Framing water and forests as global or local? Transnational community-based networks transforming common-pool resources essence and scales

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Abstract

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“Framing water and forests as global or local? Transnational community-based networks transforming common-pool resources essence and scales” – Emilie Dupuits (PhD candidate, Université de Genève) and Professor Géraldine Pfieger (Université de Genève)

Abstract
Since the 2000s, facing the increasing globalization and commodification of common-pool resources, community-based organizations managing water and forests at the local scale started to create transnational networks. Their main goal is to get a direct representation in international decision-making arenas, as to promote their model of community-based governance and transform existing norms. Two main strategies to impact the norm-building process are the reframing of the resources essence (from market goods to human rights or commons...) and the claim on appropriate scales of governance for these resources (local, regional, global...). In this global context, to what extent the reframing of water and forests essence by transnational community-based networks impacts their respective scales of governance?

The paper aims to answer this interrogation using transnational political sociology and discourse analysis. The analysis relies on two case studies: the Latin-American Confederation of Community Organizations for Water Services and Sanitation (CLOCSAS), and the Mesoamerican Alliance of Peoples and Forests (AMPB). From one side, CLOCSAS is framing water as a global common and a universal human right, in order to become an alternative international expert on water issues. Distinctively, AMPB is framing forests as collective territorial rights, in order to differentiate from technical international experts, such as UN-REDD. Finally, the objective of this paper is to highlight the influence of framing strategies, used by transnational community-based networks, on the definition of what are the appropriate scales of governance for common-pool resources.

Key-words
Common-pool resources governance; Water; Forests; Transnational networks; Community-based organizations; Latin-America

Introduction
While, since the 1970s, environmental issues are inserted into a dynamic of globalization, such as climate change or ozone layer, the global governance of common goods such as water or forests is more problematic. Indeed, these resources were traditionally managed at the local or national scales and then lack a structured international regime to regulate some important transboundary issues as deforestation or water depletion and pollution (Gupta, Pahl-Wostl, 2013). However, since the 1990s, water and forests are the object of increasing attempts to address these issues at the international scale, especially in the context of rising efforts to fight climate change. Disagreements on what should be the appropriate scale to govern common-pool resources can be explained from diverging representations on resources essence (from public to economic goods, or local to universal rights...).
From one side, the multidimensional nature of forests has encouraged its connection to other international regimes, such as biodiversity and climate change, which benefit from more structured regulatory frameworks (Howlett, 2010). For example, under the international climate change regime was launched in 2008 the UN-REDD Program (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation). This program aims to fight deforestation by creating a financial value for the carbon stored in forests (McDermott et al., 2012). From another side, the high fragmentation of global water governance led to the proliferation of international forums, from which have emerged diverse paradigms defining what should be “good water governance”. Some examples of these international paradigms are Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), or water as an economic good1. However, these norms and paradigms, often produced by international technical experts, are the object of increasing transnational protests2, mainly directed against the lack of local communities’ inclusion in decision-making processes (Conca, 2005; Agrawal et al., 2010; Cashore et al., 2012). Indeed, local communities are often represented in these global arenas through intermediaries such as international NGOs (McMichael, 2004; Vielajus, 2009; Siméant, 2010).

Facing this global context, local communities managing common-pool resources started to create transnational networks, to get a direct representation in global arenas and diffuse an alternative framing of water and forests essence around community-based governance principles3. As an example, the Mesoamerican Alliance of Peoples and Forests (AMPB) was founded in 2010, following the international climate negotiations. The alliance consists primarily of community forestry organizations, but also indigenous and peasant communities. Its main strategy is directed to the consolidation of territorial rights and autonomy from governments and international actors such as UN-REDD. Another example is the Latin-American Confederation of Community Organizations for Water Services and Sanitation (CLOCSAS), created in 2011 during the second Latin-American Conference of Community Water Management in Peru4. The network is composed of community water organizations, structured through sub-national and national federations. Its main objectives are the strengthening of local capacities and the inclusion of water community organizations in international arenas, to achieve the challenge of universal access to drinking water and sanitation.

The transnational action of community-based organizations raises the following central interrogation regarding the transformations of common-pool resources norms of governance: to what extent the reframing of water and forests essence by transnational community-based networks impacts their respective scales of governance?

This paper aims to answer this interrogation using transnational political sociology and discourse analysis of semi-structured interviews made with transnational community leaders and their allies, written documents and direct observations. The analysis relies on two case studies, the Latin-American Confederation of Community Organizations for Water Services and Sanitation (CLOCSAS), and the Mesoamerican Alliance of Peoples and Forests (AMPB). In a first part, an analysis of CLOCSAS and AMPB’s positions regarding international experts and paradigms for common-pool resources governance is drawn. In a second part, the impacts of CLOCSAS and AMPB’s framing strategies on their international integration or, at the contrary, their local autonomy to manage resources are analysed. Indeed, when CLOCSAS is framing water as a global common and a universal human right, in order to become an alternative international expert on water issues, AMPB is framing forests as

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1 Both defined during the International Conference on Water and Environment, Dublin, 1992.
2 Two major examples of these protests are the recent transnational campaign around “indigenous peoples’ rights not REDD”, and the “water war” in Cochabamba, Bolivia, in 2001, against water privatization.
3 Community-based governance can be defined as a third model to manage water and forests, between the public – State – and the private one – market. Its main principles are self-management and autonomy from governments, reciprocity between users and horizontality in decision-making.
4 Agreement made between 35 representatives of community water organizations of the 14 countries represented: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, and El Salvador.
local territorial rights, in order to differentiate from technical international experts. Finally, the objective of this paper is to highlight the influence of framing strategies, used by transnational community-based networks, on the definition of what are the appropriate scales of governance for common-pool resources.

1. Transnational community-based networks in a multi-scales water and forests governance

1.1. A general trend toward common-pool resources globalization and commodification

Common-pool resources in an era of globalization

Historically, one can observe the diffusion of three main modes of shared resources management (Ostrom, 1990): private management under private property which transform resources in a commodities, public management by a State or local authority, and community management by end-users, also called “common-pool resource institutions”. In the real world, local or national actors may experience several mixes of these models, between public, private and community management. Ostrom developed key principles to define the main dimensions of common-pool resource institutions and the conditions of their sustainability. Concerning users, she mentioned several necessary dimensions, such as reciprocity between users, horizontality in the decision-making, and autonomy regarding external authorities. It means that the main differences between a common good and a commodity (or private good) is related to the capacity of end-users to define by themselves access conditions, prices conditions, and rules of inclusion and exclusion of new users in an autonomous way, and with a high degree of reciprocity (or low hierarchy) between users.

However, common-pool resource institutions are more and more included in a wider global context of governance, implying different transformations for the community-based model. Indeed, since the end of WWII, NGOs and International Organizations worked to strengthen global environmental governance, considering that global commons, such as the atmosphere, oceans and seabed, polar regions or biodiversity, should be governed through multilateral environmental agreements (Pflieger, 2014). This focus on global environmental problems, governance and politics partly relies on the distinction between village commons (water, forests or fisheries) at the local or regional scale from global commons, which are not directly under the sovereignty of one state, or are transboundary by essence (Young, 2006). However, the general and theoretical distinction between village and global commons is more and more blurred. On one hand, global commons governance and international regimes always require regional, national or even local procedures to be implemented accurately. On the other hand, village commons could be considered as local but globally cumulative environmental resources and issues, which require international collective action. Forests, freshwater, coral reefs, drylands, just to name a few, face ecological problems that are apparently local but are characterized by both global causes and consequences (Conca, 2005).

From the most typical global environmental problems to local but cumulative environmental problems, global governance regimes are facing a common trend characterized by the diversification of their institutional forms, well beyond single treaties, conventions, and multilateral agreements. These new forms of “glocal” environmental governance (Swyngedouw, 2004; Gupta et al., 2013) imply an increasing diversity of actors participating in international decision-making processes, ranging from national governmental authorities and International Organizations to INGOs, experts and local communities organized in networks. This fragmentation represents both an opportunity for community-based organizations to enter global arenas relatively opened to civil society, but also a constraint as they have to compete with multiple powerful international actors dominating norm-building processes, especially NGOs and experts (Andonova, Mitchell, 2010).

The threat of common-pool resources commodification from the international scale
The integration of common-pool resources in a context of globalization could modify their essence, between the competing status of common, private and public goods. Under the pressure of economic, political, and ideological factors, one can observe strong trends toward the privatization of natural resources and the transformation of common-pool resources into commodities (Bakker, 2007), as well as the return of states and governments in the movement of appropriation of natural resources at the regional and international scales (Agrawal, 2009). As a consequence, the self-management of natural resources by local communities is losing ground at the global scale. Lots of these trends are coming from international technical experts, involved in a process of redefining governance norms and best practices for resource management.

On one hand, no regime exists for the management of forests, which remain governed by several overlapping agreements, from the trade of tropical timber (International Tropical Timber Agreement) to the mitigation of climate change and the fight against deforestation (REDD program). UN-REDD, as an emerging powerful international expert, tends to turn forests into a global common, instead of a pure village common, giving value to the ecosystem services provided by forests to the global atmosphere, in terms of carbon storage. As we shall see, this globalization process produces tension with local end-users who manage community forests for ages and who fight to keep their rights and autonomy from governmental authorities. International conservation NGOs also tend to prioritize an ecosystemic perspective on forests and biodiversity, giving an economic value to the resource at the cost of more social and cultural values (Nasi, Frost, 2009).

On the other hand, global water governance includes several NGOs and expert networks, such as the World Water Council (WWC) or the International Water Association (IWA). Since the 2nd world water forum organized in The Hague in 2000, WWC called for a new global water regime. Even if, finally, the forum did not adopt a global agreement on water governance, one can observe the development of several initiatives concerning the production of more or less formal norms at the global scale, through the auspices of international organizations such as UN-Water or the Global Water Partnership (GWP) (Baumgartner, Pahl-Wostl, 2013). UN-Water is mandated to provide “coordination on technical issues at the expert level”. Its soft function as a network connector doesn’t mitigate the very fragmented nature of global water governance, which therefore remains very pluralistic and opened to diverse and competing initiatives and normative processes. Some of those rules concern the governance of transboundary rivers (such as the UNECE convention), others deal with what should be “good governance” (IWRM) (Conca, 2005).

After having presented the context of globalization and commodification in which community-based organizations are inserted, the next part presents a theoretical framework to understand the specificities of transnational community-based networks, and their strategies to transform common-pool resources norms of governance.

1.2. Transnational community-based networks and norm-building

An alternative conceptualization of transnational community-based networks

The recent transnationalization of common-pool resources institutions questions existing approaches in the field of transnational networks. From a sociological perspective, transnational collective action can be defined as “the coordinated international campaigns on the part of networks of activists against international actors, other states, or international institutions” (Della Porta, Tarrow, 2005: 7). In the field of international relations, the concept of transnational advocacy networks refers to

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5 Conca highlights the technical character of classic international experts regarding their different factors of power, ranging from “the state-herding influence exerted by ‘epistemic communities’ of technical experts, the problem-framing role of politically savvy ‘knowledge-brokers’, and the knowledge-dissemination role of transnational social-learning networks” (2006:125).

“those actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services” (Keck, Sikkink, 1999: 89). This type of network acquired an important role in the regulation of globalization, seeking primarily to influence States and International Organisations. INGOs mainly prevailed in this process of redefining global norms, which highlights their role of intermediary between local actors and their global claims.

However, these concepts are failing to adequately capture the complexity of transnational community-based networks. Indeed, they do not take into account the diversity of civil society actors, beyond the dominant category of NGOs, to assess their role in global governance processes (Vielajus, 2009). They neither take into account the existence of more sustainable networks, beyond only protesting actions carried out at the international scale (Siméant, 2010; Caouette, 2010). The concept of “transnational grassroots network” is useful to link these different approaches (Guarnizo, Smith, 1998). The particularity of these networks lays in their self-management and membership, as they are exclusively composed of grassroots organizations⁷, both providers and recipients of a collective service, and therefore directly concerned by the issue they are defending. This concept echoes the idea of cosmopolitan localism (McMichael, 2004), referring to the active role played by local communities to regain ownership of global issues directly affecting them. This can happen through their participation in transnational networks, and the increased awareness of shared interests and values with other local actors previously isolated from each other (Caouette, 2010).

This conceptual approach is oriented to consider transnational community-based networks as full-fledged actors in global water and forests governance. These actors have the capacity to transform or even create new norms of governance for common-pool resources. It is now necessary to develop a theoretical framework to understand the specific mechanisms of norm-building they use.

**Framing and rescaling strategies in the norm-building process**

Norms have been defined as “standard of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity” (Finnemore, Sikkink, 1998: 891). In the three phases of the international norm-building process (emergence, diffusion, internalization), grassroots organizations are not really considered as a powerful actor. Then, some authors prefer talking about “transnational norm-building” (Mückenberger, 2008; Hein, Kohlmorgen, 2009), in order to concede community-based actors a key role in each phase of norms life cycle. This approach emphasizes the existence of subsidiary and informal norms, having an important role to play in the context of a global water and forests governance characterized by the absence of central authority. It also recognizes the existence of transnational norms, reflecting their circulations between local and global scales, and their limited scope to a certain type of actor or a geographical area. Finally, it acknowledges the influence of these norms, beyond the States, on the behaviour of actors directly affected by the promoted norms. In that perspective, transnational community-based networks can transform common-pool resources norms, by reframing their substance or essence (such as collective or human rights) and claiming certain procedures or scales for their implementation (who is sovereign on it).

Norms’ essence can be transformed through the use of reframing strategies to change the perceptions and understandings of targeted actors. The sociology of transnational social movements defines “strategies and frames” as a key factor explaining transnational networks political impacts. As two main dimensions, “mobilizing strategies attempt to attract new activists and resources for the cause or to energize existing adherents and resources [...] Action strategies, on the other hand, are the activities that social movements employ in order to influence policy” (Chatfield et al., 1997: 71). One central element of these strategies is the framing, defined as “strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate

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⁷ Batliwala mentions that grassroots movements “always refer to those who are most severely affected in terms of the material condition of their daily lives” (2002: 396).
collective action” (Khagram and al., 2002: 12). Framing strategies can be used to define the resource as local or global in function of the goal pursued. Actors can seek to reframe global norms that proved to be inconsistent with local realities in order, for example, to suggest an alternative interpretation of norms. On the contrary, local norms can be reframed as global, for example to build a common identity or gain more influence in higher decision-making arenas.

The way norms’ essence is framed may have a determinant impact on the procedures and scales to implement it. For example, defining water or forests as a common or a public good will not legitimize the same type of actors to manage it, nor the same scale. The concept of “scale” has been defined in the field of critical geography as an interactional process under power relations between actors (Swyngedouw, 1997; Cash et al., 2006; Compagnon, 2010). Actors can seek to shift decision-making authority from local organizations toward the transnational network, leading to the harmonization of practices and beliefs. On the contrary, actors can try to defend local autonomy and decision-making, maintaining a flexible transnational structure. In this paper, the analysis will be oriented toward the understanding of strategies employed by transnational community leaders and their allies to define certain scales of governance as more appropriate. These strategies depend on the degree of integration or differentiation regarding the existent international experts and paradigms (Swyngedouw, 2004; Dufour, Goyer, 2009).

**Discourse analysis: identifying narratives of common-pool resources essence and scales**

From a culturalist approach, discourses are the result of a process of interpretation and bargaining between actors (Arts and al., 2010; Keller, 2013). Therefore, discourse analysis appears determinant to understand how community-based organizations reframe common-pool resources essence and claim particular scales of governance. Reframing and rescaling strategies are particularly important in a context where “discourses of expertise that are setting the rules for global transactions, even in the progressive parts of the international system, have left ordinary people outside and behind” (Appadurai, 2000: 2). The materials used in this paper are of two types: semi-structured interviews conducted with transnational community leaders involved in CLOCSAS and AMPB, and their allies (INGOs, international donors); written documents elaborated by these actors (international declarations, internal reports, strategic planning).

According to Adger (2001), three elements have to be considered to lead a discourse analysis. First, the recurrence and concordances of key expressions used in the discourses have to be examined. In this regard, key indicators have been identified from the literature on common-pool resources institutions (Armitage, 2008; Brondizio et al., 2009; Ostrom, 2010), corresponding to central norms of water and forests governance. These norms have been separated in the two following categories:

1. Essence: type of goods (public, common...), rights (human, territorial...), management (social, territorial...) and actors (indigenous peoples, community organizations...);
2. Scales: horizontality (inter-communities networks, territorial authorities...), resource boundary (Latin-America, cultural territory...) and autonomy (alliances with public actors, self-management...).

Second, it is important to identify how actors produce, reproduce or transform discourses. In order to do so, an analysis of the construction of identities has been made, taking into consideration both negative identity (us versus them), or positive identity (us with them) (Fairclough, 2003). Third, the social and political impacts of the discourses have to be analysed. In this regard, the context in which the discourse has been produced is central, in particular the scale to which the discourse has been addressed. Following the objective of this paper, the analysis has been reduced to the production of discourses by transnational community leaders and their international allies at the global scale.

The next parts are dedicated to the comparative analysis of the Mesoamerican Alliance of Peoples and Forests (AMPB) and the Latin-American Confederation of Community Organizations for Water
Services and Sanitation (CLOCSAS). After the analysis of the framing strategies employed by these actors to transform common-pool resources essence, the second part will analyse its impacts on the redefinition of the appropriate scales of governance.

2. Framing water and forests as local or global commons

2.1. CLOCSAS and the framing of water as a universal human right

The analysis of CLOCSAS’ discourses and written reports reveals a global strategy mainly oriented toward the framing of water as a global common. A first element of this framing strategy is CLOCSAS intent to build a positive image of water community organizations in key international arenas, such as the World Water Week in Stockholm or the World Water Forum. Water community organizations are presented there as one of the best suited actors to reach the challenge of universal access to drinking water and sanitation, as part of the Millennium Development Goals, through the provision of water to the most marginalized populations in Latin America. CLOCSAS frames the collective water management model as better suited to the needs of local populations, both in terms of prices and levels of services. They are thus seen as playing the fundamental role to “serve the unserved” 8. Moreover, there is a will from CLOCSAS to harmonize the large diversity of local legal statuses and forms taken by water community organizations 9, to improve their visibility in national and international arenas, and their inclusion in decision-making processes as relevant experts on water issues. To do so, the network has created the unified category of Community Organizations of Water and Sanitation Services (OCSAS), defined as:

“Social structures created by neighbor groups, in peri-urban and rural areas, where generally public or private services are not provided. Through statutes of self-management, open, easy and democratic leaders’ elections, and common work, they orientate their effort to establish a system of harnessing, treatment and payment for the water services, and also most of the time for sanitation. Their leaders normally don’t receive remuneration for their work, because it is made by vocation and social commitment.” 10

This harmonization already led to a successful improvement of visibility in some countries, for example in Ecuador, where the Network of Social and Community Organizations of Water Management of Ecuador (ROSCGAE), created in 2012 with the support of CLOCSAS, was invited by the government to actively participate in the pre-legislative consultation for the definition of a new water law 11.

This rising visibility is also the result of a norm-building process around the idea of associativity, central in CLOCSAS’ discourses and action strategies 12. CLOCSAS defines associativity as: “An institutional process of articulation, sharing, communication and coordination between the OCSAS of a locality, region or country, as to learn and strengthen their capacities (management, advocacy on public policies, innovation) on a durable way, and oriented toward the common goal of access to water and sanitation to all Latin-Americans.” 13. It is interesting to mention the deliberate construction of a new word by transnational leaders and their allies, as to differentiate the social

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8 Several interviews with national federations’ representatives, members of CLOCSAS, and direct observation during the World Water Week (Stockholm, from 01/09 to 06/09/2013).
9 It exists a diversity in terms of legal statuses (from community organizations to water cooperatives) and water essence representations (between water as a common good, a public good or an economic good).
11 Interview with the President of ROSCGAE, 29/07/2014, Cañar, Ecuador.
12 Analysis of CLOCSAS’ written documents, semi-structured interviews and direct observations of the IV and V Latin-American Meetings of Community Water Management in Paraguay, from 29/07 to 01/08/2013, and in Costa Rica, from 09/09 to 11/09/2014.
character of water community organizations from external technical experts. As the secretary of CLOCSAS mentions it: “Associativity arises in Cuenca three years ago, during an expert meeting of Avina. They spoke about this concept that was already used without being recognized by the Academia, so it gives the opportunity of a change from international external concepts”14. Indeed, Avina Foundation, a regional NGO closely linked to CLOCSAS, actively contributed to raise the idea of associativity and diffuse it in the continent, through the organization of a first regional meeting in Ecuador in 2010 aiming to bring together water community organizations in Latin-America around the thematic of "associativity between OCSAS".

The framing of water as a global common can be interpreted as a strategy to complete the limitations of the international norm of human right to water. The human right to water is particularly important in Latin America, as it is officially institutionalized in several countries such as Ecuador or Bolivia, which even go until recognize rights to nature. CLOCSAS’ members themselves mention it in their discourses as a key objective to reach15. However, despite its institutionalization in some countries, the norm suffers from a lack of concrete implementation in relatively conflictive national contexts around water uses (agriculture, human consumption, development projects). Therefore, the promotion by CLOCSAS of the norm of associativity appears as a strategy to address the shortcomings of the human right to water, opposing a collective governance approach to the individualistic vision of the latter16.

The construction of associativity as a Latin-American norm, even a global norm, aims to produce a convergence of local practices toward excellence and productive management (water quality, sanitation services, remuneration for some members...). As an example, the secretary of CLOCSAS mentions: “We have to learn how to shift paradigms [...] using technological progresses, as a multiplying factor of productivity. If we succeed in decrease costs and make a better use in every aspects, by some way we are useful to humanity [...] Climate change is affecting us unexpectedly, so we have to adopt a more universal vision of what is happening”17. It also aims to produce a convergence toward the development of a new co-management model of public-community partnerships to improve financial and technical skills18. While promoting water as a common good, CLOCSAS’ leaders also recognize the potential for transforming it into a public good, in the sense that national governments and local authorities could help community organizations to provide a better service to end-users. Thus, they tend to distort and abolish the theoretical frontier between common and public goods, as a strategy to protect and sustain community management in the future.

Finally, CLOCSAS’s action strategies are clearly oriented toward a neutral position regarding anti-privatization movements. This position of neutrality represents a strategy of differentiation from more radical protests emerging from anti-privatization movements and indigenous people networks in the continent, often linked to radical political parties. For example, ROSCGAE made the choice not to be associated with the National Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), strongly opposed to the adoption of the new water law and leading many protests in the country19. In fact, these movements are perceived as more easy to exclude from national decision-making processes for their radical and protesting character, whereas CLOCSAS aims to become an expert actor on water management issues in Latin-American and international arenas, avoiding political partiality. As an interesting example, during CLOCSAS’ 5th General Assembly, members of the Executive Committee reaffirmed their refusal to inscribe anti-privatization in the network statutes, to

14 Interview with the Secretary of CLOCSAS, during the World Water Week in Stockholm, Sweden, 03/09/2013.
15 Several interviews with national federations’ representatives of CLOCSAS, and direct observation of the IV and V Latin-American Meetings of Community Water Management and Sanitation in Paraguay, from 29/07 to 01/08/2013, and Costa Rica, from 09/09 to 11/09/2014.
16 Idem.
17 Interview with the Secretary of CLOCSAS, during the World Water Week in Stockholm, Sweden, 03/09/2013.
18 Interview with the President of ROSCGAE, 29/07/2014, Cañar, Ecuador.
19 Idem.
avoid possible misunderstandings on their position regarding water as a service to be paid, and their openness to enter into partnerships with public and even private actors of the water sector.

According to them, the mention of associativity and human right to water is seen as sufficient to ensure the permanency of the community-based model of water management.

2.2. AMPB and the framing of forests as collective territorial rights

The global strategy pursued by AMPB’s leaders is highly oriented toward the promotion of territorial and indigenous rights, meaning a diversity of legal statuses and cultural practices. The claim for diversity takes its roots in the network structure, which is composed of a plurality of members in terms of identities (peasant, forest or indigenous), and power asymmetries. Indeed, AMPB is composed of two categories of actors:

- Community forestry organizations: Association of Forest Communities of Petén (ACOFOP) in Guatemala, National Alliance of Community Forest Organizations of Guatemala (Alianza OFC), Honduran Federation of Agro-forestry Producers (FEPROAH), and Mexican Network of Peasant Forestry Organizations (Red MOCAF);

- Indigenous Organizations: Miskitu Asla Takanka (MASTA) in Honduras, Mayangna Nation and YATAMA organization in Nicaragua, Embera-Wounaan Comarca and Guna General Congress in Panama, and Bribri and Cabecar Indigenous Network (RIBCA) in Costa Rica.

This diversity presupposes the existence of a multiplicity of discourses seeking an affirmation of local specificities. Two main divisions can be identified regarding the value given to forests and their biodiversity (from a cultural to an economic value) and UN-REDD programs (from strong opposition to local adaptation). The different representations on forests among AMPB’s members are translated into the development of two separate agendas, one dealing with territorial rights and the other with forest governance. This separation aims principally to respect the autonomy and identity of each member. As the president of AMPB’s Executive Commission mentions it: “We have separated this in the Alliance, the organizations depending on their approach. Therefore, indigenous issues are managed by indigenous peoples, and forest issues by foresters. The decision-making system in the non-indigenous world is not the same as the decision system in the indigenous one.”

At the global scale, the study of AMPB leaders’ discourses during their participation in the Climate Change Conference (COP20) in Lima reveals a prioritization of the indigenous and territorial rights agenda over the community forestry one. As an example, AMPB’s leaders have created an international mobile cinema campaign, called “If not us then who?”, aiming to raise global awareness on indigenous rights violations, and their vital role in forest preservation worldwide. One of the various videos shows indigenous peoples of the Awas-Tingi territory, in Nicaragua, defending their rights against “speculators” and “colonist invading territories”. The idea is to frame indigenous peoples as local “heroes” in the defence of forests, reflected by the emblematic death of the Asheninka native Edwin Chota in September 2014, for his environmental activism in the Peruvian amazon forest.

Moreover, a special agenda around territorial and indigenous rights was launched in the framework of the New-York Climate Summit in September 2014, in parallel with the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. These two key global events were the opportunity for AMPB to prioritize the territorial rights agenda, through three main demands to the international community: “respect and

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21 Interview with the President of RIBCA and of the AMPB’s Executive Commission, 15/07/2014, Puebla, Mexico
23 Press Conference during the official launch of the International Mobile Cinema Campaign “If not us then who?” in Peru, http://ifnotusthenwho.me/conferencia-de-prensa-por-primera-vez-la-viuda-de-edwin-chota-y-otros-asheninkas-asesinados-en-la-selva-lunes-17-de-noviembre-las1400-h-2/
reconstitution of ancestral territoriality; territorial climate funding; auto-determination and free, prior and informed consent (FPIC)\(^24\). In this global agenda, indigenous peoples and local communities are framed as the “guardians” or the “owners” of the global equatorial region. The prioritization of territorial rights results from the influence of other transnational indigenous networks, part of a global alliance of forest owners launched during COP20 in Lima, between Mesoamerica (AMPB), the Amazon Basin (Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon River Basin (COICA)), the Congo Basin (Network of Indigenous and Local Peoples for Forest Ecosystem Management (REPALEAC)), and Indonesia (Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago (AMAN)). This framing also results from the higher opportunities to access climate negotiations for indigenous peoples, for example with the creation for the first time of an “Indigenous Pavilion” in COP20\(^25\).

Interestingly, the identification of actors as “indigenous peoples” or “local communities” does not explicitly refer to the model of community-based governance, as in the case of CLOCSAS. The acquisition of territorial rights is presented as a prior fundamental step before talking about community forest management models. A report from the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) confirms this regional trend to eclipse debates on forest management, due most of the time to a lack of effective implementation on the ground of legally recognized property rights, leading to a continued and time-consuming transnational mobilization from community actors\(^26\). As an example, most of ACOFOP’s members, specialized in community forest exploitation, mention the important learning from their indigenous counterparts in AMPB on issues linked to the “defence” or “fight” for the territory. The adoption of this territorial narrative corresponds to an explicit strategy from ACOFOP’s highest leaders to raise awareness among community foresters of the vital importance to fight for forest concessions renewal, accorded by the State for a period of 25 years and whom the majority will expire in the 2020 decade\(^27\). Therefore, AMPB fights for a better security of collective property rights and autonomy by framing forests as a local common good, by opposition to a public good that would entail the reinforcement of state’s power on forest management.

This comparative analysis revealed a differentiated framing of common-pool resources as local or global commons. On one hand, CLOCSAS clearly frames water as a global common, through the normative project of associativity linked to the universal human right to water. On the other hand, AMPB frames forests as a local common, through the defence of collective territorial rights. Therefore, community-based organizations can be both linked to a productive and globalized conception of governance, or a more ancestral and local approach. The next part presents an analysis of the two networks’ constructions of what should be the legitimate scale to govern common-pool resources, from CLOCSAS’ strategy to position itself as a key expert in global water governance, to AMPB’s strategy to position itself as an intermediary to decentralize global decision-making toward territorial authorities.

3. Governing common-pool resources at a local or global scale

3.1. CLOCSAS: an alternative international expert speaking for OCSAS

CLOCSAS’ leaders demonstrate a will to constitute themselves as an alternative international actor, from those technical organizations highly professionalized. In fact, global water governance is mainly dominated by technical experts, such as the Global Water Partnership (GWP) or the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), who produce technical norms sometimes difficult to implement.


\(^{25}\) Direct observation of the Indigenous Pavilion, during the COP20, Lima, Peru, from 01/12 to 09/12/2014.


\(^{27}\) Interview with the Sub-Director of ACOFOP, 25/08/14, Santa Elena, Guatemala.
on the ground, as IWRM or the private model of governance. CLOCSAS’ Secretary mentions then the necessity to act globally: “If so many directives impact local policies, supranational organizations are necessary to establish a direct contact with those actors who take the decisions and impose their view of the world politics”.

On the contrary, CLOCSAS’ leaders are seeking to promote a more holistic vision of global water governance, through the idea of associativity, meaning the collective governance of water resources by local users, and not just the delegation of this governance to technical experts. The framing of water as a universal right and a global common facilitates CLOCSAS’ claim to be the representative of Latin-American OCSAS in international arenas. As a staff from SIWI mentions it, “CLOCSAS is mainly seen like a portavoz, someone who speak for OCSAS”.

Their main objective is to build a social expertise in complementarity with the technical expertise of external partners, mainly international and regional NGOs (AIDIS, Avina Foundation, CARE...). On one hand, as the Director of the Ecuadorian Department of the Inter-American Association of Sanitary and Environmental Engineering (AIDIS) says, “our strategic alliance with CLOCSAS exists in the sense that we can provide opportunities for them to participate in technical and scientific events, access to university for what they want to learn, raise awareness, learn technical skills on some aspects and on the general system, and on how to organize the administrative system”. On the other hand, national and transnational community leaders are social experts teaching skills to technical actors, as the Vice-President of CLOCSAS mentions it: “We are high professors of Avina. What Avina knows about water and sanitation, it owes it to us. [A staff from Avina] is actually an expert because she spent time learning from us, not only from me, but from all the community managers of Paraguay with whom she works, and also from America”.

A first consequence of this will to constitute a direct representative between local and international scales is the legal formalization of CLOCSAS as an official organization. The official legalization, through the opening of headquarters in Panama, is a first step to manage funds and projects directly from the international cooperation, and to offer services to community organizations especially in domains of administrative and financial trainings, and water quality and sanitation improvements. Moreover, CLOCSAS’ President confirmed the necessity to create a hierarchical structure to ensure democracy and representativeness, and avoid internal conflicts. This can happen through the adoption of the network statuses and legal form, and the election of representatives in each country. As he says, “facing the threat to fall into particularisms, it is preferable to maintain formalisms”.

A second consequence is the professionalism of CLOCSAS. In fact, despite the horizontal relationship of CLOCSAS with its main regional partners as Avina Foundation or AIDIS, a financial dependency persists especially for the organization of the annual meetings of community water management in the continent, as the basis for the coherence and convergence of local community organizations. Through the constitution of a formal executive secretariat to manage the network’s main activities and projects, and the establishment of a financial remuneration for transnational representatives, CLOCSAS is seeking for more financial autonomy. This trend represents both a strategy of empowerment from external allies and a threat to the community-based principles of horizontality and reciprocity, leading to a centralization of authority toward the transnational network structure.

28 International Conference on Water and Environment, Dublin, 1992
29 Interview with the Secretary of CLOCSAS, during the World Water Week in Stockholm, Sweden, 03/09/2013
30 Interview with a staff from the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), Sweden, 05/09/2013
31 Interview with the Director of the Ecuadorian Department of the Inter-American Association of Sanitary and Environmental Engineering (AIDIS), Cuenca, Ecuador, 25/07/2014
32 Interview with the Vice-President of CLOCSAS
33 Interview with CLOCSAS President, during the IV Latin-American Meeting of Community Water Management, Paraguay, from 29/07 to 01/08/2013
34 Direct observations of the IV and V Latin-American Meetings of Community Water Management and Sanitation in Paraguay, from 29/07 to 01/08/2013, and Costa Rica, from 09/09 to 11/09/2014
3.2. AMPB: the defence of decision-making autonomy speaking from territorial authorities

One of AMPB’s major claims is to differentiate territorial authorities from traditional international experts who were speaking for them in global arenas until recently. Indeed, the term “territorial authorities” appears in the discourses in opposition to “intermediaries” or “paternalism”. The idea is to regain control on decision-making processes regarding their own reality, “from the territories” and not “for the territories”. This distinction is extensively used in AMPB’s written reports, for example when mentioning the “Mesoamerican consultation on a common approach for the environmental and social safeguards of the FCPF in the framework of REDD+ from the territories”35. Therefore, “from those who produce a policy to those who execute it, there are only two actors, the government and the territories [...] All these intermediaries, NGOs, universities, started to feel displaced of their function and way of life, and this made universities and people from cooperation change their view”36. Beyond the criticism of traditional international intermediaries, AMPB’s members also oppose leaders who represent an “indigenous international bureaucracy”. These actors are compared to the metaphor of “TACA group”, in reference to the Latin-American airline, to describe a type of leadership spending most of the time in international events without a legitimate representation of community-based actors. As ACOFOP’s director mentions it: “these failures also taught us that maybe the most important thing is the territorial agenda”37.

In the academic field, many scientific studies raise the argument that greater autonomy in decision-making processes at the local scale means higher carbon storage and improved living conditions for the communities (Chhatre, Agrawal, 2009; McDermott et al., 2012). Territorial rights are presented here as a necessary pre-requisite for the implementation of REDD+ programs. Moreover, many studies tend to rehabilitate the Mesoamerican region in front of more visible forested region at the global scale, such as the Amazonian rainforest, or other tropical forests (Congo, Indonesia). Whereas the region represents only 2.2% of the forests worldwide, with about 86.6 million hectares38, local communities and indigenous peoples own or manage over 60% of the region’s forests (Kaimowitz, 2008). For example, some studies on the region show that forests located on indigenous territories, or governed by community foresters, have lower rates of deforestation (Kaimowitz, 2008). This argument is highly cited into AMPB’s publications to underline the capacity of local communities to deal locally with regional and even global issues, and justify the decentralization of REDD+ programs funds and decision-making authority39.

However, AMPB’s involvement in REDD+ debates can be interpreted more as a “pretext” to position indigenous rights into international decision-making arenas than a real conviction of the program essence and values. A staff from IUCN mentions this duality: “if REDD gives them the opportunity to consolidate their territorial rights, then they are going to opt for REDD. Anything that gives them the recognition to the territorial rights they have managed for such a time, they will accept it”40. Indeed, several AMPB’s members oppose in their discourses the market-based and redistributive equity conception of REDD+ to their more social and procedural conception of the program. This alternative view corresponds to the “community roadmap” elaborated by AMPB, called Mesocarbon, in which the expressions of “REDD experts” and “briefcase advocacy” are opposed to “local capacities” and “territorial authorities”41. The Mesocarbon project traduces a will to build a Mesoamerican model of

35 “Consulta Mesoamericana sobre enfoque común para las Salvaguardias Ambientales y Sociales del FCPF en el marco de REDD + desde los territorios”, AMPB, COONAPIP, Septiembre 2011
36 Interview with the President of RIBCA and of the AMPB’s Executive Commission, 15/07/2014, Puebla, Mexico
37 Interview with the Director of ACOFOP, 29/08/2014, Santa Elena, Guatemala
39 Direct observation of the AMPB’s Executive Commission meeting, 14-15/07/2014, Puebla, Mexico
40 Interview with a staff from IUCN Mesoamerican Office, 01/09/14, San José, Costa Rica
41 “La Hoja de Ruta Comunitaria para REDD en Mesoamérica”, AMPB (internal document)
REDD+, and to demonstrate with empirical evidence, through the experimentation on the ground beyond international abstract discussions, if REDD+ mechanisms can function or not.\(^\text{42}\)

Finally, AMPB's strategic action is oriented to redistribute global resources to local communities framed as the most legitimate experts to handle climate change and deforestation issues. Following this objective, AMPB tries to play the role of a direct intermediary between international programs and funds, and their implementation on territories. As an example, in the context of the COP20 negotiations, AMPB suggested the creation of an Indigenous and Territorial Fund, as a subsidiary fund within the Green Climate Fund of the United Nations.\(^\text{43}\) The objective is then to strengthen the legal formalization of local organizations avoiding the professionalization of the transnational network: “if the Alliance gets into a formal organization, we fall into the risk to separate from our basis.”\(^\text{44}\) AMPB’s Secretary also mentions that “the Alliance is not legally constituted, it is not an NGO nor thinking about becoming one, it is simply a dialogue arena.”\(^\text{45}\) However, the lack of professionalization questions the sustainability of AMPB and its role, beyond the promotion of territorial rights, of community forestry improvement and diffusion. As one AMPB’s leaders mentions it: “we are so territorials that we are not selling the regional signature.”\(^\text{46}\)

This comparative analysis revealed a differentiated claim of the scale at which common-pool resources should be governed. On one hand, CLOCSAS’ leaders are seeking to centralize and professionalize a transnational decision-making authority, claiming their representativeness to speak for Latin-American OCSAS. On the other hand, AMPB’s leaders are trying to defend the legitimacy of indigenous peoples and forest communities as local experts, claiming their ability to speak from the territories unlike traditional technical international actors. In both cases, CLOCSAS and AMPB are trying to differentiate from international dominant expert, by highlighting their complementarity or demanding their autonomy.

**Conclusion**

The main objective of this paper was to understand how transnational community-based networks transform common-pool resources norms of governance, following the next interrogation: to what extent the reframing of water and forests essence by transnational community-based networks impacts their respective scales of governance? Considering that the construction of a shared and proper epistemology is central in the norm-building process, it has been demonstrated that both CLOCSAS and AMPB intend to redefine existent technical expertise languages by creating their own concepts to qualify common-pool resources essence, from “associativity” to “territoriality”. However, transnational leaders of each network adopt a quite different orientation in the redefinition of water and forests essence, leading to a distinct claim on the scale at which these resources should be governed, and the scale at which community organizations should be professionalized (see Table 1 for a synthesis).

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\(^\text{42}\) Interview with the Director of ACOFOP, 29/08/14, Santa Elena, Guatemala, when talking about the “Guatecarbon” project

\(^\text{43}\) “Panel on Financing for Climate Change and Indigenous People Rights”, Candido Mezua, AMPB, 2014.

\(^\text{44}\) Interview with the President of RIBCA and of the AMPB’s Executive Commission, 15/07/2014, Puebla, Mexico

\(^\text{45}\) Interview with the Secretary of AMPB, 13/07/2014, Mexico

\(^\text{46}\) Interview with the President of RIBCA and of the AMPB’s Executive Commission, 15/07/2014, Puebla, Mexico
On one hand, CLOCSAS claims its social expertise based on the promotion of a Latin-American associativity, its contribution to the universal access to human right to water, and a co-management model with public authorities and international cooperation organizations. The construction of water as a global common and the harmonization of community-based organizations as OCSAS contribute to create a transnational decision-making authority, opening the opportunity for CLOCSAS to become an equal international expert on water and social issues. On the other hand, AMPB claims the grassroots expertise of territorial authorities in global forest and climate arenas, through the promotion of the diversity of governance models at the local scale and the framing of indigenous peoples and forest communities as local heroes and guardians of forests carbon and biodiversity. The construction of forests as a local common and the decentralization of international programs contribute to professionalize local organizations regarding territorial governance issues.

The paper gives insights to understand the deep transformations of the community-based model of water and forests governance, in a context of rising globalization and commodification of these resources. Both case studies reveal a similar promotion of a collective approach to govern common-pool resources, alternatively framed as universal or territorial rights, instead of an individualistic or private approach. Interestingly, the transnational scale seems decisive in the diffusion of this collective governance model. The case of AMPB demonstrates that community-based organizations can be strengthened through transnational action, whereas CLOCSAS reveals that transnational community-based networks can become new international experts in global arenas. Moreover, the scale of governance is determinant for the durability of this kind of transnational community-based networks, especially for legitimacy issues. Indeed, while CLOCSAS may lose its connection with its community basis because of a professionalization process, AMPB suffers from a lack of official recognition from local and forest communities. It results fundamental to go further on the research studying the internal processes of discourses production and tensions, as the analysis presented in this paper was limited to the global action of transnational community leaders.

Finally, common-pool resources institutions’ transnational action invites to reconsider the usual scales of governance for natural resources, enlarging the existing possibilities to govern complex transboundary issues such as deforestation, carbon-emissions or water wastage and pollution. Some of the alternatives suggested are public-community partnerships between local and national scales, transnational community-based intermediaries in the management of global funds, or transnational community-based networks as new international experts in norm-building processes.

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**Table 1: Transnational common-pool resources norm-building by AMPB and CLOCSAS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essence</th>
<th>CLOCSAS (water)</th>
<th>AMPB (forests)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OCSAS</td>
<td>Indigenous peoples</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common/public good</td>
<td>Common good</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal human right</td>
<td>Territorial/indigenous rights</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service to be paid</td>
<td>Territory to be defended</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale of governance</th>
<th>Speaking for OCSAS as a transnational authority</th>
<th>Speaking from territorial authorities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latin-American boundary</td>
<td>Ancestral territory boundary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complementarity with international experts</td>
<td>Autonomy from international experts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The table above shows the comparison of CLOCSAS (water) and AMPB (forests) in terms of their essence and scale of governance. The essence column lists the key characteristics of each organization, while the scale of governance column highlights the approach to governance.
Bibliography


