Masking the Destruction:
REDD+ in the Peruvian Amazon

by Joanna Cabello

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1. Introduction

More than 15 years of United Nations negotiations on international climate agreements to reduce greenhouse gas emissions have so far been a resounding failure. Not only is there a higher concentration of carbon dioxide pollution in the earth's atmosphere today than ever before,[2] but moreover, mining and hydrocarbon activities, the main causes of global warming, have expanded drastically.[3] Conditioned by the logic of the market, climate policies address pollution and the "right to pollute" as yet another commodity, placing at the service of the market the human and collective rights that are trampled by the pollution itself and by the polluters.

One of the most commonly used policies until now in the framework of climate negotiations is that of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). Through this mechanism, controversial projects implemented in countries of the South, such as hydroelectric power plants, the use of technologies to reduce the burning of fossil fuels in industry, wind farms, etc., are used to generate carbon credits that are sold to countries in the North and their polluting corporations in order to theoretically "offset" their own pollution. In other words, the purchasers can either report the credits acquired to the UN as emissions reductions, since they "offset" their own emissions, or they can profit from speculation by trading the credits on the carbon market. Ultimately, the CDM has not only allowed for more extraction and thus more pollution at the global level, while generating more profits for the polluters, but it has also resulted in serious impacts on local populations where the projects are implemented, such as forced displacement, water, soil and air pollution, criminalization of protest, and many others.[4] The logic of "development" as synonymous with economic growth has now, with the carbon market, been labelled as "green" or "sustainable".

It is within the framework of carbon “offsets” that negotiations began in 2005 around a mechanism for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) and forest conservation, sustainable forest management and the enhancement of carbon stocks (REDD-Plus o REDD+). The Peruvian government has been one of the leading promoters of this mechanism since 2008. The objective of REDD+ is to adapt forests to market logic, creating a financial value for the carbon dioxide stored in their trees and soils, or rather, the capacity of forests to absorb this carbon. Countless REDD pilot projects, national and sub-national programmes and bilateral and multilateral agreements have emerged, with a number of international processes defining their implementation, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), whose parties will meet in Peru for negotiations in 2014, the World Bank’s Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), the World Bank’s Forest Investment Programme (FIP), the voluntary carbon markets, the REDD+ Partnership, and the UN-REDD Programme. Peru participates in all of these processes at different levels.

Peru has the ninth largest forested area in the world and the second largest in South America. Its forests and their peoples, rich in biological and cultural diversity, are nonetheless in a state of constant threat. The country’s macroeconomic “growth” has come hand in hand with various activities that are destructive to the Amazon rainforest and the people who live there. Despite the fact that 84% of the Amazon region is under concession for oil and gas industry activity,[5] it is small farmers who are being singled out as the main drivers of deforestation. This situation has placed the Peruvian Amazon in the sights of numerous multilateral and private finance mechanisms, NGOs, brokers and consultants who are seeking to expand their business and profits with the help of the REDD+ mechanism.

Are local communities to blame for deforestation?

Most official documents that address the causes of deforestation – such as studies by FAO, the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank’s FIP – identify peasant farmers as the main agents of deforestation, largely for migrating to forested areas and clearing typically small areas of forest to plant subsistence crops. As far as these international organizations are concerned, large-scale infrastructure projects, mining and other export-oriented activities play merely a secondary or “indirect” role in deforestation and forest degradation.

However, when peasant farmers clear forested areas, what are the underlying causes of this phenomenon? Instead of analyzing the “whys” of deforestation, the blame is simplistically and shamefully laid on local communities, thus covering up the responsibility of the agents and factors that have structurally driven the large-scale destruction of the Amazon. Deforestation and forest degradation are complex economic and socio-political processes related to pressures emerging largely from outside the forests themselves. The production and consumption model built up in the North heavily depends on raw materials and energy sources extracted mostly from the South. It is important to take a careful look at the logic that guides this process, through which the resources demanded by the “free market” determine how land is appropriated by capital.[6]

At the same time, the communities that have migrated to the Amazon region must be considered in their historical context. It should be noted that after Peru gained its independence, Andean indigenous communities were dissolved, allowing large landowners to appropriate communal lands and subject the indigenous peoples to a regime similar to feudalism. Effective control of the territory was held by the large landowners. The indigenous peoples of the Amazon, meanwhile, suffered a similar process of exploitation and exclusion. From the 1860s onwards, thousands died on rubber plantations, and expeditions to capture indigenous people and sell them into domestic service continued well into the 20th century.

Beginning in the 1950s, the building of highways, primarily motivated by the interests of companies and the state in facilitating the movement of goods and natural resources, enabled many indigenous people to migrate away from the Andean region and into the Amazon. This led to territorial disputes with the indigenous peoples of the Amazon, but at the time the Andean migrants had the support of state institutions, which viewed colonization of the Amazon as an advance towards the integration of the region. Later, the violence of the internal armed conflict during the 1980s and 1990s forced many communities in the Andean region to migrate to other areas. The final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission revealed that during the armed conflict, 40,000 more people died than had been officially recorded. As professor Wilfredo Ardito reflected, "For the official Peru, the large majority of those who died, Quechua-speaking peasants, had never existed. They had no identity documents, properties, ties with urban sectors. Their weight in the national economy and politics was non-existent."[7]

The new highways, in combination with the neoliberal "sale" of the Amazon initiated by the Fujimori administration, accelerated the implementation of large-scale mining and hydrocarbon projects, as well as logging, the construction of hydroelectric power plants and industrial agriculture. This in turn led to continuous migration into the area of impoverished populations in search of better employment opportunities. In addition, the current map of mining projects of the Ministry of Energy and Mines reveals that there are 50,516 mining concessions on the Peruvian coast and in the mountain regions, and 49.6% of the territory of peasant communities in the mountains overlaps with mining concessions.[8] The resulting forced evictions, local contamination, criminalization of protest and other factors have pushed many communities to seek out other lands.

The logic of the system favours an elite minority that benefits from these export-geared extractive activities that are extremely harmful for the environment and local communities. In the meantime, the majority of the people of the Amazon – whether they be indigenous, peasant, urban, "colonists" or "landless" – are excluded from the eternal promise of "progress". The prejudiced view of indigenous and peasant communities as "others", "lazy" and "ignorant" persists today and was reflected in 2007 in an article by former president Alan García entitled "El Síndrome del Perro del Hortelano" ("The Dog in the Manger Syndrome").[9] More recently, the current president, Ollanta Humala, referring to the Law on Prior Consultation, implied that the right to consultation would not apply to Andean communities, since, in his view, they are not indigenous.[10]

Documents that identify small farmers as the cause of deforestation are based on the premise that forests, ecosystems and biodiversity are opportunities to develop markets. Fallow land is erroneously classified as "unused" or "abandoned". Now the carbon market, REDD+ and "environmental services" in general have been incorporated as means of promoting "sustainable, inclusive and competitive development in the Amazon". This "development" obviously includes big companies but not the indigenous and peasant communities who have consistently expressed their opposition to this mercantile view of the forest.[11]

In the midst of this carbon "boom", very little is said about the structural causes underlying the high rates of deforestation in the Peruvian Amazon. A recent analysis of satellite images from the eight Amazon countries, excluding Brazil, which share the Amazon, published by Terra-i and InfoAmazonía, reveals that Peru experienced the greatest loss of forests in 2012, with a 67% increase in deforestation as compared with the previous year.[12] The issues of oil and gas exploration and extraction, or of major infrastructure projects like highways and hydroelectric plants, or industrial oil palm plantations, are not accorded a great deal of attention in discussion around REDD+. The reality, however, evidences the major role these factors play in deforestation. More than 65% of Peru's Indigenous Territories and 49% of Protected Natural Areas overlap with oil

blocks.[13] More than 70 large-scale hydroelectric dams are planned, under construction or in operation in the Peruvian Amazon, generating devastating impacts for riverine ecosystems, the Amazon basin and the livelihoods of local communities.[14] At the same time, social conflicts are on the rise. According to the Office of the Ombudsperson, 85% of socio-environmental conflicts reported in 2013 as of the month of July were related to mining or hydrocarbon projects.[15] These projects share a common denominator: the increased extraction of raw materials to meet the demand of the global market. Nevertheless, in the documents discussing REDD+ "readiness preparation" in Peru, the role of this extractivist logic is cravenly hidden, and blame is placed on small farmers as the main agents of deforestation for clearing small parcels of land for subsistence agriculture.

From the outset, REDD+ has created expectations among the local population in the Amazon by reflecting the concerns and legitimate demands of forest communities. The announcement of objectives such as combating deforestation, guaranteeing local participation, improving forest management, generating income for local populations, and sometimes even supporting the enforcement of land rights, has led many local communities to have high hopes for what REDD+ could signify. However, the reality of REDD+ has increasingly demonstrated that these are hollow promises used by a handful of actors seeking to expand their business opportunities. Through the instrumental adaptation of local expectations, REDD+ promotes the spread of a logic in which the only "value" of nature is monetary value. At the same time, it reduces the problem of deforestation to the monitoring and sale of carbon dioxide, de-politicizing and concealing the power relations between the actors involved, and undermining the still unresolved implementation of indigenous lands and territorial rights, as well as indigenous rights in general.

Under the logic of REDD+, the financial value of forests derives precisely from deforestation and the threats to these forests. After all, if the atmosphere was free of contamination and the Amazon was safe from large-scale destruction, could the capacity of the forests to absorb carbon dioxide be sold? This mechanism is conceived in such a way that the greater degree of deforestation and the more threats to the forests there are, the more REDD+ projects can be justified and implemented in order to sell the scarce and precious commodity of carbon. Thus, without challenging or questioning the continuation of the current extractivist model, REDD+ projects not only generate carbon credits that allow the same actors who are to blame for deforestation to expand and legitimize their activities, but they are also inherently interdependent with that model.

"Offsetting" carbon emissions?

Since the introduction of international carbon markets in 1997, under the Kyoto Protocol, policies based on placing a monetary value on pollution (i.e., on each ton of carbon dioxide or equivalent greenhouse gases) have come to be viewed as the "only possible way" to tackle climate change. Carbon markets, promoted by heavy corporate lobbying, mainly from the United States, have provided the governments of the North and their companies with "flexible" market-based options to fulfill their emissions-reduction targets. In other words, they have provided them with a way out of reducing their emissions at source.

Under the premise that "an emission reduction in one place has the same effects as an emission reduction anywhere else," carbon markets trade in the commodity of carbon like any other commodity on financial markets. Carbon trading involves two mechanisms: (1) cap and trade, and (2) offsets. Under cap and trade, governments or intergovernmental bodies, such as the EU, set an overall legal limit of carbon emissions in a certain time period and then grant industries a certain number of "licences to pollute" (carbon permits). Companies can trade those permits between one another in order to comply with their reduction targets and/or trade them in the financial carbon markets.

The “offset” mechanism involves “emissions-saving” projects implemented to supposedly “compensate” for continued pollution by the industrialized countries of the North and their companies. Big hydroelectric plants, wind farms or filters to reduce the emissions of polluting factories are considered to be “saving” emissions that, in theory, would not be saved without offset projects. Each ton of carbon that is “saved” in the South generates a (cheap) credit that allows another ton to be emitted somewhere else. The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) is the largest offsetting scheme, although credits are also traded in voluntary carbon markets that are not backed by the UN.

Any “saving” of emissions generated by offset projects is by definition nullified by the increased emissions allowed to the buyer, displacing emissions cuts in the North in favour of “emissions-saving” projects in the South. Therefore, these projects do not actually reduce emissions at all. On the contrary, they allow the current economic system based on fossil fuels to remain fully intact. Moreover, offset projects evidence the power inequalities entrenched in the carbon markets. On one end, industries and governments, in partnership with big conservation organizations and financial institutions, are able to buy cheap credits and gain profits while legitimizing (and expanding) business as usual.
On the other end, the local communities where offset projects are implemented are seriously affected. These projects, which often require large areas of land, have for the most part been characterized by violations of land rights and human rights, forced displacement, land grabbing, criminalization of social movements, and increased local environmental destruction. At the same time, offset projects also affect vulnerable populations in the North who live near the industries that buy the credits, since these communities suffer from continued local pollution.[16]

The proponents of carbon markets, however, maintain that increased pollution – and its consequent destruction – can be “sustainable” as long as it is “compensated” for somewhere else.

2. The REDD+ process in Peru

The official implementation of REDD+ in Peru began in 2009 through the Ministry of Environment (MINAM), when Peru was selected as a pilot country for two of the World Bank programmes that most zealously promote carbon markets globally: the FCPF and the FIP. The World Bank, highlighting the “business opportunities” of climate change and without questioning the structural causes of the climate crisis, offers financing for, among other initiatives, preparing countries of the South to “reduce” their emissions from deforestation through market mechanisms. In order to access FCPF funds, Peru was required to submit a REDD+ Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP). The R-PP leads to a National REDD+ Strategy as well as a National Investment Strategy for the FIP.

Subsequent versions of the Peruvian R-PP were harshly criticized and condemned by the Inter-Ethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest (AIDESEP) and other grassroots organizations.[17] The criticism largely focused on the lack of concrete commitments to resolving the problem of the official recognition of indigenous lands; the failure to consider the historical marginalization of forests and forest peoples by the state and to analyze the underlying causes of deforestation; and the failure to clearly establish the application of the right to free, prior and informed consent in REDD+ projects. Final approval by the FCPF was achieved in 2011 through the inclusion of four key commitments demanded by AIDESEP: the alignment of national legislation on land and intellectual property rights with ILO Convention 169; the allocation of a sufficient budget for the demarcation of indigenous territory in the region of Loreto; the use of REDD+ funds, such as FIP funds, for the legal recognition of indigenous territories; and the recognition of “Indigenous REDD+” committees to ensure effective participation. The resolution on the approval of the R-PP stipulated

that Peru must submit a revised version of the proposal by December 31, 2013. The new version has yet to be submitted.

For its part, the aim of the FIP is to provide funding and loans to the public and private sector for the implementation of REDD+ plans as an investment strategy. The government of Peru, which is still in the process of developing its investment plan, submitted in 2013 – with the apparent backing of the FIP, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the World Bank – a draft version of the plan with fundamental discrepancies from the proposals made by indigenous organizations. In a letter of protest, AIDESEP stressed that the main flaws of this draft version include "its insistence on a failed model of large concessions (a cover for illegal logging)" and "its promotion of plantations (particularly oil palm plantations) in falsely classified 'degraded' forests." The draft strategy, according to AIDESEP, "marginalizes indigenous peoples, who are the principal actor in forests at the national level, in terms of their land titling and community forest management and governance." In the current text, they add, indigenous peoples are viewed as "unproductive and incapable" and the "alternative" is companies and some NGOs.[18]

Subsequently, there was an attempt to hold a consultation workshop on the Investment Plan in Loreto, which was categorically rejected by the indigenous organizations, as they were not given adequate prior notice for effective participation, in addition to the fact that the government was trying to impose two FIP workshops and one R-PP workshop in a single day. Moreover, the Shiwilo, Candoshi and Shawi peoples were not included in the consultation process. The indigenous organizations also stressed that the proposal to be discussed did not respect their rights, in addition to the fact that it included a plan for the creation of the Shawi Regional Conservation Area, which could generate serious conflicts with local populations because it overlaps with customary indigenous territories.[19] The indigenous organizations have submitted 40 observations on the draft FIP Investment Plan which will continue to be discussed in regional workshops to demand their inclusion in the text.[20]

The FCPF and FIP both receive funding from, among others, the IDB, several European governments, the United States and Japan, as well as private actors like British Petroleum (BP). The IDB is a key participant in Peru, having been chosen as a delivery partner for FCPF funding[21] and an implementing partner for the FIP, in addition to its extensive portfolio of climate change-related technical cooperation with Peru. The government of Peru is also promoting bilateral cooperation

with the governments of the United States, Switzerland, Japan, Finland and Germany, and with international agencies like FAO, among others.

Thus the REDD+ implementation process in Peru is being guided and financed by actors such as the World Bank, the IDB, the governments of the United States, Germany, Japan and others, and big conservation NGOs. History demonstrates that these actors actively promote and facilitate activities that are underlying causes of deforestation and the marginalization of the peoples of the Amazon. For example, the IDB provides financing for such destructive initiatives as the Camisea gas project (more details below) and the expansion of oil palm plantations.[22] Meanwhile, the Ministry of Economics of Germany and the Ministry of Energy and Mines of Peru are negotiating an agreement on German access to Peruvian raw materials. The German government is promoting an partnership among big German companies to jointly undertake mineral exploration and extraction in Peru, while also supposedly offering support to Peru for the strengthening of its environmental institutions. If the agenda is to continue with an extractivist economic model that results in major environmental and social impacts, then what are the real interests motivating these actors to push forward REDD+ in countries like Peru?

REDD+ details: What does the “plus” mean?

The “plus” (+) in REDD+ implies the inclusion in the REDD mechanism of activities aimed at (1) conservation of forest carbon stocks, (2) sustainable forest management and (3) enhancement of carbon stocks. Although these may seem like positive activities at first glance, the reality is that, based on the carbon market, these activities open the way for the logging industry, industrial monoculture tree plantations and “fortress conservation”. To make matters worse, REDD+ (like the UN in general) uses the same definition of “forest” as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which does not differentiate between genuine, biodiverse forests and tree plantations.[23] In the meantime, the “safeguards” included in UN-negotiated documents to theoretically protect indigenous peoples and their territories are extremely weak, as they merely need to be “promoted” or “supported”.

Activities for the “conservation of forest carbon stocks” are aimed at protecting the commodity of carbon. During the 2008 UN climate negotiations, the Ministry of Environment (MINAM) of Peru announced the National Forest Conservation Programme (PNCB), with the objective of conserving 54 million hectares of forest, including protected areas, concessions for ecotourism and conservation, territorial reserves for indigenous people in voluntary isolation, and Amazon wetlands. The programme also set a target to reduce net deforestation to zero by 2020. With financial support from the German, U.S. and Japanese governments, the PNCB acts as the umbrella programme in which REDD+ would be included for “carbon dioxide sequestration”.[24]

In the framework of the PNCB, the government of Peru is promoting an initiative through which indigenous communities would be paid a mere 10 soles (around USD 3.7) per hectare per year, during a five-year period, in exchange for the commitment to guard the forests where they live. The agreements with the communities require the conservation of the total number of hectares of primary forest in the community.[25] The government has already delivered a total of 2,319,020 soles (roughly USD 860,000) to 16 communities for the protection of 231,902 hectares of forest.[26] Because the communities themselves are required to keep watch and impose greater restrictions on the use of their territories, this tends to create conflicts between and within communities.

MINAM has also signed an agreement with the Carnegie Institution for Science’s Department of Global Ecology to “promote research activities and the application of geographical information systems and space remote sensing technology” – that is, technology for sensing changes in forest biomass (trees and other vegetation) for the measurement of carbon stocks in the framework of REDD+.[27] This will also of course increase the vigilance and repression of local populations living in the areas monitored. Since 2009, a pilot project has been underway for high-resolution mapping of

the Madre de Dios Region as a way to estimate carbon stocks and emissions, with the support of the non-governmental Association for the Conservation of the Amazon Basin (ACCA) and the WWF.

Meanwhile, as a result of the imposition of national parks or protected areas, local communities have faced forced displacement and the violation of their rights to the use of their territories. In the forests of northern Peru, for example, the community of Nuevo Lamas has been resisting attempts to evict them from the Cerro Escalera Regional Conservation Area. Since the community members have refused to leave the area, the park authorities have restricted their access to the forest for hunting and gathering and prohibited their traditional system of shifting cultivation. In 2010, charges were brought against three members of the community for practicing this system of agriculture. Yet a study conducted in Southeast Asia on the state of forests where shifting cultivation is practiced, as opposed to large-scale industrial agriculture, clearly demonstrates that efforts to eliminate this ancient practice have actually contributed to increased deforestation and loss of biodiversity.[28]

In addition to Nuevo Lamas, the only community located within the Cerro Escalera Conservation Area, there are other communities that depend on this reserve for vital forest resources. More recently, charges were brought against eight members of the community of Alto Pucalpillo – where community members only have title to the area around their houses – for the deforestation of 0.25 ha in order to make a small campsite where they could grow bananas, maize and fruit trees to support them during hunting and gathering expeditions. According to a recent survey there are at least 32 communities like Alto Pucalpillo with land titles that only cover their houses, and at least 13 that officially do not even exist.[29] The 132,000-hectare Cerro Escalera Regional Conservation Area has been created alongside hundreds of thousands of hectares of private conservation concessions granted to NGOs and private companies.

Similarly, activities aimed at “sustainable forest management” and “enhancement of forest carbon stocks” are also geared to the market, focusing on ways to increase carbon reserves and thus the volume of “carbon credits” that can be sold from forests or tree plantations. These can even include subsidies for industrial logging operations in primary forests, indigenous territories or community forests, as well as land use conversion (including forested land) for the establishment of monoculture tree plantations.

The FIP financing provided to the Peruvian government, for example, includes funds for the following actions:[30] (1) granting forest concessions for the extraction of timber under so-called “sustainable forest management”, preferably with “certification”, from organizations like the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). This serves as a strong incentive for industrial logging, an activity that has already been heavily challenged in Peru by local communities, and is a significant cause of deforestation. Certification schemes have apparently been used to justify the continued logging of primary forests. A study published in *Bioscience* found that just three rounds of logging, “sustainable” or not, resulted in the near-extinction of target trees in all major rainforest zones, because the hugely complex interconnections between species in these forests makes them particularly susceptible to disturbance The study demonstrates that industrial logging is incapable of keeping forests standing, and on the contrary, is usually the first step towards clear-cutting to make way for agriculture and tree plantations;[31] (2) promoting “carbon positive” agriculture, such as oil palm plantations, which already have national government and international support as an alternative to “illicit” crops, meaning those used for the drug trade. This is based on a false supposition, because in addition to promoting a monoculture model that leads to a whole range of negative social and environmental impacts, the use of palm oil as an energy source can also generate up to 25% more carbon emissions compared to fossil fuels, if the effects of changes in land use are included in the calculations; (3) promoting large-scale tree plantations in the regions that migrant peasant farmers are leaving, including the recommended establishment of 250,000 hectares of plantations in Cajamarca and Huánuco, near San Martín and Ucayali, as a means of employment generation and carbon sequestration; such schemes are most attractive, however, for the plantation companies.

Energy and mines: Thirsty industries

Water is essential for the production of energy sources: for the generation of electricity; for the extraction, transportation and processing of oil, gas and coal; and to an ever greater extent, for the irrigation of monoculture plantations for agrofuel production or as carbon sinks. The International Energy Agency, it its *World Energy Outook 2012* report, predicted that the (ab)use of water for energy production will grow at twice the rate of energy demand.[32] The predicted 85% increase in water consumption by 2035 reflects a move towards more water-intensive power generation and expanding production of agrofuels. It is estimated that 583 billion cubic metres of water were used for energy production in 2010. The amount consumed – that is, water that was extracted and not returned to its source – was 66 billion cubic metres.

In Peru, the controversial Conga mining project planned by the transnational Newmont-Buenaventura-IFC (Minera Yanacocha) in the northern region of Cajamarca has become a symbol of the struggle to protect water. The proposed site for the open-pit gold mining project is at the headwaters of a river basin that supplies five micro-basins, affecting more than 600 springs in addition to the imminent loss of numerous lakes, with drastic impacts on the environment and on the population of lowland regions. Its impacts would include the disappearance of several ecosystems and the fragmentation of those remaining, as well as the impacts of draining lakes for use as tailing ponds.[33]

In response to this opposition, the company is offering to "replace" the lakes with artificial reservoirs to "compensate" for their destruction. However, detailed studies have clearly shown that it would be impossible to implement this replacement and much less to "compensate" for the lost of a natural hydrological ecosystem with manmade reservoirs.[34] Local communities and governments have been waging months of intense protests in the attempt to halt a project that will not benefit the local population in any way. At the same time, however, the administration of Ollanta Humala and Yanacocha are striving to ensure that the project goes through at any cost.

Just as REDD+ implies a system of carbon offsets to compensate for atmospheric pollution, numerous markets are being promoted that would allow for other services provided by nature to be marketed or even replaced. The supposition that the destruction of complex ecosystems can be "compensated" for or "replaced" is extremely dangerous and is aimed at covering up increased extraction and devastation of nature and the people who coexist with it.

Legislation in process

The new Forest and Wildlife Law, which has yet to enter into force, along with the Law on the Provision of Environmental Services, are two key pieces of legislation for the implementation of REDD+, as they will provide the legal framework for ecosystem services and carbon ownership rights. The new draft Forest Law, which is currently in the process of consultation, still fails to take into consideration the key concerns of indigenous peoples with regard to the previous law: the failure to recognize indigenous peoples' customary rights to land and territories; the allocation of more than 10 million hectares in the form of concessions for logging, tourism and REDD+ activities within indigenous lands that lack official recognition; and the promotion of large-scale capital-intensive economic activities, with no measures to promote small-scale activities that could benefit indigenous communities. Moreover, the measures adopted to supposedly "consult" indigenous peoples on the Forest Law were widely and repeatedly rejected by numerous organizations, who maintain that a few meetings with the company or government do not constitute a consultation, but merely an information-sharing exercise.[35]

Meanwhile, in August 2013, the National Forest and Wildlife Policy (PNFFS) was adopted. Among other objectives, it aims to contribute to "the valuing of forest ecosystem goods and services" as well as "facilitating market instruments and economic and financial mechanisms to compensate, support and stimulate sustainable forest development, in order to discourage deforestation due to economic causes." The PNFFS highlights the potential availability of 10.5 million hectares of land suited to the establishment of monoculture tree plantations in Peru, claiming that these could help reduce poverty and extreme poverty while generating employment for women. The policy also stresses how monoculture plantations could help to capture carbon, in line with the objectives of REDD+.[36]

However, this rhetoric conceals the countless social and environmental problems associated with monoculture plantations. Plantations involve the use of large areas of land erroneously classified as "degraded" or "idle" and require the use of large quantities of toxic pesticides, fertilizers and machinery. They also tend to make excessive use of water sources, provoking droughts and contamination in the surrounding area, in addition to the destruction of natural soil cycles, vegetation and biodiversity. In other words, despite the heavy lobbying of multinational companies and financial institutions to maintain the false definition of forests used by FAO and the UN in general, which fails to distinguish between biodiverse forests and tree plantations, plantations are not forests! In the Peruvian Amazon there are already REDD+ projects that include plantations as a means of carbon capture, such as the Martín Sagrado Biocorridor REDD+ Project in the region of San Martín, where there are plans to plant more than two million trees.[37]

Prior Consultation Law and Regulations

After hard-fought struggle, the Prior Consultation Law finally included the rights enshrined in Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization (ILO), but failed to incorporate the free, prior and informed consent reflected today in international legal instruments and jurisprudence.

In February 2008, the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MINEM) included Convention 169 as a recognized source in its regulations on informing and consulting the population. However, this did not lead to any substantial changes, for numerous reasons:[38] (1) "consultation" merely takes the form of informational workshops and public hearings, which have even been declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of Justice in May 2013, in a case filed by the Legal Defence Institute;[39] (2) the opinions or observations put forward during or following these public hearings are always referential; indigenous communities and their organizations have no real possibility of modifying projects through these observations; (3) these observations and the responses to them provided by the companies involved are handled by the same state authorities whose main institutional function is to promote mining and hydrocarbon activities (MINEM in the case of mining projects and MINEM or PERUPETRO for hydrocarbon projects, depending on the stage of the project); and (4) informational workshops are held after the negotiations and agreements reached between the state and the company in question. Neither the negotiations nor the contracts are included in the so-called consultation process.

In September 2009, as a result of agreements established after a massive indigenous uprising in Bagua, where the state and the peoples of the Amazon clashed over a series of legislative decrees laws that trampled indigenous territorial rights, a multi-party committee was created in the Congress with the mandate to establish a consultation mechanism for the Peruvian legislative process. However, its work was limited to the drafting of an opinion paper.

It was under the current administration, in July 2011, that the new Congress tabled a draft law that had been endorsed by indigenous organizations and had the consensus necessary for its approval. As a result, the "Law for the right to prior consultation of indigenous and original peoples, recognized in Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization" was passed. However, in order to identify the indigenous peoples with this right to consultation, the Vice Ministry of Intercultural Affairs was tasked with "preparing, consolidating and updating the Official Database of

Indigenous or Original Peoples created by the law itself." So far, however, this database has yet to be published, which means that the law and its regulations have remained practically unused.

The recognition of the subjects of prior consultation and the time of its implementation have been left up to the decision of each sector. According to a statement from the Andean Indigenous Council of Peru: "The Prior Consultation Law and its Regulations were victories achieved with blood and suffering. And now they want to reduce this basic right to an administrative procedure. (…) They only want to implement the consultation in those places where territorial defence is limited. Where there is the possibility of resistance, they deny the existence of indigenous peoples to avoid the consultation."[40]

Moreover, according to the law, there is no possibility for indigenous communities to oppose extractive industry activities within their territories. These could only be prevented, in theory, if they threaten the habitat to such a degree that they endanger the survival of the population.

The National Human Rights Coordinator, for its part, warned in August 2013 that the attempts to implement prior consultation without the opinion of the actual stakeholders, the criminalization of indigenous protests, and the lack of advances in specialized state institutions are evidence of a political vision that has gone so far as to deny the indigenous status of peasant communities on the coast and in the Andes, in the words of the president himself.[41]

Part of the indigenous movement in Peru, particularly through AIDESEP and the Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA), is working hard on an initiative to convert the "threats" of REDD+ into "opportunities" to consolidate indigenous peoples' rights. The initiative, called the Amazonian Indigenous REDD+ Proposal, focuses on guaranteeing effective participation by indigenous peoples and respect for their rights, by granting a central role to the long-term "life plans" already developed in the Amazon region. Their key demands include recognition and legal titling of indigenous territories and ensuring financial resources for indigenous communities and families.

In the framework of REDD+ itself, however, the issue of human rights in connection with the climate crisis has been almost forgotten by the UNFCCC. ILO Convention 169 and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples are barely mentioned in REDD+-related documents. It was only in 2010 during the climate negotiations in Cancún that reference was made to so-called "safeguards" to theoretically protect indigenous peoples and their territories. However, these safeguards, as well as being extremely weak, since they merely need to be "promoted" and "supported", do not have the same legal force as rights. Thus despite the long struggle of indigenous peoples to demand their rights, the discussion has moved from rights to safeguards.

The Amazonian Indigenous REDD+ Proposal calls for "the reduction of activities that drive deforestation such as oil, mining, dams, colonization, agroindustry and megaprojects in forests."[42] However, as will be discussed in greater detail in the next section, the very existence of REDD+ depends on threats to the forests.

While REDD+ is being designed and implemented globally as a package of market-based policies to "reduce deforestation", the underlying structural causes of deforestation remain intact. From the beginning, REDD+ has sought to establish a new commodity based on the capacity of forests to store carbon. Rooted in a neoliberal climate regime, it leaves aside any discussion on fossil fuels, social justice, power relations and, in particular, the structural transition needed to tackle the underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation.

3. The interdependence of REDD+ and deforestation

For REDD+, deforestation and threats to the forests are precisely what give these forests financial "value". If the atmosphere was free of contamination, could the capacity of the forests to absorb

carbon dioxide be sold? The greater the degree of deforestation and the more threats to the forests there are, the more REDD+ projects can be justified and implemented in order to sell the scarce and precious commodity of carbon.

Identifying small farmers, mainly migrants from the Andean region or from other rainforest areas, as the main drivers of deforestation in the Amazon ignores the underlying reason for this phenomenon: the fact that most of the Andean region is covered by mining concessions.[43] This fact, combined with oil and gas industry activity, the construction of infrastructure, the building of highways, the establishment of monoculture plantations, etc., promotes migration and the establishment of human settlements, since these activities allow access to formerly impenetrable areas of the rainforest.

REDD+ does not challenge or question the continuation of the current extractivist economic model. On the contrary, the mechanism is conceived in such a way that the creation of “value”, according to its logic, not only generates carbon credits that allow the expansion and legitimization of these destructive activities, but is also inherently interdependent with the current model.

REDD+ and natural gas extraction: The carbon market at the service of oil companies and financial institutions

The Camisea Project is currently the largest and most controversial energy project in Peru. It involves the extraction of natural gas in the middle of the Amazon rainforest, in Blocks 56 (under concession to Pluspetrol), 57 (Repsol and Petrobras), 58 (Petrobras) and 88 (a consortium headed by Pluspetrol), in addition to hundreds of kilometres of gas pipelines, fractionation and liquids recovery plants, ports, access roads and the installation of power lines. The areas where these activities are carried out or planned overlap with numerous communal reserves, indigenous territories and national parks.[44] Plans to expand operations in Block 88 with the drilling of 20 new wells have sparked protest and criticism, and demonstrated once again how the drive for profits takes precedence over the protection of the rights and survival of indigenous peoples. The proposed area of expansion overlaps with the Kugapakori Nahua Nanti Territorial Reserve (RTKNN), which is home to these and other indigenous peoples living in different stages of voluntary isolation and

initial contact. At the same time, the reserve serves as a buffer zone of Manú National Park. According to UNESCO, the biological diversity found in this park "exceeds that of any other place on Earth."[45]

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) plays a key role in funding the Camisea project. In December 2012, the bank provided the Peruvian government with USD 1 million to protect indigenous reserves for peoples living in voluntary isolation.[46] To that end, "territorial" reserves are to be converted into "indigenous" reserves, supposedly as a means of offering them greater protection. However, this category, in accordance with national legislation, *permits* the exploitation of natural resources in these reserves if the government considers it necessary.[47]

The financing provided by the IDB includes the funding of studies to establish five indigenous reserves in areas that are significantly overlapped by hydrocarbon concessions. For example, in one of the proposed reserve areas, between the Napo and Tigre Rivers, there are currently operations by the Anglo-French oil company Perenco, which claims there is no evidence of the existence of isolated indigenous people in the area.[48] The IDB is also funding studies to re-categorize five territorial reserves, including the RTKNN, which is threatened by the Camisea project. In addition, under the discourse of "protection", the funds will be used for "an analysis of avoided deforestation" on the reserves for peoples in voluntary isolation or initial contact – in other words, an assessment of carbon stocks – as well as the design of "a financial mechanism for their protection with the sale of carbon credits" through a REDD+ project.

Yet the IDB has also played a catalytic role for the extraction of the natural gas in the Camisea fields. In 2002, for example, it approved a USD 5 million loan to the government of Peru to strengthen its capacity to supervise and monitor the "environmental and social impacts of the project" and establish sustainable development initiatives in its area of influence.[49] In 2003, it granted a loan of USD 135 million to a private consortium for the construction of gas pipelines, thus providing support for the "transportation component" of the Camisea project.[50] The IDB's involvement was significant, because it encouraged loans from other financial institutions, undermining the fierce criticisms of the project voiced by civil society.

How can the IBD expect us to believe that it is going to protect an area threatened by a project that the bank itself is promoting? One thing that is certain is that REDD+ makes it possible to secure ownership rights over the carbon credits from the reserve without the need to halt gas extraction in the area. That is why the REDD+ project in question does not even mention the extent of Camisea operations in indigenous territories.

In the meantime, Pluspetrol, the oil company that heads up the Camisea Consortium, managed to sign an agreement in 2013 for a Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) project involving the Malvinas gas processing plant in Block 88.[51] Through the CDM, Pluspetrol will be able to generate carbon credits up until 2020 and sell them on the carbon market, thus further boosting its profits. The company claims that it will reduce the plant's carbon emissions by installing two waste heat recovery units and thus avoiding the installation and operation of two conventional natural gas-fuelled hot oil heaters, which means avoiding the additional burning of fossil fuels.[52] However, behind the company's discourse of "energy efficiency" and "sustainability", a closer look at the Camisea project reveals the destruction that its activities provoke to the ecosystems and local population of the Urubamba valley, and how the carbon market is not only legitimizing but also supporting the expansion of its operations.[53]

In 2005 Pluspetrol began its activities in Block 56, affecting 58,500 hectares that include the territory of seven indigenous communities and the Shintorini rural settlement. The company's activities there include the drilling of 12 wells, the construction of pipelines to connect these wells with the Malvinas plant, the expansion of the plant, and the installation of an electric power line for the operation of the drilling equipment. The natural gas extracted from this block is exported to other places like Mexico, the United States and countries in Europe.[54]

Block 57, where Pluspetrol operates with partner companies Repsol and Petrobras, overlaps with the territory of the Asháninka and Machiguenga Communal Reserves, and borders on Otishisi National Park. There are 19 communities within Block 57. In its Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Spanish company Repsol notes that this block "is situated in one of the world's most important areas of natural biological diversity, as well as in an area of significant ethno-linguistic diversity, between the basins of the Urubamba and Tambo Rivers." It further stresses that "although the definition and allocation of Block 57 took place after the creation of the Machiguenga and Asháninka Communal Reserves, this does not prevent the undertaking of activities in these protected natural areas, as stipulated in the Law on Protected Natural Areas."[55] The company is already facing conflicts with the indigenous peoples in the area affected.[56]

The Brazilian company Petrobras holds the concession to Block 58, which is near a number of protected areas, such as Manú National Park and the Megantoni National Sanctuary. Its EIA was approved for seismic prospecting and exploratory drilling. Hundreds of kilometres of forest were affected by these operations. Petrobras has already drilled three wells and cleared new 3D seismic lines, in addition to the construction of gas pipelines to supply the energy market in the south of the country, particularly for the indiscriminate energy consumption of mining projects in the Andes. These projects face ongoing conflicts with local communities, who are fighting to defend, along with their lands and ways of life, their increasingly scarce water resources (see the box entitled: "Energy and mines: Thirsty industries").

The Malvinas plant, located in Block 88, is a petrochemical complex operated by the Camisea Consortium – made up by Hunt Oil (USA), SK Energy (South Korea), Repsol (Spain), Tecpetrol (Argentina, Peru) and Sonatrach (Algeria) and headed by Pluspetrol – in which gas, natural gas liquids and produced water are separated. It has an airport with daily flights to Lima and a river port with heavy boat traffic. A 2003 Supreme Decree which prohibits "the granting of new rights that imply the exploitation of natural resources" within the RTKNN has been utterly violated.

In 2007 the IDB became even more involved in Camisea by approving a USD 400 million loan to a private consortium headed up by Hunt Oil.[57] This loan was approved despite constant denunciations of the social and environmental impacts of the project, especially for indigenous peoples, and in contravention of a specific IDB policy on indigenous peoples, in which the bank commits to only financing projects which respect the right of indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation "to remain in isolation and to live freely according to their culture."[58] The IDB has admitted that the facilities associated with the new operations would further impact on "indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation within the Nahua-Kugapakori Territorial Reserve."[59] In 2011, Nahua indigenous people discovered a team of researchers employed by Pluspetrol carrying out studies in an area outside Pluspetrol's concession.[60]

The current application for approval of the EIA to expand operations in Block 88 has met with multiple observations. The Vice Ministry of Intercultural Affairs, in a resolution dated July 12, issued 83 observations, stressing that the expansion of exploration would cause "severe and critical harm to the health of peoples in voluntary isolation."[61] However, this resolution was removed from the Ministry of Culture website just a few hours after it had been posted, and was eventually overturned by another Vice Ministry resolution on July 19. That same month, the Nahua people of Santa Rosa de Serjali, a community within the reserve, sent a letter to the Vice Ministry expressing their opposition to the activities in their territories.[62]

To make matters worse, the Ministry of Energy and Mines, according to an article published August 9 in the newspaper *Gestión*, declared that in the area where the Camisea project expansion is planned "there are no contacted peoples",[63] and therefore, prior consultation would not be necessary.

The IDB, the oil and gas companies and the government of Peru have been extracting the gas beneath indigenous territories, communal reserves and national parks with no regard for the permanent damage to the peoples and ecosystems of the Urubamba valley. We are talking about the possible physical and socio-cultural extinction of some of these peoples, given that their territories are being invaded or will be invaded and seriously impacted by the operations of these companies. Now, through a REDD+ project, these actors not only want to secure the carbon credits that could be generated from the forested areas on the reserve that remain standing, but also, and more importantly, to ensure the expansion of gas exploration and extraction in the Amazon.

4. Conclusions

From the beginning, REDD+ has been about carbon: the measurement and accumulation of the carbon dioxide particles stored in trees, forests and soils, for sale and speculation on the carbon markets. Despite the efforts of organizations concerned about deforestation to try to change this concept in order to include a more holistic vision of forests, REDD+ is being financed, implemented and planned to serve as a carbon market mechanism. As with any market, buyers are concerned above all with the “value” and quality of the merchandise. The experience of recent years has demonstrated that REDD+ projects are not about defending or strengthening the rights of indigenous peoples and small farmers over their territories, but rather, on the contrary, establishing new packages of ownership rights to be appropriated by different powerful actors. This is also reflected in the heavy investment in and importance placed on “measurement, reporting and verification” of the carbon dioxide in forests. If the amount of carbon “stored” is not known, the merchandise cannot be sold.

Although Peru’s greenhouse gas emissions are not significant, representing less than 1% of global emissions, they increased by 21% between 1994 and 2000, in direct correlation with national economic growth. This means that the so-called growth or “development” that benefits only a small few has been the result of an increase in polluting extractive activities and, therefore, more deforestation. One example of this is the investment in the Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA), in which 32% of the highest priority projects are concentrated in the Amazon, accelerating a range of impacts such as logging and the occupation of previously inaccessible areas.[64] In the meantime, 84% of the Peruvian Amazon region is covered by hydrocarbon concessions, while a decree issued in 2011 declared the construction of 20 large hydroelectric power stations along the Marañon River to be a matter of “national interest”. Most of the electricity will be exported to Brazil, while the rest will be used for mining megaprojects in the Andean region.[65] Industrial oil palm plantations are also expanding in the Amazon. The regional government of Loreto has acknowledged that 106,212.6 hectares of land have been targeted (although the permits needed to begin operations have yet to be issued) for the implementation of oil palm plantation projects in this region.[66]

The severe environmental impacts of extractive activities make any other economic activities impossible in the regions affected, thus displacing the populations of these areas and permanently depriving them of their means of livelihood. Extractive activities destroy cultures, ways of life and other worlds that could teach us how to live in harmony with the environment that surrounds us.

REDD+ is based on the premise that, without challenging the extractivist model or tackling the underlying causes, adding financial value to carbon will create sufficient incentives to reduce deforestation. This clearly does not work. Deforestation and forest degradation are driven by an economic logic of continuous “growth” that depends on extraction and, therefore, environmental and social destruction. This same logic views nature, its functions and cycles as commodities, and biodiverse forests as tree plantations. This logic seeks to conduct business with forests while the fossil fuel-based economy continues to expand. Carbon is already a commodity traded through international mechanisms, like the CDM. This commodity is of interest to banks, companies, brokers, Northern governments, consultants and big environmental NGOs, who are increasingly in

need of a pro-environment image for their activities and investments, stressing that the idea of "offsetting" destruction is acceptable and even "sustainable", in order to legitimize their actions.

Carbon ownership is expressed through new forms of control, like the methodologies for the "measurement, reporting and verification" of carbon stocks, a new business in itself, while access to and management of this "commodity" in different territories is regulated through contracts. Most of these contracts subject local communities to commitments that restrict their rights of use for long periods of time, in exchange for monetary compensation. Carbon ownership also implies greater vigilance, control and repression by forest rangers or "green police" who are tasked with protecting this new commodity. Lured by the possibility of extra income, many communities end up participating in a strategy that provides carbon credits or licences to pollute to the same actors who facilitate or cause the destruction of the environment. REDD+ therefore contributes to the expansion of activities that drive deforestation, as it is based on a logic that is interdependent with the extractivist economic model. This logic also allows for the trampling of collective and human rights, formerly enforced by law, now ruled by markets. REDD+ thus serves the interests of transnational corporations, through capitalism portrayed as sustainable, conservationist and green.

The deceptive discourses of REDD+ for "reducing deforestation", which simultaneously and systematically generate more deforestation, blind us to the many other options available. On what and whom do we place "value" under this narrative? Is it not urgently necessary to being a real transformation that will allow us to escape from the extractivist model that capitalism depends on? By not recognizing the unjust realities of current land ownership regimes, REDD+ does not represent an ally to the many groups who vigorously fight against the true causes of large-scale deforestation. Nevertheless, resistance to this market logic is growing, and it is crucial to support and strengthen the struggles against this new form of land and natural resource grabbing.

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