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Conservation Capitalism: Native Amazonian Regimes of Ownership and Market-Based Rainforest Conservation

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Abstract

Forest conservation has received a new impetus from international climate-change politics, giving rise to UN-REDD, which promises to evolve into a giant international 'payment for ecosystem services' scheme. Many scholars and activists are concerned about potential social costs in the absence of forest peoples' land rights (or of respect for such rights). Meanwhile, other sceptics question the creation of forest carbon ownership rights on the grounds that the commodification of nature is merely a further expansion of capitalism. I suggest that native property regimes can help reflect on the dilemma imposed by these two criticisms of REDD. Among the Trio of southern Suriname, the ownership and appropriation of (in)dividuals pervades inter-human relations and kinship. These property relations form the basis for human interactions with the non-human actors who constitute the living environment. In this paper I describe the Trio's perspective on their involvement in the commodification of the living environment through a conservation project promoting market-based conservation. I offer conclusions about the implications for larger-scale attempts to achieve forest conservation through ownership and commodity trading.

Introduction: What is the UN-REDD?

REDD, 'Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation', is being promoted in the context of concerns among scientists, politicians and the public over climate change. The following quotation gives a useful summary of the scheme and its history:

... Land-use change contributed to approximately 20% of global greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) during the period 1990-2000... in this context, incentivizing reductions in GHG emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, conserving and enhancing forest carbon stocks and sustainably managing forests (REDD+) have emerged as a key international strategy to halt land-use change in developing countries and involve them in climate change mitigation efforts. Essentially, REDD+ is expected to establish incentives for developing countries to protect and better manage their forest resources, by creating and recognising a financial value for the additional carbon stored in trees or not emitted to the atmosphere. Drawing on the contents of the Copenhagen Accord and the current progress under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), REDD+ is becoming one of the key pillars of a post-2012 international climate regime, particularly regarding developing country mitigation efforts. (Corbera and Schoeder 2011: 89)

Negotiations over REDD over the past several years have led to a consensus that it will need to include provisions for the preservation of biodiversity and for the protection of the rights of forest peoples. The model of REDD that takes this into account is called REDD+. Now, to describe the science and economics of REDD would go far beyond the scope of this paper – the following sums up this complexity:

REDD+ is a governance process with multiple actors, interests and activities, involving several sources of formal and informal power and authority (UN bodies, multilateral organisations, governments, but also community and indigenous organisations), which all influence each other and may or may not coincide in their interests and vision regarding how such strategy [sic] of forest and climate governance should actually look like [sic] in the near future. REDD+ exemplifies how a scientifically informed policy idea (i.e. land-use change related emissions contribute significantly to climate change and biodiversity loss) permeates through multiple spheres of decision-making and organisation, creates contested interests and claims, and translates into multiple implementation actions running ahead of policy processes and state-driven decisions. (Corbera and Schroeder 2011: 90)

I would only like to highlight a couple of important elements.

Carbon trading

Firstly, carbon trading. There is much disagreement over how exactly REDD should be financed, and some have argued for the need to raise an international carbon tax. As Corbera and Schroeder write, 'It is still unclear whether future REDD+ incentives will be provided by multilateral or bilateral public funding, with or without a link to carbon markets and involvement from the private sector, or whether it will be a combination of public-based finance and a market trading REDD+ credits' (2011: 89-90). However, the

weight of international support seems to be behind raising the money through carbon trading. Carbon trading would, it is argued, maintain a price for carbon that realistically reflected its scarcity, and its economic value. The price of carbon would dictate the value of the carbon stocks in each country.

Emphasis on monitoring, reporting and verification

The second element is Monitoring, Reporting and Verification, 'MRV', which have been described as the 'cornerstone' of the carbon market (Scott et al. 2009). For the carbon market to be viable, it is of course necessary that carbon stocks should be proven to exist and to be as large as they are claimed to be. But MRV for REDD+ must include the monitoring of more than just carbon. A recent literature review summarized its scope thus:

...with REDD+ looking increasingly likely to become operational in the coming years, there is significant demand for monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) best practice, holistically including carbon, biodiversity, social, and ecosystem service monitoring (this four pronged monitoring approach is extrapolated from the current details in the UNFCCC REDD+ draft paper under the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long Term Cooperative Action (AWC-LCA) (UNFCCC 2009). (Palmer Fry 2011: 182)

MRV is based on a combination of field inventories and remote sensing. An official UN-REDD report on a recent training session in Tanzania on 'spatial data analysis and remote sensing cartography' noted that it included training on '...Satellite image interpretation' and aimed to create a 'National Forest Inventory of Tanzania, based on field samples comprising biophysical, environmental and socio-economical parameters identified by national users and stakeholders' (UN-REDD 2010).

Palmer Fry suggests that in the future REDD+ forest monitoring might work as follows:

... the community consents to the REDD+ project after extensive consultation; the community itself then plans the monitoring programme with the assistance of an external expert, and a REDD+ contract is created that fulfils local and high level policy demands; the forest monitors are elected by the community from a subgroup nominated by the expert, trained, and carry out the agreed monitoring activities that encompass carbon, biodiversity, social impacts and ecosystem services; payments are given out at a flat rate for providing the information (instead of linking them to carbon stocks as conflict may arise due to natural variance in forest carbon, and so payments (Skutsch et al., 2009)); and finally this data is collected and fed into the local management system as well as the higher level institutional framework on an annual basis, in [sic] so integrating the local information into regionally/nationally co-ordinated strategic forest cover monitoring. (Palmer Fry 2011: 185)

Ideally, for proponents of locally-based monitoring, it would include empowering local communities to monitor governance itself:

... A final addition to this monitoring paradigm might be that suggested by Global Witness (2009a, 2009b) – an independent and expert monitoring body, assembled by a local partner, that primarily looks at implementation of policy

and regulations, in so combating the commonplace “weak governance, corruption, high levels of illegality and poor forest law enforcement” in forest-rich developing nations. This would also be capable of verifying the information provided by the community and so eliminating the credibility issues associated with unregulated self-monitoring... There is also a need to explore the previously untapped potential of locally based monitoring to track social impacts (which will be a central MRV requirement in a REDD+ programme). (Palmer Fry 2011: 185)

‘Safeguards’: FPIC

The perspective on REDD that concerns me is that of the indigenous peoples of Amazonia, particularly Suriname. Concerns have been raised by NGOs such as the Forest Peoples’ Programme that REDD is being driven by the overriding interests of conservation and the carbon market – which already exists on a voluntary basis – and that the requirements for safeguards are placing all their emphasis on MRV, at the risk of sidelining, and even disenfranchising forest peoples (Dooley et al. 2011). Certainly there are serious concerns over what may happen in cases where indigenous peoples have not secured titles to their lands, when those lands suddenly become much more valuable because of the carbon stocks which they represent. At the same time, it seems likely that the vast sums of money that will be circulated will largely be used to pay the armies of experts – administrative, legal, economic and technical – needed to make the system work – very little will be left for forest peoples (The Munden Project 2011).

Readiness and the readiness plan in Suriname

Even though REDD may become the single most important factor in the conservation and development of tropical forests, so far there is no such thing as a working UN-REDD project. The existing REDD pilot projects, of which there are many, tend to be focused on technical issues rather than social ones, and the only REDD pilot project that has been designed in partnership with an indigenous Amazonian group, the Surui project in Rondônia, has not yet begun– it is still under negotiation.

At present, Suriname, like other countries that have signed up to the UN-REDD programme, is undergoing a process known as ‘readiness’, which is intended to ensure that all of the necessary governance and technical conditions are in place for REDD to come into operation. In May 2009, the Vereniging van Inheemse Dorpshoofden in Suriname (VIDS – Surinamese indigenous people’s organisation) wrote a letter to the Minister of Physical Planning, Land and Forestry Management, the Minister of Labour, Technological Development and Environment, and the Minister of Regional Development to complain that in the process so far no consultations with indigenous peoples had been made at all. They wrote:

The R-PIN [Readiness Plan Idea Note, a report on the Readiness preparations so far, submitted to the UN by the Surinamese government] further states that “Dialogue with wider circles of relevant stakeholders, including representatives of the Maroon and Indigenous peoples, will take place in the next phases, i.e. during project preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.” This is not acceptable: consultation cannot be meaningful after the Government has unilaterally pre-determined the parameters for the discussion. Also, we are not

stakeholders, but rights-holders, and we fully expect to be treated as such in relation to the FCPF [Forest Carbon Partnership Facility], especially as the FCPF Charter requires respect for our rights. (Pané and Edwards 2009).

On this level of political engagement, the key issues are Free, Prior and Informed Consent and the securing of land rights.

Native perspectives on readiness and prospects for REDD

The bureaucratic nature of free and prior informed consent is such that real consultation across communities is scarcely possible, and rarely achieved. Consultation tends to be monopolised by leaders, who are charismatic individuals whose lived worlds correspond to those of their groups, but who cannot claim to be democratically representative as those who monitor such things for NGOs and international institutions would like them to be. Still, if we accept that it is a desirable if imperfect exercise, the principal of free, prior and informed consent, which is central to the ‘safeguards’ that are offered as part of the readiness programme, entails considerations with regard to the translation of concepts. Here I will focus on three points, although many more could be raised.

Firstly, how do the prospect of legal land ownership and the concept of carbon trading appear from an Amerindian perspective? Secondly, indigenous concepts of space and time should be taken into account when considering the practicalities of mapping land and the calculation and agreement of delayed benefits, and designing locally-based monitoring programmes. Thirdly and lastly, money is today a key element in transactions between indigenous peoples in Suriname and outsiders: one needs to ask, what is the role of money among groups such as the Trio, and how much sense does it make, in their terms, to calculate the monetary value of land, trees or carbon?

One important reason for which the native peoples of Suriname were not consulted by the government as it drew up its readiness programme is this: the native peoples of Amazonia have been portrayed, following the example of philosophers such as Locke and Rousseau, as noble savages lacking the notion of property; furthermore, their lack of the scale of social differentiation to which property is classically held to give rise (Locke), meant that they were even seen as living outside, or prior to, society. Such an image remains widespread in the popular imagination in South America, certainly in Suriname, including among government figures.

Even in Amazonian ethnography, scarcely any studies of native forms of ownership exist. In fact, ownership plays an important role in indigenous Amazonian societies. Native Amazonian ownership centres on processes of appropriation which take the form of domestication, or ‘familiarization’. In my previous work I have shown how the transformation of the forest into gardens and villages gives rise to ownership, and how the appropriation of elements of personhood, and even of human persons, takes place through analogous processes of transformation or nurture (Brightman 2010). Carlos Fausto has developed the concept of ‘familiarizing predation’, by which enemies are transformed into pets, and has shown how this process underlies the relationships of ‘mastery’ widespread in Amazonian cosmologies and social relations. How does land ownership appear from the perspective of such regimes of property as these? In a certain sense, it does not even have a place in them. It belongs instead to the realm of sovereignty. A contract giving the Trio exclusive right of use to their land would not in fact do so to the land that the Trio own under their own system of classification, but

would correspond to the territory that amounts to the sphere of influence of their places of dwelling (Van Dam 2011). In this written contract, whose form and content are inseparable from the world of pananakiri, White people, would be regarded as a promise on the part of the government not to invade the Trio's territory.

The ownership of forest carbon is less easy to translate. As one activist working for an indigenous advocacy NGO has told me, this is one of the most difficult elements to explain to indigenous peoples, and invariably gives rise to incomprehension over the idea of buying and selling this new invisible power present in the air and in the trees. Some conservationists do not think it is necessary to teach indigenous peoples the science and economics of REDD, or for them to know that carbon is becoming a valuable commodity and that that is why the White people are ready to pay them to look after forests. But supporters of the rights of indigenous peoples argue that they have a right to know and to understand these things before they agree to become part of a development programme that is based on them. The same rift exists among indigenous leaders: some are inclined to accept a project which the government is placing significant pressure upon them to accept, on the grounds that otherwise they might get nothing; others prefer to know all the facts first and to ensure that they are getting a fair deal (Griffiths, personal communication, 2011).

Maps and clocks

Indigenous concepts of space and time play a role here too. There is a vast cosmological gap between the Trio and their government, the scientists and lawyers and economists involved in the Readiness programme. The latter take for granted that humanity is universal, and that the equilibrium of the resources on earth necessary for the survival of humanity is at risk. For the native Amazonians, humanity is a relative concept – humans must be made and nurtured, and proper human beings are equivalent to kin. The world is the lived world, which is constantly made out of a forest whose wildest places are equated with the primordial chaos in which spirits, animals and humans are unstable forms liable to change with every new encounter. The Trio are at once attracted to and wary of the material culture of a world of White people which constantly seeks to objectify and measure space and time. They participate enthusiastically in the technical aspects of cultural mapping projects such as those of the conservation NGO, Amazon Conservation Team, using GIS/GPS technology (Brightman n.d.a). However, many indigenous leaders are sceptical as to the political implications of such projects: what limitations might be imposed upon their livelihoods as a result of the mapping of resource use?

Money

This NGO is dedicated to putting in place sustainable development projects that help indigenous peoples to generate income for themselves. They train them in marketing techniques and other business skills to help them sell non-wood forest products in the city, such as brazil nuts, chilli peppers and basketry. The same NGO is also collaborating with the Surui in Brazil to put their REDD project into action. In both cases, ACT is promoting market-based conservation. It has recognised that today the Trio want to earn money to allow them to obtain manufactured items. Yet many Amerindian leaders are sceptical of these initiatives, for they rightly suspect that trade means something different to the NGO workers, the government and other outsiders

from what it means to native Amazonians.

In the Guianas region of South America, vast indigenous trade networks existed throughout the early and mid colonial periods, and modern ethnography shows that such networks never entirely disappeared. These trade networks were based on individual trading partnerships, which were made possible through fictional relations of consanguinity, nurtured through hospitality and especially feeding (Grotti in press). Finally, early colonial sources show that indigenous gold artefacts, known as *karakuri* or *guanín*, served both as body ornaments and as trade items possibly equivalent to money; there is also evidence of the use of shell money in the Orinoco delta (Whitehead 1990).

In a relationship of delayed reciprocity, such as the *jipawana* trading partnership, in which intervals of years could elapse before demands for objects could be met, fictional kinship provided the guarantee against debts, for giving to kin is scarcely different from giving to oneself. There may also have been situations in which exchange took place between strangers, and in such cases *karakuri* may have played a role comparable to that of money.

Today, the use of money follows a similar pattern. Between trading partners with strong relationships, even when one of the partners is not a Trio, money is less important. Debt, calculated in terms of money, is fixed between trading partners with degrees of precision inversely proportional to the level of trust and closeness in terms of sociability between partners. Cash plays the role of a liquid commodity that can be demanded at any level of sociability, because of the possible practical need for it for further transactions of immediate reciprocity. Money is powerful and attractive because of its countability – the ease with which it can be quantified is what makes it so liquid, so readily transferable, and hence so powerful – for this reason César Gordon in his study of cash and trade objects among the Mebêngôkre has underlined its role as a cosmological transformer, comparable to shamanic techniques (Gordon 2006; Brightman n.d.b). For the Trio, cash appears analogous to maps and clocks, because of its relationship to abstract numbers and its power to objectify and render concrete things transformable.

For these reasons, for the Trio, REDD will appear as the strongest manifestation yet of White people's power – it will bring into alliance the universal time, represented by the clock, with which they first became acquainted through missionaries, with the mapping techniques, which objectify the environment through universal spatial criteria, and the cash economy, which, although it is not as unfamiliar as some have supposed, has only recently come to hold a central importance in Trio lived worlds. But it is precisely for this reason that it will interest them, for they will seek to appropriate elements of it in the same process of familiarising predation mentioned above, which is at the heart of their relationship with alterity.

The Trio in Suriname

In this section I shall describe the current political context relevant to REDD+ and forest peoples in Suriname. The Surinamese government has a poor record of engagement with indigenous peoples: although it has signed the UNDRIP, it has not signed ILO169, and it does not recognise indigenous or tribal peoples in the constitution. There are two categories of forest peoples in Suriname: 'indigenous people', or Amerindians, and

Maroons, descendants of slaves who escaped plantations to settle in the forest. There are five principal Amerindian groups, a total just over 18,000 individuals, or 3.7 per cent of the total population of Suriname, and six different Maroon groups, a total of nearly 73,000, or 14.7 per cent of the total population.¹ My interlocutors, including local leaders (kapiteins) and representatives of Amerindian organizations (VIDS and OIS²), told me that the government had made no real effort to inform them about REDD, let alone consult them (it has organized one workshop, involving only the legal arm of VIDS). The only effective workshop on REDD+ from the Amerindian peoples' point of view was organised by COICA (the indigenous peoples' organization of the Amazon basin) and the Woods Hole Research Centre, an American NGO. The reasons for the government's poor record emerge in conversation with government officials: from their perspective, indigenous and tribal peoples are not 'ready' to manage their own projects, they are not 'conscious', or 'aware' enough. They do not yet have the 'capacity'. The government officials also declare frustration because, they say, sooner or later discussions with indigenous and tribal peoples return to the usual refrain: 'this is ours'; in other words, they return to the theme of land rights. Indeed all of the representatives of forest peoples that I interviewed said that the principal issue that must be resolved before anything else is that of land rights. The theme is especially important in Suriname, for it is the only country in South America that has not yet passed reforms granting land rights to its indigenous peoples (VIDS et al. 2009).

In a landmark³ decision in 2007 in the Case of the Saramaka People v. Suriname, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights decided that, most notably:

[t]he State shall delimit, demarcate, and grant collective title over the territory of the members of the Saramaka people, in accordance with their customary laws, and through previous, effective[,] and fully informed consultations with the Saramaka people, without prejudice to other tribal and indigenous communities.⁴

This particular case was used in a study to illustrate that:

... attention to indigenous peoples' rights is not only desirable as a means to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of climate change mitigation measures, but, also, that these rights must be viewed as part of the applicable legal framework for conceiving and implementing such measures. Failure to do so undermines the rule of law and will expose REDD proponents and investors to a series of serious risks. (FPP 2009)

In particular, the case establishes that there are legal risks for government or investors establishing any kind of development project without the consent of indigenous or tribal

¹ Algemeen Bureau voor Statistiek. 2005. Zevende Algemene Volks en Woningtelling in Suriname/Landelijke resultaten Volume I (Demografische en Sociale karakteristieken).

² Vereniging van Inheemse Dorpshoofden in Suriname; Organization of the Indigenous Peoples of Suriname.

³ See FPP 2009: 2. The case was also cited by the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples - see *Permanent Forum Hails General Assembly Adoption of Indigenous Rights Declaration. Pledges to Make it 'a Living Document', as Seventh Session Concludes*. UN Department of Public Information, 02 May 2008. <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/hr4953.doc.htm>.

⁴ *Saramaka People v. Suriname. Preliminary Objections, Merits, Reparations and Costs*. Judgment of 28 November 2007. Series C No. 172, at para. 194-96 (hereinafter "Saramaka People v. Suriname"). http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec_172_ing.pdf

peoples⁵ on their land.

The legally binding ruling of the IAC has not been implemented by the Surinamese government to date. However, the ruling almost certainly contributed to the decision to hold a conference in March 2011 in the interior of Suriname between the government and representatives of the Amerindians and Maroons, on the subject of gold mining. During the conference, the Granman representing the Maroons announced that before any of the outstanding matters regarding gold mining on Maroon ancestral territory could be discussed further, a condition had to be fulfilled: the land rights situation for tribal peoples in Suriname would have to be resolved. The Maroons thus allied themselves with the existing consensus of the Amerindians, greatly strengthening their collective position, because the Maroons are considerably more numerous, better organised and more highly educated. The President of Suriname quickly announced that a conference on land rights would be held at the end of June 2011.⁶

Meanwhile, with regard to REDD, VSG and VIDS have stated that they hold the same position with regard to REDD as for gold mining: there will be no discussion of REDD until the land rights question has been resolved. The Amerindian and Maroon organisations realise that they have a strong position in the wake of the IAC ruling. Concerning REDD, they know that the government's preparation for REDD depends upon World Bank funding at present under Readiness programme of the World Bank Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF). Under this programme, each participating country must submit its 'readiness' preparation plans and must provide for the participation and consent of indigenous and tribal peoples. Here, the matter of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) is of fundamental concern. The indigenous and tribal organizations have continued to object to being excluded from the process of readiness at each stage. In the latest of these objections, published on the FCPF website, the VSG writes:

Disregarding its international obligations, Suriname's R-PP fails to list any measures addressing respect for indigenous and tribal peoples' rights to own and control their traditional territories. Component 2a merely says that that a study is needed on "the identification of land tenure and other resource issues effecting [*sic*] REDD." It does not specify however what this study will focus on or how indigenous and tribal peoples may participate in the study. Component 2a also continues to incorrectly identify 'community forest', which may be issued pursuant to Article 41 of the 1992 Forest Management Act, as a form of tenure that may be granted to people in the interior. The Inter-American Court however rejected 'community forests' as an adequate means of providing protection for tenure rights in *Saramaka People*.⁷

In Suriname's draft RPP, funds of around \$8m are requested to implement the 'Consultation and Participation Plan', and the World Bank has questioned the need for such a large budget; in response, the government refers to the need for translation into around 10 different languages, and to carry out consultations in the interior respecting

⁵ Maroons, such as the Saramaka, are not indigenous, but are recognised by the IAC as 'tribal' peoples, and thus enjoy the same rights.

⁶ This conference has now been postponed until October.

⁷ Letter from S.H. Jabini, on behalf of the *Gaama* of the Saamaka people and the Chairman of the Association of Saamaka Authorities, to Benoit Bosquet, FCPF, World Bank. http://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/fcp/sites/forestcarbonpartnership.org/files/Documents/PDF/Nov2009/FCFPBrief_naar_de_Wereldbank.pdf

customary forms of organization and decision making. The indigenous and tribal organizations object that the government should have consulted them regarding the drafting of this plan in the first place. Here, a significant problem is the lack of clarity on behalf of the World Bank as to precisely what the requirements for FPIC are, and at what stage they should be implemented.⁸

Indigenous and tribal organisations intend to follow the precedent of the *Saramaka v. Suriname* case in claiming full ownership rights, implying the rights to sub-soil resources, minerals and forest carbon (moreover, a further case, regarding the Marowijne region, is currently awaiting submission to the IAC). However, government representatives will not take such claims seriously; indeed, they laugh at the prospect. Nevertheless, as a negotiating position the demand for full ownership may prove fruitful, even if full ownership is not granted (government representatives here point out that it has not been granted in neighbouring countries Guyana or Brazil). All interlocutors expressed belief that the government is taking seriously the need to resolve the land rights question, and the incentive of development funding for REDD appears very clearly to be providing a substantial part of the impetus.

The land rights debate has an oppositional character which results from the fact that the government does not recognise indigenous and tribal people's traditional capacity for forest management; the government officially regards swidden horticulture as a form of deforestation, and has so far refused to reform the 1954 law on protected areas, which, although it allows traditional subsistence activity in protected areas, does not allow for indigenous management: all protected areas must be state managed.

On a ministerial level, the lack of willingness to engage with forest peoples is thus fuelled by a prejudice about their level of capability. It is significant that the Trio and Wayana, the Amerindian peoples of the south, a remote region without road transport, have a much better relationship with both the government and major INGOs than the Kali'na and other coastal peoples. There are a number of reasons for this. The Trio and Wayana are widely perceived as 'real Indians', because they have been exposed to the 'corrupting' influence of modernity for only a few decades, and retain their traditional practices in a more obvious and visible way (hunting, swidden horticulture, body painting and feather ornaments, red loin cloths, architecture using forest materials, etc.). Coastal Amerindians, although they do still retain many of their traditional practices, in the eyes of government officials they have been corrupted, because they have sold some of their community forests to timber and mining companies, and because some of them use heavy equipment to cut swiddens. In the words of one official, 'they're just like us. You don't see naked people any more'.

It should go without saying that none of these differences constitute valid distinctions in terms of entitlement to ancestral property, either from a human rights perspective or from an ethnographic perspective. The coastal Indians are, in fact, in some ways more conscious of their identity and the value of their traditional knowledge, if only because they have more reason to feel that these things are under threat. Nevertheless, among what are principally superficial differences, there is one observation that may pose a

⁸ The FCPF is currently developing official guidelines on this, which were circulated for comment recently as *Draft Guidelines on Stakeholder Engagement in REDD+ Readiness, with a Focus on the Participation of Indigenous Peoples and other Forest-Dependent Communities*. An important set of criticisms and recommendations from a human rights perspective was released by the Indian Law Resource Centre.

http://www.unredd.net/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=1120&Itemid=53.

serious difficulty: that is, the expansion or intensification of swidden agriculture, and other forms of forest degradation, where populations are denser. Even in the South, there has been some serious forest degradation as a result of the creation of larger villages around health posts and schools. The depletion of resources around one village is currently so bad that the village is breaking up as inhabitants create new villages further away.

Swidden horticulture raises a fundamental question of knowledge, interpretation and perspective. For according to these factors, the forest degradation through traditional activities can be seen as a justification for excluding indigenous and tribal peoples or as a reason for involving them in REDD+. The government's attitude to swidden horticulture unfortunately ignores the fact that it is only a problem under certain circumstances, such as when population density or concentration is too great, which tends to be the result of poor planning: for these demographic transitions result from the intensive concentration of services in a few locations. Such degradation can also result from the very situation of lack of trust between the government and indigenous and tribal groups, when both claim ownership of land and the former implicitly maintains a threat to withhold access in favour of more profitable industrial ventures. As conventional rights-based arguments in favour of full land title for indigenous peoples emphasize, such peoples do not merely have an economic 'stake' in the land in terms of natural resources, but are also attached to the land through their traditional identity and spirituality. Yet even in terms of mere economic incentive, the prospect of REDD+ might lend assurance to sceptical governments, because of its potential to act as a further incentive for forest conservation.

A key area which emerged from interviews was gender. Josien Aloema, the acting leader of OIS, who also represents Surinamese indigenous peoples in COICA, emphasized the role of women in native communities, on the grounds that, because they manage the household, they are much more aware of changes that occur in the environment. The director of CI told me independently that during CI's project on awareness of climate change among the Trio and Wayana, following serious flooding and droughts in 2006 across Suriname, men showed little awareness of long term rainfall patterns, whereas women were able to give detailed information about historical changes in rainfall. All of this underlines the importance of involving women fully and systematically in the process of FPIC, and of developing and implementing participatory MRV. Until now, however, both land rights negotiations and REDD consultations by NGOs and government have tended to concentrate on village leaders, who are mostly men. This is mainly because VIDS is structured as a coalition of village leaders, and VIDS is the principal representational body – village leaders are not good at sharing information with the community, and tend to be preoccupied with their individual interests. There is also a problem in the case of more progressive attempts at participatory practice: CI, for instance, invites villages to send the representatives of their choice; however, the default position of the village faced with such an invitation is to send either the kapitein, or a B.O. (Bestuursopzichter, a minor, and nearly always male, local official). Only targeted, local participatory workshops can effectively involve women.

Market conservation or conservation capitalism?

In a recent article, Gwendolyn Emanuels Smith, the director of ACT Suriname, wrote of the Trio:

The community is aware that nature is changing and blame observed climate changes on disrespectful ways of living with the forest. The Trios possess insufficient western knowledge to understand the mechanics and opportunities of carbon-based conservation. However, conservation and acquiring land rights are high priorities for the Trios... Trios have always been open to receiving monies for purchasing western goods, e.g., sugar, salt, and batteries. Western goods are seen as a status symbol. Projects are therefore seen as opportunities to create wage labor for more Trios to improve their status. (2010: 5)

The Trio are already involved in market conservation – they use money to buy manufactured goods and sell forest products on an open market, although they generally use their trusted trading partners as middle men. REDD, however, promises to engage them in conservation capitalism. They will receive benefits – employment, development projects, and cash subsidies – in return for their involvement in a giant technocratic system composed of numerous scientific research organisations, national governments and international institutions, banks and stock exchanges, whose functioning is so complex and multifarious that no single individual can claim to have the full expertise necessary to fully understand the whole. Yet in this system seemingly minor technical decisions resulting from everyday bureaucratic processes in or between governments, or within the World Bank, could have major impacts on the Trio's everyday life. The price of carbon, which is likely to fluctuate as unpredictably as that of oil or wheat today, as a result of the so-called whims of the market, will also have such impacts. Yet those whom Keith Hart calls the 'owners of big money' might not be the only owners of carbon – indigenous peoples like the Trio may have shares in the forest carbon in their territory, and may earn dividends. REDD may herald an era of conservation capitalism, but forest peoples such as the Trio will not necessarily be its proletariat.

However, to describe things in such terms does not do justice to the Trio's point of view on such matters. For them, the fact that REDD projects compound the forms of White people's power – as money and the tools for calculation and objectification – more intensely than any of their previous encounters with them, is a factor of attraction, not repulsion. It is precisely these things, which they regard as human potentialities, that they wish to appropriate for themselves, in a process of familiarising predation, to promote Trio social reproduction. However, they are placed at a disadvantage because of the government's lack of recognition of their capacity to manage their own resources – and this lack of recognition is in large part due to ignorance of indigenous cultural notions of concepts and practices such as time, space, and trade.

I have so far not discussed one important kind of actor in the creation of such projects, and that is the culture broker, operating in the middle ground between indigenous peoples and developers (Conklin and Graham 1995). The most important such individuals are leaders who have been schooled by missionaries in such a way that they can become privileged interlocutors for outsiders. Robin Wright (2009) has shown that such sustainable development projects may function best in cases in which the 'protestant ethic' of work and the accumulation of wealth has been instilled in the population by missionaries, and it is indeed likely that the Trio are more open to involvement in 'sustainable development' projects as a result of their experience of evangelism. Nevertheless, this does not detract from the fact that such projects appear very differently to such individuals at every point, compared to the developers' point of view. When they talk about land, they are not talking about the same thing as the government; when they talk about forest products, they mean something different from

conservationists.

I would therefore like to end by suggesting that the notion of equivocal compatibility, developed by João de Pina Cabral, can provide a useful way of understanding how the problems of intercultural communication such as those that I have discussed can in fact be constructive. The benefits that indigenous people obtain from REDD may be very different from those that global policymakers may have in mind; however, they may nevertheless be agreeable. In fact – and this is the point of equivocal compatibility – the compatibility of the two points of view, that of the Trio on the one hand and that of the developers on the other, is made possible precisely *because of* the equivocations on both sides. Conservation means something quite different to developers to what it means to the Trio; the benefits of participation also mean something different to the Trio from what the developers intend. Yet these misunderstandings allow both parties to reach an understanding. Whether this is satisfactory in terms of the human rights that the concept of free and prior informed consent is designed to satisfy, is a separate question.

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