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**Agents, assumptions and motivations behind REDD+**

Lovera-Bilderbeek, A.S.E.

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# 1. Introduction

*“In view of urgent social and environmental problems, it is important to understand the political dynamics that may promote sustainable development and to identify the agents that make changes in this direction happen”* (Partzsch and Ziegler, 2011: 64).

## 1.1 Deforestation and the International Forest Policy Regime

Forests cover 30.6% of the earth’s total land area (3.99 billion hectares, (FAO, 2015). Between 1990 and 2015, about 129 million hectares of forests were lost (FAO, 2015). Forests help in global biodiversity conservation; forest ecosystems represent 90% of terrestrial biodiversity (UNEP, 2002; World Bank, 2004). Forest loss leads to 100 species becoming extinct daily (Okereke and Dooley, 2010) and is a key global environmental problem.

Forest ecosystems have intrinsic, esthetic, cultural, social, and environmental values (De Groot et al., 2002). Forests provide economic goods and services for humans, including fuelwood, construction materials, food, medicines and wood and non-wood products (De Groot et al., 2002). Forests support the livelihoods of about one billion people (Sobrevila, 2008; FAO, 2010) including 350 million poor people of which 60 million are Indigenous Peoples<sup>1</sup>(WCFSD, 1999) for whom forests are part of their biocultural heritage (IPCCA, 2011).

Forests store 289 gigatonnes of carbon (86% of the Earth’s above ground carbon (FAO, 2010) and stabilize the climate (De Groot et al., 2002). They help regulate local and regional hydrological flows and rainfall patterns (IPCC, 2002). Deforestation and forest degradation contribute between 12 and 17% of anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (Stern, 2006; Corbera et al., 2010; Siikamaki and Newbold, 2012; IPCC, 2014) which cause climate change.

In light of its importance, governments agreed at the 1992 UN Conference on Environmental and Development (UNCED) that forests should be conserved and managed sustainably<sup>2</sup> and should “maintain existing forests through conservation and

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<sup>1</sup> There is no formal definition of Indigenous Peoples in international law, but according to the UN the term is based on the following elements: self- identification as Indigenous Peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member, historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies, strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources, distinct social., economic or political systems, distinct language, culture and beliefs, form non-dominant groups of society and, resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities. See Wwwwunorg, 2017. [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session\\_factsheet1.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session_factsheet1.pdf) (last visited 14 June 2016). See also Appendix 1 for a glossary of key terms used.

<sup>2</sup> The Non-legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests (Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, vol. I, Resolutions Adopted by the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex III).

management, and sustain and expand areas under forest and tree cover”.<sup>3</sup> Similar international political commitments were made in 1994<sup>4</sup>, 1997<sup>5</sup>, 1999<sup>6</sup> and 2002.<sup>7</sup> The 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which entered into force in 1994, includes a clear commitment to conserve and enhance forests and other carbon sinks and reservoirs.<sup>8</sup>

The original idea to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, including conservation, sustainable forest management and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (REDD+) possibly came from a discussion paper published by Santilli in collaboration with some Brazilian and US researchers (Santilli et al., 2005; Karsenty et al., 2012) although the concept of compensated reductions of deforestation was already discussed at UNCED in 1992 (Humphreys, 2008; McDermott, 2014). In 2005, Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Costa Rica subsequently led in establishing a Coalition for Rainforest Nations (CfRN), which formally proposed a mechanism for reducing deforestation and forest degradation to the Conference of the Parties (COP) of the UNFCCC.<sup>9</sup>

In 2007, COP-13 initiated negotiations on this proposal in its Bali Roadmap.<sup>10</sup> After four years in 2016, COP-16 decided that it:

“Encourages developing country Parties to contribute to mitigation actions in the forest sector by undertaking the following activities, as deemed appropriate by each Party and in accordance with their respective capabilities and national circumstances:

- (a) Reducing emissions from deforestation;
- (b) Reducing emissions from forest degradation;
- (c) Conservation of forest carbon stocks;
- (d) Sustainable management of forests;
- (e) Enhancement of forest carbon stocks.”<sup>11</sup>

Between 2007 and 2015 the REDD+ negotiations were marked by controversy. Social movements and some countries opposed it because of its underlying neoliberal

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<sup>3</sup> Chapter 11 of Agenda 21 (Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992).

<sup>4</sup> Decision II/9 of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

<sup>5</sup> The Proposals for Action of the IPF (Report of the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests on its fourth session. March, 1997).

<sup>6</sup> The Proposals for Action of the IFF (Report of the IFF, March, 2000, in ECOSOC Resolution 2000/35).

<sup>7</sup> Convention on Biological Diversity, COP decision 6/22.

<sup>8</sup> Article 4.1 (b) of the 1992 UNFCCC, Rio de Janeiro, 1992  
<http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf> (last visited on 4 February 2017).

<sup>9</sup> FCCC/CP/2005/MISC.1, <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2005/cop11/eng/misc01.pdf> (Last visited 23 December 2016).

<sup>10</sup> FCCC/CP/2010/7Add.1 (to be found on <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2010/cop16/eng/07a01.pdf#page=2>) (last visited 21 December 2016).

<sup>11</sup> FCCC/CP.16/1. See <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2010/cop16/eng/07a01.pdf#page=2> (last visited 28 December 2016). Please note that Bolivia made a formal reservation that it did not accept the decision of the COP.

roots.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the regime was finally agreed upon and included in the 2015 Paris Agreement to the UNFCCC.<sup>13</sup>

The contemporary international forest regime consists of many separate yet partly overlapping commitments.<sup>14</sup> When the UNFCCC started REDD+ negotiations, there were already existing legally binding and non-legally binding international agreements that included commitments to conserve forests (see Appendix 2). Together these agreements form a multi-layered, complex international forest policy regime, which has been developed in an ad hoc manner at different speeds and in different directions (Humphreys, 2006; Gupta and Sanchez, 2012).

The question is: why did the UNFCCC Parties decide, 15 years after its adoption, to elaborate the forest-related commitments in the Convention into a new international forest regime, given the other forest regimes adopted between 1992 and 2005? This study addresses this question by analyzing the motivations and strategies of the main agents behind the REDD+ regime. After introducing the literature on REDD+ (1.2) and agency theory (1.3) this chapter explains the policy and scientific objectives and the main research question of this study (1.4). It subsequently describes the study's research design (1.5), methodology (1.6) and structure (1.7). The analytical framework of the study will be elaborated in Chapter 2.

## 1.2 REDD+ in the Literature

Many authors have addressed the potential of REDD+ to curb ongoing forest loss (e.g. Smith and Scherr, 2003; Santilli et al., 2005; Skutsch et al., 2009)<sup>15</sup> They provide a theoretical analysis of the potential benefits of REDD+ based on two assumptions: first, that REDD+ will generate significant amounts of financial support for reducing deforestation and, second, that financial support is the key factor of success in halting forest loss.

Other critical literature cautions against the social and environmental risks of REDD+, including risks of elite resource capture, flawed reference levels, and the difficulties of addressing leakage and permanence (e.g. Asquith et al., 2002; Schwarze et

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<sup>12</sup> See for example the Declaration of the Cochabamba Peoples' Summit on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, (Worldpresscom, 2010), <https://pwccc.wordpress.com/2010/04/24/peoples-agreement/> (last visited 20 April 2015).

<sup>13</sup> See [http://unfccc.int/files/essential\\_background/convention/application/pdf/english\\_paris\\_agreement.pdf](http://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf) (last visited 7 July 2016).

<sup>14</sup> According to the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties between States and International Organizations or between International Organizations (1986), an agreement is legally binding when a country has explicitly agreed to be bound by that treaty by signature, or ratification, or for example by approval, accession or acceptance and the treaty has entered into force in such manner and upon such date as the treaty may provide.

<sup>15</sup> Other authors include Grieg-Gran, 2006; Chomitz et al., 2007; Skutsch et al., 2007; Nepstad et al., 2007; Angelsen et al., 2008; Angelsen, 2008a; Dutschke and Wertz-Kanounnikoff, 2008; Dutschke et al., 2008; Streck et al., 2008; Holopainen and Wit, 2008; Peskett et al., 2008; Trivedi et al., 2008; Putz and Zuidema, 2008; Johns et al., 2008; Angelsen et al., 2009; Skutsch et al., 2009; Pedroni et al., 2009; Streck, 2009; Van Bodegom et al., 2009; Crossman et al., 2011; Nepstad et al., 2011; Elias, 2013; Zaballa Romero et al., 2013; Laing and Palmer, 2015.

al., 2002; Backstrand and Lovbrand, 2006).<sup>16</sup> Also of relevance is a growing body of literature on the risks and opportunities of market-based conservation mechanisms in general (e.g. Richards, 2000; Landell-Mills and Porras, 2002; Humphreys, 2003).<sup>17</sup>

Most of the above-mentioned literature on REDD+ does not include any reference to the internationally agreed actions to halt forest loss that already existed prior to the adoption of the REDD+ decision. Exceptions are Forner et al. (2006), Blom et al. (2010), Kanowski et al. (2010) and Rayner et al., (2010). However, Forner et al. (2006) only includes a succinct reference to other international forest policies while mainly discussing REDD+ itself; Blom et al. (2010) mainly compare REDD+ with existing integrated conservation and development projects (ICDPs); Kanowski et al. (2010) focus on national forest agreements and policies rather than international forest agreements; and Rayner et al. (2010) mainly discuss REDD+ in an illustrative manner to raise a couple of important issues related to international forest governance, without a detailed comparison between REDD+ and other international forest policies.

REDD+ is often presented as a significant opportunity for an environmentally effective, efficient and equitable forest conservation regime that will be able to succeed where other international forest regimes have failed, without proper comparative analysis of the environmental and social effectiveness, efficiency and equity of these existing regimes (e.g. Angelsen, 2008b; Putz and Zuidema, 2008; Skutsch et al., 2009; Streck et al., 2009a). There seems to have been limited institutional learning in the forest sector. As Alvarado and Wertz-Kanounnikoff (2007: 22) points out:

“The current climate-driven debate on REDD+ should reflect on the reasons why previous efforts to combat deforestation and to reach an international forest

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<sup>16</sup> See also Alvarado and Wertz-Kanounnikoff, 2007; Kanninen et al. , 2007; Luttrell et al., 2007; Peskett and Harkin, 2007; Fry, 2008; Grondard et al., 2008; Grondard et al., 2008; Humphreys, 2008; Karsenty, 2008; Levin et al., 2008; Lovera, 2008; Peskett et al., 2008; Saunders et al., 2008; Seymour, 2008; Sohngen, 2008; Basnet, 2009; Bond et al., 2009; Bozmoski and Hepburn, 2009; Chhatre and Agrawal, 2009; Cotula and Mayers, 2009; Hatcher, 2009; Karsenty, 2009; Lovera, 2009; Putz and Redford, 2009; Redford and Adams, 2009; Sasaki and Putz, 2009; Skutsch et al., 2009; Vatn et al., 2009; Börner et al., 2010; Brown, 2010; Gregersen et al., 2010; Kanowski et al., 2010; Phelps et al., 2010; Pistorius et al., 2010; Rademaekers et al., 2010; Sandbrook et al., 2010; Skutsch and McCall, 2010; Börner et al., 2011; Boucher et al., 2011; Doherty and Schroeder, 2011; Karsenty and Ongolo, 2011; Mohammed, 2011; Stephenson, 2011; Thompson et al., 2011; Chandrasekharan et al., 2012; Gupta, 2012; Karsenty, 2012; Karsenty et al., 2012; Kissinger et al., 2012; Bluffstone et al., 2013; Bottazzi et al., 2013; Gupta et al., 2013; Irawan et al., 2013; Lawlor et al., 2013; Minang and van Noordwijk, 2013; Rendón Thompson et al., 2013; Skutsch et al., 2013; Tacconi et al., 2013; Arhin, 2014; Borrego and Skutsch, 2014; Brockhaus et al., 2014; Cacho et al., 2014; Fosci, 2014; Kuik, 2014; Maraseni et al., 2014; Matthews et al., 2014; McDermott, 2014; Minang et al., 2014; Rosendal and Schei, 2014; Salvini et al., 2014; Pelletier et al., 2015; Roessing Neto, 2015; Wehkamp et al., 2015; Chomba et al., 2016; Fletcher et al., 2016; Sunderlin et al., 2016.

<sup>17</sup> See also Dudley, 2005; Grieg-Gran et al., 2005; Wunder, 2005; Wunder et al., 2005; Corbera et al., 2007; Richards and Jenkins, 2007; Wunder, 2006; Wunder, 2007; Engel et al., 2008; Pfaff et al., 2008; Wertz-Kanounnikoff et al., 2008; Wunder and Alban, 2008; Wunder et al., 2008; Sullivan, 2009; Chen et al., 2010; Farley and Costanza, 2010; Milder et al., 2010; Novotny, 2010; Broughton and Pirard, 2011; Ferraro, 2011; Rodriguez et al., 2011; Vatn et al., 2011; Tacconi, 2012; Bryan, 2013; McDermott et al., 2013; Porras et al., 2013; Krause and Nielson, 2014; Boucher, 2015; Leimona et al., 2015; Moreno et al., 2015; Abram et al., 2016.

agreement have had limited success (e.g. weak local-level institutions and governance structures, incoherent policies, political-economic interests etc.).”

### 1.3 REDD+ and Agency Theory

An agent in international governance can be defined as an authoritative actor “who possesses the ability to prescribe behaviour and to obtain the consent of the governed” (Schroeder 2010: 320; see also Dellas et al., 2011, and 2.8). The fundamental question underlying agency is “who governs for whom and how and to what effect?” (Dellas et al., 2011: 87). There is limited empirical research on the role of agents in specific environmental policy processes. As a relatively controversial regime that appears duplicative of existing regimes, REDD+ forms a useful subject to test the application of theories on the role of agents in international environmental governance. There is an increasing body of theoretical literature on international environmental governance (e.g. Brown, 2001; Vogler, 2003; Dingwerth and Pattberg, 2006)<sup>18</sup> and the role of agents in international environmental regimes (e.g. Gale, 1998; Arts, 1998; Auer, 2000).<sup>19</sup> There is also some limited theoretical literature on the motivations of agents in international governance (e.g. Bouteligier, 2011) but Bouteligier focuses exclusively on the agency of international consultancy firms. There is also little empirical testing of the relevance of agency theory and regime development theories in general (e.g. Hasenclever et al., 1997; Smouts, 2008) or in specific international environmental regimes. Only a few authors have looked specifically at the role of agents in the REDD+ regime (Corbera and Schroeder, 2011; Brockhaus et al., 2013; Brockhaus et al., 2014), but Brockhaus (2013; 2014) mainly looks at the agency of dominant coalitions and the influence of these coalitions and power relations in general on national REDD+ regimes, while Corbera primarily focuses on outlining a future research agenda. As Corbera and Schroeder (2011: 93) state:

“..more research efforts are required, particularly to understand what economic, socio-political and cultural factors determine effective participation, affect power relations and enable co-production of REDD+ strategies by governments, the private sector and civil society.”

They also identify the need:

“to examine which actors do not participate, whose views are sidelined and why. This issue, of course, overlaps with legitimacy questions, such as who is entitled to make decisions in the context of REDD+, and how such entitlement is constituted and respected by others....” (Corbera and Schroeder (2011: 93).

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<sup>18</sup> See also Thompson, 2006; Biermann, 2007; Larson and Ribot, 2007; Biermann and Pattberg, 2008; Cock, 2008; Biermann et al., 2009a; Biermann et al., 2009b; Rayner et al., 2010

<sup>19</sup> See also Newell, 2000; Betsill and Corell, 2001; Pattberg, 2005; Arts, 2006; Okafor, 2006; Pattberg, 2006; Visseren-Hamakers and Glasbergen, 2006; Andresen, 2007; Kasa et al., 2007; Alter and Meunier, 2009; Arts and Buizer, 2009; Okereke et al., 2009; Arts et al., 2010; Dellas et al., 2011; Bernauer and Betzold, 2012; Bohmelt and Betzold 2012; Royo, 2012; Stephan and Paterson, 2012.

To address this research gap, this study analyzes the agency and the motivations and strategies of different actors in the development of the REDD+ regime. An analytical framework has been developed that uses four criteria to analyze the agency of State and non-State actors in REDD+ regime development, namely 1) legitimacy, 2) authority, 3) success in pursuing the original objectives and 4) assumed agency (see also 2.8). By analyzing the motivations and strategies of these actors, this study also tests the relevance of the most important regime-building theories (e.g. Young, 1991; Haggard and Simmons, 1987; Hasenclever et al., 1997)<sup>20</sup> for a concrete international environmental regime like REDD+. These include (a) power-based theories, which are based on the assumption that the function of a regime is to distribute the costs and benefits associated with cooperation in a manner that is convenient to the most dominant player, (b) interest-based theories, which reflect an assumption of rational choice by all the agents involved leading to a regime that reflects the interests of all, and (c) knowledge-based theories, which are based on the assumption that agents will act according to a logic of appropriateness (Hasenclever et al., 1997). As such I analyze whether economic or other forms of coercion rather than consent have shaped agency in the REDD+ regime (Dellas et al., 2011). I also look at the interactions between agents (Dellas et al., 2011), the role of discourse, policy entrepreneurs and coalition building in regime development. I analyze links between the motivations and strategies of different agents, to what extent the assumed beneficiaries of REDD+ were able to play a role in the design and implementation of the REDD+ regime, and what the implications can be of unbalanced participation of stakeholders and rightsholders in regime development. As such I aim to contribute to the question: “who ultimately governs the earth system?” (Dellas et al., 2011: 90).

#### **1.4 Research Purpose, Objectives and Questions**

This research aims to analyze which actors have played a dominant role in developing the international environmental regime on REDD+, what their motivations and strategies are, and how they use their agency to pursue their political and economic interests and/or ideologies. By applying existing theories about regime development and the role of agents in international environmental governance (e.g. Young, 1991, Hasenclever et al., 1997, Pattberg, 2005, Biermann, 2007, Smouts, 2008, Dellas et al., 2011, Underdal, 2011, Weible et al., 2012) to this new forest regime, the research aims to contribute to a growing body of analysis on the role and motivations of agents in international environmental governance in general.

The scientific objective of the research is to contribute to the further refinement of agency theory. This will be done by testing the relevance of different theories on regime development and analyzing the role of agents in international environmental regimes. To that end, use will be made of legal and empirical data drawn from the REDD+ regime, including the views of potential agents themselves and other actors in the REDD+ negotiations. The research also aims to increase understanding of agency in Earth System Governance by analyzing the role of agents in promoting an international regime like REDD+ (see also Dellas et al., 2011).

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<sup>20</sup> See also Lejano, 2006; Smouts, 2008; Huitema and Meijerink. 2010; Steg et al., 2011; Underdal., 2011; Weible et al., 2012

The research also aims to contribute to the international search for coherent, environmentally effective, economically efficient and socially equitable policies to address deforestation and forest degradation by analyzing the role of agents in shaping the REDD+ regime, the economic interests, influence and knowledge base that motivate them, their strategies, and the implications this might have on the potential benefits, risks and flaws of REDD+ as a new forest policy regime. The study also provides some suggestions for more balanced participation of the assumed beneficiaries of REDD+ in international forest policy design and implementation.

The principal research question thus is: Which actors have been instrumental in shaping REDD+ policies and policy responses, what are their motivations and how do they use their agency to pursue their interests? Related sub-questions are:

1. How do the different actors expect REDD+ will work out in comparison to existing international forest policy regimes in terms of environmental effectiveness, economic efficiency and equity? These questions will be addressed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, respectively.
2. Which actors have promoted the inclusion of REDD+ as a forest policy regime within the climate change policy regime, and how do they use their agency to pursue their underlying interests and ideologies? These questions will be addressed in Chapters 7 and 8, respectively.
3. How could more balanced agency by rightsholders,<sup>21</sup> developing countries and industrialized countries<sup>22</sup> in international sustainable development policymaking be promoted? This question will be addressed in Chapter 9.

This study goes beyond existing forest policy analysis by analyzing the extent to which the flaws and dilemmas in the current REDD+ regime are a result of the economic and political interests and/or ideologies of the actors that advocated for this regime. By analyzing which agents have advocated REDD+ and why, this study aims to contribute to a better understanding of the likely impact REDD+ will have in terms of the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of global forest policy. A focus on effectiveness, efficiency and equity has been chosen to reflect the three main pillars of sustainable development, the environmental, economic and social pillars (Raynor, 2010).

I have particularly elaborated on the question: To what extent have industrialized country interests dominated the development of the REDD+ regime? The role of prominent REDD+ donors like the Government of Norway and organizations like the World Bank receive particular attention (see 7.4, 8.4). The research also addresses the role of REDD+ countries, in particular the CfRN, which has been the lead actor promoting REDD+ in the climate negotiations (Chapter 7). Moreover, specific attention is paid to the role and interests of non-governmental actors, including large conservation

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<sup>21</sup> The term rightsholders is used to distinguish major groups that represent people with recognized rights under international law related to sustainable development, like women, Indigenous Peoples, youth, workers and farmers, from stakeholders like NGOs, business and industry and other major groups that merely have a stake in sustainable development policy. See also Lahsen (2005) and Section 2.7.

<sup>22</sup> The term “industrialized countries” used in this study to indicate Annex 1 Parties to the Convention (see [http://unfccc.int/parties\\_and\\_observers/parties/annex\\_i/items/2774.php](http://unfccc.int/parties_and_observers/parties/annex_i/items/2774.php), last visited 31 January 2017), while being aware there are politically and economically marginalized groups in these countries that consider themselves to represent “the South within the North”. The term “developing countries” is used to indicate non-Annex 1 countries.



organizations, in promoting REDD+ and their role and interests as REDD+ intermediaries (Chapter 8).

## **1.5 Research Methodology**

This section describes the research design, the methodologies used, and the underlying rationale based on the justification of the research objectives and questions outlined in 1.4.

The analysis of REDD+ agents' roles, motivations and ideas about the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of REDD+ in comparison to existing forest regimes is partly based on these actors' perceptions. These perceptions are assumed to form the main basis of their motivation. Data collection took place between June 2011 and July 2016. The research focuses on the UNFCCC process and especially agency in the REDD+ negotiations within the framework of the UNFCCC process. It covers also other relevant negotiation processes within the UNFCCC framework, including the negotiations on Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF), the negotiations on the flexible mechanisms of the UNFCCC and the overall negotiations for the Paris Agreement (2015). As the research addresses the comparative effectiveness, efficiency and equity of other forest-related international regimes, some meetings of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), UN Forum on Forests (UNFF) and the development of Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development have been covered. Moreover, when resources allowed, meetings of REDD+-related fora like the Participants meetings of the United Nations Program on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN-REDD), the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and the Forest Days organized by CIFOR have been attended. Attendance at these meetings was possible thanks to the researcher's position as director of the Global Forest Coalition (GFC), which allowed her to participate in the UNFCCC and other meetings as a formal representative of an observer organization.

This section describes the data collection methods used for this study. Most research methods are qualitative, but when appropriate some quantitative methods have been used, for example, in the estimation of assumed agency or the calculation of the potential economic interests of different stakeholders based on the amount of funding received for REDD+ (1.5.2). Other methods include a review of relevant legal and scientific literature (1.5.1); a legal review of different international and national forest policy agreements (1.5.3); a review of the official submissions and other position papers by governmental, non-governmental and indigenous actors as well as official decisions and financial data (1.5.4); and participant observation (1.5.5). A method to test the agency of actors is briefly mentioned in Section 1.5.6 and further elaborated in 2.8. Concerns related to research limitations and ethical considerations are addressed in 1.6.

### **1.5.1 Literature Review**

The literature review formed an important part of the research methodology; it helped to identify a gap in knowledge which this research now addresses, and to identify the assumptions in the literature about the environmental effectiveness, economic efficiency and social equity of REDD+. This required a relatively systematic review of the scientific literature on REDD+ for the relevant period (2002-2015). The reviewed literature covered REDD+; international regime development theory; Earth System Governance;

international forest policy in general; the drivers of forest loss; forest governance and tenure; and North-South relations in climate policy.

In light of the interdisciplinary nature of the research, literature from different disciplines has also been reviewed, including forestry, policy science (with a focus on forest and climate policy), environmental management, climate science, international relations, social sciences, and international environmental law. Most literature reviewed concerned peer-reviewed scientific journals and books, but some grey literature has been reviewed, especially when it concerned research papers by relevant NGOs or other papers by important REDD+ actors. To distinguish grey literature from other literature, it has been referenced in footnotes. A Harvard referencing system has been used for legal and other scientific literature.

#### a) Review of literature on REDD+

To gather insights into the assumptions in the literature about the environmental effectiveness, economic efficiency and social equity of REDD+, publications on REDD+ from the Web of Science and Google Scholar databases were systematically reviewed for the period between 2002 and 2015. The views and assumptions in these publications about the environmental effectiveness, economic efficiency and social equity of REDD+ were systematized. The articles, and a number of books, were also used as a source of information about the other research questions, in particular the history of international forest policy and REDD+ and the role of agents in promoting REDD+.

#### b) Review of literature on international regime development theory

The review of literature on international regime development theory includes a review of literature on agency theory, regime theories, discourse, and policy entrepreneurship. The review particularly served to develop the conceptual framework, and the overall theoretical background to the research. The above-mentioned journals included quite some relevant literature on these themes and other elements of the conceptual framework. Furthermore, a targeted search in the Web of Science and Google Scholar databases using the keyword “agency” in relevant international political sciences literature was performed.

#### c) Review of literature on Earth System Governance

The review of literature on Earth System Governance looked specifically into the role of non-State actors like international bureaucracies, NGOs and Indigenous Peoples Organizations (IPOs) in international environmental governance. It was used as inputs for the analysis provided in Chapter 8 on the role of non-State actors as agents behind REDD+, but also as input for the conceptual framework and the conclusions. Additionally, a targeted search using keywords was performed and a number of scientific experts on Earth System Governance were consulted to gather additional advice on relevant literature. The fact that there has been quite a lot of research in this field by Dutch Universities<sup>23</sup> turned out to be particularly helpful.

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<sup>23</sup> See <http://www.earthsystemgovernance.org/> (accessed 16 February 2017).

d) Review of literature on international forest policy in general

Some of the journals selected for the review of relevant literature on REDD+ also included relevant articles on international forest policy. Additionally, a number of books and major reports on international forest policy development were consulted, including some reports produced by UN organizations like the Secretariat to the UN Forum on Forests. The information gathered served in particular as a background to Chapter 3 on the development of international forest policy.

e) Review of literature on the drivers of forest loss

A more profound review of literature on the drivers of forest loss was considered important to help analyze the environmental effectiveness of REDD+ and the question whether it would be able to satisfactorily address the direct and underlying drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. Quite some of the journals selected for the review of relevant literature on REDD+ also included relevant papers on the drivers of forest loss. In addition, a number of books and major reports on the drivers of forest loss were reviewed. The information gathered was used not only for the analysis in Section 4.5, but also provided background information for several other chapters, and the conclusions of the research.

f) Review of literature on forest governance and tenure

An elaborate review of the literature on forest governance and tenure was performed to provide an analytical background to Chapter 6 on the assumed equity of REDD+. It also served as a background to many of the other chapters, including Chapter 4 on the assumed effectiveness of REDD+ and the conclusions. The review included a review of relevant literature on community-based forest governance and other aspects of forest management, including gender aspects of local forest governance. Aside from the above-mentioned journals a number of major reports were reviewed, including reports produced by the World Bank and FAO.

g) literature on North-South relations in climate policy

A relatively concise review of literature on North-South relations in climate policy was performed, using the above-mentioned journals along with a targeted search using keywords related to international relations and climate policy. The findings were used as a background to Chapter 3 on the development of international forest policy and the UNFCCC, and especially Section 6.7 on REDD+ and the equity of the climate regime.

### **1.5.2 Interviews with Key Actors in the REDD+ Regime**

Interviews with key stakeholders and rightsholders in the REDD+ debate formed an important input to the overall research, and especially the empirical testing of agency (1.5.6). Interviews were held with a diverse group of 61 actors<sup>24</sup> in the REDD+ regime. The interviews served as input, first, for the research question on the views and

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<sup>24</sup> The interviews with two actors took place in two stages, so in total there were 63 interviews.

assumptions of key actors in the REDD+ negotiations about the potential and real environmental effectiveness, economic efficiency and social equity of REDD+. Second, these interviews generated information necessary for the key indicators of agency, the assumed agency in the eyes of other actors involved in a regime like REDD+, and the motivations, role and strategies of the different REDD+ agents. As regime development is the result of human interaction, this grounding of theoretical research in the actual experiences and views of the actors that were identified as REDD+ agents and other people who played a central role in the development of different international forest policy regimes over the past 20 years formed a cornerstone of the overall analysis.

I performed the interviews face to face, so that a more open and frank discussion was possible. This implied that the selection of interviewees was slightly influenced by the presence of actors at key meetings (see below). Moreover, as Podsakoff et al. (2003: 882) point out, one source of common method bias is the transient mood state, that is, “the impact of relatively recent mood-inducing events to influence the manner in which respondents view themselves and the world around them.” The fact that the interviews often took place at the negotiation meetings might have influenced what they said in the interview. However, for this particular research it was actually quite appropriate that interviews were influenced by the mood at the REDD+ negotiations, as the analysis compares the perceptions of possible agents with the role of those agents in these negotiations. For practical reasons various interviews took place at different locations, varying from a lively reception at the Rio+20 summit and a train ride between Brussels and Amsterdam, to a quite bumpy bus ride through the Ecuadorian Andes. The interviews were performed in English, Spanish, and/or Dutch.

Each interview started with an introduction in which not only the purpose, objectives, scope and methodology of the research were explained, but in which it was also emphasized that the research was fully independent from the campaign and research work of the GFC. As most interviews took place during stressful negotiation meetings that do not always allow for long, in-depth interviews, an interview methodology was developed that made it possible to interview a large number of key actors in a relatively time-efficient and time-flexible manner. Interviews could be relatively short and basically limited to the succinct response to the two key research questions, but if time allowed and the interviewee was inspired to share more views they could also be longer. As a result, interview time ranged from 15 minutes to three hours, but most interviews were between one and one and a half hour long.

The interviews used a semi-open interview methodology which focused on the following two basic questions:

- Which actors pushed for the inclusion of forests in the climate regime, and why?
- To what extent do you think REDD+ has had a positive or negative influence on existing national and international forest policy, especially in terms of: (a) environmental effectiveness, (b) economic efficiency and (c) social equity?

Especially the spontaneous reaction to the first question regarding the assumed agency of different actors in the REDD+ regime, that is, the agency according to the interviewee’s personal perceptions, formed an important input to one of the main indicators of agency. Interviewees were allowed to mention more than one possible agent, and they were not requested to suggest any hierarchical ordering amongst the potential agents.

Subsequently, interviewees were invited to elaborate more in depth on these questions and the background to their responses, both during the interview itself and later in writing. These elaborations formed an important source of information on potential chains of agency, the role of discourse, and possible policy entrepreneurs, and other agency theories. They also formed an important source of information on the assumed motivations and strategies of the potential agents mentioned.

The second research question was also approached through a semi-open interviewing methodology, so as to trigger a spontaneous response from the potential agents and other actors interviewed. Only when specific clarifications were needed, were additional specific sub-questions asked.

In total 61 interviews key stakeholders and rightsholders in international and national forest policy were interviewed. The selection of interviewees was based on the following criteria:

- Active knowledge of, and participation in, REDD+ regime design and/or implementation, either as a negotiator or as an observer;
- Balance between individuals working for States, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGO);
- Balance between actors from different regions;
- Balance between critical (radical green) and reformist actors; and
- At least one representative of each assumed agent.

Interviews took place under strict confidentiality and anonymity so as to allow actors to share their personal views rather than the official views of the Government or organization they represented. This is required by ethical rules for protecting interviewees; however, it does mean that it is difficult to always classify the different responses and indicate whether they came from a government, as anonymity would then no longer be guaranteed. Moreover, it would have been methodologically incorrect to reveal interviewees' professional background, as they had been invited to speak on personal title. Hence many interviewees expressed assumptions that might have been based on their professional experience, but that first of all expressed their personal views and not the perception of their government, organization or movement. This also ensured that people were able to speak their minds. Several interviewees would probably have had to refuse the interview if they had not been able to speak anonymously and on personal title, or they would have had to stick to the official position of their Government or organization, which is something that can also be found in official documents. Interviewees were thus able to share their personal views on the assumed effectiveness, efficiency and equity of REDD+, which is particularly important for analyzing the possible relevance of cognitivism and knowledge-based regime theories to REDD+.

A methodological observation that should be made is that the interviews took place between 2011 and 2015, when some aspects of the REDD+ regime were still being elaborated.<sup>25</sup> This led at least five interviewees to say that it was too early to assess the effectiveness of the regime,<sup>26</sup> with three of them expressing their frustration that it took

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<sup>25</sup> The final details of the REDD+ regime were adopted by Parties in June 2015 as part of the recommendations of the UNFCCC SBSTA and formally adopted by the COP in December 2015.

<sup>26</sup> Interview 18, June 2012; interview 44, June 2013; interview 46, June 2013; interview 54, November 2013; and interview 55, November 2013.

so long to establish the necessary institutions and market mechanisms or otherwise come to action.<sup>27</sup> As Matthews et al. (2014) point out, the public assessment of an environmental regime goes through phases, and especially the period between 2012 and 2014 was a period during which many actors in the REDD+ regime became aware of the real-life limitations of some of the financial and other assumptions with which the REDD+ regime had been originally promoted (see also 5.4). Consequently, there might be some common method bias due to the transient mood state of respondents (Podsakoff et al., 2003). This is, however, not a real distortion as the research was supposed to reflect the state of mind of possible REDD+ agents during the actual negotiations.

One other potential methodological distortion could be my position as a formal representative of an observer organization that was known by some of the interviewees for its critical position regarding REDD+.<sup>28</sup> Due to the lack of dedicated resources for this research all travel had to be combined with work travel for the GFC. Although at the start of each interview I explained that the research was fully independent from the campaign and research work of the GFC, in some cases the interviewees may have adapted some of their responses in light of their knowledge about the official position of the GFC regarding REDD+. Social desirability, “the tendency of some people to respond to items more as a result of their social acceptability than their true feelings” (Podsakoff et al., 2003: 882), is a quite important common method bias in interview methodologies, and it is often hard to avoid. This might have inspired actors to be more critical about REDD+ than they would have been if they had been interviewed by a researcher who was known to have a positive attitude regarding REDD+. Yet in other cases, actors seemed to have made use of the opportunity to highlight and strongly defend their supportive position on REDD+. Hence, while some distortion might have taken place, it is likely that the overall impact is balanced. As this study provides an overview of different perspectives without systematizing or quantifying them, there is no statistical distortion. A positive dimension is that the responses were probably more in-depth and frank in light of my position as a critical NGO observer than they might have been if the interviewer would have been an unknown researcher.

Table 1.1 provides an overview of the actors that have been interviewed. The data from the interviews was subsequently systematized in two overviews: one of responses on question one, and one of the responses on the three sub questions regarding the assumed effectiveness, efficiency and equity of REDD+. The number of times a certain actor was mentioned as an agent was calculated. The responses regarding the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of REDD+ were categorized and compared with the findings from literature, empirical data and comparative review. The, often spontaneous, responses on other dimensions of the REDD+ negotiations, including the views on the assumed strategies and motivation of different agents or the history of REDD+ and other international forest policies, were systematized and used as inputs for the different chapters.

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<sup>27</sup> Interview 44, June 2013; interview 46, June 2013 and interview 55, November 2013.

<sup>28</sup> See <http://globalforestcoalition.org/campaigns/defending-rights/> last visited 21 July 2016.

**Table 1.1 List of actors interviewed\***

States (21 interviewees)	Intergovernmental organizations (7 interviewees)	Other non-State actors (33 interviewees)
PNG Costa Rica Norway US Brazil Bolivia Mexico Philippines Paraguay Germany Tuvalu Spain Chile Netherlands Sweden Austria Finland Switzerland Ethiopia	World Bank FAO UN-REDD CIFOR UNEP UNFF CBD Secretariat ITTO	NGOs IPOs Women’s organizations Business organizations Community-based organizations Research organizations

\* Please note that no further details can be given without compromising the guarantee of respondent anonymity.

Efforts have been made to avoid potential common method biases (Podsakoff et al., 2003) in the responses like social desirability (the tendency of some people to respond to items more in accordance with the assumed social acceptability than their true feelings), leniency biases (the tendency of respondents to attribute socially desirable traits, attitudes, and/or behaviors to someone they know and like), context-induced mood (when the first question, about whom they think was a REDD+ agent, induces a mood for responding to the other questions) or transient mood state (especially the influence of the negotiations on the mood of the interviewee) although these biases could not always be avoided. However, in light of the diversity of interviewees, the impact of these biases on the research outcomes is expected to be more or less neutral.

### **1.5.3 Legal Review of Relevant International Agreements**

The legal review included a comparative analysis of the main international forest policy regimes, notably the international forest policy regimes that have been developed since the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992, which produced two international environmental agreements that are both particularly relevant for forests, the CBD and the UNFCCC. It also included a detailed legal review of the forest-related decisions of the UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement. An overview of the instruments that have been reviewed can be found in Appendix 2.

#### **1.5.4 Comparative Review of Positions and Official Submissions**

The study reviewed the positions and official submissions of different State and non-State actors in the REDD+ regime and compared them with the formal decisions of the COP to the UNFCCC as documented in official records and reports of UNFCCC meetings. This provided a basis for analyzing the extent to which certain countries and other actors have influenced REDD+ policymaking and succeeded to achieve their original objectives, which is one of the key indicators in the conceptual framework (see Chapter 2). A comparison was also made of the positions of organizations representing industrialized country interests and views and organizations of rightsholder movements representing radical perspectives. Formal decisions and background documents to the CBD and other relevant international environmental regimes were also reviewed.

#### **1.5.5 Analysis of Financial Streams**

Furthermore, the most important institutional structures in global forest policymaking were reviewed, including the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) and the funding streams between the different key actors in the REDD+ negotiations. Aside from the literature, an important source to review the financial data was the Voluntary REDD+ Partnership Database.<sup>29</sup> Other key financial data relevant for international forest policymaking that were publicly available, like annual financial reports of potential REDD+ agents, have also been studied. This allowed an analysis of possible economic interests of some of the main agents in the REDD+ debate, as well as the efficiency of the REDD+ regime.

#### **1.5.6 Participant Observation at International Negotiation Meetings**

Participant observation, or “embedded research” (Lewis and Russell, 2011), can be a valuable qualitative research methodology in the social sciences. The direct participation and observation of the negotiation dynamics in a large number of intergovernmental and other REDD+-related meetings formed an important additional source of input to the analysis of the main agents in the REDD+ regime. The research was founded on my personal experience of participating in international forest policy development meetings since 1990. The selection of meetings included almost all meetings of the Subsidiary Bodies of the UNFCCC between June 2011 and May 2016 and all UNFCCC COPs except for the 20<sup>th</sup> COP in Lima in 2014 (due to overlapping commitments). Within the timeframe of the research, I participated as an official observer in the meetings listed in Table 1.2.

Observation occurred while participating as an accredited NGO and women’s and gender constituency observer in REDD+-related negotiation sessions that were open to observer participation. The discussions and negotiations were observed, and different country positions and the positions of observers when they were allowed to speak up were analyzed. It should be noted that many informal negotiation sessions of the UNFCCC process are closed to observers, so information about those negotiation sessions could only be gathered through informal discussions, briefings by negotiators, strategy meetings, and other confidential sources.

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<sup>29</sup> See <http://www.fao.org/forestry/vrd/download/en/> (last visited 16 July 2016).



**Table 1.2 Overview of meetings observed within the timeframe of this research\***

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Venue and dates</b>
34 <sup>th</sup> session of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies	Bonn, Germany, June 2011
15 <sup>th</sup> meeting of the CBD SBSTTA	Montreal, Canada, November 2011
17 <sup>th</sup> COP of the UNFCCC	Durban, South Africa, December 2011
Meetings of the UN-REDD Policy Board and the FCPF	Asunción, Paraguay, March 2012
16 <sup>th</sup> meeting of the CBD SBSTTA	Montreal, Canada, May 2012
36 <sup>th</sup> session of the subsidiary bodies of the UNFCCC	Bonn, Germany, May 2012
UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 2012
Meeting of the ad hoc working groups of the UNFCCC	Bangkok, Thailand, August 2012
11 <sup>th</sup> COP of the CBD	Hyderabad, India, October 2012
18 <sup>th</sup> COP of the UNFCCC	Doha, Qatar, November/December 2012
3 <sup>rd</sup> session of the UN Open Working Group on the SDGs	New York, United States of America (US), May 2013
19 <sup>th</sup> COP of the UNFCCC	Warsaw, Poland, November 2013
8 <sup>th</sup> session of the UN Open Working Group on the SDGs on, amongst others, forests and biodiversity	New York, US, February 2014
40 <sup>th</sup> meeting of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies	Bonn, Germany, June 2014
18 <sup>th</sup> meeting of the CBD SBSTTA	Montreal, Canada, June 2014
12 <sup>th</sup> COP of the CBD	Pyeongchang, Korea, October 2014
11 <sup>th</sup> session of the UN Forum on Forests	New York City, US, May 2015
Participants meeting of the FIP of the Climate Investment Funds	Washington DC, US, May 2015
42 <sup>nd</sup> meeting of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies	Bonn, Germany, June 2015
14 <sup>th</sup> World Forestry Congress	Durban, South Africa, September 2015
19 <sup>th</sup> session of the CBD SBSTTA	Montreal, Canada, November 2015
21 <sup>st</sup> COP of the UNFCCC	Paris, France, December 2015
20 <sup>st</sup> session of the CBD SBSTTA and 1 <sup>st</sup> session of the CBD Subsidiary Body on Implementation	Montreal, Canada, April 2016
44 <sup>th</sup> meeting of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies	Bonn, Germany, May 2016

\* See list of acronyms in the front matter.

The observation methodologies included reviewing the agendas and formal outcomes of the relevant meetings, reports by informal meeting rapporteurs like the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and Third World Network, reports on the REDD+ Monitor<sup>30</sup> website and informal discussions with key negotiators and other actors about their perspectives on the negotiation dynamics and outcomes.

Furthermore, observation occurred during participation in often highly informative strategy meetings and online discussions of constituencies and other groupings of observers, including Climate Justice Now! (CJN!), the Accra Caucus on Forest and Climate Change, the Women and Gender Constituency and occasionally the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change. Needless to say that the content of these informal discussions and strategy meetings are strictly confidential, so they have been used as generic background information only. The information gathered was subsequently triangulated with the feedback gathered through the interviews,

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.REDD+-monitor.org> (last visited 21 July 2016).

literature, legal and policy documents, public interventions, official submissions, reports, position papers and other publicly available documents and data, including financial and other data that are publicly available on the internet.

There are a number of potential methodological biases inherent in participant observation that should be highlighted. One is the possible effect the researcher might have on the outcome of the phenomenon. The GFC implemented various advocacy campaigns during the research period, mostly with the aim to derail the REDD+ negotiations or as a minimum diminish support for the regime. However, as the research focus was not on the outcome of the negotiations itself, but on the motivations, roles and strategies of agents behind the regime, the influence of GFC's campaigns on the research outcomes cannot be assumed to be significant. As described above, it might have influenced some of the interviews, though. A related issue is the question of involvement, detachment and objectivity. I was aware of this, which is why I have chosen not to depend too much on participant observation as a research methodology, but rather on literature review and interviews.

A final issue is transparency about participant observation, making it clear to the individuals being observed that they are being observed. I have always been transparent about the fact that I was doing research on REDD+ agency, and many actors in the negotiations were aware of that, if only because they had been interviewed. It is also broadly accepted that NGO and women's constituency observers use the information gathered during their observation of the negotiations for further analytical purposes. As said, it was important to be cautious about the potential confidentiality of certain information, which is why only limited use has been made of some of the strategic information gathered.

### **1.5.7 Empirical Testing of Agency**

The data gathered through literature review, legal review, review of negotiation positions, observation of negotiations and interviews were analyzed using an analytical framework that has been developed based on existing regime development and agency theories. A set of four criteria was chosen to test the agency of different actors and a set of three criteria was chosen to compare the motivations and strategies of these agents with the main regime development theories. This analytical framework is described in detail in 2.9.

## **1.6 Research Limitations and Ethical Considerations**

An important practical research limitation was the fact that this research was performed without dedicated resources, except for the significant in-kind human resources that were invested by me, my supervisors and others who assisted in this research, including the interviewees. The participation in the above-mentioned meetings was combined with staff travel on behalf of the GFC. This meant that there was a certain level of randomness in the meetings selected, especially as far as non-UNFCCC-related meetings are concerned. The time that could be dedicated to meeting observation and performing interviews during these meetings was to a certain extent limited, as time had to be dedicated to GFC-related tasks. In a few cases that meant that interviews had to be postponed or, in one case, cancelled.

It was considered important to interview people in person, and face to face, so as to create an atmosphere of trust and openness, and as there was no dedicated travel

budget, almost all interviews had to take place during the above-mentioned meetings. As described, this meant that the interview methodology had to be adapted as interviewees were often working on tight schedules.

The main ethical concern in this research was the confidentiality of much of the information gathered, in particular information gathered through informal discussions and strategy meetings and the views and opinions of the interviewees. While an identification of the interviewees would have provided more insights into the particular views, interests and overall position of certain agents and other actors in REDD+, many of the interviewees would have had to decline or would have been able to give the formal position of their Government or organization only if they would not have been able to react in an anonymous and personal manner. That is why their names and functions, while known to me and my supervisors, are not listed in this book, even though I am grateful to all of them for the valuable inputs provided.

Similarly, caution has been taken not to disclose information that was gathered through participation in closed strategy meetings or other informal discussions unless this information could be triangulated with publicly available information and referenced as such.

## **1.7 Thesis Outline**

Using the analytical framework elaborated in Chapter 2 and based on a legal analysis of existing international forest-related regimes in Chapter 3, the thesis addresses the sub-questions through the following structure:

1. How do the different actors expect REDD+ will work out in comparison to existing international forest regimes in terms of social and environmental effectiveness, economic efficiency and equity? The response to this question, which will be elaborated in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, has shed some light on the motivations of the different actors. It also highlights how the REDD+ regime that has been created is both the cause and the result of contextual inequities and power imbalances between the different agents and assumed beneficiaries.
2. Which actors have promoted the inclusion of REDD+ as a forest regime within the climate change regime, and how do they use their agency to pursue their underlying interests and ideologies? The response to this question, which will be addressed in Chapters 7 and 8, has provided insights into the role and tactics of State and non-State actors in international regime development and especially the role of economic incentives in regime development.
3. How could more balanced agency by rightsholders, developing countries and industrialized countries in international sustainable development policymaking be promoted? The response to this question will be addressed in the concluding Chapter 9, which brings together the main conclusions of the previous chapters and provides a number of suggestions for more effective and equitable participation of the assumed beneficiaries of REDD+.