

Environmental Planning and Territorial Approach in Nicaragua

From Policy Framework to Local Realities

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Outline of the presentation

1. Context and problematic
2. The case study
3. Results
4. Discussion
5. Conclusion

Context and problematic

- ▶ In 2007, the Nicaraguan Government launched its economic growth and poverty reduction strategy with the *National Human Development Plan*
 - New strategies and a different way of dealing with poverty are accompanied by a more decisive role to be played by the state, citizens, and the international community
 - Beyond economic priorities, the Plan is based on a combination of human and environmental dimensions, as well as a territorial governance approach to development
 - => In a context of decentralization and democratization of policy processes

Context and problematic

▶ *Territorialization*

- *Territorialization* is a public policy approach that focuses on the specificities of each territory, as opposed to a vertical dividing public action in partitioned sectors
- *Territorialization* involves the elaboration and implementation of a development strategy that can adapt sectoral policies to local constraints
- More generally, *territorialization* refers to a process aimed at building the territory

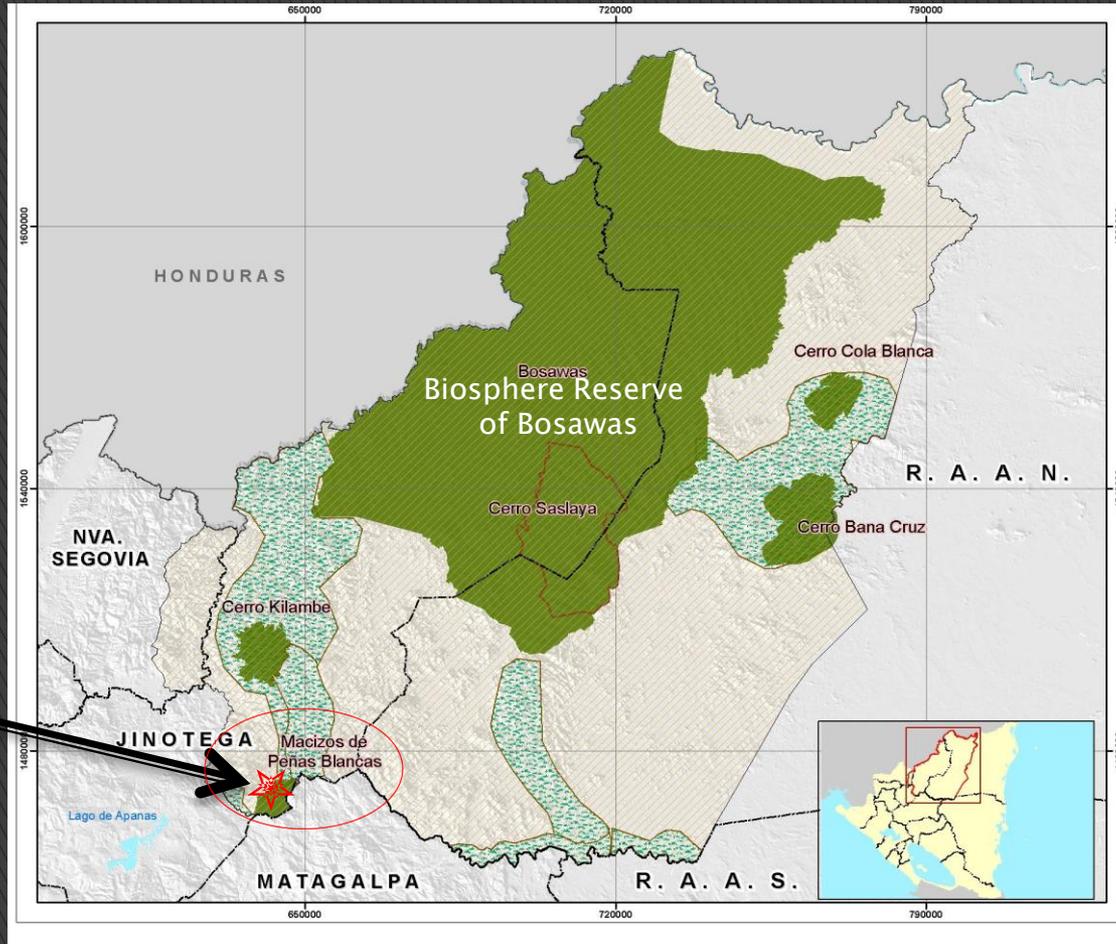
Context and problematic

- ▶ Despite various propositions of *territorial development* frameworks, only the environmental policy adopts a territorial approach
 - It provides definitions of territories
 - Protected areas, watersheds, or geographical units with a common localized production system
 - The territorial approach is one of the central instruments for environmental planning in order to achieve maximum possible harmony between society and environment
 - It defines an "*environmental territorial development*" strategy, and frames it within a policy of "*conservation and sustainable use of ecological systems*"
 - It refers not only to natural resources but also to productive activities such as agriculture in rural areas

Research questions and framework

- ▶ Can we talk about *territorialization* of environmental planning in Nicaragua? How does it work? What are the constraints and perspectives?
- ▶ Pilot research initiative to better understand the territorial approach of rural development in Nicaragua
- ▶ Combination of geographic and sociological methods
 - Qualitative research based on original data analysis
 - Direct observations and in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders
- ▶ Funded by the Network for Public Policy and Inequality in Latin America and implemented by CIRAD and UCA/Nitlapán

The municipality of El Cuá, Nicaragua



Municipality
of El Cuá

The municipality of El Cuá, Nicaragua

- ▶ El Cuá is located is part of the 6 nucleus zones of the Biosphere Reserve of Bosawas (RBB) in the Macizo de Peñas Blancas (MPB)
 - RBB is the most important reserve in Central America for its area (14% of Nicaragua territory), localization and biodiversity (the 3rd in the world)
 - Evidences of deforestation and water pollution have been pointed out

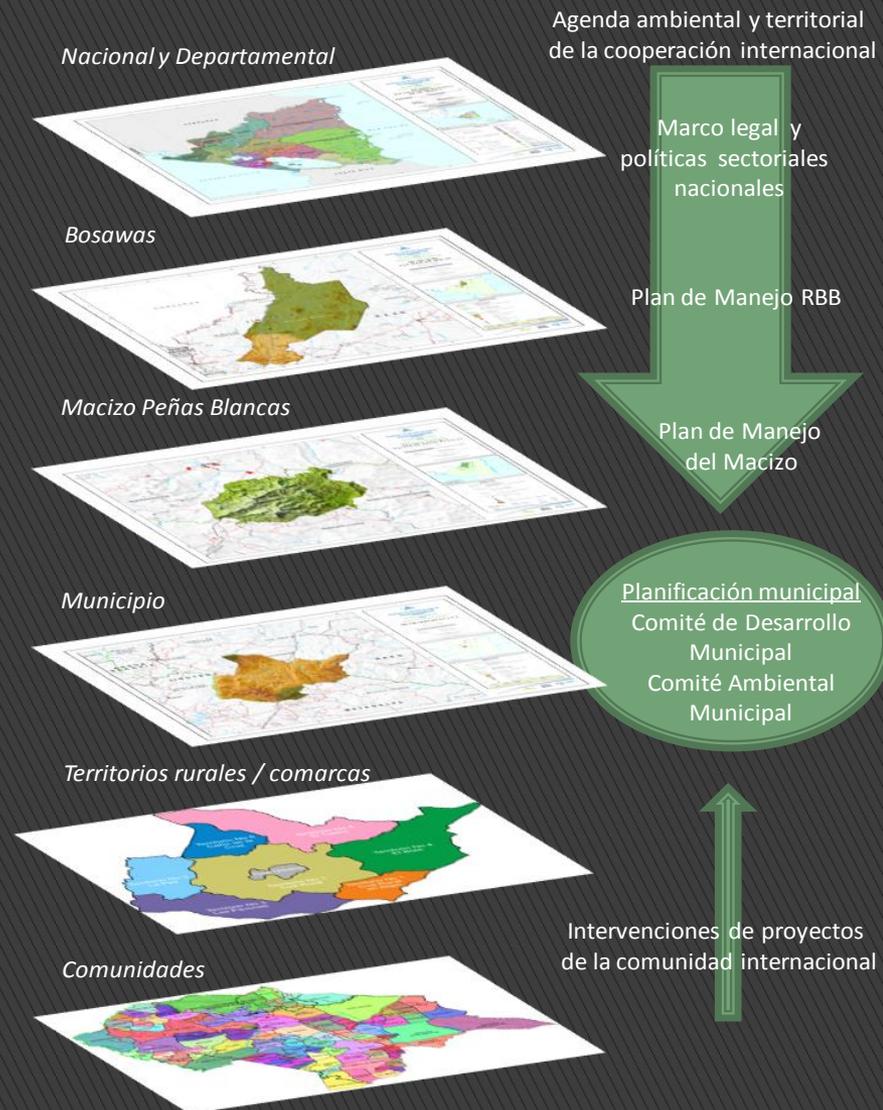
- ▶ El Cuá is located in an agricultural region oriented toward coffee, cattle and grain production
 - The rationality is that environmental planning goes against economic objectives of production
 - However, there are some emerging economic interests for producers to comply with social and environmental norms and standards
 - Some stakeholders in the territory found in the environmentalist discourse a way for better capturing resources

 - Many public and private interventions in the territory have been implemented over the last two decades (Bosawas, 1991)
 - Technical assistance to preserve soils and water
 - Direct funding to promote environment conservation

Environment planning and territorial dialogue

- ▶ Nicaragua has not yet decentralized decision-making powers on environment-related policy to municipal governments
 - MARENA still control policy making
 - There is only a local translation of national policy, with some degree of de-concentration

- ▶ The existence of Municipal Environment Commissions (CAM) at territory level is illustrative of a trend toward *territorialization*
 - A CAM is a forum of government, citizen and NGOs' representatives to address environmental issues
 - It is considered as a major level of consultation

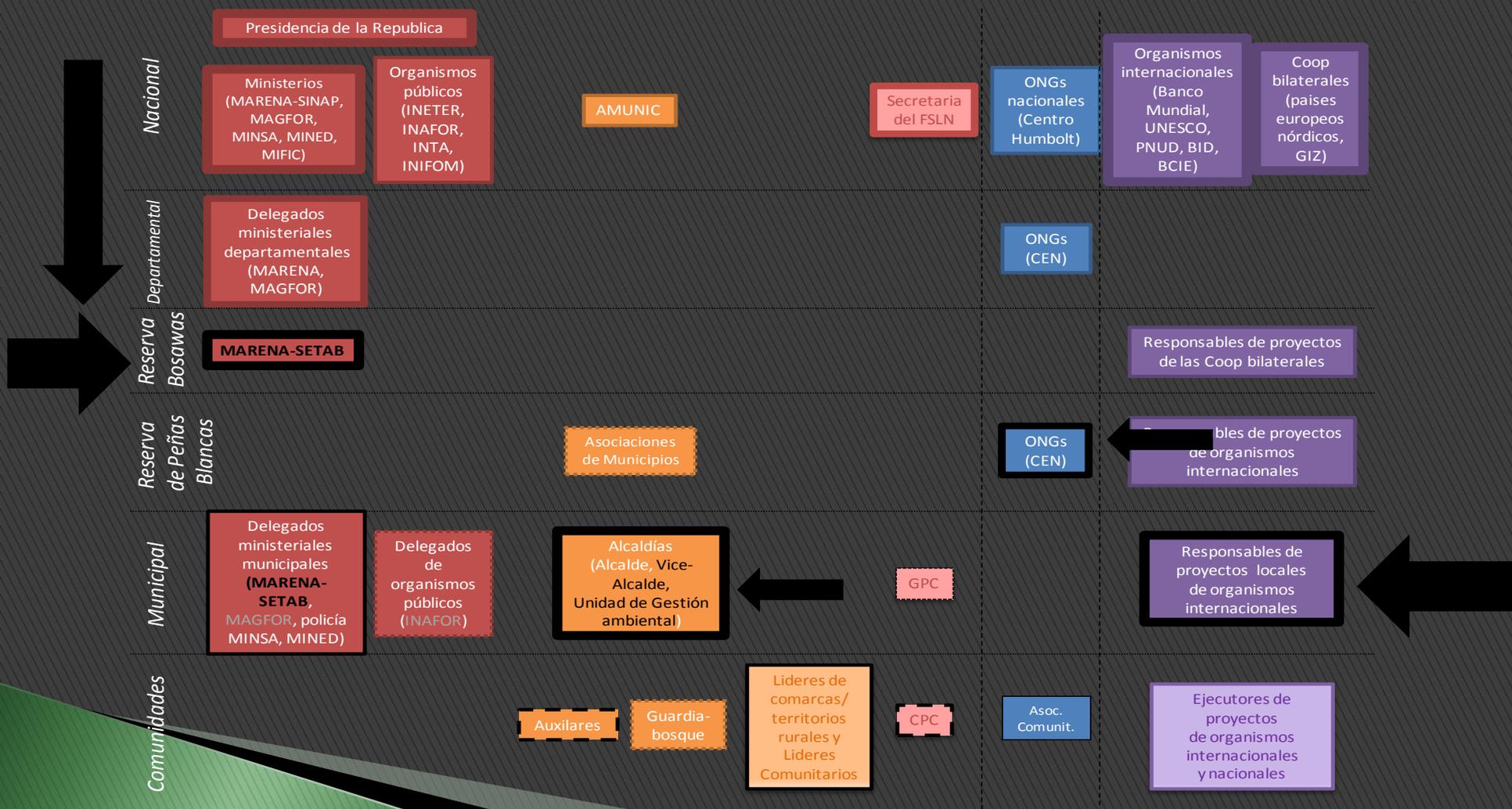


Environment planning and territorial dialogue

- ▶ The CAM was conceived by the Ministry of Environment (MARENA)
 - It makes it possible for the government to undertake a number of activities affecting environment, and often more broadly, territorial development
 - It aims at promoting multi-level and inter-institutional coordination within the municipality

- ▶ The municipal government's capacity to incorporate a CAM is directly related to its substantial budget
 - Municipal governments are frustrated by the quantity of responsibilities conferred to them without any comparable fiscal transfers that would improve their capacity to meet these new obligations

The stakeholders of the CAM



A try of *territorialization* of policy?

- ▶ In El Cuá, there is a combination of conditions for an effective *territorialization* of environment planning
 - Capacity
 - => As part of a Biosphere and a Natural Reserves, El Cuá receive the support of several important international and local organizations
 - Incentives
 - => There is an interplay of economic motives and civil society pressure
 - To capture available funding both from important funders or NGOs
 - To integrate environment dimension in production
 - To solve the existing conflicts around natural resources use
 - Interest
 - => there are local trends for a better understanding of environment-related problems in the municipality

A try of territorialization of policy?

- ▶ But, there are still major obstacles
 - Coordination of actions
 - Organizations involved in the CAM still mostly focus on their area of interest (sectoral) and often don't talk to each other
 - Within these organization, there are coordination problems between delegations, in particular MARENA
 - Consultation and participation
 - The CAM is only consultative and has not decision-making powers
 - Major stakeholders do not participate in the CAM (farmers, private sector)
 - Population is poorly aware of what is going on (even elected local leaders)
 - Projects (from external cooperation) lead the mediation within, and the functioning of the CAM => what legitimacy?

A try of territorialization of policy?

- ▶ That question *territorialization* process and its sustainability...
 - Neither the central state, nor the municipal government have the financial, technical, and human resources to make it work
 - At the national level, decision-making power is mostly based on external imported models
 - NGOs or projects (cooperation) provide funds and definitely orient environmental planning
 - And as most of planning models are imported from external stakeholders, little is effectively adapted to local reality, taking into account population priorities

Conclusion

- ▶ The study provides an overview of an experiment or *territorialization* of public policies in Nicaragua, through the example of environmental planning
- ▶ The result show that there is still important obstacles to overcome
 - Lack of capacity, including an appropriate legal framework
 - A legal framework for territorial development would clarify responsibility and would clearly establish a local decision-making authority
 - Lack of local incentives specifically dedicated to territorial development
 - Incentives may include the possibility of increasing municipal income from various sources (NGOs, projects or other civil society actors) and/or the need to solve some local conflicts
 - The missing element is also a real local interest, and the consequent participation of all local stakeholders
 - Long-term interest = environmental planning, but including economic and human dimensions

Conclusion

- ▶ With an appropriate territorial development framework, NGOs and projects can play a key role in *territorialization*
 - To increase local capacity or to provide incentives for immediate action without promoting the process itself
 - To examine the way in which these actions are being incorporated into the local knowledge base and promoting local appropriation of the issues
- ▶ This requires a new vision of municipal government for both political leaders and their constituents
- ▶ This process should survive changes of administration, which could otherwise reverse the advances made, only through the integral and institutionalized participation of civil society

Thank you
for your attention