethnography as a method for inquiry, a site for the knower that is open to anyone” (Smith,
This means that standpoint is to be considered a site that the institutional ethnography uses as a guiding perspective. The standpoints applied in institutional ethnographies vary, for instance institutional ethnographies have been produced from the standpoint of single parents in USA (Griffith and Smith, 2005) to medical practitioners in Norwegians prisons (Rua, 2009). In this study the standpoint is that of Nicaraguan civil society workers.

**Motivation for the perspective of civil society worker: “The intermediaries”**

There are many other standpoints I could have used to study REDD+. In the Nicaraguan context I could also have chosen to study the mechanism from the position of “the state”, or, as I started with a wish to see how REDD+ is perceived “on the ground” it would have made sense to talk to the “locals,” people of the population in the areas where REDD+ projects may be implemented in the future. Let’s elaborate on the example of the standpoint of the locals. As I will elaborate on in the next chapter when I do a reading of the literature on REDD+, research from other countries show that there is little knowledge of REDD+ among the locals. This even goes for areas where consultations have been carried out. It is not easy for locals to access information about REDD+ and as my analysis will show, neither is it for the organizations that will probably be working with REDD+. I therefore found that instead of asking the locals I wanted to get to the experience of people who have been working with the people, who could at least access some part of REDD+ and the possibilities related to REDD+ in the future.5 As I see it I could have talked to the locals, but then I would had to make my focus a different one, less focused on the mechanism, and more focused on the specific local context. This would have been more difficult to do in practical terms, both because it is hard to know which specific areas will be chosen for REDD+ projects and because it would have been more difficult to get access.

It is important here to note that taking the perspective of civil society does not mean that they are counted as representatives of the people. What I mean by this, is to say that taking this standpoint means looking at the way the civil society workers see REDD+, as civil society workers, as people who work with the implementation of actions according to their own agenda and will see REDD+ according to this. The civil society workers have their own understandings of what will be beneficial to the people, especially the people referred to as

---

5 I actually had the opportunity to interview a few “locals” without previous knowledge of REDD+, but, as expected, they had few prerequisites to talk about the possibilities of REDD+. 

“poor”. If you were to go ask a peasant farmer in a small community along the Caribbean Coast what she or he needs the most, the priorities of this individual may coincide with what the civil society workers have stressed here as priorities, or it may not. The focus here is on the civil society, as they are both a part of the complex policy process and are “out in the field” among people.

The perspective of the civil society worker is important as she or he can function as a sort of “intermediary” between the institutional level, and the state, on the one hand, and the regional and local level on the other. Many of the civil society workers have experience in implementing development initiatives, some represent specific groups, and all have a lot of experience from the field. The civil society workers are interesting as intermediaries and because they have an exclusive view as to what they see as “actionable” or not in the communities.

**Work knowledge**

After choosing a standpoint, the institutional ethnographer approaches the informants that share this standpoint as “knowledgeable practitioners” or “knowers” (Smith, 2005, p. 9). This means that it’s not the informants that are the object of study, but their *work knowledge*: what they do and their knowledge of what they and others do (Smith, 2005, p. 151). The term “work” is here to be understood in a generous sense. Work knowledge is not reduced to the mere working conditions of the informants in their jobs, but is rather applied as a perspective focusing 1) “a person’s experience of and in their own work, what they do, how they do it, including what they think and feel” (Smith, 2005, p. 151) and 2) “the implicit or explicit coordination of his or her work with the work of others” (Smith, 2005, p. 151). Work is extended to:

> [A]nything done by people that takes time and effort, that they mean to do, that is done under definite conditions and with whatever means and tools, and that they may have to think about (Smith, 2005, p. 151).

The focus on work knowledge and its implications for the research design is an important difference between institutional ethnography and more ‘mainstream’ sociological approaches.

> [I]nstitutional ethnographers are not using people’s experiences as a basis for making statements about them, about populations of individuals, or about events or states of affairs
described from the point of view of individuals (...) It is people’s experience of and in what they do – their “work” – and the knowledge based in their work that are the ethnographer’s major resource (Smith, 2005, p. 125).

Using institutional ethnography is a way to study institutional processes through what people are actually doing, and their experience of doing it. The knowledge and experience of the people with the same standpoint, participating in institutional relations or settings is then used to map out and explore how institutional processes coordinate, and is coordinated in everyday life. This “ordinary knowledge” is then extended to showcase “reaches of power and relations that are beyond them” (Smith, 2005, p. 49). The aim of the interviews is to investigate the empirical linkages among local settings of everyday life, organizations and translocal processes of administration and governance (DeVault and McCoy, 2006, p. 15).

On this point my study differs from the program of traditional institutional ethnography. The research questions I pose here focus on how the Nicaraguan REDD+ is perceived by civil society, rather than the work procedures. This is a result of the research process and below I elaborate on how the focus of my interviews developed. However, in focusing on the perceptions of the civil society workers I have, guided by institutional ethnography, kept the institutional processes the main study object and kept asking myself during the process “which experiences do the civil society workers draw on to explain their ambiguous perception of REDD+?” In this way I have aimed to explain how the coordination that the civil society workers’ experience is affecting their view of REDD+ and their possible future role as intermediaries of REDD+.

**Institutional discourse**

*Discourse itself is among people’s doings; it is of the actualities of people’s lives; it organizes relations among people; and while it speaks of and from and in people’s activities, it does not exhaust them (Smith, 2005, p. 25).*

Institutional ethnography emphasizes the importance of texts and discourse in coordinating institutional processes. This importance, however, hinges on them being activated by people. Poststructuralists with a Foucauldian notion of discourse often emphasize its deterministic properties. By this notion the discourse subordinates and displaces the people using it. Institutional ethnography relies on Bakthin’s (1986) concept of discourse, or speech genres as he referred to it, an alternative to the theorizing of discourse as determining what can be said
or written (Smith, 2005, p. 127). In Bakhtin’s view, every utterance is a dialogue between the givens of language or discourse and the speaker’s intention, the hearer, the situation and so on (Smith, 2005, p. 127). Doing interviews, using experience as data, the discourse is counted as one of people’s doings. The discourse is something people use and reproduce, not a determinant, but more of a tool, or a way to produce experience.

I read the Nicaraguan REDD+ documents before carried out interviews. This way I was first presented with the discourse in the documents, before I went on to enquire about the perceptions and experiences of the civil society workers. What I found was that the institutional discourse was activated by the informants, but I also found other issues, relevant to the informants but that were not presented in the documents (that after all were made by several different people with positions and different agendas). The relation between the texts and the informant’s experiences is an important part of the analysis of the thesis.

2.4.2 On the interview material

The study is based on interviews carried out during an eight week long stay in Nicaragua in January, February and the beginning of March 2015. I was based in the capital, Managua, but also took three short trips to the two regional centers of the Caribbean Coast, Bilwi (also referred to as Puerto Cabezas) and Bluefields, to meet with informants there. All the travels to the Caribbean Coast were made by plane. First, I went to the city Bilwi in the North Autonomous Caribbean Region (RACCN). Here I interviewed people from organizations and government representatives. Next, I went to Bluefields, in the South Autonomous Caribbean Region (RACCS). Unfortunately I was not able to meet with the people I had planned, because of problems with availability. In RACCS there are large distances between the communities and few roads, people mostly get around by boat. I wanted to meet people involved in a local level REDD+ information dissemination course, but unfortunately the whole team was out of town having a meeting in a faraway community. I did however manage to get meetings with other informants in Bluefields. As I found that a big forum about climate change was coming up in just a few days, I chose to go Managua (for my scheduled interviews), and then come back to Bluefields specifically for this forum.
The notion of “civil society”

I singled out the civil society organizations and institutions in my material as my main informants and have chosen to refer to them as civil society workers. I refer to them as “workers” to underline their position as knowers, people who obtain knowledge that is important to understand the coordination of REDD+. The term civil society I use to fit the variety among the organizations and institutions the workers represent, as I will get back to, they don’t fit easily into one category). I am, however, aware that civil society may not be considered as an unproblematic and neutral description. For instance, Borchgrevink (2006) in the report “A Study of Civil Society in Nicaragua” comments that civil society

...is a problematic concept, as it is used differently – and even contradictory – by different writers. Furthermore, in its dominant usage it has strong normative and ideological overtones that limit its usefulness as an analytical concept in an empirical investigation (p. 13).

In this report it is solved by defining civil society more openly and the author stresses that with an open definition the producers of the report “do not make any a priori conclusions about the character of the organizations of civil society” (Borchgrevink, 2006, p. 13). This, he writes, does not include assuming that the organizations are “necessarily promoters of democracy and human rights; united and in agreement; or counter-poised to the state, or limit our definition of civil society only to those organizations exhibiting such characteristics” (Borchgrevink, 2006, p. 14). I adhere to this, using the term civil society here is not related to and specific normative approach or ideology.6

The civil society organizations

My informants come from organizations that are very different when it comes to size, scope and structure. What a lot of the organizations have in common is that most of them have a “seat at the table” in the REDD+ process, that they have been part of the process of developing the Nicaraguan R-PP or otherwise. The organizations my informants represent also include some organizations that are not involved in the process, but are working on topics related to climate change or forest. The organizations my informants work for include UN agencies, international and national NGOs and local-based organizations, but also some

6But it is important to note that my definition differs from that of Borchgrevink’s report in other aspects. As I have previously noted my selection of informants is confined to the actors engaging in environmental topics.
research/educational institutions. Most of these organizations are professional organizations with paid employees, but some are based on volunteer work. Some have a member-base and others are purely professional. One could ask if it wouldn’t have been better if I had chosen only to include one type of organizations, for instance the NGOs – and why I included researchers. The reason I didn’t is that I came to understand that the informants didn’t see themselves as divided into NGOs and national organizations or local organizations when it came to matters regarding forest and the environment, they were rather organized as committees or working groups where all organizations had a voice. Since my aim was to understand their interest or non-interest in REDD+, what was most important was to get to organizations that could come to be involved in the future implementation, which would be decided by active interest and/or participation in such groups. These groups included researchers; hence they were included in my material.7

There were also people I didn’t talk to that it would have been interesting to include among the informants. One example I have already mentioned, workers in one organization that has carried out REDD+ information projects and I wanted to include, were not available. I would also have liked to include the territorial leaders, but they were not available either.

Some informants were not included in the “civil society” category, but could strictly speaking have been a part of it. I excluded regional government from the civil society category, even though some may argue that this level should have been included. The reason I didn’t is because the regional government is a political space, governed by many of the same parties that figure in national politics. People that are part of the regional administration were also not counted as a part of the civil society, but rather formed part of the background material.

2.4.3 Point of departure and selecting informants

In this section I elaborate on the process of collecting experience material, my point of departure for recruiting informants and practical choices in the process.

7 On a side note, inclusion of researchers in working groups could also, through their position as scientists, be seen as a way to strengthen the legitimacy of a project.
Finding informants: Snowballing and “a seat at the table”

This study starts from the position of Nicaraguan civil society. Originally I wanted to focus on indigenous organizations, to enquire about their role within, or outside, the REDD+ process, and their experiences with REDD+ so far. The aim of talking to the indigenous organizations was to understand how these organizations work with topics of climate change, how it effects the indigenous, whether they are given a “seat at the table” when it comes to decision-making and how international law regarding indigenous people, such as ILO Convention 169 and safeguards of the World Bank, is applied. But upon my arrival in Managua I was advised to broaden the scope of the study. I understood it so that REDD+ was not much of a topic and that it would be difficult to get in contact with the organizations and that despite the listings of the participants and their affiliation in the R-PP it would be difficult to get in touch with them without going through contacts, people who could “vouch for me.” Instead of focusing on the process of involving organizations in the REDD+ process I was advised to focus on the environmental agenda in total. This guided my research in a different direction from what I had started out with and I started doing interviews with a range of actors. I applied the method of “snowballing,” basing my approach on recommendations (Weiss, 1994, p. 34): I went through contacts of researchers I had met and the contacts of the informants I had already talked to. This proved to be a good way of getting in contact with people, but as it turned out, not all of them had experience relevant to the research topic.

So, in fear of not being able to get much information on REDD+, I interviewed a range of actors that had not been involved in the REDD+ process or had knowledge of the process. I interviewed both government representatives and representatives of different institutions with no clear perspective other than trying to understand how REDD+ was a part of the environmental agenda. But after applying this approach for a while I figured that I had cast a net far too wide and started approaching organizations and people whom I only knew from documents and had no access to through contacts. I realized that it was possible for me to get in contact with many only through telephone calls or email and from here on I focused on doing interviews with people I knew to be a part of the REDD+ process. In total I did interviews with 34 persons. But the bumpy process had an effect on my material, many interviews were not focused on REDD+ at all. So when I was finished with the stay I decided to focus on the 20 interviews that I had carried out with people representing non-state civil society organizations and institutions where I had also kept a tighter focus on REDD+ in the
interviews. This is the material that I have based this thesis upon. My research process was changed due to practical conditions, but in retrospect I find that selection of informants was well founded.

**Practical choices**

In the beginning I referred to my stay in Nicaragua as fieldwork. However as time went by and I started reading more about fieldwork-based research I concluded that I don’t want to use the term to describe the bulk of my work here. As I see it the term fieldwork can have certain connotations to anthropological research, where the researcher stays in the surroundings of her or his informants over a longer period, from some months up to a year. In my own work I did physically move from my known surroundings for a longer period of time and interviews had to be carried out within a certain timeframe, giving me a “fieldwork setting” for research. But I stayed in my own apartment, and did not socialize with my informants on regular basis. Further, I didn’t want to confuse my ethnographical method with the more common use of ethnography, related to fieldwork, within anthropology, so I refer to my interview period to as “a stay.”

Although there is more than one official language, the main language in Nicaragua is Spanish. Before carrying out this research I had the experience of living in Nicaragua, but I had only briefly received education in the Spanish language. During my previous stay I had relied mostly on “learning by doing.” In going back I considered the possibility of engaging a translator, but I dismissed the idea because I felt that bringing in a third person in the interview situation could make it more difficult for my informants to talk about sensitive topics. I was also aware that nuances can be lost in translation. Another option was to carry out the interviews in English, as most informants, working in organizations with ties to international networks and organizations would be likely to have at least a basic understanding of English. But then I would have lost the nuances that the informants provided by speaking in their mother tongue or work language. So I chose to do Spanish exercises daily before I left Norway and conduct the interviews in Spanish, but with a tape recorder so that I could later go back and listen to the exact wording of their answers. I was still worried that they would find it uncomfortable to be recorded, but most of the time this did not turn out to be a problem.
2.4.4 Conducting interviews

My initial plan was to focus on the REDD+ process and the specific process of “consultations” or contact between organizations and institutions in making the Nicaraguan REDD+ strategy. But as in my contact with informants I also changed my direction when it came to my interview guide because of advice I got in the initial phase of my stay in Nicaragua. I was advised not to follow my plan, and rather to focus broadly on the environmental agenda. This is one of the issues that I in retrospect found that may have be a choice that actually may have opened my eyes more than my pre-set perspective as researcher would have. An institutional ethnography usually focuses on describing what is often left out in studies in Western societies, for instance the actual actions regarding production of texts and negotiations or discussions of such. According to the way I experienced the situation in Nicaragua, there are few studies at all, so to build on the foundations of knowledge one has to start with a broader picture of the situation in general regarding environmental topics. I found that to understand the perceptions of REDD+, it was essential to understand the political situation in the country. So in the interviews I focused on the environmental agenda and the perceptions of REDD+ and the Nicaraguan REDD+, but I also incorporated new topics guided by the interviews I had already undertaken. Smith describes the process of interviewing like this:

Methods of selecting from the always-more-than-can-be-used material that ethnographic research generates are, of course, guided by the original problematic; but, more important, they are guided by the interlocking character of work knowledges of people differently located in a process. In a sense, different pieces of the puzzle select other pieces and select those aspects of other work knowledges that fit. It is as if it were a jigsaw puzzle that grows piece by piece into its own direction (Smith, 2005, p. 159).

My jigsaw puzzle was guided by the informants I met and how they were impacted by their experiences in different ways. I followed up on the topics made relevant in the interviews.

2.4.5 On the reflective data material: The researcher’s position

According to Silverman (2005) it is a good idea for new researchers to choose a topic that they themselves are familiar with and where the data collection doesn’t offer too big a challenge (p. 39). To me, my previous experience from Nicaragua was crucial to my
understanding of the experiences of the informants. However the data collection process also provided some challenges.

**Getting around**

I started doing interviews with people in Managua. Getting to the various locations could be quite a challenge. Managua is a chaotic city, because earthquakes have affected the city structure, without being rebuilt; it is effectively a city without a city center. Nobody uses addresses; though some streets actually have names, I have never heard anyone use them in directions. When I found a street sign in the street I was living, close to what could be called a sort of city center, next to the shopping mall Metrocentro, the Universidad de Centro America (UCA) and one of the major bus terminals, I asked taxi drivers to take me to this street, but nobody knew of it. The directions to the place I was staying would instead be “close to this park, the green house in front of the apartment complex”. And that they would almost always get right. But it could have been worse, often the directions would start off with “de donde fue…”, “where X used to be…” Then you just had to know where this building or other thing that it was referred to used to be maybe 40 years ago. I relied on taxi drivers to take me around the city and then if I was close to a main street I would jump on a bus and save some money. I carried out most of the interviews in Managua in the office of the respective person and some in cafés, generally ones I had suggested. I tried to find places that were easy to get to and not with too much noise. Whereas in Norway I have carried out a lot of interviews in different places without noise being a problem, this was almost impossible in Managua. The cafés are generally filled with people and if not, there is always a loud fan above your head. I worried that the interviewees would be uncomfortable or refrain from speaking their minds because of the setting, but I found that this was not a problem. The people I interviewed in their offices and the people I interviewed in cafés had more or less the same cautious way of talking about sensitive topics.

In between interviews I was allowed to work at the document center at the Niltapan institute at the UCA. Here I worked on contacting new informants. Whenever I had an interview I would just slip out with taxi fare and tape recorder well hidden (to avoid attention that could lead to getting mugged) and get a taxi to meet the informants.

When I travelled to the Caribbean Coast I also relied on taxis to get around, but in the small cities of the Coast, Bilwi and Bluefields, it is easier to get an overview. I had also
stayed in both cities before. In Bilwi I had a local helper and was provided with the numbers of “safe taxis.” I did many of the interviews in the hotel I was staying. In Bluefields I stayed in the middle of the city and was able to get around easily.

A curious outsider or “just a master’s student”

Entering the field of environmental policy in Nicaragua, I was obviously an outsider. Having some trouble with the language, I was obviously a foreigner to anyone who met me. But to try to make this into a strength I made a point of presenting myself as a Norwegian. I introduced the topic of environmental governance as a topic emphasized by my native country and in this way emphasize that what actually happens in initiatives like REDD+ is of interest to Norwegian citizens. I both felt that being an outsider entailed difficulties and possibilities. I would at times feel that I was not taken seriously, that I couldn’t possibly understand what it is like in Nicaragua. But I also imagine in retrospect, that it was easier for me to ask about sensitive topics than for a Nicaraguan. I excused myself, being a foreigner that didn’t understand, and as my language skills were far from perfect. Many of my informants would help me get explanations in detail, as they allowed me to ask apparently similar questions to understand better. Asking for interviews over the phone or email, I was mostly welcomed, but many didn’t understand why I was interested in just this topic. I got the impression they simply saw me as a “curious outsider.”

However, one interview with a government representative made me more self-conscious, and I would later see this as a part of my experience material, connected to the experiences of my informants. After I returned from my stay I kept thinking about the way I was met by one of the bureaucrats I talked to. I was well-received and the person had taken time from their busy schedule to talk to me. He listened to and answered my questions, but kept emphasizing that I was writing my master’s thesis. It gave me the feeling that he was trying to trivialize my project. Others had been happy that a foreigner was paying attention to what is going on and were happy to help, wanting me to produce more information about the situation that could benefit them in their work, but this person seemed to be more focused on the project as something minor. The experience kept irritating me, but I thought that this was after all to be expected after talking to so many, that some would be more and some less welcoming. It could just be a result of the informant’s interpretation of my position. With others I had, at least in my experience, been taken to be mainly a researcher. But as I am
much younger than most of the people who operate within this field and female – most are men over 40 - it could be that the person I interviewed saw me as a very young inexperienced woman. This was irritating for me, but I thought to myself that at least this just happened this once, at least that obviously. But when I later went back to my material, I could see that my feeling of “not being taken seriously” could easily be put into context. As the analysis will show the civil society workers also experienced that they were being “put in their place” and invited as guests to presentations instead of participating in a dialogue, and that this was an important part of the civil society workers experience.

Researcher’s participation “in the field”

During the stay in Nicaragua I was also invited to some events related to my research topic. I am especially grateful to one informant’s interest in my project that led to my participation in one meeting in a regional consultative committee for initiatives regarding forest and environment-related topics and a regional forum on climate change. In these meetings I took the part of an observant and I took field notes where it didn’t feel intruding. This participation is also a part of the experience material.

2.4.6 Analyzing and presenting the experience material

I wanted to tell their story. To do so, I concluded that I must put the question of distress center stage rather than trying to avoid it: to focus on the most distressed area, to write specifically about distress, and to use an ethnographic writing style to make its contours as vivid as I know how. If this is a story that should be told, it deserves an «audible» track (Tsing, 2005, p. xii).

The anthropologist Anna Tsing wrote about the destruction of the Indonesian rain forest in her book Friction (2005). In the preface in her book Tsing writes that she made a choice to specifically focus on the “farmers and foragers that [she] knew best had shaped [her] perspective” (Tsing, 2005, p. xii). In telling their story she chose to focus on the distress experienced by these people, even though she knew well that there were others who had gained on the business of forest destruction. The citation above resonated with me when I first read it and it has stayed with me during the process of writing this thesis. It has also affected the analysis and the presentation of it. In analyzing and presenting the material based on my

---

8 Had she been an institutional ethnographer this would be referred to as “the standpoint.”
meetings with the civil society workers I have focused on coordination and relations of ruling. I have focused on in what way the civil society workers experience the REDD+ process – their own participation and the future prospects. The possibilities and limitations of this coordination is the main focus. However, in their perspectives I found sensitive topics and distress. I asked myself if it would be right to include politics in my analysis – was this not a study about a climate change mitigation initiative and environmental policy, and not about the Nicaraguan government? Many of my informants did not speak freely about these topics, so would it be right towards them to present their distrust in the analysis? But as I was asking myself these questions I returned to institutional ethnography, and was reminded that the relevant topics are the topics relevant to the people. After all my informants are knowers, they know and present what is their perspective on the situation. They may not want to express distrust as an individual, but this was a common tendency (I discuss ethical considerations regarding sensitive topics below). I also went back to the manifest Tsing put up for herself and found that “an audible track” was just what I wanted to present, because I believe that this is the best way to convey the position, perceptions and concerns of my informants.

Analyzing the interview material

I recorded all the interviews. I then listened to all the recordings and made notes and transcribed selected parts of the interviews. The transcriptions were then fed into and coded in the program Hyper Research. I let the material rest while I finished the text analyses and then went back to the material and regrouped the codes where I found that another coding would help structure the data in a better way. After finishing the coding I decided on the key elements I would focus my analysis on. The interview material I have collected is broad and distended. Like the organizations they represent, my informants differ substantially. The questions I asked would activate different topics and experiences with each informant. Analyzing my material I was also at times wondering if I had ended up asking “the right questions” and whether “the right questions” would have provided me with more or different information. But as the analysis matured I saw that it might not be that I had not found the right questions, because my interviews were often long and I did ask a lot of questions, but rather that it could be a result of the topics discussed. Again, the sensitive topics made the informants cautious, and also, as I will get back to in the analysis, the fact that I didn’t get more information could be a sign of limited access to information.
Presenting the material

There are certain challenges one encounters in doing interviews in one language and presenting them in another. I did most interviews in Spanish, and the thesis is written in English. One challenge in presenting the material is the presentation of quotes. Weiss (1995) writes about three approaches in presenting quotations in text. The first is the “preservationist approach” (Weiss, 1995, p. 192), where the sounds on the tape are reproduced as accurately as possible. The second is “the standardized approach” (Weiss, 1995, p. 192), where the researcher remains true to the words and meanings of the original but edits the quote to make it easier to read. In the presentation here I have adhered to what Weiss refers to as “the usual compromise” (Weiss, 1995, p. 193), where only small changes are made to the quotes. Some of the ways of formulating a sentence that is perfectly normal in Spanish would seem strange in a direct translation to English. I have had this in mind in translating the quotes. Still, it is important to note that translation from one language to another always runs the risk of loss of nuance and meaning.

Many informants refer to what they have “heard” or “what the newspapers say” when they talk about sensitive topics such as politics as most of them don’t want to come out as critics of the government. This has made it more challenging to put their statements in the interviews into context, and to present them to an audience who is not familiar with current-day Nicaragua. I have myself read the main national newspapers, both before my stay in Nicaragua, during the stay and after (they are available both in paper version and online) to keep track of the news and discussions. So, in presenting the material I decided to take the untraditional choice of using two political cartoons as points of departure. The cartoons are both gathered from the Nicaraguan newspaper La Prensa which is known to be particularly critical of the current government and consequently refers to the sitting president Daniel Ortega as “the unconstitutional president.” The cartoons are here used as representations of the popular opinion, the frame of reference for Nicaraguans in general. This doesn’t mean that everybody agrees with the message, but that these are representations that activate certain meanings. These meanings can be used to better understand the position and statements of the informants.

I have also taken precautions in the way I have presented the informants, see elaboration in the next section.

9 The Internet version of La Prensa is available at http://www.laprensa.com.ni/
While the work of most journalists is complicated by Sandinista secrecy, cartoonists tell a story that reporters can’t; and they reach a larger audience in a country with high levels of illiteracy and low levels of formal education. That combination of factors makes cartoonists important opinion makers, representing a strong critical voice in a country where the political opposition is weak.

2.4.7 Ethical considerations

The entire project was reported to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) before interviews were carried out. Before conducting each interview I presented a letter for my informants, informing them about the project and that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time from the project without justification. They were also informed that the material would be handled confidentially and that they would be anonymous in the presentation of the data material. All this in line with the Guidelines for research ethics in the social sciences, law and the humanities by the National Committees for Research Ethics Norway (NESH, 2006). All the informants I approached gave their consent. However, the benefits and risks of participation for the informants were evaluated throughout the entire research process. It is important to note that while talking about environmental topics were not a particularly sensitive topic to my informants, talking about their relation to the government is. My informants would often seem cautious in explaining why they had so little faith in REDD+. Some would also provide information, but “for my ears only.” Because these are sensitive topics, I have taken some precautions in the presentation of the data material. First, I have given all my informants fictional names, these names were mainly based on lists over the most popular names in Latin America at the moment, with some additions. The group of professionals working on topics related to forest and climate change in Nicaragua is small. So to keep the anonymity of my informants I have at some points avoided providing more in-depth information about their background, to avoid them being exposed. In the parts of the analysis where specifically sensitive topics are brought up, such as the Interoceanic Canal, I have intentionally left out the names of the informant so that the opinions expressed will not be pinned down to any informants in particular. This is also to emphasize that these are general sentiments.

In reports from Nicaragua that I have read informants are anonymized by referring to the individual informant as “a peasant” or similar, and not presenting more about the
informant’s background. I still find it justified here to give “more depth” to my informants. This is, as I see it, a consequence of the foundation of institutional ethnography: the informants are real people with real experiences and their perceptions cannot be dislodged from their experiences. I find that providing information on the situation of the interview or background of the informants is a part of showing why their experience is what it is. It was also crucial to the decision of presenting the informants background that the informants provided this information in the interviews.

I also tried to ensure that each didn’t know who the other informants were. While I was conducting the interviews I received questions about who else I had talked to, but I tried to avoid the questions and rather told my informants that I had a lot of people on my list. This was however difficult when I was in RACCN and RACCS as the milieu is small and as I had help to get in touch with informants I was not fully in control on who had access to the information on who I was about to interview. However, no informant had the full overview over all the other informants, so the problem of informants identifying other informants is also solved by fully anonymizing all the informants that are quoted in certain sections.
3 Nicaragua: A short historical trajectory

Nicaragua is the largest of the Central American republics. Nicaragua has – as many Central American countries – had a turbulent history of foreign interventions. The Spanish arrived in the beginning of the 1500s and took control of most of what is currently the country of Nicaragua. The country has been marked by shifting political powers, from Mexican rule to U.S. interventions in the beginning of the 1900s, and more recently, socialist revolution and civil war. Presenting a full historical trajectory is beyond the scope of this thesis, but as history and politics relate closely to the current day REDD+ process, as we will see in the analysis, I here give a short presentation of the political backdrop.

Nicaragua captured the world’s attention in the late 1970s and 1980s after the victory of the Sandinista revolution. After decades of rule by the Somoza dynasty, a family dictatorship, the socialist party Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional (FSLN) was founded to oppose the oppressive regime (Babb, 2001, p. 6). The FSLN united a popular movement of students, workers, and peasants to protest the poverty and injustices experienced by the vast majority in the country (Babb, 2002, p. 7). The geographic vulnerability of Nicaragua has played an important role in the country’s history, together with political greed. A devastating earthquake in 1972 that destroyed much of Managua is often mentioned as an important reason for the growing opposition towards the Somozas, when leading members of the middle and upper classes joined the urban and rural working class in the fight against the regime (Babb, 2001, p. 7). In the aftermath of the earthquake the country received huge amounts of foreign aid, but the capital city was not rebuilt. Rumor had it that the sitting president Anastasio Somoza Debayle had kept the money to himself.10 The FSLN gained power after forcing the last president of the Somoza family to flee the country in 1979 (Babb, 2001, p. 7). But though the overthrow of president Somoza was generally welcomed, the new rule of the socialists was not welcomed by all. The result was a ten year long civil war raging between the FSLN and contra-revolutionary forces (Contras), until the Sandinistas agreed to hold the first free general election of the country in 1990 (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2015). The election was won by the National Opposition Union, a coalition of liberal parties. Then the Sandinistas returned to power again in 2006 (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2015). This put

10 Managua is still referred to as a capital without a centrum, because part of the city was never rebuilt.
the former Sandinist president Daniel Ortega back in the driver seat, in which he has remained since 2006. Though his re-election in 2011 (the Nicaraguan president is elected for 5 years at a time) spurred controversy,\(^{11}\) Ortega is so far expected to keep his position in the upcoming election of 2016, which will make him the person that has had the most time in the president position in the history of Nicaragua (La Prensa, November 2015).

Despite being abundant in natural resources, Nicaragua is among the poorest countries in Central America (CIA Fact Book, 2015). Historically, Nicaragua has been a country with extremely unequal distribution of wealth. The Somoza family had over the years of dictatorship in the early 1900s, and especially under the rule of the last Somoza, acquired a whopping 80 per cent of the country’s territory (Brockett 1990). As the last Somoza and his supporters left Nicaragua these possessions were confiscated and the new government undertook a major re-distribution through huge agrarian reforms (Brockett 1990). But the reforms and also land being given to ex-combatants in the forested areas in the North of the country, has in turn led to a rapid advancement of the agricultural frontier (Stocks, McMahan and Taber, 2007).

### 3.1 The Caribbean Coast

Nicaragua is parted in two parts. The Pacific side is where over half of the population lives and where you find the capital, Managua. The majority population is mestizos, Spanish speakers of mixed European and indigenous decent (Babb, 2001, p. 4). The other side of Nicaragua is the Caribbean Coast, also called the Atlantic Coast. The Caribbean Coast has a somewhat different history from the rest of Nicaragua. When the Spanish came in the 1500s they settled on the fertile soil of the Pacific Coast, growing coffee and little by little expanding the agricultural frontier to the East, at the same time overpowering and marginalizing the indigenous groups living in these areas (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2015).\(^{12}\) The Caribbean Coast, on the other hand, was taken by English pirates. This coast was not colonized in the same way the Spanish took the Pacific Coast. Instead of becoming a colony the Caribbean Coast was considered a self-ruled British protectorat, officially ruled by the indigenous group called *Miskito: The Mosquitia* (Baracco, 2011). Aside from the Miskitos the

---

\(^{11}\) CIA World Fact Book refers to the 2011 elections as marked by «widespread irregularities (CIA Fact Book, 2015).

\(^{12}\) Though there are still indigenous communities also in this part of the country.
Caribbean Coast is inhabited by Afro-descendants\textsuperscript{13}, Mayangnas (often referred to as sumos)\textsuperscript{14} and Ramas, as well as mestizos. The Caribbean Coast is rich in natural resources and almost all of Nicaragua’s forest is in this part of the country (R-PP Nicaragua, 2013).

The Caribbean Coast was included in Nicaragua in 1894, but the main population of Nicaragua in the Pacific and the indigenous and ethnic communities of the Caribbean Coast, have historically been worlds apart, geographically, linguistically and politically. The costeños, the population of the Caribbean Coast, are often met with prejudice from the mestizo majority of the Pacific side of the country, perceiving the people of the coast as having a lesser culture and having a low level of development (Lancaster, 1994, p. 211-234). Also, a lot of the resistance in the wake of the Sandinistas gaining power came from this part of the country, as indigenous youth were recruited into contra-revolutionary groups (Baracco, 2011). With the peace agreement in the late 1980s an important part for the coast people was the Law of Autonomy (Law 28), granting the Coast its own political structure and certain rights to traditional rule. But with an increasing influx of other population groups to the Coast, such as the previously mentioned ex-combatants and new insurgence of poor people settling on vacant land, both often referred to as “colonists,” the indigenous communities have found it hard to sustain their rights to the properties. Studies from the Northern part of Nicaragua have also shown that indigenous farmers have deforested significantly less than colonists (Stocks, McMahan and Taber, 2007) and suggested the importance of decentralized rulemaking as an important means for nature protection (Hayes and Persha, 2010). The Autonomy Law was in 2003 followed by The Demarcation Law (Law 445), a law recognizing indigenous land rights with backing in the Autonomy Law (Stocks, 2005). According to Law 445 indigenous communities have the right to land titles based on historical occupation (Stocks, 2005). However, the demarcation process has so far been slow and it has been suggested that the claims are in political circles considered “too much for too few,” another way of saying that too many political and economic interests want the land (Stocks, 2005), but the process is in motion (Baracco, 2011, Lorío, 2014). Today the two autonomous regions, called the Northern Autonomous Region of the Caribbean Coast (RACCN, after its

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{13} Afrodescendent people decend from slaves brought from Africa to Latin America.
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{14} This group is often referred to as sumos, but is now rather referred to as “mayangnas.” Sumo is a name given them by the miskitos, which is the miskito word for «lazy». Mayangna is the word the indigenous group themselves use.
Spanish initials) and the Southern Autonomous Region of the Caribbean Coast (RACCS) are
governed by general assemblies and regional presidents\textsuperscript{15}.

\textsuperscript{15}At the time of my stay representatives from the Sandinista party held all the top positions [Spring 2015].
4 REDD+ literature and critical perspectives

Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, REDD+, was proposed as a climate mitigation initiative that would make forests more worth in carbon value than as industrial products. By paying people not “to cut down trees,” people would get incentives to conserve forest instead of cutting down valuable forest for the sake of for instance agriculture or extracting timber. The funding would come from carbon markets. In this chapter I present a text analysis of REDD+ literature. First I present how a proponent and research institution producing research on REDD+ presents the idea behind REDD+ and the development of the concept. Then I contrast this presentation with two selected critical perspectives on REDD+, and do a critical reading of the presentation of the concept.

4.1 The REDD+ idea

No idea for saving the world’s tropical forests has generated anywhere near the same excitement and commitment of funds as has REDD+ (Angelsen, Brockhaus, Sunderlin, & Verchot, 2012, p. 1).

The world’s total forest area today is just over 4 billion hectares, equivalent to 31 per cent of our total land area. And the world’s forests today store 289 gigatonnes of carbon in their biomass alone (FAO, 2010, p. xvii). However, the forests are disappearing at an alarming rate: between 1990 and 2000 there was a net loss of 8.3 million hectares forest per year, and the following decade, up to 2010, there was a net loss of 6.2 million hectares per year. Although the rate of loss has slowed down, it still remains very high (FAO, 2010). The global deforestation is leading to reductions in carbon stocks, degradation of biodiversity and lowering water quality. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has reported that the atmospheric abundance of carbon dioxide was 390.5 ppm (parts per million) in 2011, a 40 per cent increase from 1750 (Stocker et al., 2013, p. 161) and we still see an increase in CO² emissions today. The situation is a cause of great concern, because it means that not only are we, the world population, increasing the carbon emissions every year – and in this way adding to the problem we started with the industrial revolution – we are at the same time decreasing the earth’s possibility of holding on to the carbon. By limiting the available
We are burning the candle at both ends, and there is no new candle in sight, which means that there is good reason to focus mitigation initiatives on forests.

4.1.1 A fresh approach

The Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) – a center which has long been a proponent and actively involved in the development of REDD+ strategies – describes REDD+ (and the reception and development of the mechanism so far), based on their 2010 compilation of research on REDD+, like this:

REDD+ has been perceived as a quick and cheap option for taking early action toward limiting global warming to 2°C. It also takes a fresh approach to the forest and climate debate, with large-scale result-based funding as a key characteristic and the hope that transformational change will happen both in and beyond the forestry sector. At the same time, REDD+ has been sufficiently broad to serve as a canopy under which a wide range of actors can pursue their own ideas of what it ought to achieve (Angelsen et al., 2012, p. xiii).

So REDD+ is seen as (1) a quick option, (2) a cheap option, and (3) a fresh approach (because it is based on large scale result-based funding), and lastly (4) as a broad canopy. In the following I will go into detail on these four core aspects of the concept.

REDD+ has been perceived as a quick and cheap option for taking early action toward limiting global warming to 2°C...

Despite the development of environmental policies the fact is that climate change is already happening and at a much faster rate than the political processes. It is hardly possible to find a scenario where we will manage to stop all changes, therefore environmental movements and politicians have increasingly been focusing on a common goal of limiting the global temperature rise to 2°C. Positioning REDD+ as a means to reach this end makes it a valuable card politically, for politicians that want to comply with possible future international agreements and to account for their environmental policies to their constituents. The simplicity of the concept also helps make it easy to “sell”: REDD+ is defined as a quick option. It is easy to picture that a ‘simple’ transaction from a buyer to a seller will be a faster

16Though it has been argued that make a 2°C temperature increase a common objective is also a political choice that suits specific political interests. This relates to the discussion of environmental justice. For Norwegian readers I recommend a discussion of this topic in Lahn 2013.
approach to make change happen, and a way to make people accountable to potential missing changes, compared to the old school education program designed to ‘change attitudes’.

Defining REDD+ as cheap the authors base on the Stern report (Stern, 2006): “According to the Stern report, eliminating most deforestation would cost only US $1–2 per tCO2 on average, which is very inexpensive compared to almost all other mitigation options” (Angelsen and McNeill, 2012, p. 33). The authors comment that the estimates are contested, and that higher estimates exist, but that “a general impression” was that REDD+ would be cheap.

...It also takes a fresh approach to the forest and climate debate, with large-scale result-based funding as a key characteristic and the hope that transformational change will happen both in and beyond the forestry sector...

The elaboration on REDD+ as a fresh approach, according to CIFOR, I have boiled down to five characteristics. First, REDD+ is a fresh approach because it’s a market-based approach. Angelsen and McNeill write that “forest conservation was to become more profitable than forest clearing as a result of the economic incentives, Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES)” (Angelsen and McNeill, 2012, p. 34). Since PES is voluntary, forest users will conserve forest if the benefits for conserving are higher than the possible benefits from forest exploitation (Angelsen and McNeill, 2012, p. 42).17

Second, availability of funding has also put REDD+ in a special position, as annual transfers to REDD+ countries were estimated to potentially bring in tens of billions of dollars, which is considerable more than had been available through other programs” (Angelsen and McNeill, 2012, p. 34).” The popularity of the idea would give access to funding only dreamed of before. Third, the relation to development policies was counted as a bonus: “REDD+ was seen as contributing to both environmental and development goals, thus avoiding the ‘iron law of climate policy’: whenever environmental and economic goals collide, the economic goal will win” (Pielke 2010, cited in Angelsen and McNeill, 2012, p. 34).

Fourth, the connection to the Kyoto Protocol made REDD+ actionable in view of a new future international agreement: “A key concept in the Bali Action Plan (UNFCCC 2007)

17 A) PES projects were first developed in Costa Rica and PES projects function as inspiration for REDD+ projects. However there are discussions of whether it would be right to actually call PES “market-based,” and this same discussion apply to REDD+. For reasons of space I refer my reader to e.g. Muradian et al. 2010. B) PES projects also exist in Nicaragua. Some of my informants have connected REDD+ to PES, but as there is little information on this link so far I have chosen to exclude it from the analysis. However, I refer my reader to e.g. Van Hecken, Baetsiensen and Huybrechs, 2015 and Aguilar-Støien, 2014 for interesting analyses of the development of PES in Nicaragua.
was that REDD+ should involve ‘positive incentives’, interpreted by many to mean compensation provided by Annex I to non-Annex I countries for achieving measurable reductions in forestry emissions” (Angelsen and McNeill, 2012, p. 34). The reference to “Annex 1” and “non-Annex 1 countries” refers to the division of responsibilities in the Kyoto Protocol, strongly debated not least because a number of the world’s fastest growing economies belong to the “non-Annex 1 category.” But as the authors note, being based on a similar categorization “REDD+ therefore fit well with the division established in the Kyoto Protocol: Annex I countries would take on commitments for emissions reductions, while non-Annex I countries would do so on a voluntary basis” (Angelsen and McNeill, 2012, p. 35).

Also a key premise of REDD+ when it was launched was also that it would have a strong national, rather than subnational, focus (Angelsen and McNeill, 2012, p. 45). REDD+ was perceived to be a significant shift from previous project-based conservation: “now national governments would be the leading actors in forest conservation” (Angelsen and McNeill, 2012, p. 45).

...At the same time, REDD+ has been sufficiently broad to serve as a canopy under which a wide range of actors can pursue their own ideas of what it ought to achieve.

The vagueness – or broadness – of the REDD+ idea is, the authors suggest, part of the reason for its success (Angelsen and McNeill, 2012, p. 33). But going from theoretical and political prospects to a real life process of policy undeniably changes things:

REDD+ looked like the ideal solution. It could provide quick and cheap emissions reductions and win–win–win opportunities for everyone: large transfers to the South, cheap offsets for the North and funding for conservation and development projects. But as REDD+ began to be tested and more precisely defined, problems began to crop up. As long as REDD+ remained vague, a broad coalition could support the idea. But an idea is not effective until put into practice, and then powerful interests can distort and dilute it (Angelsen and McNeill, 2012, p. 35).
4.2 The REDD+ reality: How has REDD+ turned out so far?

*Deforestation and forest degradation have a long history and powerful interests have much at stake in their continuation. The policy arenas in many countries are battlefields between interests of ‘business as usual’ and interests of transformational change (Angelsen, Brockhaus, Sunderlin, & Verchot, 2012, p. 1).*

Introducing their third book about REDD+, the CIFOR main authors define REDD+ as a “success story”. Dozens of developing countries have prepared for and started implementing REDD+ and hundreds of local projects have been started. There are already thousands of publications on the topic, billions of dollars have been pledged to REDD+ and new international programs have been created (such as the World Bank’s FCPF). However, the concept, or rather the output, could be said to have taken on a life of its own. Key reasons for the changes are outlined below.

### 4.2.1 The missing agreement

Angelsen and McNeill write that “the most significant impact that the climate negotiations have so far had on REDD+ is perhaps due to what they did not achieve, namely a global climate agreement” (Angelsen and McNeill, 2012, p. 39). As previously mentioned, REDD+ was designed to fit a post-Kyoto agreement and such an agreement would help secure long-term funding. The authors connect the fact that no binding agreement has been reached so far, to the fact that funding to date has been less than envisioned and has been dominated by what they call “non-market sources,” which in turn “has led REDD+ to further broaden its objectives and scope” (Angelsen and McNeill, 2012, p. 39). Because funding has not been available through a global climate initiative, it has been sought elsewhere, often from development aid budgets. In 2012, two thirds of international REDD+ funding came from development aid budgets (Angelsen et al., 2012, p. xiv). The CIFOR main authors write that “[t]he smaller magnitude and the ‘aid-ification’ of REDD+ [funding] have had major implications for the pace of implementation and have contributed to a broadening of the scope of REDD+,” the authors go on to write.
4.2.2 Market-funding and controversy

Market funding is controversial, especially when REDD+ credits are used as offsets (i.e. to allow a country or company to count them as part of their mandatory emission reductions). The opposition has partly been ideological, arguing that it is immoral to pay others to allow oneself to continue to pollute (Angelsen and McNeill, 2012, p. 47).

As previously elaborated, the REDD+ mechanism is based on creation and trade of carbon credits within a carbon market. Alongside concerns over whether a carbon market will turn out to be able to self-sustain and provide actual changes in terms of environmental outcome, REDD+ has been met with critique based on ethical judgement: the mechanism has been seen as a way for polluters to be able to continue to pollute themselves.

4.2.3 From national to local

One of the novelties of REDD+, as previously mentioned, was sketched out to be a national approach. In their account for the evolution of REDD+, Angelsen and McNeill write that “[so far (although these are still early days), REDD+ has not brought about such a shift [national focus rather than project-based conservation]. Much of the REDD+ funding has been awarded to local and subnational initiatives” (Angelsen and McNeill, 2012, p. 45). The authors suggest some factors that can explain the outcome. First, that national-level reforms often bring about win – lose situations, with powerful groups standing to lose. Second, the availability of substantial donor pledges to REDD+ created the pressure to spend quickly. Conservation and development NGOs had the necessary means to carry out projects. Third, “donors prefer to fund concrete projects or programmes, rather than policy reforms where it is more difficult to follow the money and be sure of its end use” (Angelsen and McNeill, 2012, p. 45-46). However, Angelsen and McNeill write, preliminary findings REDD+ research suggest that the shift from a national to a project focus may not continue.

REDD+ projects are – as many have done before – finding that effective action on the ground is blocked or constrained by national policies and institutions (...) The push will therefore continue for national-level reforms, and more action to enable links between subnational

18 Another concern, on the technical part, that Angelsen and McNeill note is that of market flooding: “cheap REDD+ credits that could lower the carbon market price and crowd out mitigation in fossil fuel sectors. A major challenge is to regulate the rate of introduction of REDD+ credits into carbon markets by adjusting the overall cap as they are introduced (Angelsen et al. 2012) (p. 46-47).
activities and national-level policy design can be expected (Angelsen and McNeill, 2012, p. 46).

4.2.4 From idea to reality

REDD+ has undergone drastic changes since the idea (...) both in terms of how it is perceived and what it has become in practice. While some of these changes arose from a natural maturation of the idea, as we learned and gained experience, they are also the result of REDD+ being thrown into the political arena and altered by differing interests and ideologies (Angelsen and McNeill, 2012, p. 32).

As I have presented here, REDD+ has changed. In summary, Angelsen and McNeill present three main reasons why REDD+ has undergone significant changes. First, there has been a learning and maturation process:

Some initial ideas proved unrealistic, e.g. the rapid creation of PES systems that could fully incentivize and compensate forest users for their reduced emissions. These ideas nevertheless spurred the initial REDD+ enthusiasm, and this optimism – bordering on naivety – may have led to the creation of new coalitions and innovative solutions to burning climate problems (Angelsen and McNeill, 2012, p. 48).

Second, there is still no binding international climate agreement in place.

REDD+ was optimistically expected to become part of an international climate agreement that would prompt major sources of funding through carbon markets. That eventuality has been postponed until at least 2020, which means that international REDD+ funding may never reached the scale originally envisioned. As a result, REDD+ policies will necessarily have to reflect the fact that full compensation will be too expensive and most international funding in the short to medium term will come from aid budgets, with their own objectives and logic, and from domestic sources (Angelsen and McNeill, 2012, p. 48).

Third, Angelsen and McNeill comment on forces modifying the idea of REDD+.

Two forces have modified the idea of REDD+: business as usual interests have formed a strong opposition to policy reforms and have limited the political action space. At the same time, supporters of REDD+ have had such differing interests that both the ends and the means of REDD+ have been reconfigured: some NGOs, for example have promoted it primarily as a means to secure indigenous land rights (Angelsen and McNeill, 2012, p. 48-49).

The CIFOR authors attribute the change to a “natural maturation” of an idea, and describes it as a learning process, but also a process of politization, the idea becoming something to be
altered by persons with different “interests and ideologies”. But when did REDD+ become political – or ideological for that matter? And who has “learned” and “matured”? I will bring these questions over to the next section, presenting critical perspectives on REDD+ – and its proponents.

4.3 Critical perspectives

So far I have focused on a presentation of REDD+ by using CIFOR as primary source. I will now go on to present two contrasting perspectives on REDD+. There is little research on REDD+ on the ground so far, because the initiative is relatively new and few countries have come very far in the process, but here I present two such contributions. These contributions represent the institutional processes regarding REDD+ and ethnographic findings. First, an ethnographical perspective: Social anthropologist Signe Howell emphasizes the lack of information about REDD+ on the local level. Second, an analysis of the institutional processes: Political ecologists Mariel Aguilar-Støen and Cecilie Hirsch study the relations between powerful networks that interact on global and local level and affects how REDD+ develops.

4.3.1 REDD+ on the ground

In a very short period of time (...) the focus [of REDD+] has been shifted from a simple concern with preserving forests to the rights of people who live in them (Howell 2014a, p. 257).

Most people can easily picture what deforestation means. “Keeping a tree” means keeping storage for a certain amount of carbon. Forest degradation is a bit more technical, but one could look at it like this: if a big area of forest is cut down but there is still forest all around it – the remaining forest is still intact, but it has been changed into a less ecologically stable state. This would also be the case if virgin forest had been cut down and replaced by new trees. The forest would still be there, but it would be a case of forest degradation. In terms of REDD+ the issue often is defining what the additional benefits are, what is referred to as co-benefits of forest conservation: Protecting biodiversity and livelihoods and to reduce poverty. Protecting biodiversity, the animals and organisms that live in the forest, is important to keep the ecosystem of a forest in balance. To understand the relation between forest conservation,
protecting livelihoods and poverty reduction can for some be a stretch, but this simply requires one to look at who resides in the forests. Often referred to as forest dependent people, the populations of the world’s forests are often indigenous or other ethnic minority groups. These are groups with a high level of poverty and few resources (e.g. few owning the land they live on, high levels of unemployment).

Very few forest dwellers have enough formal education to understand what is at stake [understand the intentions and details of implementation of REDD projects\(^{19}\) and their underlying reasoning]; even those with some education cannot be expected to understand the issues. Few NGO employees have enough knowledge fully to understand them, few bureaucrats and politicians have enough knowledge to understand them, and the same applies to anthropologists. Most of the people I have talked to about REDD feel extremely uncertain about what is involved, and slide backwards and forwards in their explanations of the causes and the effects of human behaviour in the forest (Howell 2014b, p.161).

Social anthropologist Signe Howell writes that “[t]he rather dramatic shift that has occurred in REDD from a protection-of-forests project to a project that, in many ways, is as much concerned with the people as the trees, can be brought back to efforts made by NGOs and other interested parties” (Howell 2014b, p. 152). The NGOs and networks are “insisting on the clarification of land rights and a non-negotiable inclusion of “Free Prior and Informed Consent” (FPIC) by affected local populations in any proposed REDD scheme” (Howell 2014b, p. 152). The position of such actors is that as many don’t own the land they live on, a clarification of land rights is needed to ensure that changes won’t be carried out without the people living on the land having a say in the matter, for instance already marginalized locals being evicted in favor of conservation projects. Tenure rights are in many cases unclear and if there is money to be made from establishing projects, there is a possibility that people with a higher position within society will use their position to bypass marginalized groups. “Free Prior and Informed Consent” often simply referred to by its acronym “FPIC,” is the right for indigenous people to give their consent (free and prior to project start and fully informed) before a project is started on their land according to ILO-169. As forested areas often are inhabited by indigenous groups this becomes an important part of REDD+ projects.

Howell has studied REDD+ through ethnographical fieldwork in Indonesia. In her article “‘No RIGHTS – No REDD’: Some implications of a Turn Towards Co-Benefits” she elaborates on the reaction among Indonesian NGOs to REDD+ projects. Howell notes that so far research shows that few, if any local communities studied have benefited from REDD+.

\(^{19}\)Researchers differ in choosing to refer to the initiative as REDD+ or simply REDD.
Howell focuses on the poor communication between the relevant national and local authorities, the implicated NGOs and activists, and the local communities. REDD+ might have been a brilliant idea on paper – but the contents of the actual projects and the communication about them have been anything but clear. Howell suggests this proposition for how REDD+ projects are presented to locals so far:

*The principle of REDD+ is that you will be paid not to cut down trees. We do not know how much you will be paid, when you will be paid, or even whether you will in fact be paid, and, if so the money will be paid directly or if the local community will be rewarded in other forms such as the provision of a school, a clinic, a new road or whatever. Do you agree to accept this scheme? (Howell 2014a, p. 256).*

The author adds that “when expressed so starkly, this may seem absurd. Yet the statement reflects the situation as it is today and for the foreseeable future” (Howell 2014b, p. 256). It is evident that the scheme presented is filled with uncertainties and that it does not seem to fulfill the requirement for an informed consent. Howell notes in the article that her concern is not to emphasize the gap between for instance policy documents and the actual practice on the ground, but “to ascertain the reasons for and effects of, this gap” (Howell 2014b, p. 254). Howell writes further that “To a large extent, [the] failure in communication is due to the vagueness of what actually to communicate, because no one knows what REDD will actually turn out to be” (Howell 2014b, p. 254).

*Although there are variations between the countries, the overall picture emerging is that, rather than being a ‘bottom-up’ project, i.e. building on local experience, knowledge, and practice, REDD is very much a ‘top-down’ project, i.e. planned according to Western understandings and needs. The goal is non-negotiable: deforestation must be reversed (Howell 2014a, p. 258).*

Here Howell refers to James Ferguson´s anthropology classic *The Anti-Politics Machine* (1994) in which he suggests that development and conservation projects often are subject to ‘depolitization’, through this the bureaucratic power relations distract from stated aims, such as the reduction of poverty (Ferguson 1994, cited in Howell 2014b, p. 258), and that it has been further argued that a consequence of this is that “a local, technical perspective is substituted for a more global, political perspective on the processes that produce poverty in the first place” (Howell 2014a, p. 258). The next section will be about this connection between the local and global perspective. Because, as Howell subtly points out, “[d]espite the
fact that no one knows what REDD (...) will turn out to be, there is no shortage of reports and publications that deal with what it ought to be” (Howell, 2014b, p. 253).

4.3.2 Contesting the “facts”

Political ecologists Mariel Aguilar-Støen and Cecilie Hirsch study the role of science-policy networks within REDD+. ‘Science-policy networks’ refers to the close link between research producing institutions and policy-makers. Aguilar-Støen and Hirsch write that “science-policy refers to a joint enforcement rather that a neat division between science and policy (Aguilar-Støen and Hirsch 2014, p.173). They suggest that “controlling knowledge production and dissemination is an important factor in shaping who will participate in REDD debates and how, and consequently the direction REDD is going to take” (Aguilar-Støen and Hirsch 2014, p. 175). Despite Howell’s example of a nonsensical proposition, there are – even if on the vague side – information and debates going about REDD+, as for instance the CIFOR book cited in the first section of this chapter. But as this information is not readily available to Howell’s informants (Howell, 2014a, 2014b), based on interviews and fieldwork Aguilar-Støen and Hirsch find that “science-policy networks have emerged ad new elites in the development of REDD preparions in the Amazon countries (Aguilar-Støen and Hirsch 2014, p. 172). The reason, they claim, is that “REDD debates are characterized by a very complex and technical language that is not readily accessible to those who do not have experience with REDD+” (Aguilar-Støen and Hirsch, 2014, p. 174), and furthermore getting access to the production of said knowledge:

Paradoxically, to get information about REDD it is necessary to participate in forums and networks where knowledge about REDD is being produced, often in the form of international conferences or national level forums. Accessing such forums requires previous knowledge about REDD (Aguilar-Støen and Hirsch 2014, p. 174).

To be able to acquire knowledge, and perhaps a seat at the table, previous knowledge is needed. The available knowledge dissemination to local communities so far, Aguilar-Støen and Hirsch write, “has been fragmented and dependent on particular networks’ access to these communities and their interest in presenting REDD in a certain manner” (Aguilar-Støen and Hirsch 2014, p. 175). As there is no one definition of what a REDD+ project is, it is not the particular project in question but rather the proponents that matter. If a project is supported by what Aguilar-Støen and Hirsch call “REDD science-policy networks” it can become a
REDD+ project. Therefore access to networks are key. The networks “systematize information (…) and are having a great influence in defining what a REDD project is, who the legitimate implementers are, who will benefit from it and how” (Aguilar-Støen and Hirsch 2014, p. 174). One such “science-policy network” is The Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR).

**The role of CIFOR**

Aguilar-Støen and Hirsch use the example of the books published by CIFOR to sum up the development of REDD+ to show how this defining power has developed alongside the concept: The first CIFOR study trying to systematize local REDD projects explicitly recognized that there was a lack of a “clear definition of what constitutes a REDD demonstration activity” (Aguilar-Støen and Hirsch 2014, p. 175), while still presenting “insights on current trends to inform future REDD investments.” The second CIFOR study defined REDD as “activities (…) which are identified by their proponents as REDD and are operating under official agreements with some level of government.” This leads Aguilar-Støen and Hirsch to observe that “pilot project proponents, most of whom are networks of private actors, act as de facto researchers testing REDD implementation modalities and producing information and knowledge about the projects (Aguilar-Støen and Hirsch 2014, p. 175). CIFOR is in a position where they not only describe REDD+, but also define what REDD+ is – and moreover: their definitions are listened to. The “recasting” of international and local NGOs, consultant firms and individuals as “REDD experts” gives “considerable leverage in defining what REDD would be, repackaging their own projects as REDD, and also opens the doors to policy-making arenas at national and international levels” (Aguilar-Støen and Hirsch 2014, p. 175). “Creating and disseminating knowledge also contributes to enhancing the reputation of those actors involved in the network, ultimately reinforcing their power in discourse formation” (Aguilar-Støen and Hirsch 2014, p. 175).

**4.3.3 Rereading REDD+ from a different angle**

In line with this analysis we can go back to the CIFOR quote at the end of the previous section on the “REDD+ reality” and *reread* it in a slightly more critical way. Here is the quote with my bold highlights:
REDD+ has undergone drastic changes (...) both in terms of how it is perceived and what it has become in practice. While some of these changes arose from a natural maturation of the idea, as we learned and gained experience, they are also the result of REDD+ being thrown into the political arena and altered by differing interests and ideologies (Angelsen and McNeill, 2012, p. 32).

Angelsen and McNeill attribute the change of REDD+ to a “natural maturation” of an idea, and describes it as a learning process, but also a process of politization, the idea becoming something to be altered by persons with different “interests and ideologies”. Returning now to the questions I posed before starting this section: when did REDD+ become political – or ideological for that matter? And who has “learned” and “matured”? It could be argued that the most interesting part is not to try to pin down an exact answer to these questions, but rather to question the premises for the questions. As REDD+ was meant to be a part of climate policy, one has to admit that it was a political topic from the very beginning. But maybe for some, especially the proponents, the opposition, or the petitions for changes, seemed like a way to “make it all political”. Can a policy tool ever be only about technicalities? Isn’t the choice of methods also an ideological choice? Why is “natural maturation” not the same as bringing theory to practice? And writing that “we” learned and gained experience – the “we” seems awfully familiar to the Northern countries’ strategies, being met with civil society organizations’ claims. It would be weird to say that the civil society organizations “learned” – did they learn and experience to be heard? These questions lead us to see the non-arbitrary state of, and relations, within the field.

4.4 Summary

In this chapter we have seen that REDD+ is both a concept which is based on certain premises and with certain objectives. The REDD+ idea is based it being a quick and cheap option and a “fresh approach.” REDD+ was seen as a good way of producing offsets for a new international climate agreement. However, as REDD+ was becoming a reality there was still no climate agreement in sight, the market-based approach was met with criticism and the national focus was shifted towards a more project-based focus (though this current may be changing). REDD+ has changed both in terms of how it is perceived and what it has become in practice. The CIFOR authors write that the changes came about both as result of a learning process and as REDD+ was “thrown into the political arena.” One could ask if REDD+ was
not from the start a part of political arena and that the learning process was the idea of some people being presented to a reality of other people. REDD+ has become more about the people living in the forest than about the forest itself, but still the access to information about REDD+ is scarce for the people on the ground. There is also a lot of uncertainty as to what REDD+ will actually bring of activities on the ground other than the bigger focus of mitigating climate change. Also there are different levels and networks that have a greater influence than others on what REDD+ projects will look like. Based on this critical reading of REDD+ I entered the documents about the Nicaraguan version of REDD+.
5 The Nicaraguan ENDE-REDD+: The institutional captures of the proposal

One of the places to apply for grants to start preparation for a national REDD+ strategy, what is referred to as the readiness stage, is the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) which is located within the World Bank. On the FCPF web pages one can find information on what REDD+ is, but also information on what an application should contain, how it should be filled out and updated information on the processes of every country that has started a REDD+ process with the FPCP. The basis of the information presented there was established in negotiations on a higher level. Institutional ethnographer Lauren Eastwood (2006, 2014) followed the process of policy deliberation in the International Forum on Forests (IFF) of the United Nations, the early discussions of initiatives regarding forests and deforestation. She describes the text-reader interaction while texts are negotiated between the participating countries, as well as the role of the civil society organizations that are allowed to be present but not participate in the process. The documents go from being filled with “bracketed text”, formulations that are not already agreed upon, to “clean text”, texts that are agreed upon which are consensual and which many participants see as “the least common denominators” (Eastwood, 2014, p. 86). Years later the work carried out by negotiators (and activists on the sideline) have resulted in what is specifically explained on the FCPF web page.

5.1 The institutional discourse of the template

All documents handed in by Nicaragua in the process are available online. The Nicaraguan Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP), the application to make a national REDD+ strategy, is over 200 pages long. Adding to this you find assessments and reports produced as a part of accounting for the Nicaraguan process. Exploring the total amount of documentation would be far beyond the scope of this thesis, and also a lot of the assessments are templates with lists of yes and no, so to get an idea of REDD+ in Nicaragua I here put the main focus on the R-PP. The R-PP contains a budget of approximately 10.3 million US dollars. Out of this, approximately 3.7 million dollar from the FCPF, an estimate of 250 000 dollars from the local government and 1 million dollars from another source, but “not official and to be decided”

http://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/nicaragua

20
The “expected duration of R-PP implementation” is from July 2012 to May 2015. However, the “date of submission or revision” is put as July 1st 2012, while the next line on the front of the document is dated almost a year later: “Formal Version 7 March 17th 2013” (Nicaragua R-PP, 2013, p. 1).

5.1.1 Institutional captures in the R-PP

Not very surprisingly, I found the document hard to read. The language of the documents is either English or Spanish, but the trouble was not the language in itself, it was the type of language. The documents are filled with special abbreviations and bureaucratic articulations. Every document has a “name” and is often referred to by its initials, like the proposal always being referred to as “the R-PP”. The bureaucratic language enters the R-PP through its template. There whole document is a pre-prepared template produced by the FCPF. This template contains the structure of the document, names of the different components (chapters) are pre-made and text boxes specify which information is to be listed where in the document. The reader knows that the basis of the document is a template because the instructions specifically ask that the person filling out the document leave in the instructions when it is handed in. The templates starts its instructions to the writer like this, in English:

Executive summary. Please provide a one– to three-page summary of the R-PP in the space below, including: your assessment of the current situation, overarching goals of R-PP preparation, your proposed activities and expected results of each component, schematic of the expected readiness process, and the total funding requested and timing (R-PP Nicaragua, 2013, p. 9).

This is a rather open request, it is after all a request for a summary, but one does need to know what an “assessment of the current situation” should contain – the situation where – and which aspects are important in such a report? The writer cannot give an assessment of everything that goes, so the writer needs to either interpret the text in his or her own way, or have an understanding of what is implied by the people writing the instructions. Most likely the writer will use previous applications from other countries as guidelines. The text boxes that contain the “recipes” for each chapter are more specific, but also contain more terms left for interpretation by the reader. This is a text box instruction for “National Readiness Management Arrangements” (I have put specific terms and institutional language in bold text):
The cross-cutting nature of the design and workings of the national readiness management arrangements on REDD-plus, in terms of including relevant stakeholders and key government agencies in addition to the forestry department, commitment of other sectors in planning and implementation of REDD-plus readiness. Capacity building activities are included in the work plan for each component where significant external technical expertise has been used in the R-PP development process (R-PP Nicaragua, 2013, p. 14).

These terms and formulations are all part of an institutional discourse (Smith, 2005, p. 101-121). The terms I have singled out are institutional captures, “the discursive practice, regulated by the institutional procedures of text-reader conversations, through which institutional discourse overrides and reconstructs experiential talk and writing” (Smith, 2005, p. 119). The terms convey specific meanings that are activated when one is familiar with the institutional discourse. Each of the terms has a specific meaning that is not obvious for the uninformed. Institutional captures are categories made to activate certain understandings by the readers, but when I read the texts, as I am not acquainted with the institutional discourse, I find big empty categories that I am not able to make sense of. Exploring the discourse of the ENDE-REDD+ documents could have made for a whole master’s thesis altogether, which could in itself have been an interesting study. Here I have chosen to use the R-PP and the institutional captures and internal “voice” of the document as a starting point for the interviews with the informants.

5.2 The textual opposition of the finished proposal

The R-PP is written in the voice of “The Government of National Reconciliation and Unification”, the current government of Nicaragua. Opening the executive summary the government addresses the committee in charge of approving the proposal. Presented as an official request by the government, the document also lists participants that presumably played a role in the development of the document (listed according to affiliation: organization, region or state) and consultants involved in creating the document. Without knowledge of the institutional discourse, I could still see differences between the instructions and the application. First, the language is different, the instructions are in English and the writer of the application writes in Spanish.21 There are differences between what the instructions asks for

21 In an extended text one could ask whether the language differences might have affected the “conversation” between the template and the writer that filled information into it.
and what is presented: the application is generous in presenting information and lists more than what is asked for in terms of adding tables and models which amounts to more pages than prescribed by the instructions. Accessing the finished application I found that the application seemed to somewhat oppose the stringent structure of the template. In fact the government of Nicaragua does not propose a REDD+ scheme at all. The R-PP defines REDD+ like this:

REDD+ is understood as a mechanism capable of providing economic benefits that will co-help to conserve the forests that will include reducing emissions of greenhouse gases. It is hoped that this mechanism will offer significant co-benefits, namely maintaining ecosystems, improvement of biodiversity, improvement of rural livelihoods and adaptation to climate change (R-PP Nicaragua, 2013, p. 18, my own translation from Spanish).

5.2.1 ENDE-REDD+

This R-PP is not a proposal for REDD+ at all. It is a proposal for “Estrategia Nacional de Deforesacion Evitada” (ENDE), in English: “The National Strategy for Avoided Deforestation.” ENDE will be a platform for REDD+ in Nicaragua. Mainly the difference is that “ENDE” will not be based on a market.

Beyond bad replicas, Nicaragua should try out its own model or standard of growth and development, with its own historic and cultural characteristics and grounded in the calling of its lands (R-PP Nicaragua, 2013, p. 17, my own translation from Spanish).

This citation sees the ENDE as something that should adhere to “its own historic and cultural characteristics.” But the formulations in the R-PP are general and it’s hard for me to make out how this difference will turn out in actual action, as well as any specific description of what “REDD+ activities” is. A table is provided in the R-PP comparing the REDD+ and ENDE (see Table 1). The writer has also chosen to emphasize certain words in the description of ENDE-REDD+ that can be read as key words: “non-market focus,” “reinstating the rights of those that conserve the forests,” “applying co-benefits and biodiversity [sic],” “adapting to climate change” and respect for “mother earth” and “indigenous rights.” It lists that while REDD+ is focused on climate change mitigation, ENDE-REDD+ will focus on both climate change mitigation and climate change adaptation, where ENDE-REDD+ emphasizes

---

22 ENDE and ENDE-REDD+ are used interchangeably in the document to refer to the platform.
“improving resilience.” The writer of the table, however, has added co-benefits only as a part of ENDE and not REDD+, which is a little strange, the REDD+ literature I read in the previous chapter, chapter four, referred to co-benefits being an important part of REDD+.

Table 1: Brief comparison of REDD+ and ENDE. Source: Nicaragua R-PP 2013 (p.18-19, my translation from Spanish, bold highlights from the original table).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparative elements</th>
<th>REDD+</th>
<th>ENDE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Mitigation</td>
<td>Mitigation and adaptation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligible modality</td>
<td>Reduction of emissions from deforestation</td>
<td>Reduction of emissions from deforestation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reduction of emissions from degradation</td>
<td>Reduction of emissions from degradation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improvement of carbon reserves</td>
<td>Improvement of carbon reserves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conservation of the carbon reservoirs</td>
<td>Conservation of the carbon reservoirs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sustainable forest management</td>
<td>Sustainable forest management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improvement of sustainable livelihoods (agroforestry, silvopasture systems, ecological agriculture, community forest management)</td>
<td>Improvement of sustainable livelihoods (agroforestry, silvopasture systems, ecological agriculture, community forest management)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co-benefits of the forest, assets and ecosystem services</td>
<td>Co-benefits of the forest, assets and ecosystem services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics</td>
<td>Incentives to improve sustainable livelihoods</td>
<td>Aim to strengthen existing strategies, national, regional and territorial plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fulfill social and environmental safeguards</td>
<td>Aim to promote an environmental-forestry certificate for the conservation and management of the forests, as an institutional mechanism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National and international verification</td>
<td>Non-market focus and reinstating the rights of those that conserve their forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stringent and costly technical requirements</td>
<td>Apply co-benefits and biodiversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Market mechanisms and non-market mechanisms</td>
<td>Emphasis on improving resilience in adapting to climate change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Full respect for mother earth and the rights of indigenous peoples</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2.2 Recommendations for dialogue

Another thing is that the R-PP sometimes seems to conduct not with one coherent voice, but voices. An example is this citation when describing how workshops to share information about the initiative will be carried out:

*It is recommended that the workshops are organized so that they are converted into true moments of dialogue about the problems, the preoccupations, the ideas and the expectation of the participants regarding a future ENDE-REDD+ process (R-PP Nicaragua, 2013, p. 47, my own translation from Spanish).*

As the document is introduced by the government, it seems that the government, who is to carry out the workshops, is recommending action for itself. This may be a reflection of the different participants that contributed to making the document, that this text is the result of a concerted effort of many parties, and formulations like these made me wonder about the role of the civil society and their perspective of the initiative and the process itself.

5.3 Summary

Engaging with the Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) handed in by Nicaragua to the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility I have here highlighted some aspects that are related to a general theme regarding the process REDD+ entails: how the “local” is manifested in a “global” proposal. For REDD+ to emerge as something that people do, as a certain set of actions or understandings, the technical terms and even the concept of REDD+ itself has to be rendered meaning in a local context. The descriptions of the Nicaraguan ENDE-REDD+ as something different from REDD+ have to be rendered meaning too. The recommendation of “true moments of dialogue” have been written by specific people with a specific standpoint in the institutional processes, and may or may not be something that other people starting from other standpoints understand in the same way. With these reflections as a backdrop in the next chapter I enquire about what ENDE-REDD+ looks like from a “local” standpoint, through the experiences and perceptions of Nicaraguan civil society workers.
6 Wrong remedy for change: The experiences of the intermediaries

I have now presented my reader with REDD+ literature on the idea behind the concept and research on REDD+ in other countries, as well as the proposal for a Nicaraguan REDD+ scheme. Now one could ask “is REDD+ ‘actionable’ in Nicaragua?” “Is it feasible, achievable?” The question could have a number of answers, depending on who one is asking and how the term “actionable” is understood. In this chapter I attempt to give an answer, grounded in the views of “the intermediaries,” civil society workers that work in Nicaragua. The analysis is first focused on views and sentiments expressed by the informants when it comes to understanding REDD+ and ENDE-REDD+: That there are disparities between the objectives of global initiatives like REDD+ and local conditions, that REDD+ mainly is a means for funding, and that the process of ENDE-REDD+ is marked by the difficult relationship between state and civil society. The civil society workers make a diverse group and not all informants focused on the same topics in the interviews, in the discussion of each of these general views I include elements discussed by a single or a few of the informants, as these variations point towards certain patterns that highlight the structures that the civil society workers participate in and have to relate to. While I was in Nicaragua it soon became evident that little was happening with REDD+, despite the grant Nicaragua had received from the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility. An important part of the interviews therefore became the topic of “why ENDE was moving so slowly.” The understandings of the informants of why the process was moving slowly highlights sensitive topics such as corruption related to cattle and timber, but also the very controversial plans of making The Nicaragua Canal. In the analysis I also include reflections and my experience of “seeing through the intermediaries,” where I draw on my own meetings, also with state representatives and with the informants. Finalizing the chapter I see past REDD+ and, in accordance with the explorative approach I have applied throughout the research process, incorporate a section on desired alternatives to REDD+.

6.1 REDD+: The disparities between global initiatives and local conditions
How do we tell the outside world that wants us to conserve the forest, people who want to stop the effects of the emissions, that there are a lot of poor people that has to eat? Tell me, Julie. Tell me. (Sebastián)

Most of the civil society workers I talked to were skeptical towards the global REDD+ initiative. The above quote is from my interview with Sebastian. Sebastian (like many of the civil society workers I talked to) has studied abroad and works for an international organization. This means that he has easy access to information available on mitigation initiatives like REDD+ on both national and international level and experience with working on local projects in Nicaragua. When I met Sebastián he was very polite with me, but he also seemed resigned when talking about REDD+. After having talked to Sebastián for a while he uttered his frustration with the disparities he saw between the global initiatives and the local situation. He was not alone in feeling this. Below I present the frustration of Sebastián and then a comment on the complexity of REDD+ by Mateo, another civil society worker with a similar background as Sebastián.

6.1.1 Cattle raising or a “significant” benefit

Here in Nicaragua REDD+ is an initiative that the government is supporting to reduce the deforestation and the degradation of the environment. And [the government] does this because it’s a necessity for the Nicaraguan society... But it’s not an easy topic. Mainly, because Nicaragua is a poor country. There are many people here that.. the only thing they have is land... The only thing. (Sebastián)

Sebastián knows the objectives of REDD+, but to him, as to many of the civil society workers, the main focus is not on the forest but rather on poverty. Sebastián goes on to say:

And still the society doesn’t pay them to have a forest, without touching it. They aren’t paying. Or say... If you are a poor peasant, a producer, and you have a thousand hectares and you don’t want to touch it, nobody will give you a dollar for it. And if you want to eat, you have to plant beans and corn and eat. And this is what is happening. The people need to eat, because nobody pays them to keep the forest intact. This is the big problem here in Nicaragua. (Sebastián)

Sebastián is here pointing to the problem of continued deforestation but explaining this by saying that well, nobody is paying anyone yet to quit cutting down their forest. As long as it
doesn’t give people money not to do it, they still need to cut it and use it for agriculture so that they can eat the food produced. To be able to plant for food, the forest needs to be cut down. And the types of food often eaten by poor farmers, beans and corn, are especially destructive to the soil in the rain forest of the Caribbean Coast.

On top of this you have cattle ranchers. Meat is a highly valued product, and you can produce it within a short timeframe. People like short-term investments, they don’t like long-term investments... So people go looking for terrain to make pastures, to be able to produce meat, milk and cheese. (Sebastián)

Sebastián is here referring to the natural reserve called Bosawas in the North of Nicaragua, which has huge forests. But the forests are disappearing, because poor people are moving into the reserve.

What is happening is that cattle ranchers are coming [to the area] and giving offers to the peasants. They say that if the peasants keep cattle in their area, they will pay them four to five dollars per cattle head every month. So the farmers that don’t have anything and that gets this offer... I don’t know if they can say no. If they get 50 animals and they pay five dollars a month, that’s 250 dollars a month. And if they keep the animals for six months for them to grow big.. Six months and 250 dollars for each... It’s a very attractive offer. So the farmers removes the forest to make pasture to be able to get this payment. (Sebastián)

What Sebastián is saying here is that wealthy cattle ranchers offer the poor peasants huge amounts of money for taking care of their cattle. Even though this means deforestation in protected areas, Sebastián says that it’s “an attractive offer,” and he is not in a position to condemn the actions of the poor. If they have a chance to make what is definitely a huge amount of money in a Nicaraguan context, then it’s not hard to understand that they would choose to do so. Upon hearing Sebastián’s explanation of the situation, that there are poor people who have few resources, I thought about the objectives of REDD+ and I asked him if not REDD+ could be the solution for the peasants, a way of changing the environmental agenda, Sebastián seemed resigned.

Well, REDD+ is a continuation [of climate policies]. But one of the most complicated and complex I have ever known. Nicaragua had to spend like two years with intense work to get 3.6 million dollars, to help make the proposal! It’s super difficult.(Sebastian)

Sebastián had been participating actively in the making of the R-PP (what he refers to as the proposal). He found that the regulations from the FPCP were very strict and that the concept
of REDD+ and all it entailed of forest inventories and production of text, was too complex. He did not think that REDD+ would be able to provide a significant benefit to the peasants.

*I don’t have the solution. When the society isn’t capable of paying the owners of the forests for them to keep them [intact], and pay them a significant benefit, one that is comparable to the cost of producing rice, beans, meat and all this.. Then, we as the world society, I don’t know if we can find a solution.*

### 6.1.2 The small producers cannot afford REDD+

Mateo has the same background as Sebastián, he is following and participating in the national REDD+ process. When I asked him about REDD+ and ENDE he replied:

*Sure I know what it is. REDD is the program of, what signifies avoided deforestation, more what signifies the part of water and biodiversity.. But it’s really difficult to assess what REDD ‘plus-plus’ is, right? What does it mean? That you need a lot of investment, a lot of technicians to carry out first, the inventory, and second, follow-up... which is the most difficult, right. To guarantee that it is conserved. So these types of mechanisms are very difficult. I think it would be very difficult to get a ‘real’ [money] from REDD+. (Mateo)*

Like Sebastián, Mateo found REDD+ to be a difficult mechanism. He found it hard to know exactly what REDD+ would entail, also when it came to the “plus” in REDD+, the co-benefits. The co-benefits are related to poverty. Mateo emphasized the need to follow up on REDD+ projects and the difficulties it would bring for peasants.

*The rules are extremely strict, so the small [producers] cannot enter [REDD+].. They would have to carry out an inventory of a hundred per cent of their stock of trees. This is super expensive! Second, they have to keep doing inventory constantly to see to that they haven’t lost trees. So the money they will get, they will already have used. It’s expensive, this mechanism. (Mateo)*

So I asked Mateo why they were trying to implement REDD+, even though it almost surely wouldn’t improve the situation of the small producers. He told me it would benefit the country in general and that he had heard that it would be tried out in huge areas that belonged to indigenous villages, so that it would benefit the indigenous communities. Mateo questioned if the benefits would actually get to these groups, a concern I will get back to. Mateo was also
skeptical, saying that these are areas with a lot of people and that it would be very hard to apply the strict rules where there is a big population.

6.1.3 “Top-down” rather than “bottom-up”

The disparities the civil society workers express were not a part of the Nicaraguan R-PP, but are part of the knowledge of the civil society workers in their work, where the informants focus on local conditions, the poverty problem and the very high incomes offered to keep cattle. The experiences of the informants can be connected to the findings of Howell (2014a). REDD+ is experienced by my informants as a “top-down project” rather than “bottom-up”. While the informants see REDD+ as focused on simply reducing emissions, the civil society workers ask: “Well, how will people eat?”

6.2 ENDE-REDD+: Opposition and funding

So the informants are overall skeptical to the concept of REDD+. However, there is still interest, the state of Nicaragua has applied to start REDD+. The informants explained this as a result of the need for funding. Because of the popularity of REDD+ on a global scale, there is funding to be accessed – with possible hopes of allocating the funds to where it is deemed necessary. This is where ENDE-REDD+ comes into the picture.

6.2.1 The resistant government: ‘What is the REDD+ animal?’

William is an experienced civil society worker who has worked for international agencies in Nicaragua and lives in the Caribbean Coast. When asked about REDD+ and ENDE, he told me that he thought that the Nicaraguan government made a national strategy because of the possible benefits, despite strong skepticism:

Nicaragua was very cautious. Nicaragua didn’t use all the money from the World Bank at once. It took a year or so because of controversy within the government: “What is this REDD animal? Where does it come from? What size is it? Does it have fur?”[laughs a little laugh]…So they took their time. (William)
The reason for the cautiousness William talks about, wondering what would come out of REDD+, is a topic I will elaborate on when considering why so little was happening with ENDE-REDD+ while I was in Nicaragua. One reason apparent from the reading of the ENDE-REDD+ documents is that the Socialist government does not want a market model, but other than that William, like others, had a hard time seeing what the government wanted from REDD+. Some of the informants felt that it was hard to see a clear strategy in the process so far (despite all the documents produced), saying that it still felt “very general.” Some had small hopes that a non-market REDD+ could mean a stronger focus on sustainable livelihoods, on the people living in the forest, but still thought that REDD+ in Nicaragua would end up like REDD+ elsewhere, “following the protocol.” Like one of them uttered, when I asked him about the Nicaraguan version of REDD+: “Well, they applied to the World Bank. Where else would you find stronger advocates for the market?”

On the other hand, there were also civil society workers that were positive when it came to ENDE-REDD+, like Joel. He believed ENDE to be a broad strategy, a national agenda, and one that was not dependent on REDD+ and the development of the REDD+ initiative. REDD+ would be purely a means of funding, nothing more.

6.2.2 “Participation” or “true participation”?

*It is recommended that the workshops are organized so that they are converted into true moments of dialogue about the problems, the preoccupations, the ideas and the expectation of the participants regarding a future ENDE-REDD+ process* (Nicaragua R-PP, 2013, p. 47).

The above quotation was one of the formulations in the Nicaraguan Readiness Preparation Proposals that caught my eye. The workshops, the opportunity for participation, was an important topic for several of the informants, and especially so among the informants from the Caribbean Coast. REDD+ funding can come from different sources, but to access funds from the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility the state has to apply and cooperate with civil society and other sectors. The funding comes with a framework for action and requires cooperation between civil society and state. William, presented in the previous section, pointed out to me that “70 percent of the forest is in the autonomous regions, but I don’t think the government is sure what rights to give the regions just yet. On the other hand, I don’t think the [people in the] regions know either...” He added:
There is a difference between what they are saying and what they are doing. I haven’t seen any consultant in the [Caribbean] Coast... And it’s been a long time since they carried out meetings there. (William)

William’s statement reflects a common refrain among the civil society workers: “In the discourse it seems that we are doing fine. Environmental topics are prioritized and the government gives it a lot of attention. But in practice it’s very difficult.” Several of the civil society workers point to consultants being hired by the government to carry out studies, but the results have been few and the whole topic of REDD+ is covered in similar descriptions, or observations, as described here as an absence. Another informant put it like this: “Information about REDD+ is not very well distributed.” Many of the informants were uncertain about the proceedings and the specific areas that would be relevant for possible future REDD+ pilot projects. This was attributed to the lack of possibilities to participate in the ENDE-REDD+ process, or rather the way they were allowed to participate.

Michael works in an organization with offices on the Caribbean Coast. Michael voiced strong concerns about the current situation of affairs and the REDD+ process. He told me that he wanted a “diversity of analysis”:

“The environmental agenda has to be horizontal, not monotone or lineal. It has to be dialectic. It has to give a notion of the diversity of analysis, a diversity of opinion. And all the time this is lacking.” (Michael)

I asked Michael what he meant by saying this - did he want more participation from the organizations? He answered me:

Yes, a more participative agenda, but true participation, Julie. It cannot just be participative because it is presented to people in a meeting. It has to be participative, from a free public opinion, without coercion. (Michael)

These views and sentiments were shared by other informants. Another informant saying that it was “outright pretentious” of the government to call in the organizations just to give them premade presentations, instead of actually going into dialogue. Civil society workers both on the Caribbean Coast and on national level expressed indignation and a feeling of being “kept out.” The lack of inclusion of the people who live in the territories, “in the ecosystems,” is also a concern voiced by some of the informants, one pointing out that “the people in the territories are viewed as beneficiaries of the environmental agenda, not as living actors that
make the agenda.” One of the civil society workers on the Caribbean Coast even said directly “REDD+ is not going to make a change for us, we are going to make a change for ourselves!”

6.2.3 Distribution of funding: “Who ends up with the money?”

A central concern among my informants was where the money would end up, for them the anti-market definitions in the documents didn’t matter much, the real question most of them asked was ‘who ends up with the money?’ Of course, this may require a complex answer, some of the money will go to the state that ensures that the systems, monitoring and inventory is carried out, some money goes to the consultants that prepare the strategy and maybe also carry out consultations, while some money will go to the owners of the forest – which in the case of the Caribbean Coast would be the indigenous groups. But the how the distribution is carried out is what worries people. This concern was shared both by people from region and those not from the region. The question being “could the money get to the indigenous groups or would it stay with the government?”

Diego, a civil society worker who had been involved in talking to locals about possible future REDD+ projects put it like this: “the question is how they will distribute the credits.” He told me that the projects hinge on the determining the tenure rights in the Caribbean Coast, the process of giving out titles to land. According to the Law of Autonomy indigenous and Afro-descendent groups have a right to land based on historical affiliation of each village. The process of demarcation started over ten years ago by the passing of the Law of Demarcation, but many villages still don’t have a title for their land. A polemic follows from this: Who is the owner of the carbon? Is it the state, because the trees are on Nicaraguan soil, or the communities that have historical tenure rights over the forests? I was told that “a lot of indigenous people say that ‘the carbon is mine, so you have to pay to me!’”

The ENDE-REDD+ proposal, the document presented in chapter 5, describes ENDE as based on respect for mother earth and indigenous rights, but the impression I was left with from the civil society workers was that ENDE-REDD+ was overall seen as something from the “outside.” The civil society workers on national level saw REDD+ as something from the global level that didn’t fit into the Nicaraguan context, and the civil society workers from the Caribbean Coast saw ENDE as a model from the central level, the Pacific Coast. None of the informants from the Caribbean Coast expressed a perception that ENDE was something that reflected the indigenous population of the Coast.
“More money for the rich?”

The UN initiated *Clean Development Mechanism* (CDM) is another climate mitigation initiative and one has been initiated in Nicaragua. Some of the informants commented on the relationship between REDD+ and previous climate mitigation initiatives, defining REDD+ as “an alternative version of CDM.” But a connection between REDD+ and CDM was not a favorable one in the Nicaraguan context, as some of the informants suggested that CDM projects had mostly benefitted one of the wealthiest and well-known families in Nicaragua. Because this family owns many companies, they have taken the opportunity to apply for funding to improve the environmental profile of their business. This did not come across as fair to the civil society workers, and their spirits were dampened by the thought of some of the wealthiest earning money before indigenous groups and others.

### 6.3 ENDE: “Why is it moving so slowly?”

While I was in Nicaragua it quickly became evident that little was happening with REDD+, despite the grant Nicaragua had received from the FPCP. An important part of the interviews therefore became the topic of “why ENDE was moving so slowly.”

#### 6.3.1 Intro: The presentation that never was

After having stayed in Nicaragua close to eight weeks I was tipped off by an informant that there would be arranged a two-day regional forum on climate change in the Caribbean Coast funded by USAID. One of the posts in the program was even ENDE-REDD+. I managed to arrange it so that I would be in town for the two days and was looking forward to hearing about REDD+ from the state, and seeing the interaction between people from civil society and state representatives on the topic. The forum was notably costly, offering a large number of people dinner, expensive modes of transport and lodging for two days in the city, and many civil society organizations that work in the region were represented. However the presentation about ENDE-REDD+ never materialized. The program I had received in advance said that the presenters were “to be confirmed” and on the day it turned out that there would be a different presentation instead. The forum instead focused on providing information about climate
change and promoting civil society cooperation and starting local-level initiatives. State representatives were not prominent in the program.

It was probably a coincidence that caused the ENDE-REDD+ presentation to fall out, a booking that just didn’t fit the schedule of the people that were set to carry out the presentation. However, I couldn’t help but feeling that the missing presentation was analogous to a feeling that had grown as I had been carrying out the interviews. As I asked my questions about REDD+ it became apparent that there was little happening. People told me that it had been a long time since the last meeting, that they were calling and asking, and that they were told by state representatives that there would soon be a new meeting, but the meetings were never announced. So I started asking the civil society workers about what could be the reason for this situation, and their answers to pointed to structural conditions.

6.3.2 A politicized country

The civil society workers experience that it is difficulties to access adequate information about REDD+ and ENDE-REDD+. When I asked my questions I would many times just be met with shrugged shoulders, at times accompanied by a meaningful stare, a stare that I felt was saying “well, you know, in this country...” An informant that told me that information was kept within a small group of people. As he told me this he was cautious, he seemed to weigh his words and was not comfortable with the topic of what was (not) happening. These are apparently sensitive topics. Some didn’t even want to talk to me about REDD+, and from what I could tell some had chosen actively not to be a part of the process, because they disagreed on how it was carried out. The previous section focused on general dismay and skepticism, this part goes on to focus primarily on how the informants perceive the government’s interest, or the lack of it, in REDD+. General comments I received were that “Nicaragua is a very politicized country” or “here, everything is moved by political causes.” In accounting for these concerns I have chosen to use political cartoons as a starting point, since they express existing sentiments in a succinct manner and exemplify the statements made by my informants. 

---

23 In a Time magazine article, featuring an interview with the cartoonist in question, it is written that “while the work of most journalists is complicated by Sandinista secrecy, cartoonists tell a story that reporters can’t; and they reach a larger audience in a country with high levels of illiteracy and low levels of formal education. That combination of factors makes cartoonists important opinion makers, representing a strong critical voice in a country where the political opposition is weak” (Rogers, 2008). As a consequence of receiving threats the cartoonist Manuel Guillén who has drawn the political cartoons shown here now lives
6.3.3 Cattle, timber and the government

In September 2015, after I had carried out my fieldwork the Nicaraguan newspaper *La Prensa* published a cartoon that more or less subtly indicates that illegal timber traders and cattle smugglers have the president in their pocket (Guillén, 2015). The cartoon24 is called “Routine” and shows two trucks meeting on a remote road. The driver of the first truck, a cattle smuggler, says to the other: “Yo man, how are things going?” The driver carrying illegal timber answers “Only victories! We are moving ahead!” This is the slogan of the sitting president Daniel Ortega and the FSLN party. Through the campaign slogan, president Ortega promises success and progression for the country. By putting the slogan in the mouth of an illegal exporter of timber the cartoon suggests that the cattle smugglers and timber exploiters are the people that are really progressing under the sitting president. This is obviously very critical towards the sitting president, as it implies that the governing powers are not very focused on conserving the forest, and instead promotes, or even covers, for two of the biggest threats to the forest – cattle and timber exploitation. In my interviews with the civil society workers, more than one referred to a timber company that is said to belong to the president. These civil society workers see truck after truck filled with timber leaving the Caribbean Coast, while they know that they themselves wouldn’t be allowed to cut down a tree and bring it to Managua. One informant commented that “maybe it’s not convenient to give out the land titles to the indigenous because of [the timber company].” There was also talk of cattle ranchers with high distinctions within government.

Another concern raised was the question of where the money had gone to so far. Everybody knew that money had been coming in – the grant from the World Bank to prepare the national strategy – but where had it ended? This could also be a sign of a hesitation to act on behalf of the government, as previously described by one informant, but it raised a suspicion among several of the civil society workers. Some believed that the money was still with the ministry, and it was obvious that several were concerned that the money might stay there. The general sentiment among the civil society workers voicing this concern was that if the people higher up were supporting these practices, whether as an act of outright corruption or lack of law enforcement, there would be little use in expecting anything from REDD+.

---

24 The cartoon is not included here due to copyright restrictions, but can be viewed here: [http://www.laprensa.com.ni/2015/09/09/caricaturas/1898522-caricatura-992015](http://www.laprensa.com.ni/2015/09/09/caricaturas/1898522-caricatura-992015)
Then ENDE-REDD+ would just be like other things “Nicaragua” does that look good; nicely designed projects, but with no future.

6.3.4 The Nicaragua Canal: An explanation?

Before I left for Nicaragua I had been following the news and knew that there had been a lot of controversy regarding the new interoceanic canal, internationally called the Nicaragua Canal. The Nicaragua Canal is planned to be a “new” Panama Canal and a Chinese firm was hired a few years ago to be the contractor. However, “the Canal,” as it is referred to in Nicaragua, has spurred controversy. Christmas Eve 2014, just a few weeks before I went to Nicaragua to carry out my interviews, protests against The Canal broke out in the Southern part of Nicaragua. The protesters live in the surroundings of the planned route of the canal. Another cartoon by the same cartoonist was published later in December. The cartoon shows is called “Advancement of the Canal” (Guillén, December 2014). In the cartoon president Daniel Ortega and the Chinese contractor for the canal, Wang Jing, are standing in front of a map of Nicaragua. The map is parted in two by a canal. The top part reads “those who think that they live in a beautiful, open and democratic country,” while the bottom part reads “those who actually know what country they live in.” President Ortega says to the other “well, at least I have parted the country in two, right buddy?” The Chinese contractor Jing has a thought bobble over his head which reads “Oh, this is how the country I am ‘renting’ should look like.” The cartoonist here refers to the public opinion regarding the Canal being divided. Some see the Canal as a possibility to bring employment and wealth, while others are worried about the outcome of this big project, the last group, the cartoonist hints, being mostly those living in the areas that will be affected. The government is criticized for not having carried out studies to account for the environmental consequences or consulted with the people residing in the area. Some civil society organizations have been vocal in their protest against The Canal, mainly claiming that it will affect an important source of potable water. Parts of The Canal will also be crossing indigenous areas in the Caribbean Coast. (see for instance Huete-Perez, Meyer and Alvarez 2015 or Campos 2014).26

25 The cartoon is not included here due to copyright restrictions, but can be viewed here: http://www.laprensa.com.ni/2014/12/30/caricaturas/1671908-caricatura-42

26 During my stay I met people who had attended consultations but that were still worried about the consequences.
A way to “make up”?

The Canal came up in interviews with my informants as it to some was considered the most important environmental topic of the time. Informants did not dismiss REDD+ altogether, but would readily note that “what one could see” was that the priority is The Canal. So one could ask, why is REDD+ to be carried out only in the Caribbean Coast? Interest in REDD+ may be explained by access to funding, but as ENDE is not something that comes from the initiative of the indigenous groups of the Caribbean Coast, but rather as a model from the Pacific, then why is REDD+ set to be carried out in these areas? The obvious answer is that most of the forest in Nicaragua is in these areas. But as there have been historically bad relations between the centralized power and the Caribbean Coast, also the Sandinistas in particular, then why go ahead with a project there? One of my informants suggested that it was a part of a deal, that “with The Canal coming, they have to give them these types of things [ENDE].” This, I sensed, was offered as a suggestion more than a certain fact, but as there was a general notion of the importance of politics among my informants, I at least saw the need to raise the question, as forest in other parts of the country has been deemed irrelevant in the ENDE-REDD+ process. It is clear that to several of my informants The Canal was perceived negatively, some saying that “at best, The Canal will have environmental consequences for 10 per cent of the country!”

But is it for real?

On the other hand, my informants provided a varied set of ideas of what The Canal Project could turn out to be. Some were outraged, some worried and some calm. The last category connected The Canal Project to the upcoming elections and saw it as more of a stunt. One said that he wasn’t worried until he could see a technical study. He showed me a picture of a lorry that had been passed on through Facebook. The lorry figured in the pictures from the work site. He compared the lorry, from the Facebook post, the size of a garbage truck, to a truck used in open pit mining, and showed me both pictures - the size of which made the first truck look like a toy car. He remarked “now how can you build a canal with that?” He also told me that the plans and the planned routes the canal might take are not new, but just a copy of previous plans based on a presentation by a Dutch company made under the previous president Enrique Bolaños, and through this the seriousness of the Chinese contractor was questioned.
“It ends up the way the government wants”

There are differing opinions about The Canal, but in my experience through the case of the Canal, some of the conditions of the current situation in Nicaragua are highlighted. The Canal is highly controversial, but the laws regarding it went through the legal system in record time. One of my informants added after the interview that “this is what happens to people that are against the Canal” and made a gun with his fingers pointing towards his head. He added that he believed that the international agencies would leave within two to three years because “everyday it gets more difficult to work with the government.” To me this echoed his colleagues telling me about the ENDE-REDD+ process, where “many were consulted, but it always ends up the way the government wants.” Or as another informant ended the interview: “If the government is not ready, how can we make a REDD+ scheme?”

6.4 Wrong remedy for change

To summarize, most informants see REDD+ as difficult, complex and not suited for local conditions. Rather than being seen as a “new solution” to the current problems, REDD+ is simply seen as a way to obtain funding. The ambivalence towards ENDE-REDD+ in some ways reflects the ambivalence regarding the government. Distrusting ENDE-REDD+, or not seeing it as an interesting option for action, reflects the distrust in the state. If the funding will not reach the small producers it is understandable that the motivation for implementing ENDE is low. This also relates to the state of affairs when I carried out my stay in Nicaragua. The perception of why the process is moving slowly reflects other structural difficulties in the relation between the state and the civil society: Weak law enforcement, corruption and the state’s other priorities.

6.4.1 Coordination from international and national level

If we look at the perceptions of the civil society workers, we can also understand them as expressions of their experience with coordination. REDD+ is based on coordination from above, from the concept development to the complex application and assessment process. And as the participation in the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility goes through the state, the national level also infers certain practices of coordination. The coordination embedded in
REDD+ from international level offers possibilities – civil society is invited to participate and there are possibilities of gaining funding. But REDD+ is also characterized by limitations, as the coordination of the participative processes from the national level is not experienced by all as “real” participation and there is doubt as to whether the funding will benefit the locals. The coordination from the national level sets limitations on the actions of the civil society workers. “Participation” is a concept that is given its meaning by the state and the civil society workers seem to have little room to contest this definition. They do have the possibility of making their own networks. They can cooperate and share information, but they experience that they have few possibilities in changing the structure. REDD+ is characterized by coordination from international and state level, and both types of coordination affects the civil society workers’ perceptions of REDD+.

6.5 Reflections on seeing REDD+ through the eyes of the intermediaries

My informants see REDD+ through a lens of the situation for the poor. The difference is that in comparison to Howell’s informants, in chapter four, my informants aren’t on the ground, wondering what is happening, with no way of knowing. My informants have access to information, but REDD+ still doesn’t make sense to them because of the actualities of the lives of the people REDD+ is said to help. In their view, REDD+ just isn’t a strong enough incentive. In accordance with the theory of science-policy networks, almost all of my informants are participating in some type of international network, but they do not seem very “powerful,” maybe because also the networks have internal hierarchies or because there are certain topics where the civil society workers don’t have much of a say. They could have an interest in REDD+ but they do not find it applicable for their conditions.

6.5.1 The background material: The stylized story

There was a general sentiment among the civil society workers that the organizations were not being included sufficiently in the state’s work with ENDE-REDD+, that there was no true dialogue, or any dialogue at all. As I have accounted for in chapter two, I also carried out interviews with some state representatives. When asked about the state of ENDE-REDD+ they all provided almost exactly the same story. What they told me resonated with the story in
the documents: There had been a participative dialogue, the process was moving forward, the ENDE was something very distinctly different from REDD+, but when I asked about the development of ENDE-REDD+ they had few details to share, and I was often told that “we’ll find out” without further reflections or information. This goes for state representatives, both on the national and the regional levels.

I have no reason to think that I was being lied to. But still I couldn’t beat the feeling that I was being told the same stylized story over and over again. When the presentation of REDD+ at the regional forum was cancelled and there was only one story being told by the state representatives, I could understand the general feeling among civil society that REDD+ was not a government priority.

6.5.2 Internal difficulties

The civil society workers are generally critical towards the government and support the peasants and the indigenous. However the groups that the civil society workers support, is more complex than I have demonstrated so far. The peasants that choose to raise cattle on indigenous land and to the detriment of the forest, are often referred to as “colonists,” as noted in chapter three. Traveling in the areas I was both told by my informants and could see myself that there were signs that more people were migrating to the Caribbean Coast. I could see that the small colonist communities in the area I had visited previously had grown bigger.

In the research literature discourses are identified that portray small farmers both as victims and as active agents of change (Adger, Benjaminsen, Brown and Svarstad, 2001). It should be noted that all the while my informants stress the difficult situation of poor peasants, they are at the same time aware that the peasants are often colonists. They occupy land that they do not have a claim to, often land that belong to indigenous communities. And regarding the indigenous people, even though they are often portrayed as “noble savages” who have been wronged time and time again throughout history, the situation is more complex.

For instance, while on the Caribbean Coast I witnessed a discussion among various civil society workers and state representatives about one specific community. They discussed the planting of a lot of African palm in said community. Palm oil plantations can cause environmental harm, and planting of palm often requires destroying rainforest and it can harm local biodiversity. These plantations generally require concessions from indigenous communities, so the question remained: who had allowed it?
So far, I have stressed the relationship between the civil society and the government, but it is important to note that the emphasis my informants have put on structure is for a good reason. If the funding never leaves the government, the internal disputes among the people on the ground are irrelevant.

6.5.3 What they all want: Adaptation

In accordance with the explorative approach I have chosen, I dedicate the last section of the analysis to what the informants and the other people I talked to all agreed on, what they all want, but that does not seem to be possible within the REDD+ regime. Rather than funding for climate change mitigation, they all want funding for climate change adaptation:

_There are more investments in mitigation than adaptation. This is the current situation; we are waiting for the climate negotiations._ (Diego)

Santiago said, in the same sentiment, that he thought that Nicaragua wouldn’t be able to contribute much in REDD+, after all there is little forest in Nicaragua compared to Mexico or Brazil. Santiago felt that the only reason Nicaragua was “allowed” to participate in REDD+ could be a serving of justice because the country is so vulnerable to climate change. Joel, who is from the Caribbean Coast, pointed to the simple fact that there are no resources in the region to confront a rise of the ocean. “It would be impossible!” He added, before he connected the problems with adaptation to the vanishing forest:

_A clear example is a hurricane. One of the big hurricanes we have experienced took away almost one million hectares of forest, but in the end it saved the people. The hurricane destroyed the forest, but it saved the people. Because the people live in the forest, [they found cover and] they were saved. If there was no forest they would have gone too. People in this region are depending on the forest, that it supports us. Because it is what we have._ (Joel)

My informants do not experience that Nicaragua has a problem of emissions. The country has almost no emissions compared to countries in the North. They do not feel responsible for climate change, but they are the ones to experience the consequences. Their focus is on getting prepared for the inevitable changes that face their country. Nationally and regionally, people are producing knowledge about sustainability, climate change effects, and traditional ways of adaptation to changes in the climate (e.g. Cunningham, Mairena and Pacheco, 2010).
The informants see REDD+ as the wrong remedy for change, both because it does not fit with local conditions, and also because it is an external initiative that doesn’t take into account local knowledge. While awaiting funds for adaptation from the world community, they are using their experience to produce knowledge that will support solutions for the future.
7 Institutional ethnography and “governmentality”: Comparing two approaches to the study of global governance

In the previous chapter I found that REDD+ is characterized by coordination from international and state level, and that both types of coordination affects the civil society workers’ perceptions of REDD+. Another of the aims of carrying out this study of REDD+ in Nicaragua was to investigate if institutional ethnography could be a useful framework for research on global environmental governance. But, one can ask, in what way is the approach I have applied here similar to other ways of studying global governance, and how does my approach differ from that of others? I will not be able to fully answer this question due to its scope, instead I attempt to compare my findings and the empirically-guided approach I have applied, to a theoretical approach to global governance studies.

As a foil for my empirically guided approach, the theoretical approach will be represented by Ole Jacob Sending and Iver B. Neumann in a frequently cited article on the relationship between civil society and states within global governance, where their research approach is the governmentality perspective. The theme of their article, the relationship between state and civil society, is a theme that is also central in the study I have carried out. My research agenda, the point of departure for carrying out the study, matches the one of Sending and Neumann. The research agenda of Sending and Neumann is based on challenging what they find to be three “core claims” that global governance studies are based on. As I elaborate on below, these claims have certain similarities with Dorothy E. Smith’s critique of mainstream sociology. However, Sending and Neumann’s analytical solution to the critique they raise is different from the analytical solution I have chosen. In comparing the two approaches I have chosen to focus on what I find to be three important aspects: The research lens, agency and the role of research in society. At the end of the chapter I summarize the possible benefits of applying an institutional ethnography perspective in studies of global governance.
7.1 Global governance – the claims of the research approach

Global governance as a research agenda emerged in the 1990s. The research literature on global governance has provided insights on the changing roles and significance of sovereign states in the governing of global or transnational affairs (Sending and Neumann, 2006, p. 651). In the article “Governance to Governmentality: Analyzing NGOs, States, and Power” by Ole Jacob Sending and Iver B. Neumann, the authors sum up what they refer to as “core claims in the literature on global governance” (Sending and Neumann, 2006, p. 651)” and present a theoretical approach based on the concept of “governmentality.” In the following I shortly present the three key interrelated claims, the “problems,” presented by Sending and Neumann and comment on how these “challenges” relate to an institutional ethnography approach.

7.1.1 Governance as process, more power to non-state actors and less to the state

The first claim from the field of global governance studies, according to Sending and Neumann, is that government must be studied as a process, not as an institution. Within global governance studies, “government” usually refers to as a task or process rather than an institution, a distinction credited Rosenau and Czempiel (1992). Keeping with this global governance is commonly defined as “a process that involves both public and private actors, the activities of which are coordinated through both formal and informal rules and guidelines in such a way that a common or public goal is advanced” (Sending and Neumann, 2006, p. 653). But, the authors object that: “However, while studies of global governance define their object of inquiry as a set of processes, their ontology and concomitant analytical tools are not equipped to grasp the content of the processes of governance itself” (Sending and Neumann, 2006, 653). They specify that the conception of governance applied by other scholars “effectively limits the analysis of governance conceived as a process to an exploration of the types of actors involved and the authority they are able to bring to bear, as opposed to the substance of the processes of governance that flows from such authority” (Sending and Neumann, 2006, 654). Sending and Neumann argue that “while the literature on global
governance highlights governance as a set of interrelated processes, it does not provide the analytical tools to study these processes” (Sending and Neumann, 2006, p. 652).

The second claim of global governance studies is that non-state actors have become much more powerful in global politics, rendering the state less powerful than before. Sending and Neumann write that the central empirical claim in studies of global governance is that non-state actors have emerged as powerful actors in world politics, and that they are challenging the power and authority of sovereign states: “The increased influence and power of actors representing ‘civil society’ and its implications for the power and authority of the state are at the core of what global governance is all about” (Sending and Neumann, 2006, p. 654). The authors further argue that an underlying premise of the literature is that the relation between state and non-state actors is a zero-sum game (Sending and Neumann, 2006, p. 654). A zero sum game is an analogy for a setting where something is to be shared, but where the size of what is to be shared is fixed. In this case this means that the amount of power in the world is seen as a fixed amount, and consequently that if non-state actors become more powerful, the state must by definition become less powerful.

The third claim Sending and Neumann present is that political authority is increasingly dislodged from the sovereign state and in the direction of transnational policy-networks and others (Sending and Neumann, 2006, p. 651). The authors argue that tying the analysis of the processes of governance to a concern with authority is in fact keeping with the state-centric framework, instead of transcending it. This is so because the focus on authority is “negatively defined in relation to sovereignty, aimed at analyzing to which actors power and authority have flowed from the state” (Sending and Neumann, 2006, p. 655).

7.1.2 How my findings relate to the global governance claims

In presenting the three claims I have accounted for here, Sending and Neumann conclude:

*Studies of global governance [are] unable to deliver on its claim that global governance should be studied as a process, inasmuch as its analytical tools favor theorizing about what actors “are” in terms of which actors have power and authority rather than about what these actors “do” as they engage in the processes of governing (p. 655).*

The content and formulations are notably similar to the criticism institutional ethnography raises against mainstream sociology, presented in chapter two. The outcome of this is that my

---

27 Italics in the original text are here replaced by bold font.
study, informed by institutional ethnography, in my eyes, avoids the fallacies presented by Sending and Neumann. In this study of REDD+ my intentions have been to focus institutional processes. My study also has the objective of studying not what the actors “are,” but on what the actors do in their participation in the processes of governing, their “work knowledge” in IE terms. When it comes to the underlying claims of the lessening power of states, this is an important aspect of the interpretation of research. However this raises questions that demand a different type of empirical data, and other research questions than the ones that guided this study. The critique may be directed more towards studies of historical trends, but I still find it interesting to also draw a parallel to my study here. There are two important things to note. First, institutional ethnography is an empirically-driven perspective and the researcher is not to make assumptions, but rather to explore and let the empirical findings guide the researcher’s gaze, which I will get back to shortly in discussing the differences between governmental rationality and ruling relations. As I see it, a zero-sum assumption of power would not be in accordance with an institutional ethnographical starting point. Second, in my study I found that the civil society workers experienced relations of ruling both from the international level, mainly from the World Bank, and from the state. One could, upon reading my study, assume that the state has lost power to the international level. REDD+ is a new initiative, a part of the new agenda of global environmental governance, and to participate in the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility Nicaragua has to abide by regulations set forth by THE FCPF/the World Bank. This is a fact, but I have no previous findings to assume that this changes the power of the state. On the contrary: My informants found that the agenda was being set at the state level, even asking “if the government doesn’t want REDD+, how can we make a REDD+ scheme?” But still I have not found that the state is gaining power. What I can say something about based on this study is how the relations of ruling are experienced and perceived by the people whose standpoint I view the institutional processes from: the civil society workers. To me this is a major difference between these two approaches; IE requires a start from somewhere, positioning the knowledge claims about ruling relations in the everyday activities, while the approach of governmentality requires “general” (unpositioned) theoretical and empirical knowledge as a starting point. And from this follows different knowledge claims; to say something about ruling relations (the general) through the local (institutional ethnography) or to say something about the local through the ruling relations (the general) (the governmentality perspective). So, according to this critical review of global governance literature (Sending and Neumann, 2006), my study seems as fruitful contribution.
As we will see, the analytical framework presented by Sending and Neumann and the analytical framework of IE have other important differences in the way they solve the “problems” presented.

7.2 Governmentality perspective vs. institutional ethnography perspective

To further illuminate ways in which the institutional ethnography approach and the governmentality (here represented by Sending and Neumann) differ I have chosen three themes when comparing the two approaches. First what I call the research lens, the way data is approached and interpreted, second the agency of the actors involved in the study and third a paragraph on the role of research in society. Finally, in the last section of the chapter I sum up the advantages of adding an institutional ethnographical perspective in the studies of global governance.

7.2.1 The research lens: Governmental rationality or ruling relations

Governmentality is an “analytical concept aimed at grasping government as a form of power” (Sending and Neumann, 2006, p. 656). Michel Foucault defines “government” as a form of power - different from that of sovereignty - that started occurring from the sixteenth century and onwards (Foucault, 1991, cited in Sending and Neumann, 2006, p. 656). Sending and Neumann find the concept useful precisely because it enables a focus on the changes of sovereignty and the relation between state and non-state actors through a focus on global governance (Sending and Neumann, 2006, p. 656). By starting from a governmentality perspective, Sending and Neumann write, they are able to “identify dimensions of global governance that are largely omitted in the existing literature” and that also “makes it possible to challenge some of the core claims in this literature about the autonomy and power of civil society actors” (Sending and Neumann, 2006, p. 652). The governmentality or governmental rationality is “the ‘mentality’ or rationality that characterizes the systematic thinking and knowledge that is integral and renders possible different modes of governing” (Sending and Neumann, 2006, p. 656).28

---

28 Sending and Neumann comment that they use the terms governmentality and governmental rationality interchangeably. I will here mainly refer to the governmentality as the approach and governmental
The definition of governmental rationality bears some resemblance to with the concept *ruling relations* that I have applied in my study to investigate the power experienced by the civil society workers. Ruling relations are, as pointed out in chapter two, the “complex of relations that are textually mediated, that connect us across space and time and organize our everyday lives” (Smith, 2005, p. 10). 29 Governmental rationality and ruling relations are both concepts directed towards understanding how governance is made possible. Both concepts emphasize governing and that there are different ways of governance that can be in effect. The concepts are, however, quite different as research tools. Governmental rationality is a way of orienting the research gaze towards power, but the concept in itself has certain implications. Using the concept of governmental rationality the researcher presupposes that there is at all times a hegemonic “rationality” or a “mentality” behind the way governance is carried out. This differs from the concept of ruling relations. Focusing on ruling relations means exploring the manifestations of power and coordination in people’s lives, without presupposing any “rationality.” Focusing on ruling relations is a way of orienting the researchers gaze towards what is being done. This is a consequence of the notion that power is a theoretical concept that is only given meaning when used by people.

### 7.2.2 Agency: Civil society as “autonomous subjects” or “knowers”

Sending and Neumann find a change in governmentality in the period after World War 2 that has led to a governmental rationality where government is performed “through autonomous subjects and not on passive objects” (Sending and Neumann, 2006, p. 668). The authors present two case studies. Here I will focus on the case study of the international ban on landmines. In this case study Sending and Neumann, using the Norwegian state as the object of study, find that the state has engaged with civil society organizations in the work on landmine policy. I cite a rather lengthy quotation below, as is Sending and Neumann’s summary of their analysis:

*The literature on global governance and on ‘global civil society’ frequently highlights the case of the ban on antipersonnel landmines as a key example of successful transnational network advocacy (...) We demonstrate how, in the Norwegian case, (...) it is not a case of a rationality as the concept.*  

29 The governmental rationality definition does not mention text specifically as a part of governance, but as their case studies show, Sending and Neumann also see text as an important part of governance. Although, of course the fact that both approaches includes texts in the analysis, does not mean that definition of text and the use of texts in studies is similar.
transfer of power from the state to nonstate [sic] actors. Our analytical perspective enables us to focus on the micro-level relations and interactions between the state and nonstate actors, which makes clear how a governmental rationality was at work that defined the will-formation, the expertise and advocacy residing in ‘civil society‘ as key to effective governing (Sending and Neumann, 2006, p. 664).

Sending and Neumann here suggest that there is a “governmental rationality at work” that has defined the “will-formation, the expertise and advocacy” in civil society, and that this is a key to effective governing. Describing this change in civil society, Sending and Neumann present interviews with Norwegian diplomats giving descriptions of how NGOs, during their cooperation, have been “adjusting their language and their behavior,” of how the organizations previously had a tendency of simply “slogging around,” but that the organizations had now “shaped up” and had become “effective” and “streamlined and diplomatic in their approach” (Sending and Neumann, 2006, p. 667). Sending and Neumann suggest that different (historical) governmental rationalities generate different action-orientations of non-state actors:

*The transformation in governmental rationality implied in the increased emphasis on governing through free and autonomous subjects generates new types of NGOs and new action-orientations of existing ones (Sending and Neumann, 2006, p. 667).*

The authors also write that this is “a case of how a new governmental rationality defines the autonomy of individual subjects as a prerequisite for legitimate and effective government” (Sending and Neumann, 2006, p. 663). In short, civil society affected by a strengthened focus on “free and autonomous subjects,” but this governmental rationality also helps create new NGOs. This presentation of civil society workers is very abstract. With an institutional ethnographical approach the researcher would focus on what is being *done* and the experiences of the subjects: Do the civil society workers themselves think that they are “free and autonomous”? In what way do they experience the cooperation with the Norwegian state? What do they have to do in this cooperation?

In my study I focus on the relation between civil society and state, but as a result of using an institutional ethnography approach, my study is based on seeing the governance from a specific standpoint and viewing my informants as knowers or knowledgeable practitioners. The study is not directed towards seeing the process from the standpoint of state representatives, or from many different standpoints at the same time. By focusing on the civil
society workers I give a presentation of the process from their standpoint. Reading the article of Sending and Neumann the descriptions of NGOs “shaping up” is attributed to Norwegian diplomats, but the conclusion states that the governing carried out actually generates new types of NGOs and that the “action-orientation” of the existing ones have changed. But with an institutional ethnographic perspective, as the one I have presented in this study, one could ask whether the descriptive words presented would resonate with and be used by actual NGO workers, and that the people actually experience a change – and then how this has come about - , or whether this rather represents the standpoint of the state workers that, from their standpoint, experience the NGOs as changed.

### 7.2.3 Research: Part of the governmental rationality or a “map for people”

Lastly in the comparison between the governmentality perspective and the IE perspective I have applied in my study, I want to comment on the view of the position of research in society. Sending and Neumann comment that within a governmentality perspective, the research literature is also part of the governmental rationality:

*The literature on global governance itself forms part of the governmental rationality that characterizes world politics: in identifying nonstate actors as crucial actors in global governance, and particularly in identifying new sources and modes of conferring legitimacy to governmental practices that involves nonstate actors, the extant literature on global governance forms part of and underwrites the governmentality in terms of the thinking and knowledge that underwrites this form of governing (Sending and Neumann, 2006, p. 663).*

The authors here argue that by identifying non-state actors as crucial, researchers also partake in the governmental rationality. This relates to my discussion of governmental rationality and ruling relations: It is also clear within institutional ethnography that the researcher herself is a part of the ruling relations. However, the objective of institutional ethnography is “designed to create an alternative to the objectified subject of knowledge of established social scientific discourse” (Smith, 2006, p. 10). This is avoided by beginning in the local actualities of the everyday world, with the concerns and perspectives of people located distinctly in the institutional processes (Smith, 2006, p. 34), and to think of research as producing maps. The objective of an institutional ethnography is to produce “maps” of the ruling relations (Smith, 2006, p. 51). People’s knowledge of their everyday world is then expanded beyond the scope

---

30 Italics in the original text is here replaced by bold font.
of what can be learned in the ordinary ways we go about our daily activities, and people can make use of the map to find out where they want to go (Smith, 2006, p. 51). The objective of IE is to make maps of the ruling relations that will benefit the informants and others.

### 7.3 Benefits of applying institutional ethnography in global governance studies

The governmentality perspective Sending and Neumann present emphasize broad trends within global governance. In their article Sending and Neumann find that the power of the civil society actors is not in opposition to the political power of the state, but is a central feature of how power operates in in late modern society. Sending and Neumann ground their conclusion on the existence of a governmentality, a rationality that offers civil society actors “autonomous” positions as both “object and subject” of governance. In my empirically-based study I do not presume the existence of such a “rationality.” The object, as a consequence of following an institutional approach, has simply been to study the existing power relations, as experienced by actual people. There may or may not exist such a rationality, but for it to become an object of study it has to belong to someone, there has to be a person that contains this rationality. What more “rationality” is a term that needs to be rendered meaning by actual people. This does not mean that I, as an institutional ethnographer, find that governance never has an “intention” or is mere chaos. If there is an intention of governance, it has to have been decided by actual people. I find that it is hard in Sending and Neumann’s study to see whether it is the state representatives that are the standpoint of the study, offering their interpretation of the intention of governance, or if it is the civil society organizations, and the civil society workers, that interpret their work to have changed from “sloppy” to “streamlined and diplomatic.” And one can only wonder what these descriptive words mean and what types of work the words describe. In this study I have started from the standpoint of civil society workers. I convey the coordination experienced by the civil society workers as a part of a global governance regime. If I had started with a governmentality perspective I would have focused on finding the overarching principle guiding global governance, or taken such principles as a starting point for my empirical investigation. With an IE perspective I do not start out with a belief in the existence of a “governmental rationality.” There may be many different rationalities at the same time, because the experience of power changes with the positions people inhabit in the institutional processes, that is the standpoint. If I had used a
governmentality perspective it is very possible that I would not have been as attentive to the local level experiences of coordination.

In this chapter I have given an outline of the similarities, mainly in research agenda, and differences, in approach, between an institutional ethnographical perspective and a governmentality perspective. The objective of the comparison is to show the possibilities of using institutional ethnography in global governance studies: The starting point of institutional ethnography can be fruitful as the perspective emphasizes an open and explorative approach to the empirical reality, by using ruling relations as research lens. Furthermore, by seeing the group of people that are in the focus of study as knowledgeable practitioners, their agency is highlighted and the studies can come closer to providing research on “what actors do as they engage in the processes of governing.” Applying research perspectives that emphasize what “actors do” will also probably be more usable for the actors themselves. To summarize, I have here attempted to elaborate on the possibilities of using institutional ethnography in global governance studies, through highlighting how institutional ethnography answers to the same research agenda as the governmentality perspective, but proposes different research solutions. I find that the use of institutional ethnography can contribute to the global governance research to provide researchers with tools to investigate, by grounding the analysis to one standpoint, how global coordination and governance are manifested in the everyday life and experiences of people in specific places.
8 Concluding reflections

This thesis started with an interest in how the global society offers help to people that live in countries that are vulnerable to climate change. I was curious as to how REDD+ is perceived and whether REDD+ is seen as “compatible” with national and local challenges, a possible way to change the current situation. In starting the project I had understood that REDD+ was complex, but as there are few initiatives with specific aim of limiting climate change, I expected that there would be interest among the civil society workers. Reading the documents regarding REDD+ in Nicaragua I found that there were many listed as participants, so I inferred that there would be interest: Who would bother to participate if there was nothing in it? The thesis shows that there is an evident lack of interest in REDD+ in Nicaragua. Here I will first revert to the research questions I posed in the introduction chapter and answer each one according to the data presented, before I offer some reflections on the analysis, on writing about a “field in motion,” and possible future research.

8.1 Main findings

In the introduction I presented the following research questions: How is the Nicaraguan REDD+ scheme perceived by civil society workers? And in what way are their perceptions and experiences affected by the coordination incorporated in REDD+ from international and national level? Why is there an ambivalence towards REDD+? In the following section I summarize the answers to these questions, based on the analysis presented. I also offer some finishing reflections on the relevance of applying institutional ethnography approach in further research on global environmental studies.

8.1.1 How is the Nicaraguan REDD+ scheme perceived by civil society workers?

The civil society workers perceive big differences between the objectives of REDD+ and local conditions. They do not perceive that REDD+ will be able to securely provide enough benefits to offset the sacrifices made by poor peasants, and also that it will be very costly and bureaucratic. The Nicaraguan version of REDD+, ENDE-REDD+ is, despite being branded as a particular and new “non-market” scheme, not perceived by the civil society workers as
something that will end up being very different from the “original” REDD+. The informants see the REDD+ initiative not as a fresh approach and a “changemaker,” but rather as a means for funding.

8.1.2 In what way are their perceptions and experiences affected by the coordination incorporated in REDD+ from international and national level? Why is there ambivalence towards REDD+?

Nicaragua has applied to the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility to start REDD+ activities. The REDD+ process entails coordination from international level, as well as national level. The coordination from international level offers possibilities for the civil society workers. Civil society is invited to participate and there are possibilities of gaining funding through REDD+. But REDD+ participation in FCPF goes through the state, and the civil society workers experience the relationship with the state as difficult. The participation in the process is not experienced by all as “real” participation, a true dialogue. There is also doubt as to whether the funding will reach the locals. The civil society workers experience REDD+ as a “top-down project,” rather than “bottom-up.” The impression among several of the civil society workers is that the Nicaraguan government was hesitant to enter into a REDD+ process. They also do not trust that funds will reach the locals. They also reacted to the apparent slow progress of the process. This is related to indications of corruption, or at least “weak law enforcement” in the sectors of timber and cattle. Several civil society workers were also concerned about the planning of the Nicaragua Canal, because the environmental harm implicated in such a project would REDD+ irrelevant. In sum, the REDD+ initiative is experienced as the wrong remedy to bring about change. The empirical findings show that an understanding of how civil society see REDD+ would be flawed if it we do not take into account the relationship between civil society and the government, and the current political situation.

8.1.3 Using institutional ethnography to study global environmental governance

In this study I have applied institutional ethnography but I have also contrasted my approach to a governmentality perspective, so as to emphasize possible benefits of applying an institutional ethnographic perspective in the study of global environmental governance. By
comparing my empirically-guided approach and contrasting it with a theoretical approach I have emphasized the differences in the use of different research lenses (governmental rationality and ruling relations), different concepts of agency and differences in the role of research in society (as a part of the governmentality or as maps). The way I see it institutional ethnography provides good tools and perspectives that can help the researcher focus on coordination, as well as to maneuver in a landscape marked by institutional captures and regulations of access to knowledge. I see this thesis as an example that institutional ethnography can provide a helpful starting point to explore governance in the South.

8.2 Reflections on the analysis

I would here like to stress some finishing reflections on what an institutional ethnography approach has come to mean for the analysis presented. First, it’s important to note that the research questions of this study have been oriented towards governance and coordination. This thesis has not been directed towards painting a complete picture of the civil society worker’s work situation or view on the environmental agenda. Rather the focus here has been to call attention to the effects of the aspects of coordination that the civil society workers experience and that affects their perspectives on REDD+. An explicit focus on the institutional setting comes with the danger of losing sight of the diversity among the informants. My aim has been to make visible the common experiences of the civil society workers, but there is no question about the fact that the informants have different motivations for their work, as the organizations they represent have different agendas. This is an explorative study of a field where little research has been carried out so far, and I have chosen here to focus on the institutional and organizational level. It is important to note that the civil society workers, despite living and working in a “highly politicized” country, are not bound hand and foot by the coordination described here. Civil society enjoys a certain liberty in that there are critical voices that are profiled in the media also because their funding is based on foreign donors. But the coordination, control and power that I describe here enters into their work and their perceptions of REDD+
8.3 Wrong place at the wrong time? On writing about a field in motion

My meetings with the informants displayed a discontent with the way the government was handling the process. “Nothing has happened” was the familiar refrain. The data collection for this study was finished in March 2015. Countries participating in the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility have to submit a self-assessment report every year in August and the Nicaraguan report from 2014 refers to the level of achievement as “low” and that “further development is required.” Under the heading “Main Lessons Learned” it is commented that the starting point has been delayed because of lack of personnel, and that a project that lacks an operating manual cannot start operations. August 2015 lists that there are monthly meetings for stakeholder engagement platforms. It also lists that in the first half of 2015, 26 workshops were carried out, however there is no mention of which municipalities where visited, how many participated in each workshop, and how many of these were locals and how many were state representatives. Level of overall achievement is here referred to as “significant progress.” A diagnostic study of tenure rights is expected in March 2016. From the documents it looks like there has been progress since my interviews were carried out. The possibility of change is always there when one’s object of study is societies. However, many of the formulations are similar to the ones I encountered in the R-PP, still the work is focused on preparations to be able to, in the future, carry out consultations. And on the other hand, the frequency of the protests against the Nicaragua Canal has increased since I collected my data (Rezaye, October 2015) and the confusion, as it was reported that the Chinese contractor of the Canal has lost almost all of his fortune (Mao and Schmidt, October, 2015). In September people from the two indigenous groups Miskito and Mayangna demonstrated against the colonists and the lacking government action regarding tenure rights in the Northern Autonomous Region of the Caribbean Coast (RACCN) (Chamorro and Garth, September, 2015). As the problems expressed by the informants on both at national and regional level prevail, it is difficult not to sympathize with and understand the civil society workers’ disregard and resignation when it comes to REDD+.

31 All the country reports are available online at http://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/nicaragua.  
32 The annual country reports are based on templates, so the heading is a fixed part of the template.
8.4 Further research: From the global to the local

Climate change is a threat to us all, but some will experience the consequences before others, and some will be better prepared than others. Doing research is not just a way of finding out about the effects of climate change, but also finding out what these changes mean to the lives of actual people. If global environmental governance is to be a way for us to limit the damage, and as climate initiatives such as REDD+, we need to know how the initiatives are perceived and whether or not they are seen as “actionable,” and something that can contribute to the structural problems that underlie the problematics of increased emissions. These are processes that it is hard to study as a whole, but it is equally important both to understand the international negotiations, and the national and regional outcomes if we are to understand how the governance is working. And, as long as the global society keeps producing miles of documentation to avoid deforestation, there is a need for researchers to investigate the consequences for the people whose actions are governed through them.
Bibliography


Rogers, Tim (October 2008). *Cartoonists go to war.* Retrieved from: http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1813252,00.html


Stock, T. F., Qin, D., Plattner, G. K., Tignor, M., Allen, S. K., Boschung, J. & Midgley, P. M. (2013). *Climate change 2013: The physical science basis. Intergovernmental panel on climate change, working group I contribution to the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report (AR5).* IPCC.


Antall ord i denne oppgaven er 36 318.
Alle kilder som er brukt i denne oppgaven er oppgitt.
Appendix 1: Request: Participation in research project

Letter of support and presentation of research project about political and social processes of climate change policy in Nicaragua

First of all, permit me to greet you cordially and to wish you all the best in the performance of your work.

The motive of this letter is to communicate that Julie Kalveland, Master’s student at the University of Oslo (Norway) is carrying out a research project to understand the political and social processes of climate change policy in Nicaragua, and particularly the REDD+ program, the English acronym which signifies “reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation,” and the Nicaraguan version ENDE-REDD+. The research project is based on interviews with a diversity of actors on different levels in these processes. Julie is carrying out her work in Nicaragua between January and March 2015, while counting on the support from the Institute for Research and Local Development Nitlapán at the UCA and supervision of the International Development Research Centre CIRAD (France), through me. For this reason I ask you cordially for your valuable support and cooperation.

What does participation in the study entail? Your cooperation involves giving Julie a little of your time to carry out a semi-structured interview, for approximately 30 minutes to one hour. The interview will be recorded.

What happens to the collected information? Julie follows the ethical code applied in social science research. All information collected will be analyzed confidentially by Julie and her supervisors, the findings when presented will be totally anonymous. Participation in the study is voluntary and the respondent can withdraw from the interview at any time without giving reasons. To facilitate data collection, the interview will be recorded, essentially because of imperfect language competence. The recordings will not be shared with other people. Preliminary findings of the investigation, which does not mention the identity of respondents,
will be shared with stakeholders. The report will be written in English, but Julie will make a summary of the main findings in Spanish and provide it to you by email.

Without doing other than making referrals and awaiting to count on you, I cordially bid goodbye,

Sandrine Fréguin-Gresh

Master student: Julie Kalveland
University of Oslo
Department of Sociology and Human Geography
Email: juliekalveland@gmail.com
Phone number: +47 926 26 568

Dr.Ing. Sandrine Fréguin-Gresh
CIRAD / Universidad Centro Americana
Centro de Investigacion y Desarollo Nitolapan
Managua, Nicaragua
Email: freguin@cirad.fr
Phone number: +505 86948674
Appendix 2: Interview guide

Information and consent

First I want to say thank you for your valuable support and cooperation and that you have provided time for this meeting. For starters I’ll tell you a little about the project: My name is Julie Kalveland. I am a student at the University of Oslo. I’ll be in Nicaragua for two months to do work to complete my master’s thesis in sociology. With support from the Institute for Research and Local Development Nitlapán at the University of Central America (UCA) and supervision of the International Development Research Centre CIRAD (France), through Dr. Sandrine Fréguin-Gresh, I am conducting a research project to understand the political and social processes related to climate change policy in Nicaragua and in particular the REDD+ program, and the Nicaraguan version called ENDE-REDD+. The research is based on interviews with the diversity of actors that are involved at various levels in these processes.

What happens to the collected information?
All information collected will be analyzed confidentially by me and my supervisors, the findings when presented will be totally anonymous. Participation in the study is voluntary and the respondent can withdraw from the interview at any time without giving reasons. To facilitate data collection, the interview will be recorded, essentially because of imperfect language competence. The recordings will not be shared with other people. Preliminary findings of the investigation, which does not mention the identity of respondents, will be shared with stakeholders. My report will be written in English, but I will also make a summary of the main findings in Spanish.
Would you want me to send you the synthesis?
Do you have questions before we start the interview?

Can I turn on the recorder?
Can I have your consent to participate in this study?
Background knowledge

In 2015 it’s expected that there will be a lot of attention related to the climate negotiations, COP-21 in Paris. Climate scientists say the world’s carbon emissions need to reach a peak by 2020 to avoid drastic increase in temperature. We also know that climate change will have worse consequences for some countries than others, and Nicaragua is a country that is in this category. Therefore I ask:
Where are we with respect to environmental issues in Nicaragua today? What’s on the environmental agenda?
Could you tell me your personal trajectory related to environmental issues?

The organization
What is the purpose of [the organization]?
How would you situate your organization within civil society working with climate change?

REDD +
Could you tell me [do you know] what the REDD + program is? And also the Nicaraguan version called ENDE-REDD +?
Have you worked with REDD +?
[If yes] How you got involved in working with the program?
The REDD + program is based on free, prior and informed consent. Do you know of the consultation process that took place in 2012?
Did you attend the workshops?
If yes: How?
If no: Why not?
Do you consider that the ENDE-REDD + can change the environmental agenda?
If yes: How?
If no: Why not?

The future
What do you think are the top priorities in the coming years?
Now we’ve finished my questions. I just want to repeat that all information collected will be analyzed confidentially by me and my supervisors, and that the findings when presented will be totally anonymous.
Do you have any questions or comments?
If I need more information, could I come back to you?
I thank you and wish you the best in the performance of your functions.