

Degrowth for Ecological Sustainability and Social Equity

Green Economy & Its Others: Scarcity, (De)growth, Abundance

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PLAN

- 1 . Why 'green economy' cannot work
for either conservation or development
2. Green economy & growth
- 3 . Three mental traps that lock us into capitalist logic
- 4 . Green economy's others: two challenges

'green economy' 'ecological modernization'

'selling nature to save it'

'Nature™ Inc.' 'commodification of life'

Natural capital

Measurement, market-based valuation, private
ownership & trading of nature's assets & services

Conservation efficiency

+ Development gains & poverty reduction

a break with conventional economics?

trade in 'ecosystem services'

- biodiversity offsets
- carbon sequestration
(compliance 'markets' & voluntary 'markets')
- hydrological 'ecosystem services'
- other PES schemes

REDD+

Contradictions of nature as property
& complexities of living ecosocial systems
don't fit the requirements of market contracts

'leakage' 'impermanence' 'non-additionality'
'perverse incentives' 'moral hazard'
'crowding-out', etc., etc.

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Can green economy rescue the stalled global economy?

Green economy promises to simulate more growth

Green-technology innovation & transfer will 'create jobs'

& investment opportunities **Incentives depend on profitability**

& (profitable) green-technology development depends on

market demand **& therefore depends on growth**

theory: private investments become more profitable as G.E. policies

(C taxes, cap-&-trade) make the right to pollute more scarce & costly

reality: C markets are barely alive; prices low; it's cheaper to pollute

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markets & inequalities

Offsets obtained from global-South regions are a bargain –
because land, labor (& lives!) are cheaper in the global South

‘efficiency’ in conservation finance

→ control by wealthy of global-South landscapes; ‘green grabbing’

To the extent that funds for market-based conservation schemes
depend on *for-profit* investments,

they will reinforce existing North-South & South-South inequalities
& will probably create new ones

McAfee 2012 “The Contradictory Logic of Global Ecosystem-Services
Markets” *Development and Change* 43:1

CONCEPTUAL TRAP 1

green economy ↔ neoclassical economics

economics is about the management of scarcity....

why is there scarcity? endless competition for limitless wants

purpose of economic activity = satisfaction of wants: consumption

resonates with ideas of 'limits' in conservation discourse

'resource shortages' 'peak oil' 'spaceship earth'

'I=PAT' lack of 'ecological space' 'tragedy of commons'

CONCEPTUAL TRAP 2

private investment

in green technology.... in conservation ***benefit!***

in education, infrastructure, services.... ***benefit!***

public investment

in green technology.... in conservation ***cost!***

in education, infrastructure, services.... ***costs!***

In protection of indigenous & other human rights.... ***cost!***

CONCEPTUAL TRAP 3

‘development’ versus ‘conservation’

conservation constructed as ‘cost’ that must be paid by external sources

deal underpinning global-S participation in earth summits, FCCC, CBD

1980s - 90s: principles of CDR & SDT 2000s -> ‘trade not aid’

externally-driven, export dependent development

ecosystem-services exports –

the latest tropical miracle-crop commodity

PES, REDD+, Yasuní ITT Initiative, biodiversity offsets, etc.

depend on external sources of investment &/or aid

& enable growth; depend upon growth (for market-based financing)

green economy's others:

Contra presumptions of scarcity & necessity of growth

buen vivir/ buenos convivires, sumak kawsay, lekil kuxlejal, lok swaraj, aparigraha (etc.)

plentitude, sufficiency, living well, living together, commons;
resistance to commodification of life

degrowth, a-growth, post-growth, post-productivism (etc.)

happy abundance, synergistic economies, re-commoning,
economies of care, affective labor, metabolic value

What is 'the economy' for?

CHALLENGES FOR DEGROWTH MOVEMENT

“*degrowth* can’t meet needs of ‘developing’ countries...”

Strong moral case for reparations, for payment of ecological debts,
for compensation for centuries of extractivism & net out-flow of wealth

but, these can reinforce the assumption that foreign investments
must drive development

(bond purchases, IMF loans, mining concessions, factory production
contracts, **offsets for ecosystem services & conservation.**

recognition, compensation, redistribution without commodification

‘right to grow’ as means to overcome extreme deprivation

**need redefine growth, reconceptualize production to include
(sustainable) production for material needs**

CHALLENGES FOR BUENOS CONVIVIOS

“buen vivir can’t work for industrialized societies”

buen vivir raises the same key questions... & may have some answers

What is ‘the economy’ for?

Whom are ‘economies’ for?

What is ‘cost’?

What is work?

Meta-industrial labor; metabolic value; synergistic economies (A Salleh)

Affective labor (not so much a la Hardt Negri)

Radical and grassroots feminisms Reproductivity

Social & solidary economy movements Diverse economies

Example from Mexico of the dangers on focus on greening via REDD+ :

REDD REDMPTION?

REDD MENANCE??

OR REDD HERRING???

2013 FCCC COP19 Warsaw decisions on REDD

'finally established the policy basis for global REDD+'

- REDD \$ can come from market or non-market sources, Green Climate Fund, etc.
- \$ *should* be 'results based' (except in preparatory phases)
- Countries *should* provide summary of how they're using safeguards
- Non-carbon functions of forests are good, too... etc.

Global community puts forests first with milestone decision: REDD+ a reality



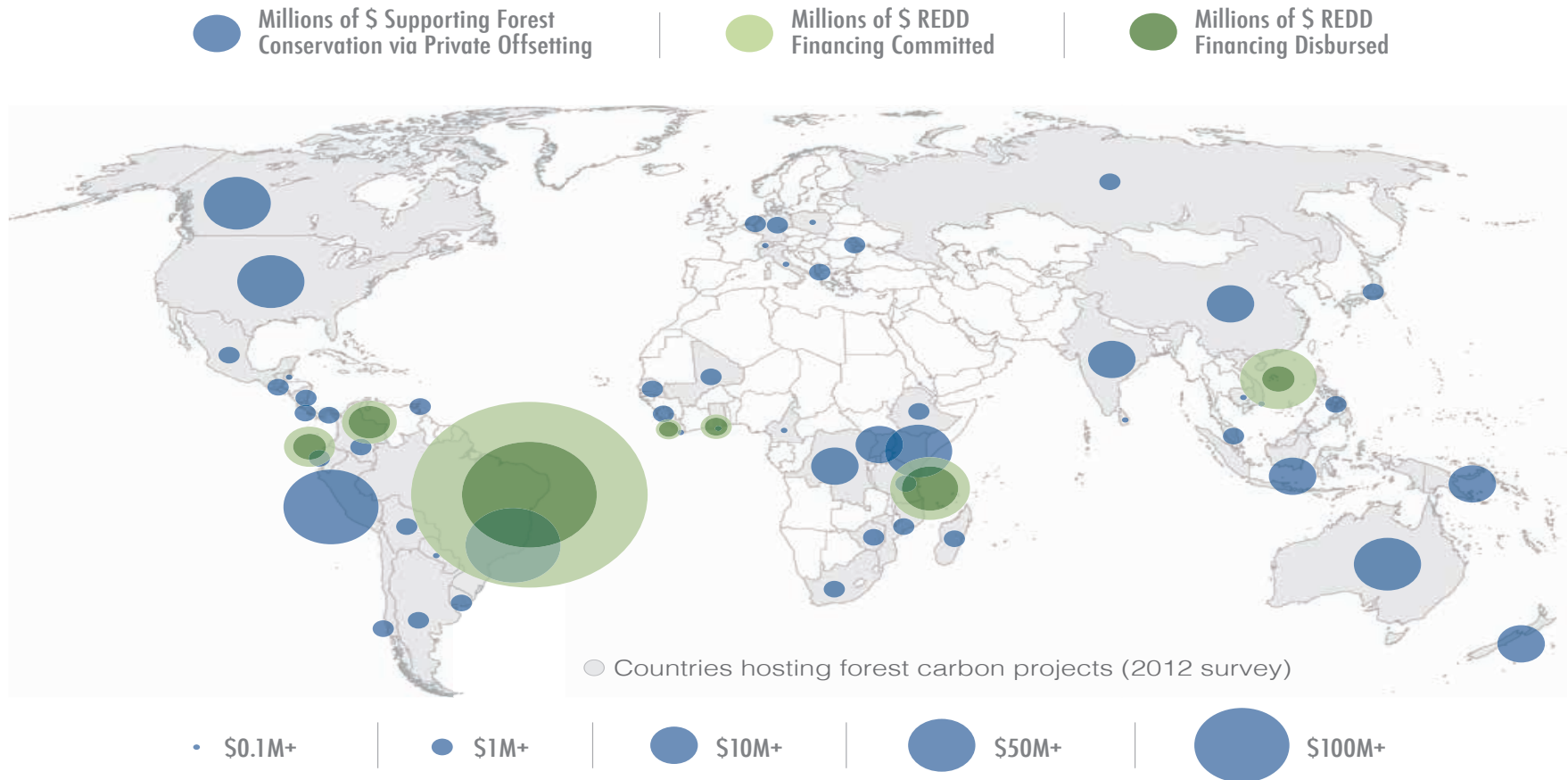
Posted on 13 December 2013

Washington, DC: In a major victory for the world's tropical forests, the more than 1.6 billion people that are dependent on them, and the Earth's fragile climate, global leaders have agreed on a much anticipated package of elements that will unlock finance to reward tropical forest nations for reducing carbon emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+).



“major victory”

Figure 5: Comparison of Project- and Country-level Forest Finance, All Years



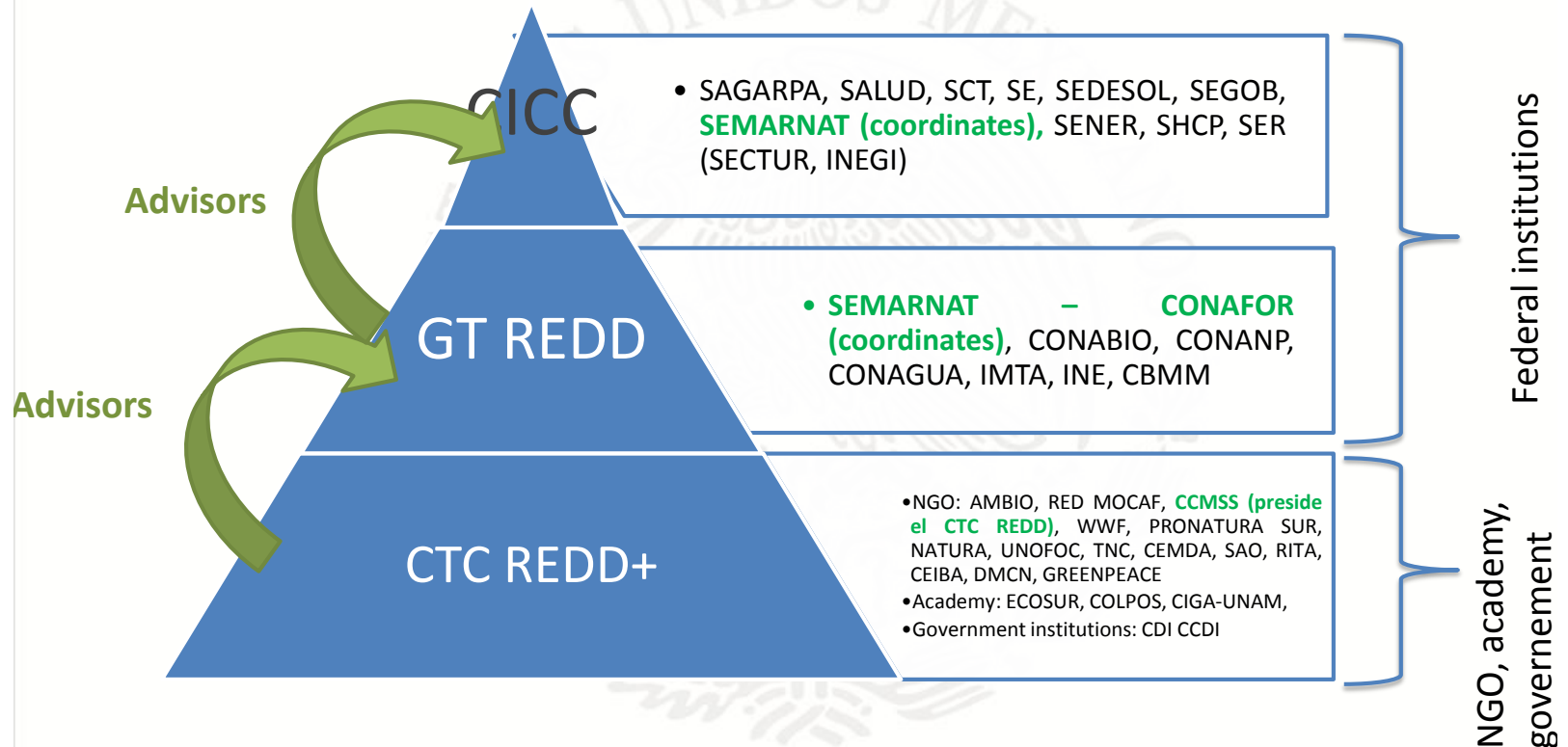
Notes: Based on value associated with all years of “State of” forest carbon market tracking and REDD finance data sourced from reddx.forest-trends.org, as of October 2013.

Source: Forest Trends' Ecosystem Marketplace. *State of the Forest Carbon Markets 2013*.

Forest Trends: as of Nov. 2013 “ > \$1 billion had been committed to Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Ghana, Liberia, Tanzania, & Vietnam alone”.

Mexico

2.1 Institutional arrangements: Technical Consultant Committee of REDD+ (CTCREDD+)



REDD Herring From what does the herring distract us?

Chiapas

INTENSIFIED EXTRACTIVISM

Agrofuels: subsidized oil palm & jatropha + maize, soya, cane sugar

Export crops: 'productive agricultural reconversion' policy

Petroleum: oil & gas

Mining: gold, silver, titanium, mercury, lead, uranium, marble, gravel

Big dams

Big wind

Water

Tourism

Protected areas