

Land control and the social re-appropriation of resources under recent ecotourism projects in the Eastern Highlands of Chiapas, Mexico

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Problem:

Ecotourism and nature-based tourism, both salient under the guise of ‘sustainable tourism’ as a Low Carbon Development (LCD) initiative, have been implemented to mobilize productive resources away from traditional agricultural activities and historical biocultural knowledge toward afforestation and other low carbon market activities.

Communities have hearkened these LCD initiatives, but have struggled to regain their traditional biocultural knowledge, hampering social cohesion and resilience in light of new discourses to reevaluate the role nature plays in community cohesion.

Patterns of exclusionary conservation initiatives gather around ecotourism projects in Chiapas, Mexico.

This problem relates to the sustainable management of enclosed community livelihood where sustainability is understood from multi-dimensional perspectives.

Low Carbon Development and Sustainable Tourism:

- Interface between limiting global carbon emissions and international development (Urban and Nordensvard, 2013)
- Limits on global carbon emissions include strategies to reduce greenhouse gas sources and emissions and increasing greenhouse gas sinks.
- LCD aimed at adopting low carbon consumption and production
- Criticisms/Barriers to LCD:
 - Green growth;
 - Developing countries, unintentional low carbon activities (traditional biomass)
 - Production of biofuels
 - Emergence of social movements against new emancipatory forms of land control (exclusionary resource conservation initiatives)

Plan:

I. Historical background

- Opprobrious land reforms, dispossession, and land right concentration in historical perspective.

II. State of Chiapas: Northern Highlands and Eastern Highlands.

- Geographic location
- Landscape and orography
- Highlights: Demography, resources, and economy

III. Select case studies in Northern Highlands (between S.C. de las Casas and Palenque) and the Eastern Highlands.

MEXICO: State demarcations



Source: INEGI

State of Chiapas: Political demarcation



I. Historical background

- Opprobrious land reforms, dispossession, and land rights concentration in historical perspective.

1. The emergence of the Zapatistas and the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico, didn't occur overnight.

- Enclaves grieving over tenancy issues, plus oppressed and dispossessed agrarian laborers (*Problems were exacerbated due to 1992 Land reform.*)

- Rich deposits of minerals and natural gas along with comprehensive takeover of land by large agribusinesses and remnant hacendados.

...led to uprising and EZLN's 13 demands. Messagerepresenting the oppressed and excluded, e.g. San Andres Larrainzar and ensuing response: EZLN-sympathetic *Juntas de Buen Gobierno*

Two types of land under the Ejido System: Common and parceled *(Wallace and Chapa 2015)*

Ejido, a clientelist system, was used by a party-led state to redistribute land following the Mexican Revolution, which helped keep corporatist structures in place under industrial and government control.

Common land refers to land used or accessed by all; whereas, parceled land is assigned to an individual or family.

Share of land classified under the ejido system has changed as administrations have granted land rights to convert ejidos to private ownership (following 1992 land reform)

Until 1992 the ejido restricted use of land to agriculture. Further, land under the ejido system could not be sold, rented or used for collateral.

Since 1992 ejido land can be converted to private ownership.

I. Historical background

However, opprobrious land reforms and dispossession go back further in time...

2. Patterns of inequity in historical perspective:

- Colonial period
- *Encomiendas*
- Rebellions: colonial wars against racial and ethnic assimilation
- *Hacienda* systems (post-independence)
- Revolution and the introduction of the *ejido*
- Latest land reforms (1992)

II. State of Chiapas

- Geographic location
- Landscape and orography
- Highlights: Demography, resources, and economy

Chiapas, Mexico

Land (km²): 73,289, 7.6% of national territory

Municipalities: 118. State capital: Tuxtla Gutierrez

Population: 4.3 mill. Density (hab. Per km²): 60

Share rural population: 52.3% (2006)

GDP-Sector breakdown (2004): agriculture (8.4%), manufactures (26%), services (65.6%)

Source: INEGI

State of Chiapas



Source: State Government, Chiapas



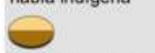
Población indígena de México por Entidad Federativa, 2010

Simbología

Población de 3 años y más que habla una lengua indígena

- >2 400 - 250 000
- 250 001 - 500 000
- 500 001 - 800 000
- >800 001

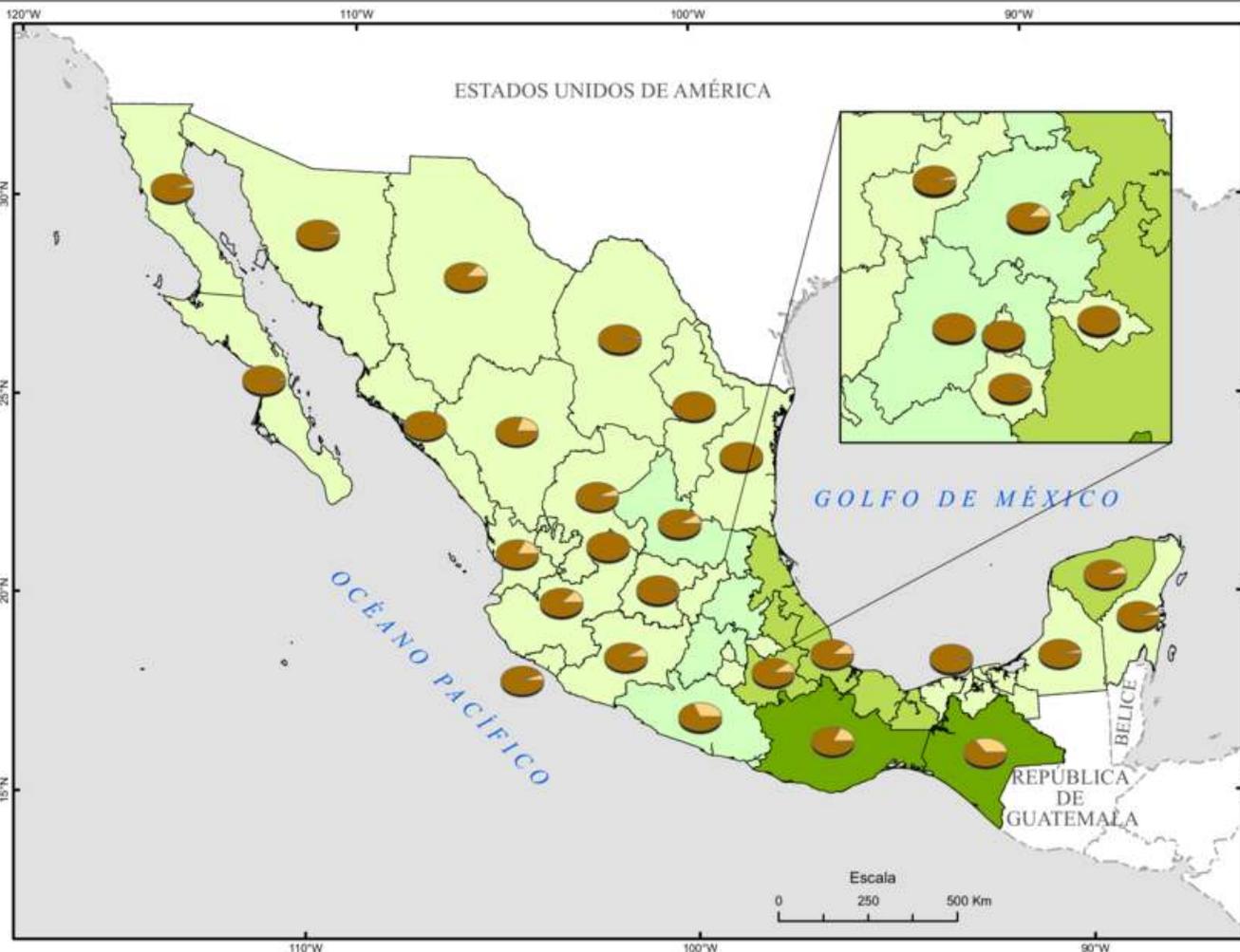
Población por condición de habla indígena



- Monolingüe
- Bilingüe

- Límite estatal
- Límite internacional

Sistema de Coordenadas Planas
Proyección:
Cónica Conforme de Lambert
Datum: WGS 1984

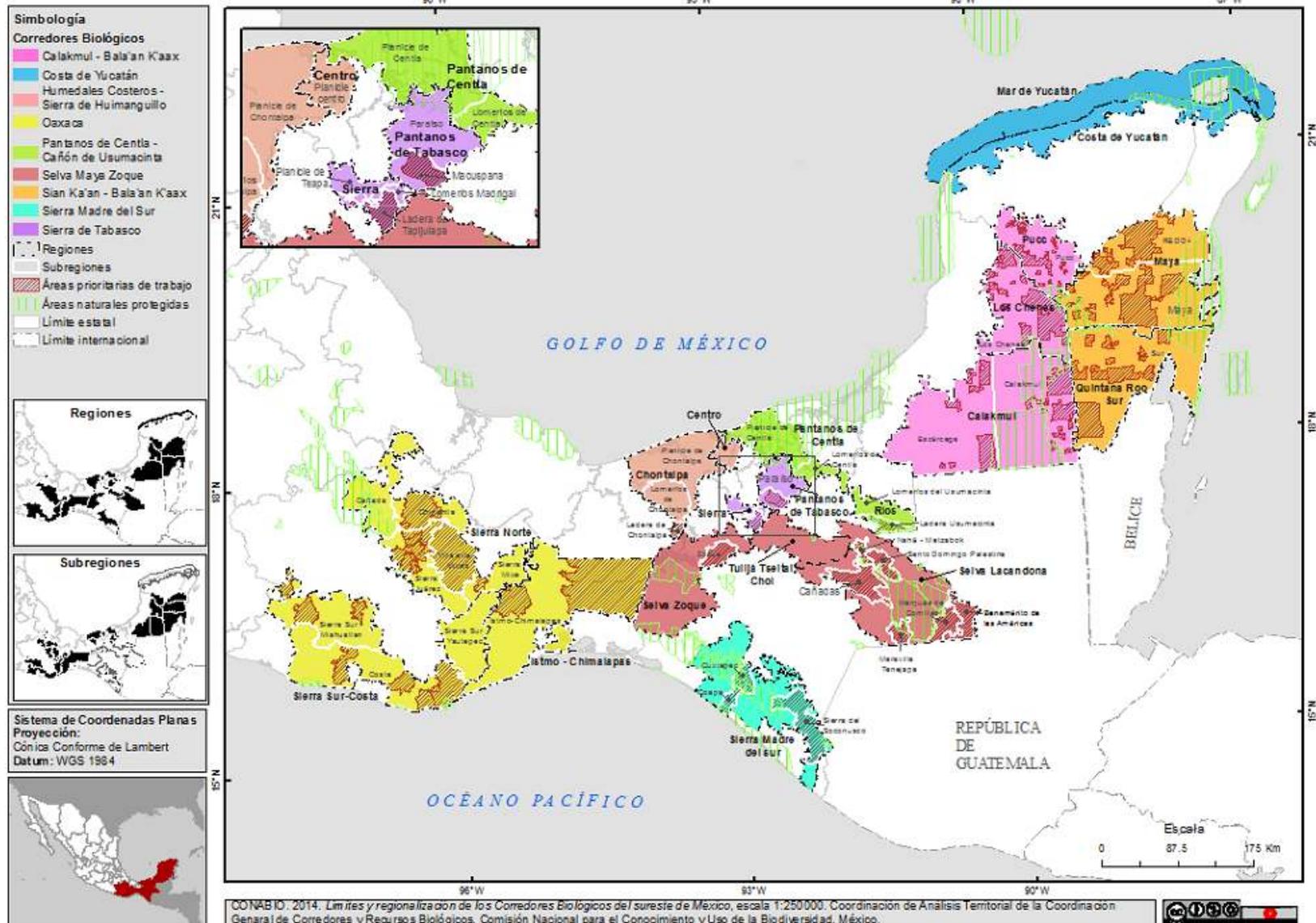


CONABIO.2012. *Población indígena de México por Entidad Federativa, 2010*, escala 1:250000. Comisión Nacional para el Conocimiento y Uso de la Biodiversidad. México D.F.



Source: CONABIO

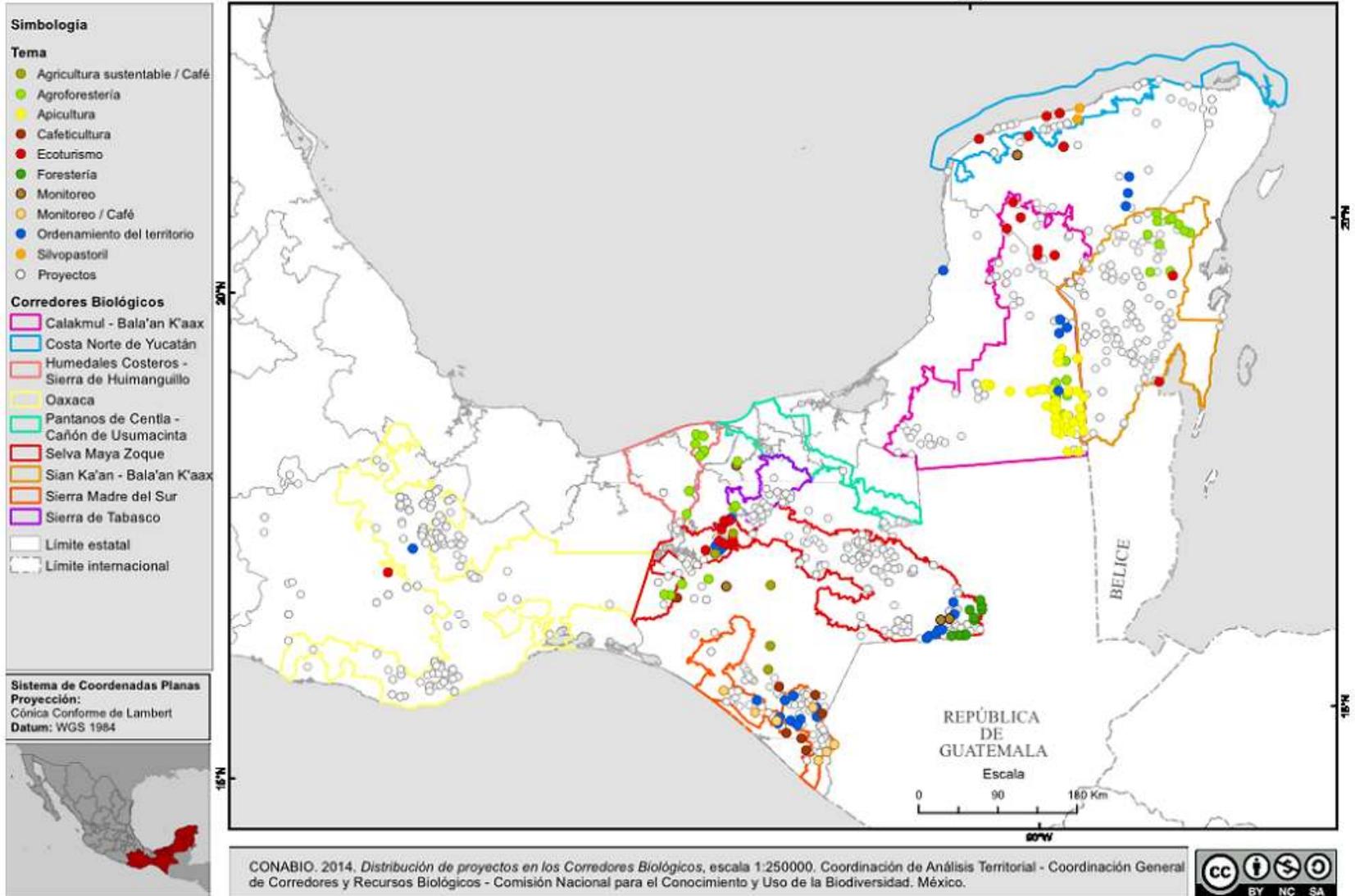
Límites y regionalización de los Corredores Biológicos del sureste de México



Source: CONABIO



Distribución de proyectos en los Corredores Biológicos



Source: CONABIO

III. Select case studies in Northern Highlands and the Eastern Highlands

Local traditional knowledge may be perceived as highly contextual Briggs (2005) questions transferability and universal value of indigenous knowledge. But traditional knowledge may be at risk of loss or diminished local impact.

Case (a) Biocultural resistance processes as paths toward sustainability (*V. Toledo and B. Ortiz*) Horizontal social movements, plurality of ways of knowing (*Stahler-Sholk et al. 2014*)

Case (b) “Cascadas El Corralito”, in El Corralito community, Oxchuc, Chiapas [Tzeltal eco-touristic project] (*Bello 2013*)
Social re-appropriation of natural resources. Yet, community has been unable to raise sustained revenue stream from eco-tourism activities. Thus, society is dependent of transfers from state authorities and employment outside community

III. Select case studies in Northern Highlands and the Eastern Highlands

Case (b) “Cascadas El Corralito”, in El Corralito community, Oxchuc, Chiapas (Tzeltal eco-touristic project); whereas, other eco-touristic projects in Eastern Highlands have failed in creating elements for a social appropriation of natural resources (*Hernandez 2002.*)

Biological reproduction of resource \neq environmental dimension of resource



Social re-appropriation of natural resources



New discourses/languages necessary for reevaluating resources (*Leff 2007.*)

*Biological reproduction of resource: When resource satisfies self sufficient collective responses (*Leff 2007 and 2002, and Bello 2013.*)

*Whereas, environmental dimension of resources introduces private vs. public spheres, often mediated by changes in legal frameworks (exogenous) and the recreation of new social dialogues (endogenous.)

III. Select case studies in Northern Highlands and the Eastern Highlands

Case (c) Sustainability criteria in relation to three ecotourism projects in Montes Azules biosphere reserve, Chiapas (Zarazua and associates 2015)

Montes Azules biosphere reserve or Lacandon Jungle:

Largest Mexican tropical biosphere (331 thousand ha or 37% of all protected surface throughout the state)

Campamento Top Che, Lacanha-Chansayab (MABR & Lacandon ethnic); Campamento Yatoch Barum, San Javier (MABR & Lacandon ethnic); Centro Ecoturístico Tres Lagunas, Frontera Corozal (Chol ethnic)

*Chol ethnic is marginalized from public incentives as it not under MABR territory.

Evidence points to an imbalance and unsteady access to subsidies for communities involved in these ecotourism projects.

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Case (c) Sustainability criteria in relation to three ecotourism projects in Montes Azules biosphere reserve, Chiapas (Zarazua and associates 2015)

Sustainability criteria:

Economic: Returns, loss absorption, anticipate changes in revenue, CBA;

Social: Access to basic services, education, distribution of returns;

Technological: implementation of technology;

Institutional: compliance of ecotourism norms and regulations, access and use of public subsidies due to ethnic and industry, transparency and accountability re. use of subsidies or private incentives;

Environmental: adoption of alternative energy technologies throughout day-to-day activities, water reuse and capture, and management of solid residuals;

Surroundings: Factors driving costs, anticipate effects from competition

Thank You!

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