Research and policy documents

Scope



Territories that Cool the Planet:

How Indigenous Territorial Entities in the Amazon are Reshaping Global Climate Governance

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We are the descendants of the Celestial Anaconda (Anaconda Celeste), the ~Hɨda (Tatuyo). We are Children of the Cosmos, Children of the Sun, guardians of celestial space. We know how to manage time and climate.

We are the Children of the Remedy Anaconda (Anaconda Remedio), the Eduria, descendants of Godó ~Kubu, the ~Kubu of the Territories. Therefore, we know how to resolve and heal conflicts, establish harmony and peace in the territory, and protect its integrity.

Words from:
Benedicto Ortega
WII ɨHɨ ~HADERA
Maloquero barasano

LIFE PLAN
INDIGENOUS TERRITORY OF PIRÁ PARANÁ



Numerous studies agree that territories managed by Indigenous Peoples are fundamental for the protection of global biodiversity (Brondízio et al., 2019; FPP et al., 2020; Sze et al., 2024). In addition to their ecological function, these territories play a crucial role in planetary climate stability by conserving ecosystems that store and regulate massive flows of carbon and moisture. Due to their capacity to store billions of metric tons of carbon, both above and below the Earth's surface, these territories are essential for the planet's climate stability (Catanoso, 2018; FILAC & FAO, 2021). Despite this recognition, States and other decision-makers demonstrate a limited understanding and low appreciation of indigenous territorial management, which is reflected in the lack of recognition of their contributions to national and international climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, and mirrors the weak or ineffective political and legal recognition they receive globally.

In the Amazon, lands and territories titled to and/or managed by Indigenous Peoples register significantly lower levels of deforestation and degradation than non-Indigenous ones (Moutinho et al., 2023; Blackman et al., 2017). This difference has direct effects on the carbon balance and climate regulation of the region, since the maintenance of ecosystem corridors and soil integrity depend largely on cultural practices —fire management, crop rotation, and ecological calendars— which are based on traditional knowledge systems (Gavin et al., 2015).

As a result, Indigenous Territories have become essential spaces for maintaining the ecological and functional connectivity of the Amazon. Today, they guarantee 93% of pan-Amazonian connectivity —more than 182 million hectares—, surpassing even the effectiveness of Protected Natural Areas (ANPs)(ANA & RAISG, 2025). This connectivity not only supports biodiversity, but also the major hydrological and atmospheric cycles that moderate the climate of South America and, by extension, the planet. However,

the increasing fragmentation and loss of connectivity around Indigenous Territories threatens to isolate them from other forests, weakening their vitality and reducing the capacity of the Amazon biome to act as a carbon sink and source of continental moisture.

Their effectiveness is not accidental: it stems from self-governance structures that regulate the relationship of Indigenous peoples with their territory. Greater recognition of autonomy and territorial rights leads to stronger capacities for these peoples to respond to external pressures —deforestation, mining, and agricultural expansion— (Garnett et al., 2028), demonstrating a direct correlation between the recognition of indigenous self-determination and the climate resilience of Amazonian ecosystems.

Colombia, a pioneer in the recognition of Indigenous Territorial Entities (ETIs) in the Amazon, offers fertile ground for exploring how guaranteeing the right to self-determination —understood as the power of peoples to freely decide on their system of government, their institutions, their participation in the life of the State, and their own development model, based on their knowledge systems— constitutes an indispensable framework for addressing global challenges such as climate change and biodiversity conservation. The process of formalizing ETIs is thus emerging as a structural contribution to national climate goals and global environmental governance, by linking indigenous autonomy with the sustainable management of natural carbon sinks and the reduction of emissions.

The case of the Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Governments of the eastern Colombian Amazon, on which this study focuses, allows us to examine both the opportunities and challenges related to recognizing this right. On the one hand, it reveals the richness of the dialogue between diverse knowledge systems and their contribution to building a State capable of confronting the current socio-environmental crisis; and, on the other hand, it highlights the tensions with extractive development models and centralized governments, as well as the contradictions between the environmental and economic policies derived from these models.

This research is organized into four complementary chapters that explore, from the perspective of the Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Governments of the eastern Colombian Amazon, the scope and challenges of recognizing their own systems of governance within state structures and their role in global climate action and governance. Using local cases of planetary relevance, the text demonstrates how self-determination and Indigenous territorial management contribute to mitigating the climate crisis, to adapting to environmental extremes, and to maintaining the ecological integrity of the Amazon rainforest. These are rights that, at the same time, contribute to the construction of state models capable of integrating biocultural approaches, legal pluralism, and environmental justice. Together, the chapters offer insights for advancing towards more just, effective, and coherent climate action that respects the cultural and biological diversity of the Amazon.

Chapter 1 examines the process of establishing ETIs in the Colombian Amazon —which could extend over 36% of the national Amazonian territory— as a historic opportunity to realize self-determination and strengthen territorial governance as a national and regional climate strategy, with repercussions for the global climate agenda.

It also presents evidence of the effectiveness of indigenous management and its role in ecosystem connectivity; it reviews internal governance tools and analyzes the institutional and legal barriers that have limited their effective implementation, concluding that the consolidation of these

ETIs represent

36%

of the
Colombian Amazon

entities requires progress in institutional adaptations and intercultural coordination mechanisms between indigenous and non-indigenous governments to meet national and international goals.

Chapter 2 analyzes the tensions between national authorities and Indigenous governments and raises three key challenges to achieving effective climate agreements. First, the dichotomy between nature and culture, inherent in the modern state, which reduces nature to an economic resource and hinders the development of biocultural approaches. Second, the modern state's "monocultural logic" —as defined by the National Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon (OPIAC)—, a colonial legacy that restricts self-determination and pluralism as a condition for the full expression of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, regulatory, and management systems. Third, environmental governance failures: gaps in decision-making, inclusion, and inter-institutional coordination that impede intercultural articulation and the coherent implementation of climate policy measures in Indigenous Territories.

Chapter 3 brings together emblematic territorial experiences from the Macro-territory of the Jaguars of Yuruparí to draw lessons on intercultural coordination and climate governance in the Amazon. Using three cases —the Macro-territorial Coordination Body, the Diversified Financial Sustainability Strategy, and the environmental management agreements in the Yaigojé Apaporis Indigenous Territory— this chapter examines how Indigenous Peoples strengthen and project their ancestral systems of governance, regulation, and territorial management, promoting constructive dialogue with other state entities and moving toward forms of intercultural coordination that integrate self-determination, traditional knowledge systems, and the Good Life (Buen Vivir) as the foundations for just and effective climate action in the region.

Chapter 4 focuses on global climate governance and examines the participation and influence of Indigenous Peoples in multilateral forums, as well as the persistent tensions and limitations in their recognition as full political actors. Unlike Chapter 2, which analyzes internal challenges in the coordination between national authorities and Indigenous governments, this chapter broadens the perspective to the international level, showing how the Amazonian ETIs' process is fostering innovation in intercultural and climate governance models. From this perspective, the chapter argues for the need to move toward a paradigm of legal pluralism that recognizes Indigenous knowledge and governance systems as fundamental pillars of global climate action and resilience to the planetary crisis.

Finally, a **series of recommendations are presented at the national level**, aimed at the full formalization of ETIs and the strengthening of coordination between indigenous and non-indigenous governments; and at the regional and global level, aimed at enriching international climate governance from a rights-based approach, with special emphasis on guaranteeing the self-determination of indigenous peoples and on, enhancing their own systems of knowledge and governance as a basis for a just and territorially balanced climate transition.

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List of acronyms

Translator's Note: Spanish acronyms have been preserved when they refer to local or context-specific institutions or frameworks. For internationally recognized organizations, treaties, and mechanisms (e.g., UNFCCC, FAO, ILO, UNEP), the widely used English acronyms have been retained.

ANA	Alianza NorAmazónica *North Amazon Alliance*
ANP	Área Natural Protegida *Protected Natural Area*
CAR	Corporación Autónoma Regional *Regional Autonomous Corporation*
CDB	Convention on Biological Diversity *Convenio de Diversidad Biológica*
CIDH	Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos *Inter-American Commission on Human Rights*
CNMH	Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica *National Center for Historical Memory*
CIDH	Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos *Inter-American Court of Human Rights*
CLUA	Climate and Land Use Alliance *Supreme Court of Justice*
CSJ	Corte Suprema de Justicia *Supreme Court of Justice*
EDSF	Estrategia de Diversificación y Sostenibilidad Financiera *Financial Diversification and Sustainability Strategy*
ETI	Entidad Territorial Indigena *Indigenous Territorial Entity*
FAO	Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Alimentación y la Agricultura *Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Alimentación y la Agricultura*
GTF	Grupo de Trabajo de Facilitación *Facilitation Working Group*
IWGIA	*International Working Group on Indigenous Affairs* Grupo Internacional de Trabajo sobre Asuntos Indígenas
ILO	International Labour Organization *Organización Internacional del Trabajo*
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services *Plataforma Intergubernamental de Biodiversidad y Servicios Ecosistémicos*

LCIPP	Comunidades Locales y Pueblos Indígenas *Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples*
MTJY	Macroterritorio de los Jaguares de Yuruparí *Macro-territory of the Jaguars of Yuruparí*
OMEC	Otras Medidas Efectivas de Conservación Basadas en Áreas *Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures – OECMs*
OPIAC	Organización Nacional de los Pueblos Indígenas de la Amazonia Colombiana *National Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon*
OTCA	Organización del Tratado de Cooperación Amazónica *Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization – ACTO*
PNN	Parque Nacional Natural *National Natural Park*
RAISG	Red Amazónica de Información Socioambiental Georeferenciada *Amazon Network of Georeferenced Socio-environmental Information*
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation *Reducción de las Emisiones derivadas de la Deforestación y la Degradación forestal*
REM	Régimen Especial de Manejo *Special Management Regime*
SGR	Sistema General de Regalías *General System of Royalties*
SPA	Science Panel for the Amazon *Panel Científico por la Amazonia*
TI	Territorio Indigena *Indigenous Territory*
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme *Programa de Naciones Unidas para el Medio Ambiente*
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change *Convención Marco de Naciones Unidas sobre el Cambio Climatico*
WMO	World Meteorological Organization *Organización Meteorológica Mundial*

1. Colombia and Amazonian Indigenous governments:

Paving the way towards a global indigenous and climate governance

Rodrigo Yucuna

"The words of our grandfather, once sown, will strengthen the process of our people, with our thinking focused on guiding our organizational, political, administrative, and financial path".

The Amazon is at a critical juncture. The Science Panel for the Amazon (SPA) warns that, if current trends continue, the biome could soon reach a point of no return and transform into a savanna, with irreversible consequences for its ecosystems, biodiversity, and the life cycles upon which the planet depends[1]. Far from being an alarmist view, recent evidence confirms the severity of this trajectory. By 2022, 23% of the region —equivalent to 193 million hectares— had completely lost its ecological connectivity, while an additional 13% (108 million hectares) showed signs of functional degradation. In just four decades (1985–2022), the area experiencing ecological disconnection doubled (ANA & RAISG, 2024), indicating an accelerated deterioration of the Amazon rainforest's structure and resilience and a decline in its capacity to regulate the global climate.

According to the SPA, 17% of the region is already deforested and another 17% degraded, meaning that large areas have partially or completely lost their ecological functions. This deterioration translates into visible climate impacts: droughts are becoming more frequent and intense —increasing from four extreme events per century to four in less than 25 years— and global warming is dangerously approaching a critical threshold. The loss of forest cover reduces carbon capture, alters precipitation patterns, and weakens the Amazon's role as a global temperature regulator. In this regard, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) estimates a 70% probability that the temperature increase in the next five years will exceed the 1.5°C limit set by the Paris Agreement, with variations between 1.2°C and 1.9°C (WMO, 2025). Each degree exacerbates extreme weather events, accelerates ice loss, raises sea levels, and multiplies risks to life. In this context, it is evident that the measures adopted by governments remain insufficient to prevent an environmental crisis of global scale (IPBES, 2019; UNEP, 2023).

1. Reaching a point of no return on a large scale, in the region, could lead to the collapse of much of the Amazon rainforest, with grave consequences. These include: (1) accelerating global warming, hindering the achievement of the Paris Agreement goals; (2) reducing moisture flow in South America, jeopardizing the water security necessary for key activities such as agriculture; (3) raising temperatures in the Amazon region to unsustainable levels for both urban and rural populations; (4) triggering mass extinctions of species; and (5) endangering biological and cultural resources that are essential for addressing humanity's current and future challenges.

Preventing the collapse of the Amazon is also essential for maintaining global climate stability. This biome acts as a key carbon sink and a continental rainfall regulator; its degradation directly compromises global climate change mitigation and adaptation goals. Reversing the loss of ecological integrity of the biome requires profound transformations in how states and the international community approach climate action. Coherent climate action must recognize that *Amazonian indigenous territories are also climate territories*: spaces where the planet's capacity to maintain atmospheric balance and hydrological stability is defined. Global commitments will only be effective if they are built upon territorial processes that are already demonstrating concrete results in conservation, adaptation, and mitigation. It is in these territories —where ancestral knowledge and systems of self-governance are intertwined with ecosystem management— that the most transformative responses are emerging. Strengthening these processes is essential to projecting local impacts toward global results.

Colombia and the world are facing a historic opportunity. Twenty-seven Indigenous governments in the Amazon[2] are leading a process of political and administrative decentralization to establish the country's first Indigenous Territorial Entities (ETIs) —integrated within the organization of the state and bearing political, administrative, and fiscal autonomy— consolidating themselves as a globally-relevant model of Indigenous governance[3]. These Entities also represent a new paradigm of climate governance based on the biocultural management of ecosystems. The ETIs represent 36% of the Colombian Amazon, nearly 75% of the eastern Amazon, and encompass 45 Indigenous Peoples. By 2023, their forests represented 41% of the total forest area in the Colombian Amazon region. For these reasons, and because of their close-to-zero deforestation rates —they retain 99.5% of their natural cover intact— they are essential for climate mitigation and the conservation of the country's carbon sinks (MapBiomas, 2024; Gaia Amazonas, 2025).

Evidence shows that where Indigenous Peoples exercise their systems of governance and territorial management, forests remain standing, and the emissions avoided contribute directly to national mitigation goals. In the municipalized departments of the Amazon —Guaviare, Caquetá, Putumayo, and Meta— which together cover 25.6 million hectares, the average annual forest loss between 1985 and 2023 was 74,500 hectares. In contrast, in the eastern Amazon departments —Amazonas, Guainía, and Vaupés— where Indigenous Peoples maintain a form of governance based on their knowledge systems and traditional land management practices, the average annual loss has been only 3,200 hectares (MapBiomas, 2024). These differences reflect the correlation between territorial autonomy and regional climate stability.

This management, in turn, contributes to the integrity and connectivity of the largest continuous tropical forest on the planet —connecting the Andes to the Atlantic—, a biocultural ecosystem of more than 100 million hectares, 32% of which corresponds to Indigenous Territories in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana. This living system not only safeguards extraordinary biological and cultural diversity but also maintains critical functions of the global climate system by storing approximately 150 to 200 billion tons of carbon[4] and sustaining the moisture flows that regulate rainfall in the Southern Cone (Cifuentes, 2022; Meineke, 2024).

2. To date, the Indigenous Territories of Yaigojé Apaporis, Miritíi Paraná, Tiquié, UITIBOC, Ríos Cotuhé-Putumayo (Cimtar), Arica, PANI, Bajo Río Caquetá, Río Pira Paraná y Rios Isana y Surubi —located in the departments of Amazonas and Vaupés— have been organized within the state structure as ETIs. In addition, twelve other Indigenous Territories are progressing in their formalization process, and five more have expressed their willingness to begin it soon.

3. The progress in formalizing ETIs in the Colombian Amazon is part of a collaborative effort between Indigenous Governments, OPIAC, the Gaia Amazonas Foundation, and the Etnollano Foundation.

4. This is according to a recent document on multidimensional connectivity, presented by the Science Panel for the Amazon in collaboration with ANA, led by Gaia Amazonas, the Amazonian Waters Alliance and RAISG.



LEGEND

INDIGENOUS TERRITORIAL ENTITIES IN PROCESS OF FORMALIZATION

- I.T. del Alto Río Guainía
- I.T. del Bajo Río Guainía
- I.T. Bajo Río Caquetá Amazonas
- I.T. Papunahua
- I.T. Yaigojé Apaporis
- I.T. de los Ríos Cotuhé y Putumayo
- I.T. Ríos Atabapo e Inírida
- I.T. del Río Tiquié
- I.T. Mayor del Pueblo Murui
- I.T. ARICA
- I.T. Papurí
- I.T. Unido de los Ríos Isana y Surubí
- I.T. del Río Pirá Paraná
- I.T. PANI
- I.T. Munhuyi del Cananarí y Alto Apaporis
- I.T. de La Chorrera
- I.T. Miriti Paraná
- I.T. UITIBOC - ASOAINTAM
- I.T. La Victoria
- I.T. del Medio Río Guainía

INDIGENOUS TERRITORIES EXPRESSING INTEREST

- I.T. de Puerto Alegría
- I.T. del Medio Amazonas
- I.T. Puinave
- I.T. Kubeo del Cuduyarí
- Indigenous Organization for Mobilization and Defense of the Bajo Vaupés

OTHER NON-INDIGENOUS TERRITORIAL ENTITIES

- Departments and municipalities

This process is implemented through Decree Laws 632 of 2018 and 488 of 2025, which complementarily establish the functioning of Indigenous Territories as recognized by the Political Constitution[5]. Decree Law 632 has been key to the expression of self-determination and the exercise of autonomy by Indigenous Peoples (Ochoa, 2024). It seeks to formalize Indigenous Territories in Amazonas, Vaupés, and Guainía –territories that were inappropriately referred to as non-municipalized areas, lacking a recognized public administration framework; thus, presenting numerous challenges and opportunities for territorial planning. With a national scope, Decree Law 488 of 2025 complements and consolidates this legal framework by defining regulations on the functioning of Indigenous Territories and mechanisms for coordination with other authorities and territorial entities. Its promulgation represents a significant advance in the recognition of the right to self-determination and in indigenous territorial governance, and constitutes a regional reference for designing public policies that promote autonomy and respect for cultural diversity (CIDH, 2025).

Within the framework of Amazonian ETIs, Indigenous Councils —emerging governance structures that materialize the exercise of territorial autonomy— embody a new form of political organization based on knowledge systems and a spiritual relationship with the rainforest. The Indigenous Council of Miritíi Paraná, for example, defines territorial management, ensures the sustainability of the rainforest and the well-being of its inhabitants, and guides its decisions according to the principles of reciprocity, complementarity, and integrality (Miritíi Paraná, 2024). Similarly, the Yaigojé Apaporis Territory demonstrates how the *maloca*[6] constitutes the heart of Indigenous governance: a political and spiritual space where Council decisions are deliberated, the collective future is planned, and new generations are educated. There, ancestral wisdom through the Word of Origin guides the responsible use of the rainforest and its resources, and guarantees harmony between people and the territory (Yaigojé Apaporis, 2024). Taken together, these Councils represent a living form of governance that integrates political and cultural dimensions and reaffirms the collective responsibility to preserve the balance of the rainforest

Among the main governance tools are the Life Plans, dynamic documents that guide territorial decisions in the cultural, social, economic, environmental, and political spheres, and which constitute the axis of articulation between Indigenous Governments and State institutions (Gaia Amazonas, 2020). The ETI of Yaigojé Apaporis, for example, conceives its Life Plan as an instrument of intercultural dialogue and self-planning, through which it presents to the world the ancestral knowledge that sustains community well-being and the care of the territory, building a bridge to society and shaping institutions to strengthen intercultural communication (Yaigojé Apaporis, 2023).

Life Plans also incorporate cultural principles and spiritual foundations that shape a unique system of regulation and relationship with the territory. This system guides the protection of sacred sites, the care of natural resources, land use and management, productive activities, and food sovereignty, consolidating —from the perspective of the peoples— a unique set of norms that becomes a determining factor in territorial organization (Tiquié, 2024).

However, various political and administrative barriers have hindered the implementation of ETIs (Indigenous Governments, 2022), leading to territorial and legal defense actions that reflect the political and organizational strength of Indigenous governments. Delays and extra-legal demands in the registration of the Councils of Pirá Paraná and Medio Río Guainía prompted the intervention of the Constitutional Court[7], which

5. The Political Constitution of Colombia recognizes Indigenous Territories as territorial entities, with the same status as municipalities and departments, granting them political, fiscal, and administrative autonomy (Articles 287, 329, and 356). Furthermore, it empowers the National Government to regulate their operation and coordination with other territorial entities until Congress enacts the corresponding organic law for ETIs (Transitory Article 56).

6. **Translator's note:** A traditional communal house used as the spiritual, social and political center of community life in many Indigenous peoples of the Northwest Amazon

7. Sentencia T-072 de 2021 de la Corte Constitucional de Colombia.

ordered immediate progress in this process and the inclusion of all communities and traditional authorities. Subsequently, Law 200 of 2022, which allowed for the municipalization of previously non-municipalized areas without prior consultation, was declared unconstitutional[8], prohibiting the swift or "express" municipalization of Indigenous Territories. This was compounded by further administrative delays and a lack of inter-institutional coordination, leading to another ruling by the Court[9] urging the State to overcome the obstacles and move forward with the effective formalization of the ETIs.

In addition to institutional challenges, Indigenous Territories face increasing pressures driven by illicit economies and an extractive development model that continues to expand across the Amazon. In the eastern Colombian Amazon, these threats materialize in gold mining, the extraction of black minerals or rare earth elements —strategic for the global energy transition— and the risks associated with their location as a route for arms and cocaine trafficking (FCDS, 2025). Following the signing of the Peace Agreement in 2016, new armed actors and criminal structures filled the power vacuums left by the FARC-EP[10], through the appropriation of territories, gold and rare earth mining, and illegal trafficking (CNMH, 2024).

Pressure also stems from state and private interests linked to so-called "strategic mining areas", to concession applications and mining titles, and to infrastructure projects —such as airfields, river corridors on the Guaviare, Vaupés, and Putumayo rivers, and the improvement of the Orinoquía Mainline— that could open access to still-preserved forested areas and weaken community governance structures. These interconnected pressures form part of a broader regional extractive geopolitics, shaped by the global demand for strategic minerals and timber. The expansion of these activities is reshaping Indigenous Territories and areas of high biodiversity, transforming the life systems and ecological foundations of the Amazon biome (CLUA, 2018).

Despite institutional pressures and limitations, the past year has been decisive for the formalization of ETIs and the strengthening of their autonomy. Among the most significant advances are the issuance of administrative acts delimiting the territory of eight of the twenty-seven entities and the promotion of *intercultural dialogue* aimed at fostering the necessary institutional adjustments —legal, political, and economic— for the full exercise of the powers of Indigenous Governments.

In this context, *intercultural dialogue* is consolidated as a structuring principle of institutional relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous authorities. More than a series of meetings, Indigenous Peoples conceive of it as a space for convergence between systems of thought and diverse forms of political and administrative organization, where agreements are built on horizontality and mutual recognition. Through this process, it is hoped that Indigenous Governments and state entities will overcome institutional gaps, create coordination mechanisms that value Indigenous knowledge systems and the epistemic plurality expressed in governance instruments such as their Life Plans, and develop management models aimed at protecting territories from various pressures and threats.

With COP30 approaching in Belém do Pará, in the heart of the Amazon, the Indigenous governments of the eight Territorial Entities that have made the most progress toward formalization have issued an urgent appeal to President Gustavo Petro to ensure that the legislative and administrative advances achieved translate into concrete institutional actions that guarantee the effective implementation of the new entities. This would materialize into "*a different —intercultural— way of governing the Amazon*" (Indigenous Governments, 2025).

8. Sentencia C-054 de 2023 de la Corte Constitucional de Colombia.

9. Sentencia T-180 de 2024 de la Corte Constitucional de Colombia.

10. FARC-EP (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army): an insurgent group

Consolidating this intercultural vision requires the Colombian State to undertake a profound transformation of its national and territorial architecture, moving towards a state model that reflects the diversity of its legal framework and the country's legal pluralism. Structurally, this implies guaranteeing the autonomy of Indigenous Governments and promoting genuine public coordination at all levels. Environmentally, it requires the effective recognition of their environmental authority[11] and the validity of their own norms for land-use planning and ecosystem management, based on their cultural principles and foundations, as well as coordination in decision-making regarding climate and biodiversity. This entails recognizing ETIs as climate actors, capable of making measurable contributions to national mitigation and adaptation commitments, and of strengthening the socio-ecological resilience of the Amazon to climate extremes. Finally, administratively and fiscally, it will be essential to design special procedures, consistent with the political-administrative vision of the ETIs, guaranteeing the necessary conditions for their full operation.

Moving in this direction decisively paves the way for the full guarantee of Indigenous self-determination on both the national and global stage. What is happening today in the Colombian Amazon sends a message to the world about the real possibility of building a state model that guarantees cultural diversity and is genuinely committed to protecting life. Ultimately, transformative climate action must intertwine respect for the self-determination of Indigenous Peoples with the promotion of territorial planning models — such as those being implemented by these governments— that respond to the global imperatives of climate change mitigation and adaptation.

11. Decree 1275 of 2024 represents a decisive regulatory advance by recognizing Indigenous Peoples as environmental authorities within their territories. This instrument strengthens the operational capacity of the ETIs and establishes the basis for coordination with other state entities. It defines fundamental competencies, including the formulation of environmental management plans, the management of ecosystem protection projects, the adoption of their own regulations for the preservation of their territory, and the application of sanctions within their jurisdiction, thus consolidating a legal framework that integrates environmental management with their systems of self-governance and traditional knowledge.



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2. *Governing from cultural diversity:*

Intercultural tensions with territorial and global effects

The current international architecture of Indigenous Peoples' rights and environmental governance reveals a persistent paradox: while normative frameworks advance the formal recognition of autonomy and self-determination, environmental and climate policies continue to reproduce structures of exclusion that limit their effective implementation. Since 1989, ILO Convention 169 and, later, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) have consolidated the right of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination, including the power to govern themselves, define their own models of life and development, preserve their cultural and spiritual identities, and have the necessary means to sustain their own governance functions and structures (Gaia Amazonas, 2023).

However, the development of environmental and climate policies has followed a parallel and, in many cases, contradictory course to that of Indigenous rights. While international human rights instruments have strengthened the legal and political recognition of Indigenous peoples, global environmental agendas —such as the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement— have tended to instrumentalize nature under logics of compensation and the market. This imbalance reveals a profound divide between two visions of life: one centered on the intrinsic value of territories and their biocultural fabric, and the other framed within the green economy, where nature is measured by its capacity to mitigate emissions.

Consequently, Indigenous Peoples face a double exclusion: on the one hand, the slow and fragmented implementation of their rights at the national and international levels; and on the other, their underrepresentation in regional and international climate governance mechanisms. This tension —which operates simultaneously at multiple scales— is not only institutional but also philosophical: it confronts opposing ways of understanding the relationship between human beings, nature, and political power. At the national level, this translates into policies that recognize territory but not its governance; at the regional level, this manifests in Amazonian agendas that prioritize conservation without intercultural dialogue; and at the international level, it manifests in climate governance mechanisms that value forests without recognizing the peoples who sustain them.

Addressing these tensions requires understanding that climate justice cannot be achieved without epistemic and territorial justice. Climate policies that disregard cultural diversity and traditional forms of governance risk reproducing the very extractive patterns they claim to combat. In this sense, the intersection of Indigenous rights with environmental and climate policy becomes a critical arena in which not only the future of Indigenous Peoples is at stake, but also the ethical horizon of global climate action.

IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES

This chapter analyzes three tensions that emerge from this intersection:

1. The modern separation between nature and culture, which strips nature of its spiritual and relational dimensions
2. The persistence of a monocultural logic of the State that hinders coordination among systems of governance
3. The paradox of environmental and climate governance, which seeks to be participatory while excluding those who sustain the territories most vital to the balance of the planet

266 Mha*

*Million hectares

This is the area encompassing the region north of the Amazon River between Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela. It contains the largest and best-preserved continuous tropical rainforest in the world

33.6%*

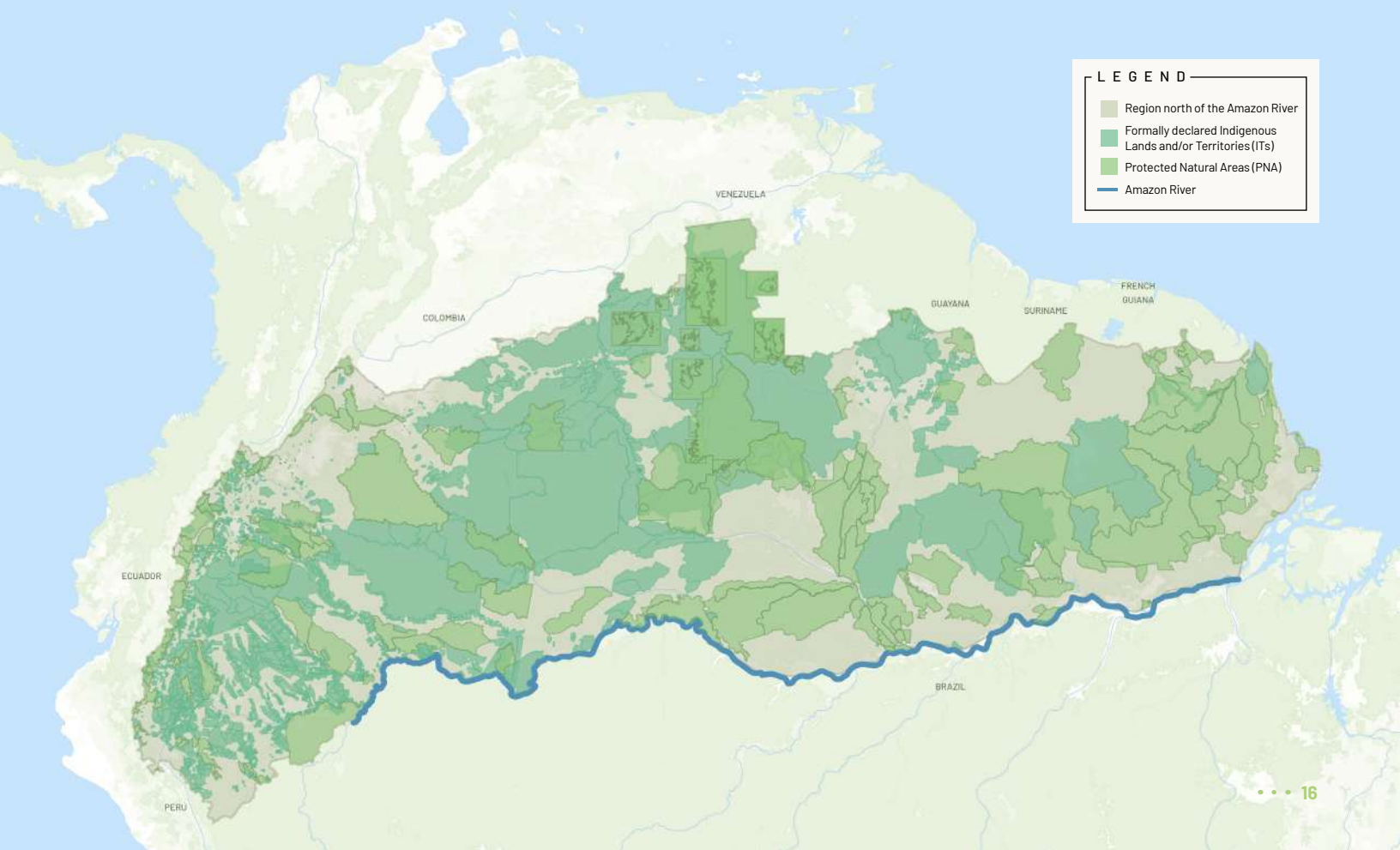
Protected by Indigenous Lands and/or Territories

**89 Mha*

24.4%*

Protected by Natural Protected Areas

**65 Mha*



The Ayawa Create the River of Water of Yuruparí

After the Great Universal Flood and the Burning of the World, there was no water left and no trees. The earth was hot, and the sun continued shining; it sent heat upon heat, never fading or growing weak. The earth was flat. The Creators descended to this land once more. They were the Children of the Universe, the Ayawa. They were four:

~Kubu Yu, the eldest, was to lead the tasks they needed to carry out; following him were Boayawa, ~Daa-ayawa, and the fourth —whose name we do not know— who would bring great harm.

They began the search for the primordial water using the Sacred Yuruparí, which they had hidden during the burning, and they made it sound again as if performing a ritual. They gathered all the sacred instruments from the different ethnic groups to search for water; they were confused because the earth had shifted its axis.

Accompanying the Ayawa in their search were three beings: the Guama Heron — ~Bede Yahe, the Foam Heron — ~Sobo Yahe, and the Blood Heron — Ríyahe. For this reason, to this day, they are sung to and danced for in the ritual of Old Yuruparí, Heebiki~ra; though they are far away, in spirit they are present.

After searching for a long time, they went toward the Gate of the Waters. There, deep below, were four stools, one upon another; four layers of earth. After stepping on the first layer, they searched for water but found none; their throats were very dry.

"In one of these layers there must be water. Perhaps with the burning it drained into the lowest layer," the Ayawa said.

They searched every corner of that layer, and pointing to the Yuruparí Wasp of the Pirá — Hebi Waiya Beroa — they wondered: "Could he be the one who knows how to think?". While the Ayawa were playing the Yuruparí from the first layer deep beneath the earth, Waiya Beroa played the Yuruparí with such force that it reached the fourth layer, and there he found the water. The Creators rejoiced and said to him: "You are the Great Yuruparí, the one who can set order to the times."

The Yuruparí — Waiya Beroa — drank the water from the deepest layer and blew it toward the sky, forming an arc. At its highest point, the Lagoon of the Sky was formed, where the clouds nest. When it fell, it created the Hollows of the Pirá — Waiya Goheri — where the Pirá Paraná River is born, the River of the Waters of Yuruparí — Hee Ide ~Ba.

For us, the Pirá Paraná River is one single river from its birth in the Hollows of the Pirá to the Gate of the Waters, where the Amazon River empties into the Atlantic Ocean. The Pirá Paraná River is the vein; the primordial source of the territory.

INDIGENOUS TERRITORY
OF PIRÁ PARANÁ

2.1. Separation between nature and culture:

The epistemic root of the environmental crisis

The Ayawa story of the river of water of Yuruparí constitutes a principle of knowledge and a worldview. After the Great Flood and the Burning of the World —when no water or trees remained, and the earth burned under a relentless sun— the Creators descended once more to search for the primordial water. With the Sacred Yuruparí, they played the instruments they had saved from the fire, and as they played from the depths, the elder Yuruparí, Waiya Beroa, found the water and blew it toward the sky, forming an arc that gave rise to the Pirá Paraná River, "*the primordial vein of the territory.*" Since then, "*the Pirá Paraná River is one and the same, from its source to the Gate of the Waters, where the Amazon flows into the Ocean; it is the source of life of all that exists*" (Pirá Paraná, 2015).

This narrative is not a metaphor, but a living ontology that expresses the continuity between the human and the non-human, between water, spirits, and peoples. It encapsulates norms of coexistence and responsibilities that sustain life: to care, to balance, to maintain the flow of the world. As the elder and knowledge-keeper Benito Letuama affirms, "These wisdoms are living knowledge systems, that belong to those who created everything that exists in the territory; they were given to us to care for life, and therefore belong to all beings in the territory" (Benito Letuama, traditional wise man).

From this perspective, knowledge is inseparable from nature and politics: knowing, inhabiting, and governing are inseparable dimensions of the same system of life. This way of thinking, rooted in the Law of Origin, challenges the modern division between nature and culture, a foundational axis of Western epistemology. While the State and environmental sciences have transformed nature into an object of management and subjected it to the languages of property and the market, Amazonian knowledge systems conceive of it as a political and spiritual subject endowed with agency, memory, and the capacity for relationship.

In dialogue with Marisol de la Cadena (2020), these relational ontologies —or "cosmopolitical" ones, as she calls them— destabilize the modern idea of a single world governed by a single rationality. In practice, the encounter between these two matrices of knowledge has historically been asymmetrical: the coloniality of knowledge has reduced Indigenous systems to cultural expressions or local knowledge, denying their character as political and philosophical thought about the world.

The first challenge, then, is not only environmental but also epistemic. The modern state, heir to a political economy that conceives of nature as a resource, and of life as the raw material of development, has built its legitimacy on the idea of a nature external to humanity, quantifiable and manageable. In this logic —which permeates global climate

policies— the relationship with ecosystems is transactional and utilitarian (Latour, 2004; Shiva, 2005). From this stem not only policies of compensation or commodification of nature but also the extractive expansion that has reconfigured Amazonian territories.

Instead, Amazonian peoples propose an ontology of relationship, where the territory is a living system of connections, and authority is exercised based on the balance between the different beings that inhabit it. Their territorial organization, based on reciprocity and respect, constitutes a system of ecological governance that has sustained Amazonian biodiversity for generations (REM, 2018). In contrast, state territorial organization —structured from an extractive logic and the centralized administration of land and subsoil— has fractured these relationships, giving rise to multiple forms of violence and socio-environmental conflict (Escobar, 2008; Molano, 2018).

While certain conservationist movements have promoted the complete separation between nature and communities (Guha, 2014), Indigenous practices reveal that caring for the rainforest requires constant interaction and knowledge of the cycles of rivers, fruits, stars, and seasons. The management of the *chagra*[12], ecological calendars, and rituals such as dances and healing practices[13] are simultaneously agricultural, spiritual, and climatic: *they are biocultural technologies that sustain the planet's life cycles*.

Finally, the recognition of the Amazon as a subject of rights by the Colombian Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ, 2018) represents a discursive advance toward an ecocentric vision, but it also reveals the limitations of a legal model that continues to operate under an anthropocentric epistemology.

On the one hand, the ruling mandates achieving the goal of zero deforestation by 2030; on the other, it omits the active participation of Amazonian peoples and lacks mechanisms to integrate their knowledge systems. Thus, the State recognizes nature as a subject of rights, but does not, through its own legal framework, fully recognize those who govern it.

This paradox reveals that ecological justice can only be achieved if the coloniality of knowledge is overcome and the political and epistemic role of the peoples who embody the life of these territories is recognized. Ultimately, the transition to genuine climate justice depends on the possibility of learning to govern with nature, and not over it.



© RITUAL ELEMENTOS YAP | JUAN GABRIEL SOLER, 2018

12. The chagra (traditional agricultural plot) represents a traditional, rotational agricultural system of the Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon, managed primarily by women, which plays a central role in Indigenous food systems. In addition to ensuring ecosystem renewal, this method preserves biological and cultural diversity by integrating traditional knowledge about soils, seeds, and pest control. Furthermore, the chagra serves as a valuable vehicle for transmitting ancestral knowledge related to environmental conservation.

13. Taking seriously the agency of non-human beings and the knowledge systems of Indigenous Peoples implies recognizing that ancestral practices such as dances and healing rituals have a direct impact on the vitality and sustainability of ecosystems. As Barker (2017) points out, these practices, in themselves, contribute to landscape regeneration by revitalizing and sustaining the complex webs of life that make up the territory.

Knowledge of the Constellations*

14. **Translator's note:** to be understood as foods gifted / established by the creators as part of the cosmological order (including cultivated plants, sacred crops, forest foods, etc.), foods that sustain life in an ecological and cultural sense.

Our tradition is to follow the constellations in order to measure time and to understand what happens in each season of the year. The ancestors, by observing the constellations, knew in which time we were living and which time was approaching. With that knowledge, they understood what was happening in the forest with the animals, the fish, the people, and the river. They knew when there would be abundance of wild fruits, of animals of the forest, and of fish. Through knowledge of the constellations, people have the proper knowledge so that the environment functions in balance.

Constellations inscribed in the sky show us how our Ecological Calendar —Rodori— works. It is space and time themselves that give order; we, the Knowledge-Holders or Traditional Healers, simply help regulate nature so that everything functions correctly, without illness, war, or hunger; so that life may continue in a world where no one can stop the movement or the rotation and orbit of our Earth.

That is why we say that we, Indigenous peoples, walk along the path traced by our creators, guided by the ritual elements, norms, and foods they left us.

***Narrated by:**
Hee Gu Ignacio Valencia
Etnia macuna

Translated by:
Tarcisio Vanegas
Etnia itano
Comunidad de Santa Isabel

INDIGENOUS TERRITORY OF PIRÁ PARANÁ

2.2. Vigencia de lógica monocultural del Estado

The narrative of the constellations reveals a form of territorial governance that arises from the observation of the cosmos and the relationship with climate cycles. By guiding community activities according to stellar movements, Amazonian peoples synchronize their social, spiritual, and ecological lives with the rhythms of the Earth. This form of knowledge embodies a model of territorial organization that integrates nature, time, and politics; a cosmology of balance that contrasts radically with the monocultural logic of the modern state.

The monocultural logic of the State is founded on the idea that there is only one legitimate way to organize life, time, and power. From this perspective, valid knowledge is that which conforms to universal categories and standardized administrative procedures, producing a governmental structure that absorbs or subordinates other forms of knowledge and authority, reducing cultural diversity to a formal rather than a structural recognition. Instead of fostering dialogue between knowledge systems, the State imposes a single matrix of administration and control, disconnected from the plurality of life forms that inhabit the Amazon.

This monoculturalism translates, in practice, into a state that does not conceive of the Amazon as a living and interdependent system, but rather as a territory administered by isolated sectors —environment, agriculture, energy, transportation— whose policies lack articulation and coherence. By organizing its public action around sectoral agendas and programs, the state reproduces management models that fragment Amazonian reality into disconnected bureaucratic spheres and reduces its ecosystemic, social, and cultural complexity to an administration that operates without a comprehensive vision or the capacity for inter-institutional coordination.

State planning —having inherited a utilitarian view of nature— ignores the ecological temporalities and regeneration processes that sustain life in Amazonian ecosystems. Its vertical and centralized structure, based on the homogenization of knowledge and the subordination of territory to the interests of economic development (Santos, 2016; Escobar, 2011), reinforces this fragmented management that dissociates the links between economy, territory, and life. As a result, the contradictions between territorial, environmental, and development agendas hinder conservation and sustainability goals, while the isolated management of biodiversity and climate change continues to limit the scope of national goals in both areas (Pörtner, 2021; Ostrom, 2009). Thus, the State reduces public action to mechanisms of environmental control and compensation, incapable of sustaining the ecological and cultural integrity of the biome.

In contrast, the governance, regulatory, and territorial management systems of Amazonian Indigenous Peoples are founded on an ecological worldview, where knowledge, climate, and life are interwoven. In the Pirá Paraná Indigenous Territory, for example, the cultural calendar of seasons serves as a norm setting instrument, linking ecological processes with productive practices related to food systems. By synchronizing planting,

caretaking, and harvesting with climatic cycles, these communities ensure ecosystem regeneration and the sustainability of their ways of life. These systems not only manage the territory but also govern the relationship between society and nature through ethical principles of care and reciprocity. They represent, therefore, an ancestral climate policy that sustains life, in contrast to a state policy that seeks to manage it.

This second challenge of the persistence of a monocultural logic of the State, is not limited to administrative tensions between Indigenous Peoples and the State, but rather exposes the epistemic nature of inequality and the persistence of a power structure that imposes a single way of knowing and governing life. This colonial legacy —expressed in the historical imposition of structures, decisions, and control techniques without consent— has generated an institutional asymmetry that weakens self-determination and restricts the capacity of Indigenous Peoples to influence national and global climate policies.

In recent years, the Colombian State has adopted a logic of limited recognition that seeks to formally respond to Indigenous demands without effectively guaranteeing their self-determination (Tully, 2020). This recognition, although it incorporates the language of rights and participation, does not transform decision-making structures or institutional frameworks that continue to centralize power and subordinate Indigenous authorities to the state apparatus. Indigenous Peoples and Territories continue to be treated more as beneficiaries of policies than as public authorities, and their participation in climate action continues to be subject to consultative or compensatory mechanisms, instead of being based on coordination and co-responsibility in the governance of the territory.

Overcoming this monocultural logic requires understanding that climate action demands multiple forms of knowledge in dialogue. Recognizing Indigenous systems of governance and knowledge is not a gesture of inclusion, but a structural condition for building pluralistic climate governance, consistent with the diversity of worlds that sustain the Amazon.



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The paradox of environmental and climate governance

"The carbon credit project that arrived in the Pirá Paraná ignored the self-governance of the Territory at every stage of its design and implementation. Moreover, it is an example of something systemic: the imposition of false solutions to climate change. For Indigenous Peoples, this is deeply concerning, because these mechanisms —created in the name of human rights— paradoxically violate the human rights of those who have cared for the forests the most. The regulation and governance of such projects must be based on the criteria, cultures, and ways of life of Indigenous peoples, because we are the ones who safeguard life and territory."

Fabio Valencia
Legal Representative

INDIGENOUS TERRITORY OF PIRÁ PARANÁ.

Click to view Fabio's full statement before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (CIDH).

2.3. The paradox of environmental and climate governance

Fabio Valencia's testimony reveals the central paradox of contemporary climate governance: while proclaiming the participation and recognition of Indigenous Peoples, it reproduces power structures that exclude or instrumentalize them. The third challenge relates precisely to these inherent contradictions in the concept of governance, used widely —and often indiscriminately— in the public, multilateral, and private spheres. In theory, governance[15] implies participatory and horizontal interaction between the State, social actors, and the private sector in managing matters of collective interest, such as land-use planning or climate action. However, in practice, its implementation has consolidated new forms of inequality by leaving intact the economic and political mechanisms that concentrate decision-making power in the hands of global and state actors; concealing profound power asymmetries and reproducing decision-making structures that exclude, among many other actors, also Indigenous Peoples.

At the state level, environmental and climate governance models tend to address socio-environmental conflicts without questioning their structural causes, which are linked to a global economic order that has historically hierarchized states and populations to sustain the system of accumulation. Within this framework, inequality, injustice, and a lack of territorial recognition remain the main drivers of conflict. As long as these structural conditions persist, attempts at coordination, collaboration, and participation will continue to be merely formal exercises without real impact, and decisions will remain marked by power imbalances. Furthermore, the coexistence of multiple interests in these territories —state, corporate, and multilateral— along with the institutional fragmentation of Amazonian states, hinders the development of lasting and truly intercultural agreements.

From an Indigenous perspective, this contradiction is even more evident. Despite discursive advances toward more inclusive governance, the dominant paradigm remains resistant to recognizing Indigenous Peoples as fully empowered territorial authorities and as political actors within the global climate architecture. Thus, the international discourse on governance, presented as pluralistic and participatory, ends up reproducing historical exclusions by failing to effectively guarantee self-determination.

This tension became evident during the negotiations of Target 3 of the Global Biodiversity Framework, which aims to protect at least 30% of the planet's terrestrial, inland water, coastal, and marine areas by 2030. Although Indigenous Territories are essential for the protection of global biodiversity, several States —during the negotiations in Nairobi and Montreal— refused to formally recognize them as environmental entities or key conservation units (Abulu, 2022). After arduous debates, their inclusion along with Protected Areas and Other Effective Conservation Measures (OMECs) was ultimately

15. The concept of governance emerged in response to the restructuring of political and administrative systems in the 1980s and 1990s. Some scholars link it to a neoliberal project that sought to expand the role of the private sector in public administration.

subject to the will of the States, which demonstrates the fragility of the international commitment to indigenous systems of government and territorial management.

A similar contradiction is evident in the implementation of the REDD+ mechanism, a central instrument of climate governance based on payments for environmental results, driven by carbon markets. Although its objective is to reduce deforestation by financing local projects, its application has shown profound limitations. In many cases, Indigenous Peoples have been treated as passive recipients of externally designed projects; in others, companies have violated fundamental rights such as self-determination and prior consultation. The case of the Pirá Paraná Indigenous Territory —which filed a lawsuit, with legal support from the Gaia Amazonas Foundation, against the company Masbosques for having formulated and marketed a REDD+ project without free, prior, and informed consent— clearly illustrates these tensions.

Furthermore, climate compensation mechanisms have become tools of territorial control that extract value from the Amazon and the best-governed territories on the planet, without questioning the accumulation, production, and consumption model of the Global North (Dehm, 2021). Consequently, the climate-biodiversity agenda continues to be defined by external actors through financial instruments that subordinate self-determination and depoliticize the visions of reciprocity, interdependence, and complementarity that sustain life in Indigenous Territories.

To reverse this paradox, climate governance must be transformed from the ground up, recognizing that effective climate action is impossible without territorial justice. It is essential to recognize Indigenous governments as full political actors in territorial management. This implies not only respecting their self-determination but also creating intercultural coordination mechanisms that integrate their knowledge systems, cultural practices, and institutions into the public administration. Strengthening the autonomy of Indigenous governments and recognizing their territories as pillars of climate stability and biodiversity protection is not just a matter of justice: it is a structural condition for building climate governance that is consistent with biocultural diversity and the planet's sustainability.

3. *Intercultural opportunities and climate coordination from the Macro-territory of the Jaguars of Yuruparí*



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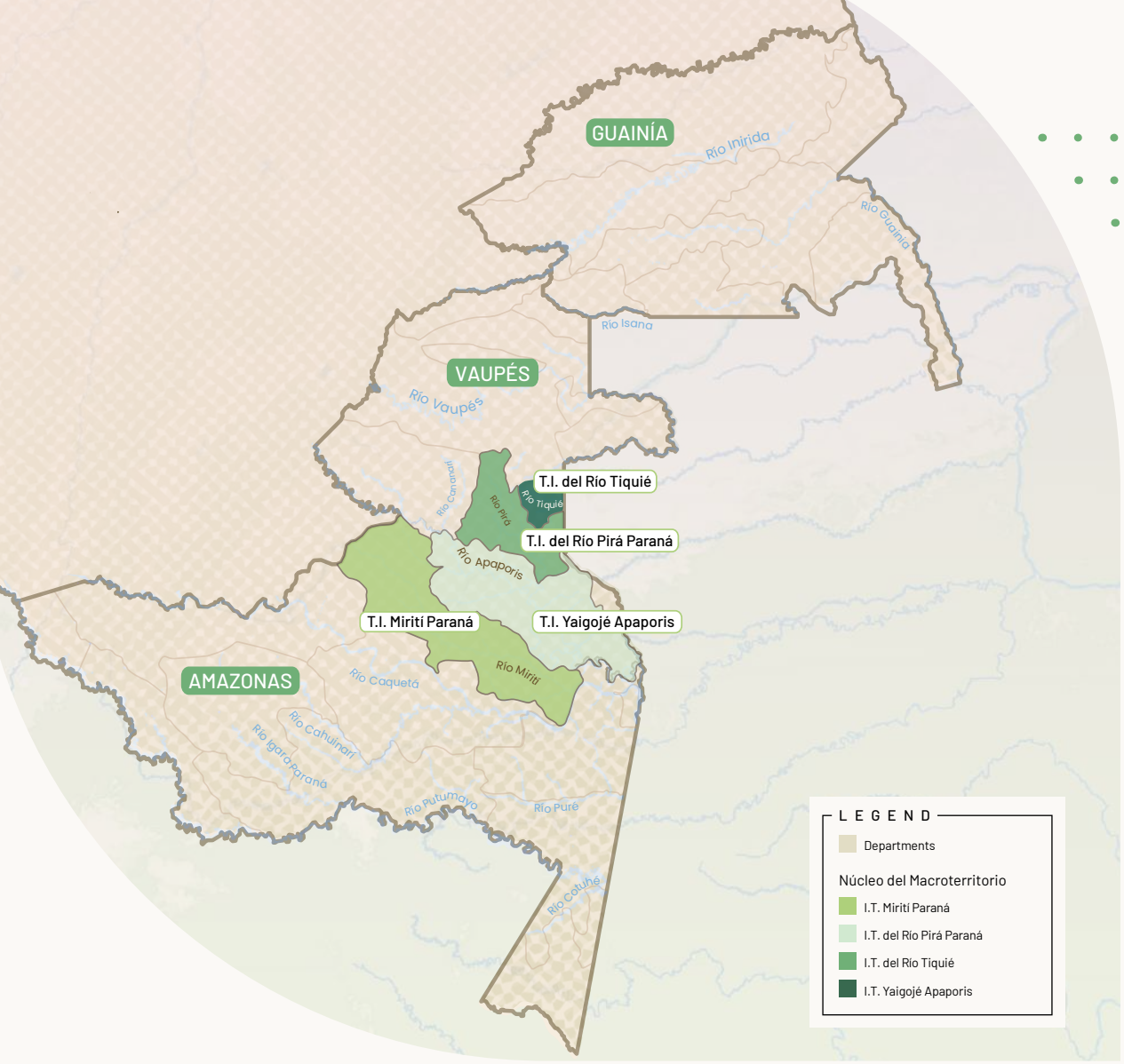
Addressing the climate crisis requires transforming state structures and their relationships with territories. Current environmental challenges reveal the need to overcome institutional fragmentation and move towards governance models capable of recognizing cultural diversity, ecological interdependence, and the plurality of knowledge systems that sustain life in the Amazon. In this context, Indigenous Peoples offer concrete experiences that demonstrate how autonomy, collective territorial management, and ancestral knowledge systems can strengthen climate and ecological action.

Recognizing and learning from these experiences is essential for building a pluralistic state with effective coordination among different levels of government. In the eastern Colombian Amazon, initiatives driven by the communities of the Macro-territory of the Jaguars of Yuruparí —which integrate territorial defense, financial sustainability, and climate governance— show that joint action and intercultural coordination can pave the way for fulfilling global commitments to conservation, restoration, and climate justice, drawing on the vital energy of the territories themselves.



3.5Mha
million hectares in Colombia*

4 Indigenous Governments

16.5% of the entire Colombian Amazon

41
ethnic groups

31 different languages
belonging to the Eastern Tukano, Arawak, and Maku-Puinave language families.

*This vast territorial and cultural system extends from the eastern Colombian Amazon and beyond the border with Brazil.

In total, it covers an area of eight million hectares. Their origin stories, cultural practices, environmental management and governance are based on the traditional knowledge of Yuruparí, a sacred ritual of disease prevention and cure that seeks the reproduction of life and abundance in the territory.

3.1. Coordination Body of the Macro-Territory of the Jaguars of Yuruparí:

A model of self-determination and climate action

The Macro-Territory of the Jaguars of Yuruparí, at the heart of a biocultural corridor of the same name, extends across the Vaupés and Caquetá river basins. This area encompasses more than eight million hectares of continuous rainforest and interconnected territories —if its extension beyond the border with Brazil is considered. This vast system of life and knowledge constitutes one of the most important centers of ecological and cultural connectivity in the Amazon, essential for the continent's climate stability and the protection of its water sources and biodiversity (GETI Rana et al., 2021; Leal et al., 2025).

The governance model of the four ETIs that form the core of the Macroterritory —Tiquié, Pirá Paraná, Miritíí Paraná, and Yaigojé Apaporis— is based on the ancestral knowledge of the Jaguars of Yuruparí (Hee Yaia Keti Oka), recognized by UNESCO in 2011 as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This system of governance, based on reciprocity and balance between the human and non-human worlds, has for decades shaped the collective management of the territory, guiding the use, care, and transmission of knowledge as principles of sustainability and climate justice.

In March 2024, following nine macro-territorial meetings held since 2017 with the support of the Gaia Amazonas Foundation, the governments of these four territories formalized the 'Coordination Body of the Macro-Territory of the Jaguars of Yuruparí'. This framework consolidates a political and cultural agreement that gives rise to an association structure of special public law, allowing them to act collectively as territorial authorities, strengthen their autonomy, and establish political-administrative coordination relationships with the State, international cooperation agencies, and other Amazonian peoples[16].

The Coordination Body aims to strengthen systems of knowledge and self-governance, promote Indigenous territorial planning, encourage the formalization of ETIs, and manage financial and environmental sustainability strategies in accordance with Life Plans. Its creation represents a milestone in the implementation of Decree Laws 632 of 2018 and 488 of 2025, which recognize ETIs as territorial public entities with the capacity for planning, management, and participation in the country's climate and environmental policy (Macronoticias, 2023).

From an ecological perspective, the Macroterritory connects the two largest Amazonian river basins —the Caquetá-Japurá and the Vaupés or Río Negro— forming a biocultural corridor of more than 6.6 million hectares that retains 96% of its forest cover. This corridor sustains the atmospheric flows of the so-called "flying rivers," which are

16. For more information on the Macro-territory of the Jaguars of Yuruparí and its Coordination Body, see https://jaguaresdeyurupari.org/.

fundamental to rainfall patterns and water regulation in South America, from the Andes to the Atlantic. In their aboveground biomass, the forests of the Macroterritory store around 840 million tons of carbon, reaffirming their role as one of the largest carbon reservoirs in the region.

The exercise of Indigenous environmental authority has materialized in management instruments such as Life Plans and Environmental Management Plans, which guide territorial planning in accordance with the Law of Origin and traditional management practices. In Yaigojé Apaporis, for example, this plan is integrated with agreements coordinating the public environmental function with National Natural Parks; in Pirá Paraná, with the Special Cultural Safeguarding Plan; and in the territories of Miritíand Tiquié, with agroforestry management systems that incorporate ecological calendars, food sovereignty, and the care of sacred sites.

The Coordination Body also utilizes the Information System for the Management of Indigenous Territorial Entities (SIGETI), a biocultural monitoring and intercultural management tool that integrates traditional knowledge with modern technology to strengthen ETIs' self-governance and the exercise of their authority. More than a technical instrument, it is a political, cultural, and administrative process that brings together Indigenous knowledge systems, norms, and planning practices with state monitoring and decision-making mechanisms. In this sense, SIGETI functions as a public policy instrument that strengthens local and regional capacities for the comprehensive stewardship of territory, promoting coordination between Indigenous governments and state institutions under conditions of equity and complementarity.

Taken as a whole, the Coordination Body of the Macro-Territory of the Jaguars of Yuruparí represents a living form of intercultural and climate governance, demonstrating that Indigenous self-determination is not only a right but also a concrete strategy for sustaining the ecological integrity of the Amazon biome and confronting the global climate crisis.



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3.2. From REDD+ to a self-determined strategy for sustainability and climate governance in the Macro-Territory of the Jaguars of Yurupará

The collective action of the Indigenous Governments of the Macro-Territory of the Jaguars of Yurupará, consolidated through their Coordination Body, has also proven decisive in addressing the impacts of the REDD+ mechanism, promoted as a climate mitigation tool but widely criticized for its effects on Indigenous territories. In various contexts, this mechanism has generated new forms of dependency and control by treating communities as passive recipients of external projects, without considering their governance systems or their principles of relationship with the territory (Van Dam, 2011; Gaia Amazonas, 2023).

The case of the Pirá Paraná Indigenous Territory illustrates this clearly. The company Masbosques attempted to bypass the consent of the Indigenous Council —the highest governing authority— to design a REDD+ project which went so far as proposing a 30% reduction in chagras as traditional agricultural plots. This would have undermined the cultural and food security of the communities, and the project failed to comply with the required social and environmental safeguards (Gaia, 2023, 2024). Through coordinated analysis by Indigenous governments and warnings issued by the Coordination Body of the Macro-territory, a larger conflict was avoided and the collective capacity for territorial defense was reaffirmed. The Constitutional Court ruled in favor of the territory, determining that the companies had not acted with due diligence and ordering them to refrain from interfering in the autonomous governance of Indigenous Peoples (Court, 2024).

Building on this experience, the Coordination Body advanced an alternative proposal for climate governance, aimed at ensuring a fair distribution of benefits from the REDD+ mechanism and guaranteeing its cultural relevance. Rather than limiting itself to the economic valuation of forests, this proposal recognizes territories as sources of life, well-being, and ecological balance, capable of sustaining the political, economic, and spiritual autonomy of Indigenous peoples.

The autonomous decision adopted by the Indigenous Government of Pirá Paraná at its nineteenth Extraordinary Session, in 2024, marked a turning point in the construction of its own climate governance. At this session, indigenous authorities reaffirmed their commitment to formalizing their territory as an ETI and integrating a REDD+

project under the principles of self-governance and their Life Plan, incorporating it as a source of funding for their Diversified Financial Sustainability Strategy (EDSF). The agreement established that any project must be collectively managed by the four Indigenous Governments of the Macro-territory, without intermediaries and in full respect of their knowledge systems and collective decision-making structures, ensuring that benefits are directed toward cultural and territorial continuity (Pirá Paraná, 2024).

The consolidation of ETIs as legitimate forms of self-governance requires not only legal recognition but also the guarantee of stable, relevant, and sustainable financial conditions. To this end, the Coordination Body developed the EDSF, envisioned as a self-determined system of public finances in service of life. This model weaves together public funding, international cooperation, and green finance instruments, in line with constitutional principles of autonomy and existing regulatory frameworks.

This Strategy seeks to implement a comprehensive and intercultural financial model rooted in Life Plans, in Indigenous rights, and the legal framework that recognizes ETIs' special status. It is guided by principles of co-responsibility, autonomy, and macro-territorial governance, recognizing Indigenous Governments as public environmental authorities in the process of full consolidation. Its actions are grounded locally with a global projection, supported by strategic alliances, integrated planning, and multi-actor participation. It draws inspiration from the model of the Good Life (Buen Vivir), which incorporates Indigenous indicators of well-being and balance with nature, weaving together the cultural, ecological, and economic dimensions of life in the territory.

Within this framework, the recent Joint Action Declaration between the Coordination Body and the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Colombia (MADS, 2025) marks a milestone in strengthening intercultural relations between Indigenous Governments and the State. Its fourth provision, which advances inter-institutional coordination to establish direct mechanisms for climate and biodiversity financing, reaffirms the commitment to build joint management pathways that strengthen the economic autonomy and environmental governance of the ETIs. The agreement not only recognizes the legitimacy of Indigenous Governments as public environmental authorities, but also integrates their EDSF into national and international climate finance systems, enabling resources to flow directly toward institutional strengthening, the protection of Amazonian ecosystems, and the continuity of the cultural life of the peoples.

In this way, the Macro-territory of the Jaguars of Yuruparí is consolidated as a reference point for Indigenous governance and just climate action, in harmony with the principles of autonomy, reciprocity, and co-responsibility that guide its model of the *Good Life (Buen Vivir)*. This experience reaffirms that effective climate action in the Amazon does not depend on externally imposed mechanisms, but on the recognition and strengthening of Indigenous territorial governments as central actors in protecting the biome and ensuring global climate stability.

3.3. Territorial defense and intercultural coordination in the region of Yaigojé Apaporis

In the southeastern Colombian Amazon, between the Caquetá and Apaporis rivers, lies the Raudal de la Libertad (Yüisi) (Freedom Rapids), a significant waterfall on the Apaporis River, located within the Yaigojé Apaporis Indigenous Territory. It is a sacred place, considered the foundation of the world and the spiritual center of the Jaguars of Yuruparí. According to Indigenous knowledge systems, it was there that the spirit of Yuruparí taught the first humans about the cycles of the world and how to live in harmony with the rainforest. From this non-anthropocentric perspective, Yüisi acts as a regulator of territorial order and is a vital node of ecosystem connectivity. Its protection has been a central political and spiritual focus for the peoples of Yuruparí cultural affinity.

In 2007, the Canadian mining company Cosigo Resources applied for concessions to extract gold within this territory, threatening the integrity of the sacred site and its associated ecosystems. Even with a mining title granted, the company failed to comply with the obligation to conduct prior consultation. In response, Indigenous governments spearheaded the creation of the Yaigojé Apaporis National Natural Park, which was officially declared in 2009 (Teteye, 2021). This decision became an unprecedented territorial defense strategy that protected the territory from extractive interests and ensured its cultural and ecological continuity.

The mining threat was not an isolated incident. Throughout the Amazon basin, gold mining is the second leading cause of forest degradation, after deforestation. Research in Colombia's border areas with Peru and Brazil, and in Colombian rivers such as the Caquetá, Puré, Cotuhé, and Purité, reveals severe impacts: deterioration of water quality, accumulation of mercury in animal species and human populations, loss of riverbank forests, and profound alterations that jeopardize the cultural integrity of local communities (AARIMO, 2024).

The defense process of the Yaigojé Apaporis was supported by the Constitutional Court of Colombia, which recognized the right of Indigenous Peoples to prior consultation and control over their territories (Constitutional Court, 2014). Following this decision, the communities of the Yaigojé Apaporis consolidated a sustained process of dialogue and coordination with Colombia's National Natural Parks, aimed at connecting Indigenous knowledge systems with the State's environmental public functions, recognizing their differences and complementarity. This process initially culminated in the creation of the Special Management Regime (REM), a pioneering tool for shared management that, more than an end in itself, paved the way for a new stage of institutional strengthening and political recognition of Indigenous governments.



© CHAGRA 2 PIRÁ PARANÁ | SERGIO BARTELSMAN, 2006

The REM experience enabled the ETI of Yaigojé Apaporis to assume a leadership role in intercultural coordination, advancing environmental management agreements grounded in its own governance perspective. These agreements aim to strengthen coordination between national environmental authorities and Indigenous environmental authorities, linking public environmental functions with territorial autonomy.

Thus, the Yaigojé Apaporis experience illustrates a transition from a territorial defense strategy —focused on resisting extractive threats— to a strategy of intercultural and climate governance that integrates Indigenous knowledge systems with public action and the State's environmental management. Its evolution demonstrates that territorial defense and intercultural institutional coordination are complementary phases of a shared commitment to the biocultural continuity and climate sustainability of the Amazon. This approach has ensured the protection of at least eighteen ecosystems, many of them unique, such as flooded rainforest and wetland environments (REM, 2018).

4. *Towards a global agenda that takes seriously the self-determination of indigenous peoples*

Fabio Valencia
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"From the Law of Origin, we are here to contribute life to the world. We do this through coordination and inter-institutional collaboration for the well-being of the Amazon and the planet. This vision must be built through collective dialogue; we therefore invite you to join us and row together in this great journey."

There is broad consensus that climate change is a direct consequence of human activities (Oreskes, 2018). Since the Industrial Revolution, the burning of fossil fuels, land-use change, solid waste management, and transportation have altered the global climate and are now recognized as the primary drivers of global warming (IPCC, 2018). Moreover, this responsibility is highly concentrated among a small group of major corporations, primarily fossil fuel producers, commonly referred to as the Carbon Majors, which accounted for approximately 71% of global CO_2 emissions between 1988 and 2017 (CIDH, 2025)

Faced with this human-caused crisis, the international community promoted a collective response through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), created to prevent the disruption of the climate balance from causing irreversible damage to life on Earth. Since its adoption in 1992 and its consolidation with agreements such as the Paris Agreement, global climate governance has been marked by profound contradictions and power struggles.

Since 1979, Indigenous Peoples have demanded effective participation in this governance framework. Despite their initial exclusion from the UNFCCC, they developed

strategies and created spaces for advocacy (Sherpa, 2019). At COP21, which resulted in the Paris Agreement, they succeeded in ensuring that Parties include a commitment to respect and promote their rights in the preamble, although the legally binding section omitted all references to Indigenous and human rights. In response to their demands, the Parties agreed to create the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP), whose scope generated prolonged tensions among States, until the formal creation at COP24 of the Facilitation Working Group (FWG) tasked with its implementation (IWGIA, 2023).

These tensions reveal the limitations of an international system that reproduces centralist views and colonial hierarchies in its understanding of the relationship with nature and the exercise of climate authority. The lack of solid bridges between diverse knowledge systems and the exclusion of Indigenous peoples as full political actors reinforce a model that prioritizes economic and geostrategic interests over climate justice. Moving from a participatory framework to one that recognizes Indigenous Peoples as governments in their own territories is now an essential condition for balancing the international climate regime and ensuring legitimate and effective decision-making. This implies recognizing their regulatory and management roles, as well as the need to coordinate policies across territorial, national, and regional levels. It is a paradigm shift that demands moving from symbolic representation to the effective exercise of authority and co-responsibility in climate governance.

In its most recent report, the GTF (2024) acknowledged that obstacles to the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples persist. It highlighted, among these, the mismatch between the dominant global approach —focused on metrics and quantitative reductions in greenhouse gases— and the holistic vision of Indigenous Peoples, based on reciprocity and balance with nature. While the international framework tends to measure and control, Indigenous worldviews conceive of climate as a living network of spiritual, cultural, and social relationships. The report also warns that reliance on dominant languages simplifies complex ecological knowledge and that the repeated emphasis on the vulnerability of Indigenous Peoples obscures their political agency and the richness of their knowledge systems.

With the aim of disseminating, from local and territorial processes, advances that strengthen global climate governance from a rights-based approach —and from a perspective that takes seriously the self-determination of Indigenous peoples— the case of the Indigenous peoples of the eastern Colombian Amazon emerges as an unprecedented reference point. Their experience demonstrates that effective climate action is built from the territories, where ancestral knowledge and self-governing political organization are combined to propose new models of intercultural governance.

The ETIs of the Amazon represent a decisive step toward a governance model grounded in cultural diversity. This process enables Indigenous Peoples to have the tools and resources needed to advance their own visions of development, public policy, and territorial planning. It constitutes one of the most significant advances in state-building from an intercultural perspective, recognizing Indigenous Peoples as full political actors and holders of legitimate systems of governance. Their organizational diversity and their coordination with the State offer a unique opportunity to strengthen Colombian democracy and project an innovative model of Amazonian governance, with direct implications for international commitments on conservation and climate action, and for the fulfillment of the constitutional mandate.

Recognizing Indigenous Peoples as territorial governments also implies assuming

a paradigm shift in global governance: moving from rhetorical recognition to effective coordination, where their normative and environmental management systems are recognized as structural components of the State and the international order. This process also allows us to move beyond the view of Indigenous peoples as mere participants in state structures, proposing a paradigm shift in the very understanding of governance. Rather than attempting to fit Indigenous systems into Western political and legal frameworks, it proposes an epistemological reorientation that recognizes their own systems of governance as essential frameworks for confronting global crises (Bacca, 2019).

The models implemented by the Coordination Body of the Macro-territory of the Jaguars of Yuruparí illustrate this transformation, showing how Indigenous political structures not only resist external impositions but also actively construct forms of territorial regulation consistent with their biocultural realities.

At the heart of this transformation lies a fundamental challenge: recognizing and embracing Indigenous knowledge, management, and regulatory systems as foundational —not peripheral— pillars of global governance. Struggles for territorial protection, such as those in Yaigojé Apaporis and Pirá Paraná, highlight the limitations of national and international legal mechanisms that, while claiming to protect Indigenous rights, often fail to guarantee them in practice. These cases demonstrate that Indigenous organizational processes offer governance alternatives that transcend Western notions of ownership, sovereignty, and environmental management.

The tensions that emerge in participation and coordination scenarios highlight the need to move toward legal pluralism, rather than symbolic inclusion (Bacca, 2019). Integrating Indigenous knowledge and governance systems and promoting effective institutional collaboration can make Amazonian governance an ecologically sustainable and socially just model. This requires not only legal recognition, but also mechanisms to resolve conflicts, balance models, and ensure that Indigenous leadership guides conservation and climate resilience on equal terms with other state authorities.

Taking seriously, and sustaining over time, the right to self-determination of Indigenous Peoples and the possibility of building States from decentralized perspectives requires a commitment to institutional adaptation. This involves adopting innovative and differentiated governance architectures capable of overcoming structural barriers at local, national, and international levels. It also calls for a profound revision of legal and policy frameworks, moving toward a global governance system that recognizes the interdependence of human and non-human worlds.

In its Advisory Opinion on the climate emergency and human rights, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights emphasized that recognizing Nature's right to maintain its essential ecological processes contributes to consolidating sustainable development models that respect planetary boundaries and offer effective legal tools to address the environmental crisis. This approach allows us to overcome inherited conceptions that viewed Nature as an object of ownership or an exploitable resource, strengthening a paradigm centered on protecting the ecological conditions essential for life and recognizing the leading role of indigenous peoples and their profound knowledge of these balances (CIDH, 2025).

In line with this paradigm, the institutional transformation of climate governance must incorporate the lessons learned from Indigenous Peoples regarding mechanisms such as REDD+. The experience of the Macro-territory of the Jaguars of Yuruparí demonstrates that

when these instruments are implemented without recognizing Indigenous governance systems and the principles of the relationship with the territory, they tend to reproduce relationships of injustice and inequality. Managed through Indigenous autonomy and under effective social, environmental, and cultural safeguards, they can, instead, become legitimate tools for strengthening climate action and territorial sustainability. This implies moving towards institutional frameworks that enhance —and do not replace— the development visions expressed in Life Plans and other biocultural instruments. Only in this way will it be possible to consolidate Indigenous jurisdictional projects with cultural relevance, fair distribution of benefits, and coherence with the principles of autonomy, reciprocity, and the Good Life (Buen Vivir), contributing to a climate action that is just and intercultural (Gaia Amazonas, 2023).

Finally, an innovative vision of climate governance would allow experiences like those of the Indigenous governments of the eastern Colombian Amazon to be projected onto broader and more interconnected contexts of impact. The process of the Macro-territory of the Jaguars of Yuruparí integrates with and complements other regional initiatives that contribute to the maintenance of the largest ecological corridor on the planet, located in the Amazon.

This governance strategy is phased and multi-level, gradually expanding territorial management from local governments to regional coordination bodies. At the territorial level, Indigenous Peoples have consolidated their governance structures and Life Plans; at the regional level, they have fostered collaboration among communities through meetings, agreements, and shared political agendas. These processes have led to coordination around Life Plans, exchanges of territorial management practices, and joint efforts to maintain the ecological, social, and cultural connectivity of the Amazon as a living system that transcends national borders.

One of the initiatives that best exemplifies this is 'Conversations of the Amazon,' a project of the North Amazon Alliance that promotes regional meetings for the exchange of knowledge and horizontal dialogues between representatives of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities from the northern Amazon region, with strategic allies who influence and impact decision-making relevant to the biome. Likewise, these spaces have allowed for a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of long-term territorial processes and the strategies that these peoples and communities lead and sustain for the protection of their territories and the strengthening of their autonomy and governance (Conversations of the Amazon, 2025)[17].

This approach reaffirms the need for integrated policies and effective cooperation to guarantee both the rights of indigenous peoples and the integrity of the Amazon biome. It is in this context that local Indigenous governments are working together to strengthen their autonomy, maintain the integrity of regional ecosystems, and demonstrate their valuable contributions to global climate change goals (White, 2017). As Indigenous leader Celia Xakriabá, of the Xakriabá people of Brazil, stated during the launch of The Planet Caucus at the COP 28 Climate Change Conference:

"It is not possible to talk about a climate agenda without talking about human rights and Indigenous Peoples."

17. Between 2019 and 2025, the North Amazonian Alliance (ANA) —a network of civil society organizations working alongside Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) in the region north of the Amazon River in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela— has focused on convening a series of regional knowledge-exchange meetings known as the 'Conversations of the Amazon'. These gatherings are designed to foster horizontal dialogue between IPLCs and key regional actors who directly or indirectly influence decision-making about the territory.

5. *Recommendations*

5.1. For the Colombian state:

- **Fully formalize the first ten ETIs of the Amazon.**

  In the context of COP30, the National Government should announce the issuance of presidential decrees formalizing the Territorial Entities of Miritíparaná, Yaigojé Apaporis, Bajo Río Caquetá, PANI, Río Tiquié, Ríos Cotuhé–Putumayo, UITIBOC–ASOAINTAM, Arica, Río Pirá Paraná, and Ríos Isana and Surubí. This measure will consolidate a State model grounded in cultural diversity and reaffirm the country's commitment to rights-based climate action and to recognizing the Amazon as a global climate regulator.

- **Accelerate the formalization of the remaining ETIs through an inter-institutional coordination plan and intercultural dialogue.**

  Under the leadership of the Ministry of the Interior, the State must implement an action plan to overcome the administrative barriers that have hindered progress in the process. This requires clear guidelines, unified procedures, and permanent intercultural technical teams, in compliance with constitutional jurisprudence.

- **Adapt the State's institutional structure to the political–administrative nature of the ETIs.**

  To ensure effective coordination between Indigenous and non-Indigenous authorities, special administrative and fiscal procedures are required that are consistent with the territorial and public character of the ETIs. This includes adjustments in planning, procurement, budgeting, and fiscal oversight systems that enable intercultural public governance rather than fitting into traditional municipal models.

- **Guarantee structural public financing for the functioning of the ETIs.**

  The State must accelerate compliance with the agreements regarding direct participation in the General System of Transfers (education, health, water, and sanitation), the Special Allocation of the General System of Transfers for Indigenous Resguardos, the National General Budget, and the General System of Royalties. This must be articulated with the Financial Diversification and Sustainability Strategies (EDSFs) developed by Indigenous Governments, ensuring budget continuity and avoiding dependence on external projects.

- **Consolidate intercultural dialogue as a core principle in the relationship between the State and Indigenous Governments.**

  It is necessary to institutionalize permanent processes of intercultural dialogue and joint follow up, equipped with technical and financial resources and with clear mechanisms for decision-making and shared responsibility. These processes must guarantee the full, sustained, and direct participation of Indigenous Governments

in decisions related to the territory and climate action, strengthening trust and coordination between Indigenous and non-Indigenous authorities.

- **Establish innovative mechanisms for climate and biodiversity financing securing direct access for the ETIs.**

  In line with the Joint Action Declaration between MADS and the Coordination Body of the Macro-territory, the State must create direct, stable, and long-term financing pathways for the ETIs, avoiding intermediaries and ensuring that benefits are directed toward cultural and territorial continuity. These mechanisms must move beyond a project-based logic and strengthen Indigenous jurisdictional proposals, in accordance with their systems of governance and territorial stewardship.

- **Strengthen the implementation of Decree 1275 of 2024 on guaranteeing the Indigenous environmental authority, in articulation with Decree 488 of 2025, which recognizes ETIs as public authorities with their own environmental competencies.**

  It is essential to consolidate operational intercultural coordination agreements between the ETIs and national and regional environmental authorities, aimed at joint territorial planning and environmental management. This requires integrating Life Plans, Indigenous territorial management systems, and the protection of sacred sites. Doing so will help safeguard the ecological integrity of the Amazon biome, maintain biocultural corridors, and meet the country's climate and biodiversity goals

5.2. For regional and global climate governance:

- **Recognize Indigenous Peoples as territorial governments with a central role in climate governance.**

  States and multilateral mechanisms must recognize and guarantee the self-determination of Indigenous Peoples as territorial authorities with competencies in environmental stewardship and climate action. This requires moving toward binding co-governance arrangements in which Indigenous normative systems, regulatory practices, and knowledge frameworks are not included merely as consultative inputs, but rather as structural pillars of decision-making at the national, regional, and global levels.

- **Strengthen a governance architecture that is multilevel and bioregional.**

  It is necessary to consolidate permanent mechanisms for coordination between Indigenous territorial governments, national institutions, and multilateral frameworks (such as the UNFCCC and the CBD), aimed at the intercultural and transboundary governance of strategic biomes like the Amazon. This requires moving toward layered governance structures capable of coordinating decisions across local, regional, and global scales, ensuring regulatory compatibility, clear distribution of competencies, and the construction of joint agendas for

conservation, restoration, just ecological transition, and territorial protection. A bioregional approach to climate action recognizes the Amazon as a living and continuous system, in which national policies must engage in dialogue with territorial processes and with ecologies that transcend State borders.

- **Global climate programs and funds —including REDD+— must transition toward mechanisms of direct financing for Indigenous governments, with robust social and environmental safeguards and criteria for cultural relevance.**

  This requires recognizing that each people defines its own jurisdictional systems and territorial regulatory practices, and therefore financing must strengthen —not condition, nor subordinate— their governance structures. Resources should be directed toward the implementation of Life Plans, Territorial and Environmental Management Plans, and other self-determined biocultural instruments, ensuring that decisions regarding the use and distribution of funds respond to the priorities of autonomy, collective well-being, and the *Good Life (Buen Vivir)* of Indigenous Peoples.

- **Reconfigure global climate governance based on principles of reciprocity, complementarity, and relationality[18].**

  This requires an epistemological transformation, moving from a worldview that conceives climate as a quantifiable system to one that understands it as an interdependent and relational framework between human and non-human beings. Climate agreements must incorporate Indigenous conceptual frameworks and knowledge systems into their planning, monitoring, and decision-making mechanisms, recognizing their scientific, political, and spiritual validity.

- **Incorporate biocultural indicators into global monitoring frameworks.**

  Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and Target 3 of the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework must include indicators that reflect the interdependence between ecological and cultural dimensions, recognizing Indigenous monitoring systems —including those grounded in spiritual relationships with the territory— as legitimate and necessary sources for evaluating adaptation, mitigation, and resilience.

- **Strengthen regional mechanisms for protection and transboundary cooperation.**

  Climate governance requires regional cooperation protocols that integrate environmental justice, the protection of defenders, and coordinated control of threats such as illegal mining, deforestation, and land grabbing. The Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (OTCA) and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (CIDH) can play a key role in harmonizing standards and protecting Amazonian peoples and ecosystems.

18. **Translator's note:** Referring to a worldview centered on relationships, rather than isolated entities.

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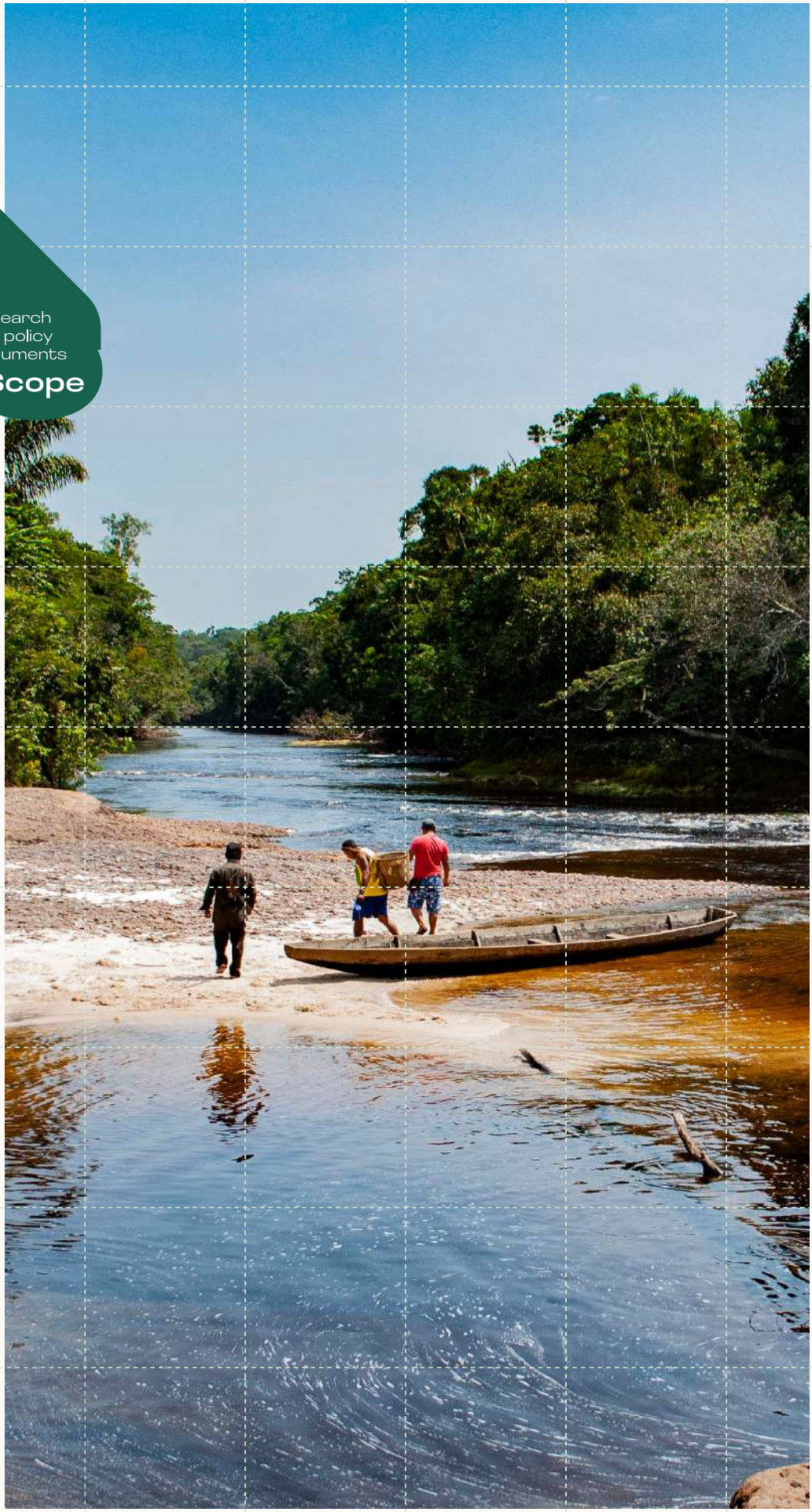
Research and policy documents

Scope



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