Re-articulating Discourse for Indigenous and Environmental Justice: A Study of Nicaragua’s Unidos por BOSAWAS Music Festivals

by

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ABSTRACT

RE-ARTICULATING DISCOURSE FOR INDIGENOUS AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: A STUDY OF NICARAGUA’S UNIDOS POR BOSAWAS MUSIC FESTIVALS

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Dr. Sheri Longboat

The cultural and physical survival of the Mayangna people of Nicaragua is being threatened by the increasing, illegal presence of farmers and other colonists in their home, the Biosphere Reserve of BOSAWAS. The activities of these non-Indigenous settlers reflect a disregard for the sustainability and respect for mother Earth, characteristic of the Mayangna worldview. In Nicaragua, there are policies that have been articulated in the last several decades with the goal of protecting Indigenous communities and the natural environment. However, these policies are not implemented. A group of musicians and environmental activists have considered that this problem emerges because of a lack of knowledge and education and because of long-standing Discourses\(^1\) that have devalued the cultural heritage and knowledge of Indigenous people in Nicaragua. Through the organization Misión BOSAWAS, they attempted to facilitate processes of conscientization (consciousness raising) through concerts and media campaigns from 2012 to 2016. They hoped that by raising awareness, Nicaraguan society might take the first steps toward

\(^1\) In this dissertation I will make a difference between the official social Discourse and instances of discourse of utterances where the former one is spelled with a capital “D” and the latter with a small “d” (Gee, 2012).
re-articulating a Discourse that supports justice for Indigenous people through policy implementation.

This interdisciplinary research involved an in-depth, single case study of these festivals. The data collected and analyzed included secondary data and primary data. The dissertation asked the following central questions: 1) How has Nicaragua’s official national Discourse constructed the notion of Indigeneity? 2) How has the music performed and recorded during the Unidos por BOSAWAS Festivals contributed to the process of conscientization in favour of policy enforcement? 3) How have activists and the public experienced the festival? And 4) How can the initiatives surrounding this issue be optimized by Misión BOSAWAS and similar organizations so as to benefit Indigenous people and the environment?

The research results show a positive contribution of music in this attempt at a re-articulation and re-appraisal of Indigenous heritage in Nicaragua. The results also indicate a need for education, political organization and liaisons with international entities that defend human rights. Finally, the results indicate that while problems continue to exist, raising awareness through festivals where music is a central component has laid the foundation for critical awareness and support from the public. These first steps toward justice and policy enforcement may not be large but they are certainly significant.
DEDICATION

To my mother, María Alba Laguna de Pérez (1941-2017), who taught me the language of music and the love of learning.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As I reflect on my academic journey, I am reminded of the words of musician Carlos Mejía Godoy. He once told me that, when he wrote lyrics to his popular music, he paid attention to everyone. You never know when someone is going to say something brilliant. Sometimes, he told me, the greatest wisdom came from the lady that was serving coffee in a restaurant. This has been true for me as well. I have continually grown and benefitted from the popular, cultural or academic wisdom of my family, friends, professors, research participants and strangers. This dissertation is the fruit of all those contributions and I am honoured to be the recipient of such wisdom.

Specifically, I would like to acknowledge the guidance and dedication of my advisor, Dr. Sheri Longboat. You not only offered your academic knowledge and experience but also your values, integrity and love for justice and Indigenous people. I also want to acknowledge the support and contribution of my committee members, Dr. Al Lauzon and Dr. Gordana Yovanovich, two professors who have mentored me from the beginning of this doctoral journey and who always knew to ask the right questions. I am thankful for your challenges, questions and support.

Many others come to mind, professors who took their time to sit with me to talk about research, life, academia, and the meaning of it all. Among these I first remember professor Nonita Yap with whom I had the joy of working during the last months of her life. I am also thankful to professors Karen Landman and George Lovell for agreeing to be part of the examination committee.

I would like to acknowledge and thank all of those who assisted me during the field research stages of this dissertation. Thanks to all who agreed to be interviewed, all the musicians and activists who were happy to sit with me to talk. I would like to thank Ernesto Lopez “Matu” for leaving your farm and your family for a few days to go into BOSAWAS with me. Thank you for introducing me to the community since, without you, this journey would not have been possible.

This research was made possible also thanks to the financial support of the University of Guelph, the School of Environmental Design and Rural Development and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. This support allowed me to visit BOSAWAS and gather the perspectives of Mayangna Elders, leaders, musicians and community members.

Finally, I want to offer a word of gratitude to Seidy, my spouse, for her kind support and sense of humour, especially in the midst of pressing deadlines. You have made this journey not only possible but also beautiful.
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>BOSAWAS</td>
<td>Bocay Mountain, Saslaya Hill, Waspuk River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CENIDH</td>
<td>Centro Nicaragüense de Derechos Humanos (Nicaraguan Centre for Human Rights)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSLN</td>
<td>Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (Sandinista Front of National Liberation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIZ</td>
<td>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Agency for Sustainable Development)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTI</td>
<td>Gobierno Territorial Indígena (Indigenous Territorial Government)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRENA</td>
<td>Instituto de Recursos Naturales (Natural Resources Institute)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARENA</td>
<td>Ministerio del Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MISURASATA</td>
<td>Miskito, Sumu, Rama, Sandinista Together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAAN</td>
<td>Región Autónoma Atlántico Norte (North Atlantic Autonomous Region)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAAS</td>
<td>Región Autónoma Atlántico Sur (South Atlantic Autonomous Region)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNG</td>
<td>Unión Nacional de Agricultores y Ganaderos (National Union of Farmers and Ranchers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YAMATA</td>
<td>Yapti Tasba Masraka Nanih Asla Takanka (Sons of Mother Earth)</td>
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Prologue: Coming to know the Mayangna and BOSAWAS

In the summer of 2014, I came across a video trailer on social media, a video that would become the catalyst for the undertaking of this research. It was Calé Productions’ invitation to its latest documentary release in Managua, Nicaragua (Allgood & De Castro, 2014). This release was part of the “Misión BOSAWAS” movement’s efforts to gather support for the BOSAWAS cause. As an academic and musician, the documentary’s title and images drew my attention. *El Canto de BOSAWAS* showcased the songs of the Mayangna peoples of BOSAWAS echoing through the thick, tropical rain forests of North Western Nicaragua. As a Nicaraguan born individual, I was surprised to recognize that this was the first time I came across the names “BOSAWAS” and “Mayangna” and I suspected, from the message presented in the trailer, that I was not alone. I come from the Pacific and, like people who come from this region, grew up believing that the Indigenous peoples of this country were a reality of the past and that the Nicaraguan identity was a mestizo one (Cuadra, 1969), one that nevertheless carried the fiery Indigenous strength running through our veins alongside our Spanish ancestry (Borland, 2002).

The traditions, struggles, and territory of the Mayangna communities were the focal point of this documentary which followed Ernesto “Matute”, a young musician and activist, and his friends on their quest. Motivated by the idea to preserve the language and music of this community, they travelled through the forests and rivers of the BOSAWAS Biosphere Reserve to record the songs of the Mayangna for the first time in history. This long journey, however, had another urgent and well-defined purpose: to have audiovisual material to educate mainstream Nicaraguan society, especially its youth, and bring them an experience that would awaken in them a sense of empathy and justice for the Mayangna. The Mayangna are suffering because their
territory is being despoiled, their rivers polluted, their forests cut and cleared, and their community members violently killed by invaders while most of Nicaragua remains unaware and unaffected, especially those living in the Pacific region. Matute and his team hoped that the images, the songs and the stories they collected would facilitate the end to this indifference and so open a door to critical awareness and change. In one word, it aimed for conscientization².

The documentary, along with the concerts organized by the Misión BOSAWAS movement since 2012, were permeated by a sense of urgency as expressed by its activists. The Mayangnas are one of Nicaragua’s last Indigenous communities but their way of life and the natural environment upon which they rely are at risk of disappearing due to illegal, non-sustainable activities such as commercial agriculture, cattle ranching and colonist settlements (Stocks et al., 2007). This reality prompted these young men and women, both Indigenous and mestizo, to make use of a language with which they are quite familiar, the language of music performance. A profound relationship with the land lies under the commitment behind the work of Nicaraguan Indigenous musicians whose music was at the centre of “Unidos por BOSAWAS”, a yearly music festival that took place from 2012 to 2016 and that promoted the protection of this Reserve. Music was, for this movement, an event through which they wished to provoke processes of conscientization in Nicaraguan society. By articulating their values through the language of music, these artists hoped to bring about a change in the relationship of mainstream society with the

² Based on approaches to education articulated by Paolo Freire in his 1968 book Pedagogy of the Oppressed, conscientization (which may be translated into English as “consciousness raising”) refers to a process of critical awareness where the learner examines his or her social context to bring about change.
environment, Indigenous people and their views on what it means to live well within a just society, thus securing a sustainable future for Mayangna communities.
PART 1: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND CONTEXTS

1 INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation I explore the development of the social constructs of national identity, Indigeneity and social justice in Nicaragua and the impact of these constructs on the life of Indigenous communities and their natural environment. I begin with the premise that the established Discourse in Nicaragua needs to change so as to prevent the environmental and cultural destruction of the Biosphere Reserve of BOSAWAS and its Indigenous communities. Building upon this, the framework that guides this study includes the concepts of conscientization (Freire, 1970; Boal, 1979), performance (Taylor, 2003; Schechner, 1988; Dutta, 2011), and music as Discourse (Nattiez, 1990). These concepts will be examined in depth in Chapter 3. In this introductory chapter, I will provide a formulation of the problem studied in this dissertation, an introduction to the Mayangna, the Biosphere Reserve of BOSAWAS and the grassroots movement Misión BOSAWAS. I will offer an overview of the research methodology, research questions, and the goals and objectives that guided this study. I will then discuss the significance of this research and will conclude with a description of each chapter of this thesis.

1.1 Problem statement

The cultural and physical survival of the Mayangna people, one of Nicaragua’s last surviving Indigenous groups, is being threatened. Their rivers, the only source of water in such remote areas, are being polluted by colonists, extractive industries, commercial agriculture and cattle ranching. Their forests are being depleted, making it more difficult for them to hunt, thus affecting

\[^{3}\text{In this dissertation I will make a difference between the official social Discourse and instances of discourse of utterances where the former one is spelled with a capital “D” and the latter with a small “d” (Gee, 2012).}\]
their food security. Their physical integrity is also threatened as the violence perpetuated by armed colonists is increasing to a point where entire communities are being displaced (Calero, 2017). The Mayangna’s existence and basic human rights are intimately connected to the protection of BOSAWAS, a national Reserve that has been losing land at an increasingly rapid rate over the past decades. The destruction of the protected forest emerges because of a lack of enforcement of the policies that were established in 1991 to protect BOSAWAS from illegal sale, encroachment and extractive industries (Stocks et al., 2007). It also reflects a disregard for the worthiness of Indigenous communities and their culture. This situation is an embodiment of the social struggle between competing values and attitudes regarding the meaning and implication of justice for Indigenous peoples and humanity’s relationship to the natural world. Facilitating processes of conscientization in Nicaragua around this issue can help establish the foundation for shared values that may promote the implementation and enforcement of existing policies. These policies, which were largely the result of the work of Indigenous political organizations such as MISURASATA and YATAMA during the process of revolution and counter revolution (Staver et al., 2007), protect the rights and survival of these communities and future generations as well as the natural environment in which they live.

1.2 Context and Unidos por BOSAWAS Festivals

1.2.1 Nicaragua’s Mayangna peoples

In his book *Indigenous Peoples and Human Rights* (2005), Patrick Thornberry establishes a definition of Indigenous people on which this thesis builds and identifies the Mayangna peoples of Nicaragua. He suggests that this definition is made up of four components. First, being Indigenous means to have a lengthy association with a particular place, and to have a deep and vital link to ancestral territory. This connection is such that “uprooting people from areas to which
they are indigenous results in disorientation, disempowerment and loss” (p. 37). Secondly, Indigeneity carries with it a sense of prior inhabitation, a historical priority that these peoples have upon the land as opposed to the rights of colonizers. Thirdly, being Indigenous means being the original inhabitants of the particular place they inhabit. Finally, Indigenous identity is connected to distinct societies and cultural patterns that “differ from those of the dominant society” (p. 39).

If we consider the Mayangna peoples of Nicaragua and their cultural characteristics, we can argue that they indeed are an Indigenous group according to Thornberry’s assessment. The following paragraphs will explore this identity and its relationship to the BOSAWAS Biosphere Reserve.

The Mayangnas, whose future is deeply connected to the survival of the BOSAWAS Biosphere Reserve, are a people with rich traditions and a complex history. Mayangna means children of the Sun God in their own language, and they make up about 5% of the population of the North Atlantic region in Nicaragua. Along with the Miskitos and the Rama, their ancestral origins connect them to this land for more than 4,500 years (Guevara Flores et al., 2015, p. 11). Two main theoretical streams theorize about their ancient presence in the area. Some suggest that the Mayangna’s worldview is similar to that of other Indigenous groups that originated and migrated from the Amazonian region to Central America’s tropical forests. Others suggest that their linguistic characteristics indicate that they originated in Central America and that later they migrated toward Colombia in South America (Hurtado de Mendoza, 2000). Both of these theories support the argument that the Mayangna have a longstanding relationship with this territory and they have been here before any other groups arrived.

Most of the Mayangna live in the rural and urban areas around the mining towns of Bonanza and Rosita (Guevara Flores et al., 2015). There is historical evidence that they have lived not only in the Atlantic region of Nicaragua but also in neighbouring Honduras. They settled in
what is now the BOSAWAS Reserve from before Colonization and lived there uninterruptedly until the beginning of the 17th century (Guevara Flores et al.). Currently, the Mayanagas live in nine territories which spread across the North and South Autonomous Atlantic regions of Nicaragua (RAAN or Región Autónoma Atlántico Norte and RAAS or Región Autónoma Atlántico Sur). Their largest presence in BOSAWAS is in the Mayanaga Sauní As Territory, located in the buffer zone which is part of the municipality of Bonanza, and in Musawás which is part of the Reserve’s core zone.

Currently, different layers of government share jurisdiction over BOSAWAS and its communities and coordination is a challenge since they are not always in agreement with one another. Nicaragua’s central government is represented in the Reserve by Ministerio del Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (MARENA)4. There are also two levels of Indigenous government: the territorial government or GTI for its Spanish initials Gobierno Territorial Indígena5 and the communal government (p. 17). Guevara Flores et al. (2015) mention that the Mayanaga and Miskitos were not consulted about the establishment of the protected zone on the ancestral territory, and they do not accept the central government’s co-jurisdiction of the BOSAWAS core zone, setting the stage for governance ambiguity and gaps in policy enforcement.

Along with the Miskito communities who live along the border of the Reserve, closer to the Caribbean Coast, the Mayanaga are, in many ways, the protectors of this land as they struggle to halt the encroachment from reaching the core zone (Gros & Nakashima, 2008). Their knowledge system is informed by a way of life that is centered on agricultural initiatives that focus

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4 Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources.
5 Indigenous Territorial Government
on the production of substance crops such as “rice, beans, bananas and yucca” (Gros & Nakashima, p. 17). They also have the longstanding practices of hunting, fishing and gathering which complement their diets. In 2008 their population was estimated at 20,000 and that one third of them lived in Indigenous territories (Gros and Nakashima, 2008). Their culture and faith have been influenced by British colonizers through missionary Christian presence by the Moravian church. Their current religious expressions reflect this influence as well as their traditional Mayangna worldview which sees the natural world as existing in an interdependent system of relationships of reciprocal stewardship (Bryan & Wood, 2015).

1.2.2 The Biosphere Reserve of BOSAWAS

Known generally as BOSAWAS6, the Reserve represents an extremely rich and diverse environment in its flora, fauna and geography. The Reserve takes its name from its main rivers and mountains, the Bocay River, the Saslaya Mountain and the Waspuk River. Considered to be one of the largest protected areas in Central America and second in size only to South America’s Amazon Rainforest, it is part of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor, a protected land bridge that unites all of Central America with some of the southern Mexican states and provides a natural passage for the migration of a number of animal species. Its 20,000 km2 constitute about 15% of Nicaragua’s land area (See Figure 5.1), with its core zone covering about 8,000 km2. Hansen et al. (2016) report that BOSAWAS is “home to an estimated 3.5% of global biodiversity of flora and fauna” (p. 141), and this fauna includes species that are “rare in other parts of Central America, particularly the giant anteater, jaguar, harpy eagle and American crocodile, and a few are some of the world’s last populations, for example Baird’s tapir and the Central American spider monkey”

6 In official government documents, the name BOSAWAS is written in capital letters since it is an acronym. It is also commonly written “Bosawas”.
Preservation of the natural habitat that BOSAWAS represents for these species is vital for their future survival.

Figure 1.1: Location of the BOSAWAS Reserve in Nicaragua

Source: Google Maps, 2017

The BOSAWAS Biosphere Reserve was established by Violeta de Chamorro’s government in 1991 as a protected area with the proclamation of Decree 44-1 soon after her electoral triumph over the Sandinistas. The Decree stated its aim of “protecting biodiversity and the resources necessary for indigenous sustenance” (Stocks et al., 2007, p. 1496). This
proclamation represented a crucial point in the struggle for land and resources for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Nicaraguans. The area, marked by years of armed conflict between the Sandinista and the Contra\(^7\) during the period of revolution and counter revolution (Morris, 2014) saw the displacement of Mayangna and Miskito Indigenous communities between 1979 and 1990. These communities initially welcomed the establishment of the Reserve as an opportunity to return to their home, the lush, natural environment where they could continue to co-exist with such abundant biodiversity. Today BOSAWAS’ frontier continues to move in, the core zone continues to be reduced from colonist encroachment which includes economic interests and disregard for indigenous culture and the environment, causing the loss of natural resources and the livelihood of its communities. The inhabitants of BOSAWAS can be divided into Indigenous and non-Indigenous and it has been proven that it is the non-indigenous inhabitants that have sped up the rate at which the forest is being depleted and the water resources polluted (Stocks et al., 2007).

The Indigenous inhabitants of BOSAWAS are primarily Miskito and Mayangna people who were allowed “to return to their home communities to rebuild” in the 1990s after the revolution and counterrevolution (Stock et al., 2007, p. 1496). They had been displaced during the armed conflict that had contras, revolutionaries and the army in battle in the forests of Nicaragua. The government later awarded common property land titles in May of 2005 to the territorial organizations of five “ethnic” territories containing 86 indigenous Miskito and Mayangna communities” (p. 1497). The creation of BOSAWAS was also intended so that these communities “could pursue their interest in defending a homeland free from the pressures of logging and mining interests” (p. 1497). These measures have been considered a positive step for

\(^7\) The title “contra” is given to the counter revolutionary army that fought against the Sandinista leftist government after 1979.
the validation of the rights of these communities on paper, but these laws have not always materialized. The government, for example, has been resistant to indigenous self-governance in the Reserve and land titles for indigenous communities were, as affirmed by Stocks (2007), not quickly inscribed in the national land registry once they were granted in theory.

The non-indigenous inhabitants of BOSAWAS are referred to as *colonos* or colonists and they include peasants, former combatants and other individuals and families that claim ownership to sections of cleared forests even though the existing laws should prevent them from holding such claims. They have been in the region even prior to the establishment of the Reserve and their presence increased significantly in recent decades. In 1990, for example, there were 167 colonist families and by 1996 there were 1,977, totalling approximately 10,000 people (Stocks et al., 2007 p. 1496). More recently, between 2010 and 2012, the Indigenous government reports that at least 600 new colonist families have settled in the area (Guevara et al., 2015). This increasing presence is the result of a number of factors including relocation due to building of dams as well as land exhaustion in the central regions of the country. The colonists have been a strong force that have, through their organizations, limited indigenous access to rivers. New colonists continue to settle and indigenous and MARENA forest rangers have been unable to remove them. It has also been documented that the colonists’ agricultural practices are more harmful to the life of BOSAWAS since there is a higher rate of forest loss and pollution in colonist areas as compared to those inhabited and used by their indigenous counterparts (Stocks et al., 2007).

The sale of land in BOSAWAS has been outlawed since 1991 (Howard, 1998) but “illegal transactions continue, while the popular perception that state lands are free for the taking encourages invasion of BOSAWAS” (p. 21). Various sources (Allgood & de Castro, 2014; Salinas Maldonado, 2014; Howard, 1998) argue that the problem is accentuated because of issues of
governability as the Managua-based central government is mostly absent from such a distant region. The government has also failed to effectively organize its initiatives when it comes to environmental concerns. Various organisms have been established such as the ECOT - PAF, a team of technical specialists to elaborate a strategy of Conservation for Sustainable Development, Environmental and Territorial Ordering and Forest Action (ECOT-PAF), and MARENA the Nicaraguan Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources. As Howard (1998) affirms “BOSAWAS continues to be affected by decisions made by a plethora of international, national, regional and municipal governmental and non-governmental organizations with overlapping roles and, at times, contradictory policies.” (p. 21). With increased colonist influx, the agricultural frontier continues to encroach into the Reserve, beyond the buffer zone, and into the core region of BOSAWAS.

1.2.3 Unidos por BOSAWAS Festivals

The Unidos por BOSAWAS festivals were a series of events organized by the Misión BOSAWAS organization in partnership with environmental organizations in Nicaragua such as Fundación Dúo Guardabarranco. These festivals were an annual event from 2012 to 2016 and their purpose was to bring together various sectors from civil society in order to raise awareness about environmental issues (González, 2016). Each year, the festivals were held in Managua and, in 2014, events were also held in Matagalpa and Bonanza. During the last three festivals (2014 to 2016) the focus became more centered on the aspect of justice for Indigenous people, particularly the Mayangna who live in BOSAWAS. These last festivals featured the presence of Mayangna musicians Príncipes de Paz. The festivals included concerts, exhibits and other educational activities and their target audience included non-Indigenous young people and families. The audience in attendance at each festival was estimated to be around 2,000. As part of the efforts,
the organization carried out a campaign where they showed the documentary *El Canto de BOSAWAS* in movie theatres, high schools and other community venues, free of charge. Finally, the organizers produced a music album that included some of the main artists and songs performed at the festivals from 2012 to 2014.

1.3 Research Questions, Goal and Objectives

1.3.1 Research Questions

This research examines how music and music festivals can be used by activists to support a process of conscientization that may facilitate eventual change in the realm of policy implementation and social justice. This study asks if the Discourse articulated through music-centred activism contributes to the implementation of policies designed to enact social and environmental justice for Indigenous people concerning the issue of land depletion in Nicaragua. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following central questions:

1. How has the official national Discourse articulated in Nicaragua constructed the notion of Indigenous identity?
2. How has the music performed and recorded during the Unidos por BOSAWAS Festivals contributed to the process of conscientization in favour of policy enforcement?
3. How have activists and the public experienced the festival?
4. How can the initiatives surrounding this issue be optimized by Misión BOSAWAS and similar organizations so as to benefit Indigenous people and the environment?

1.3.2 Goal and Objectives

The goal of this research is to investigate the social and political impact of the musical Discourse already underway in Nicaragua and its capacity to facilitate ongoing processes of conscientization and social change through policy implementation. In order to attain this goal, this study has the following specific objectives:
1. To understand the social and historical context that has shaped the construction of social justice and its implications for Indigenous peoples in Nicaragua from colonial times to the present.

2. To investigate participant’s perspectives regarding values, goals of their involvement and their perspectives regarding effective practices undertaken as part of their activism around this issue.

3. To critically examine the Discourse articulated through music performance during the festival.

4. To explore and generate a synthesis of best practices and strategies for future implementation by Misión BOSAWAS and similar organizations.

1.4 Overview of methodology

This research is interdisciplinary in nature and takes a social constructivist approach that considers that meaning and context are embedded in complex social systems (Bresler, 2016; Kim, 2014). It also draws on aspects of Critical Discourse Analysis which consider that Discourse articulates and establishes social dynamics of power (Way & McKerrell, 2017). Following Nattiez’ (1990) views on music as multimodal Discourse, some of the analysis carried out in this research assesses the three multimodal layers of music and its social context, using Nattiez’ terminology, its poietic, esthetic and trace aspects.

This research involved an in-depth single case study of the Unidos por BOSAWAS music festivals held in Managua, Matagalpa and Bonanza, Nicaragua from 2012 to 2016, between July and August. The study was conducted according to a social justice framework (Capehart, 2007) that incorporates the Indigenous philosophy of Buen Vivir⁸ (Thomson, 2011) and was influenced by performance theory from a Latin American perspective (Taylor, 2003). The research methods

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⁸ A philosophy that is articulated by many of Latin America’s Indigenous groups and that provides a holistic approach to individual and community wellbeing.
include document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and Discourse analysis of performed and recorded music from the festival as well as the music album BOSAWAS (2014). Considering the numerous perspectives and definitions of social justice, this research’s framework focuses on justice as a restorative and transformative enterprise that transcends socioeconomic redistribution (Fraser, 1995), requires an essential process of critical awareness, (Freire, 1970) and calls for a restructuring of existing systems of power and exclusion.

1.4.1 Data collection

This research involved the collection of primary and secondary data. The primary data collection included 19 semi-structured interviews with audiences, performers, organizers and Indigenous leaders and community members. The interviews were conducted in person during the months of May to August and November to December 2017. Interview participants were selected through convenience sampling that included willing and available individuals who attended at least one of the Unidos por BOSAWAS festivals, musicians, and Mayangna leaders and community members. In total, 19 interviews were completed: 6 musicians, 7 non-Indigenous activists and festival participants, 3 Mayangna elders, 2 Mayangna community leaders, and 1 Mayangna community member. Musicians were identified through newspaper articles and contacted individually via e-mail or social media. In order to identify and reach individuals who had attended or been part of the Misión BOSAWAS movement and concerts, I sought out its leadership which is based at the Universidad Centroamericana in Managua. They facilitated e-mail contact information. Reaching the Mayangna community involved travelling to the Sauni As territory in the BOSAWAS Reserve. The Mayangna leaders interviewed included members of the GTI and community Elders, as well as some of the musicians living in Musawás.
The secondary data collected and analyzed in this research includes government documents, media publications such as documentaries and news articles, and the lyrics of songs performed during the festivals and recorded in the 2014 album *BOSAWAS*. This also encompasses quantitative data compiled in existing reports produced by the Humboldt Institute of Nicaragua and the Mayangna government. This secondary data facilitated an understanding of the social and historical context that has shaped the construction of social justice and its implications for Indigenous peoples in Nicaragua and the current socioeconomic context of BOSAWAS. Finally, lyrics from the songs were analyzed for themes and historical and cultural references. These were seen as an important element in the construction of Discourse regarding the intersection between Indigenous people, land and social justice in Nicaragua.

### 1.4.2 Data analysis

The data collected through this research was analyzed using a triangulation of methods and considered Discourse from a critical point of view (Fairclough, 1995; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). Data collected through interviews was coded based on emerging themes, and participants were divided into categories according to their involvement in the festival. NVivo, a software designed to organize and analyze qualitative data (Richards, 1999), was considered appropriate in the identification of these themes. This process sought to obtain multiple perspectives, converging to provide a fuller understanding of the case considered in this study (Yin 2009) in order to facilitate a compilation of best practices and recommendations. This approach facilitated a thorough identification and analysis of narratives surrounding the Mayangna people in Nicaragua. These include both historical and current narratives constructed through official Discourse evident in archival data as well as Discourse produced by activists, the public and, especially, the Mayangna peoples themselves.
1.5 Significance of research

This study looks at the importance of articulations of Discourse on Indigeneity and their relationship with social and environmental justice. It specifically looks at the place of music performance in bringing about a change in this Discourse articulation. In a society in which historical exclusions have facilitated the construction of Indigeneity as an obstacle for development, the efforts of Misión BOSAWAS and similar organizations attempt to recover the cultural value that these excluded Indigenous groups represent for society. Through an articulation of Discourse that blends musical styles, languages and worldviews, these efforts provide a first step toward political action. This research highlights the importance in understanding these processes and the role of representation and inclusion of Indigenous people in them.

1.6 Description of the thesis

This thesis is organized in five sections and ten chapters. Part 1 provides the research questions and situates this research within its social and historical context. It comprises Chapters 1 and 2. This introduction constitutes Chapter 1 and provides a brief overview of the problem, its context, the methodology used to study it and the significance of this research. Chapter 2 includes a literature review of the key concepts that inform this thesis, including social justice, human rights, and Indigenous perspectives on justice such as the philosophy of Buen Vivir (Vanhulst & Beling, 2014). Part 2 offers the theoretical and methodological considerations and is made up of Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. Chapter 3 provides the conceptual framework of this dissertation by exploring the implications of conscientization, performance, and music as Discourse. Chapter 4 describes the research methodology in greater depth and highlights some key events that influenced the process of data collection. Part 3 includes Chapter 5 which provides a targeted review of key historical events and perspectives on the process of national identity formation in Nicaragua and
the place of Indigenous peoples within it. Part 4 explores the empirical evidence in detail and it is divided into Chapters 6, 7, and 8. In Chapter 6, I offer an analysis of Nicaragua’s Environmental Policy and Indigenous Autonomy. In Chapter 7, I present the results of the media analysis and, in Chapter 8, I present the results from the interviews carried out for this research. Part 5 is a summary and encompasses Chapter 9 where I discuss my findings, and Chapter 10 where I offer concluding thoughts for this dissertation.
2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction: BOSAWAS in the context of justice and human rights

The situation of Indigenous land encroachment by non-Indigenous colonists in BOSAWAS is embedded inside a social system that, as expressed by the Mayangnas (Allgood & De Castro, 2014), is one of ongoing injustice and disregard for their rights. Their articulation of the problem makes constant reference to indifference toward the collective rights and epistemologies of Nicaragua’s Indigenous people by the Nicaraguan government and Nicaraguan society. The young musicians and activists engaged in the Unidos por BOSAWAS movement center their activism on the concept of conscientization and make use of music performance, a familiar method of engagement for the Nicaraguan people, in order to convey knowledge about the situation. They hope that by sharing information through the participatory nature of performance, the public will enter processes of empathy with Indigenous people, thus instigating social and environmental change. This chapter situates the case study in the literature and explores the concepts of justice, ethnic and Indigenous rights and their relationship with the epistemology of Buen Vivir. This exploration will deepen our understanding of the complex system within which the land conflict of BOSAWAS, as well as the efforts to curtail it, have emerged.

2.2 Conceptualizing social justice

Justice, a concept with profound repercussions on social interactions, has evolved through time and is heavily influenced by a given society’s worldviews, the knowledge systems through which it seeks to understand the world and its embedded relationships (Capehart, 2007; Dorling, 2012). While definitions of justice can and have been contested, it is generally understood that justice relates to allocation, or the distribution and retribution patterns of resources, responsibilities, and blame within social systems. Justice also has to do with relationships and
power, and with processes of healing, restoration and transformation when these relationships have become oppressive or exclusionary. It looks at how individuals and groups affect one another, the place that each one holds in social hierarchies, and the access to resources that such positioning grants to each (Capehart, 2007). Justice is also claimed to have at its core human rights as these relate to people’s well-being and development and the goods and actions that would facilitate their advancement (Wronka, 2014). Since justice exists within systems of human construction, the definition of its components is a dynamic and ever-evolving process in which a dominant social Discourse becomes articulated and established over the others. Specifically, Indigenous conceptualizations of human rights and well-being have been disregarded as well as the concrete rights of Indigenous peoples themselves.

Throughout history, the lived experiences of Latin America’s Indigenous peoples are filled with evidence that suggests that justice has been constructed through a dominant Discourse that has failed to incorporate their knowledge systems and perspectives. In Central America, for example, the formulation of national identities and the writing of constitutions at the time of independence was based on the articulation of a Discourse that labeled Indigenous peoples as undesirable and silenced their worldviews on humanity’s relationship with the natural world (Díaz Arias, 2007). These Central American countries identified Indigenous peoples as a problem that needed to be resolved in order for the new nations to become established social systems. This problem was dealt with by exclusion and by the construction of Indigenous communities as culturally extinct and irrelevant. To this day, Latin America’s Indigenous communities struggle to have their traditional knowledge incorporated into the Discourse that defines and implements the notion of justice in the societies where they exist (Barranquero Carreto & Saez Baeza, 2015).
Building on the premise that our understanding of justice directly impacts the lives of groups and individuals, Capehart (2007) questions accepted notions of this concept that focus on inclusion and meeting basic needs. He suggests that “as societies develop and change through historical processes, so too does justice” (p. 2) and that these ever-changing definitions evolve to incorporate new understandings of social power dynamics. He posits that, to truly address injustices such as poverty, oppression, and environmental degradation, we must acknowledge that justice is much more than fair distribution of rewards and burdens (p. 29). Advocating for social justice means advocating for a restoration of social relationships in such a way that groups or individuals that have been wronged in the past are, in fact, granted retribution for such wrongdoings. This restoration of relationships sets the stage for a transformation of social dynamics to take place. Only then, they suggest, can social justice be attained.

At its primary level, justice has historically been understood to be both distributive and retributive and should facilitate what is denominated as a good life for the individual and for society (Capehart, 2007). This first level deals with the question of how to designate rewards and burdens or punishments fairly. Building upon the work of philosophers such as Aristotle, Socrates and Aquinas, who extensively examined the definition of justice within Western societies, this topic was further developed by classic social theorists such as Emile Durkheim (1984) and Karl Marx (Marx & Engels, 1965) among others. While they were concerned with the establishment of relationships, they tended to relate justice with the fair division of labour. This division was often imposed and governed by market forces. Justice required solidarity among individuals from similar contexts, in order to exert influence on the government which was the entity who could distribute and grant fair retribution and distribution of resources to workers.
Restorative justice goes beyond traditional understandings of justice. This perspective emerged as an “alternative vista” to the criminal justice system’s focus on retribution and punishment of offenders (Capehart, 2007). However, this exploration has also been highly relevant in the social realm. It seeks to repair or restore broken relationships, to return them to what their state of being was before conflict emerged. Critics of this perspective, such as Pavlich (1996) and Schehr (2000), consider that it does not go deep enough and that an effective perspective on social justice must question the state to which situations and relationships are being restored. It is important to note that transformative justice is still an emerging perspective which has not been fully articulated and restorative justice is often referred to in using aspects of transformative justice. Those who advocate for a separate formulation of transformative justice argue that restoring relationships to what they once were does not deal with structural issues and power inequalities that perpetuate conflicts (Pavlich, 1996). In the case of BOSAWAS, restoring the relationship between Indigenous people and the Nicaraguan government and mainstream society would not provide a solution to issues of cultural and environmental security since the dynamics of power between Indigenous, colonizers and rulers have left Indigenous groups at a disadvantage from the very beginning (Díaz Arias, 2007).

A more recent approach to justice is referred to as transformative justice and is used to analyze “how individuals and communities undergo change through healing processes” (Capehart, 2007, p. 66). In this approach, Van Ness and Strong (2002) see a recognition of power imbalances and argue that societies, like individuals, must examine their political, economic and social patterns and accept responsibility for the inequalities perpetuated within them. This model considers social structures as the forces that govern relationships (p. 69). Following this idea, Van
Ness (1993) considers that to enact justice is to heal relationships instead of restoring them to a previous dysfunctional or oppressive stage.

Essential questions of definition arise out of these discussions. If justice involves relationships, defining what constitutes a just relationship becomes essential if we are to determine what the goal of social justice advocacy is. Regarding the historical and current struggles of Indigenous peoples for justice, Weaver (2014) suggests that there is a fundamental discrepancy between colonial, mainstream appraisals of justice and indigenous perspectives. The mainstream definition of social justice centres on integration and inclusion and this has been translated into granting citizenship to Indigenous people as well as the articulation of apologies and financial compensation by governments as has been the case in Canada. Weaver (2014) suggests that this focus on justice as integration can be interpreted as a “colonial reflection of imperialistic dominance” (p. 114) and that, for Indigenous people, justice is connected not with integration but with the preservation of their autonomy and distinctive identity.

Indigenous perspectives on justice tend to favour a restorative approach (Cuneen, 2001) where the focus is on mending damaged relationships and maintaining both community and individuals in a healthy balance. What Weaver (2014) identifies as restorative is a “step toward restoring autonomy, control and the development of healthy Indigenous societies” (p. 115). Fraser (1995), even considers that cultural recognition has replaced socioeconomic redistribution as the goal of the struggle for social justice but that they must be considered side by side for a more holistic, transformative approach. For Indigenous people, this recognition also requires the acknowledgement of collective rights and not only individual rights. Ultimately, justice for Indigenous people is related to “maintaining balance by respecting all, including the natural world” (Weaver, 2014, p. 116), and involves reclaiming cultural and traditional forms of social control (p.
From a Latin American perspective, I suggest these ideas are encompassed by the Indigenous philosophy of Buen Vivir (Vanhuyst & Beling, 2014) that encapsulates their perspectives on what it means to live a good life, in harmony with the elements of the world.

2.3 Buen Vivir, justice and development

In the *El Canto de BOSAWAS* documentary (2014), which has been extensively used across Nicaragua by the Misión BOSAWAS movement, percussionist and activist Ernesto López Matute’s concluding words bring to the forefront a vital question that lies at the heart of the issue of environmental preservation and justice in BOSAWAS. He states the following:

If we truly love our children, if we truly love Nicaragua, we have to save BOSAWAS and recover this vast indigenous knowledge, our only legacy, the only thing that is left for us after more than five hundred years of colonization. I want people to understand that what is at stake here is much more important than any economy (in Allgood & De Castro, 2014, 48:38).9

Matute’s words allude to the contradiction between Western perspectives that focus on development and economic progress as what constitutes a good life, and the indigenous belief that nature is beneficial in and of itself and not because it can bring us financial gain. These perspectives represent inconsistent ways of seeing humanity’s relationship with the natural world, and they have implications in the areas of values, beliefs, spirituality and politics.

The region of BOSAWAS is the stage where the conflict between these differing perspectives reaches devastating results such as land loss and increasing violence. It is, therefore, important to carry out a brief analysis of the contradictory stance that each of these perspectives represents. For the purpose of this thesis, the traditional way of looking at development needs to be considered side by side with the Indigenous philosophy of “Buen Vivir” (Vanhuyst & Beling,

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9 Author’s translation
Understanding these concepts allows us to keep in mind their repercussions on the relationship between societies, governments and Indigenous communities.

Development is a challenging concept to understand since its definition has been the object of extensive academic debate (Redclift, 2006) and is informed by cultural perceptions. General trends of thought, however, recognize two main approaches to its definition, namely, the mainstream and the marginal approaches. The Weak or Mainstream approach to sustainable development places humans at the center. As Lauzon (2013) writes, this perspective’s “discourse is strictly anthropocentric, focusing on natural resources as being here for human use, and that human progress can only be measured through economic growth” (p. 13). The goal here is to increase the availability of natural resources through technology or by making better use of what is already available. The Strong or Marginal approach to sustainable development, on the other hand, recognizes that natural resources are fragile and that the earth is not an infinite source of natural resources, while we also use it as a wasteland for the by-products of industrialization.

Regardless of which view on development we may consider or hold, it is generally noticed that the term “development” carries economic connotations, particularly when we consider the neoliberal approach to development evident in the past decades throughout the world (Mowforth, 2014). This neoliberal perspective argues that incorporating communities, countries and regions into the world market will sooner or later bring about development in some way or another. Specifically, in Central America, attempts at participating in this system of development has meant the excessive exploitation of natural resources through mining, fishing and agriculture (Ruben & Bastiaensen, 2000; Mowforth, 2014). Questions of sustainability have not been traditionally considered by governing bodies and corporations during the implementation of this agenda on development.
It is argued that since the 1940s, the emergence of modernization and the implementation of the neoliberal model in Latin America has set in motion social movements (Mowforth, 2014), as well as new theoretical perspectives on development such as that of Beltrán (1967; 1979), Moreno (2012), Rogers (1976), Bordenave (1977) and many others. Mowforth (2014) believes that the implementation of the modernization approach has planted the seeds for violence in Central America. Here development has been an uneven process and has reflected an anthropocentric approach where nature is seen as a resource to harness and exploit. This has left populations undernourished and communities dealing with the effects of banned pesticides, decreased access to clean water and other damaging factors. Furthermore, the current situation of development builds upon a history of agrarian reforms in the region. These have been ways by which people have sought to gain food security in an area deeply marked by its colonial history (Ruben & Bastiaensen, 2000).

2.3.1 Understanding the concept of Buen Vivir

The Indigenous concept of Buen Vivir challenges Western ideologies of development and is a key component to the worldview held by the Mayangna communities living in BOSAWAS (La Última Frontera, 2009). Vanhulst & Beling (2014) discuss this philosophy as follows:

Buen vivir cannot be equated to the western idea of continued progress towards welfare, where the idea of ‘progress’ refers to an indefinite future. It is rather a way of living the present in harmony, that is, assuming and respecting differences and complementarities (among humans and between humans and non-humans) from an ecological perspective that could be described as holistic and mutualistic. Hence Buen vivir breaks away from the reductionist Cartesian worldview to adopt a systemic perspective encompassing the entire ecosphere (including abiotic components) (p. 56).

The articulation of the philosophy of Sumak Kawsay or Buen Vivir is an event of historical importance according to Villalba (2013). First, it is the perspective of a group that has been historically marginalized for centuries and secondly, it poses as a source for alternatives to
development as it has been understood until now. The origins of its name come from the Quechua words Sumak Kawsay which can be translated to mean a life of fullness, or the good life. Sumak means “that which is full of plenitude, is sublime, excellent, magnificent, beautiful and superior” and Kawsay stands for “life, to exist in a dynamic, changing and active manner” (Villalba, p. 1429). Buen Vivir was introduced as the best translation of the term which in English is often referred to as “Good living” (Thomson, 2011).

This concept emerged out of Latin American Indigenous peoples both in Central and South America and the belief that we need to learn to live in harmony with the earth and its natural cycles not only in a physical sense but in a spiritual sense. This context has felt more strongly than others the repercussions of state-driven import substitution industrialization and market-driven policies endorsed by the dominant Discourse on development (Bryan, 2011). As Unai Villalba suggests (2013), these developments have not resolved the issues of poverty and inequality felt in the region and which indigenous groups feel more strongly.

Among the differences that stand out between development and Buen Vivir, are the relationship between humanity and nature and the conceptualization of time. Modern Western perspectives consider that we exist in dualities, that is, there is a clear “division between nature and society” (Villalba, 2013, p. 1430). For Indigenous people, ontology is relational and the line between society and nature is permeable and in constant relationship. Western thought sees time linearly and the movement from underdevelopment to development follows this logic which is absent in the Andean world-view. Development, then, cannot be addressed as a linear process since Buen Vivir does not see history or life as linear but as cyclical and whole.
This way of seeing humanity and nature as not being divided brings about a new, non-
anthropocentric attitude, one which focuses on the interconnectedness of all things and one which
sees that all human actions do not exist in isolation but, rather, have repercussions on all life forms.
This perspective also considers that culture, politics and spirituality are connected, just as humans
and nature are in a non-hierarchical way. We are to seek harmony between all these components
of life because “there is a search for harmony between the material world and the spiritual world
from which no one is excluded” (Thomson, 2011, p. 1431). Nature is seen as having intrinsic
rights and should not be considered a commodity to be sold or purchased. The focus of Buen Vivir
is a life of well-being and happiness that is not based on ownership or income but rather on a
balanced life. The good life is one which includes the

...satisfaction of needs, the achievement of a dignified quality-of-life and death, to love and
be loved, the healthy flourishing of all in peace and harmony with nature, the indefinite
prolongation of cultures, free time for contemplation and emancipation, and the expansion
and flourishing of liberties, opportunities, capacities and potentials (Thomson, 2011, p.
1451).

We must add that this philosophy has been officially adopted in Ecuador in 2008 and
Bolivia in 2009 and is not without criticism. Some consider that this concept is often
misunderstood by non-Indigenous citizens and argue that it is a marketing tool for the government
to gain the support of its vast Indigenous population rather than a true way of life (Fernandez et
al., 2014). While these criticisms are quite valid, an analysis of them is beyond the scope of this
thesis. What is important to note is that this philosophy has been a compelling factor in the
involvement of Indigenous communities in Chile, Ecuador and Bolivia, which has sparked social
movements where Indigenous identity remains a defining political factor (Rice, 2012). It is also
at the heart of the life of the communities studied in this research, as is expressed by Mayangna
leaders and seen in previous research (Allgood & de Castro, 2014).
The evidence suggests that the philosophy of Buen Vivir is reflected in the difference between indigenous and colonist\textsuperscript{10} approach to life, agriculture and other farming practices. Stocks et al. (2007) mention that colonist settlers in the region “tend to live and farm on their individual parcels, which are on average 50 ha, whereas indigenous people group together in communities closely knit through kinship and multiple reciprocal obligations” (p. 1499). Some data suggest that the indigenous way of life is more conducive to living in harmony with the preservation of BOSAWAS. For example, the level of deforestation per capita is lower in indigenous areas. This is evident in satellite images and other field data as Stocks et al. report: “Indigenous territories in BOSAWAS had significantly less net vegetation loss/capita associated with agricultural and pastoral conversion, settlement, and logging than the colonist-inhabited portion of the BOSAWAS reserve” (p. 1500). It can be argued that the indigenous values of Buen Vivir may be influencing the Mayangna community and their approach to using the land as “Colonist and Indigenous land uses exhibited marked difference in levels and types of disturbance to the forests” (p. 1504). The intricate reality surrounding BOSAWAS is marked by a clash between this approach to life influenced by Buen Vivir and the other perspectives on development. This conflict, I suggest, generates a dynamic process of Discourse articulation that hopes to instigate transformations of relationships through conscientization.

The philosophy of Buen Vivir provides a strong pillar for this thesis’ social justice framework as this study seeks to bring Indigenous perspectives to the discussion of justice and the environmental and cultural survival of the Mayangnas and the Biosphere Reserve of Bosawas. I argue that advocacy requires a transformative approach to justice that upholds the values of

\textsuperscript{10} Non-indigenous inhabitants of BOSAWAS. Colonists are generally peasant, mestizo farmers who enter the zone by illegal means.
autonomy, identity and balance championed by Buen Vivir. This approach advocates for Indigenous self-governance and jurisdiction over BOSAWAS as well, and acknowledges and promotes the Mayangna’s distinct identities and the central place of their teachings. These teachings, which focus on harmony and balance, include all aspects of the natural world as well as all sectors of society. In this research, the Unidos por BOSAWAS festival performances will be studied from a Discourse analysis perspective according to this lens of social justice.

Considerations of social justice inevitably bring us to examine questions of human rights as experienced by Indigenous people. Disregard for the rights that are inherent to them because of their shared humanity and ancestral identities has, indisputably, left them in a situation of systemic injustice throughout the world but especially in Latin America. Let us shift our focus to a closer examination of the place of group and Indigenous rights within the broad conversation on human rights and their connection to human dignity.

2.4 The journey of human rights and Indigenous rights

This section will situate the establishment of Indigenous rights within the broader context of the articulation of human rights. It will assess the concepts of human rights and dignity and their connection to the moral life as well as the tension between the needs of the individual and the needs of the collective. It will also provide a general overview of the role of key actors in the consideration and implementation of Indigenous rights in Latin America, a region where unaddressed multicultural relationships have perpetuated ongoing injustices toward Indigenous people from colonial times until now.

After the atrocities of the 20th century’s two World Wars, the international community took key steps in the ongoing discussion regarding relationships among individuals in civil society.
This conversation saw the emergence of important documents such as the publication of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations (1948), which considered that respect for one another’s rights make it possible for human beings to live in harmony. At the heart of the approach taken by this document we find the concept of human dignity and its connection to a moral life. This connection points to the premises that to be human carries certain rights that can potentially facilitate a life of dignity, and that to be human also carries a moral obligation with regard to the lives and rights of others. Scholars such as Will Kymlicka (1995) and Jack Donnelly (2013) consider that this is particularly true in societies that are constituted by groups that differ in cultural characteristics. The sustained interaction between groups raises questions over the tension between individual rights and the rights of groups. Kymlicka posits that citizens who belong to culturally diverse groups have specific needs that build upon and go beyond the rights of the individual. He suggests that our contemporary world’s inability to reach the goal of social harmony and justice can only be addressed when we stop ignoring the unique rights required by these communities to enjoy a life of dignity and well-being. Among these groups, Indigenous communities across the globe constitute one of the main groups that have experienced historic discrimination and disregard for their rights both as individuals and as collectives. In the Latin American region this reality is poignantly present and continues to call for the implementation of policies to protect the rights of these communities.

When it comes to the ongoing concern for human rights, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, originally published by the United Nations in 1948, provided the foundations for the standard to be followed by society in the decades to come. It sought to address issues raised by World War I such as the concern for workers and other minorities’ rights. It established that rights were connected not only to basic biological needs such as food and shelter, but to an
improved standard of life and greater freedom for citizens. Above all, it rooted human rights “in a conception of human dignity” (Donnelly, 2013, p. 28), that is, human beings possess an inherent dignity that has intrinsic rights embedded within it. In a given society, the exercise and enjoyment of these rights ought to be automatically respected without a need to turn to its enforcement. In an ideal world “rights would remain both out of sight and out of mind” (p. 9). Paradoxically, human rights and human dignity become important and come to the attention of society when they are, precisely, under threat.

The concept of human dignity in connection to a moral life constitutes the base upon which discussions of human rights and social justice are built. Human rights are defined as those rights that we hold because of the dignity inherent to being human (Donnelly, 2013, p. 7). They help and shape our “moral nature as human beings” (p. 7). Human beings are entitled to rights precisely because they are human, and these rights are connected to an obligation, a standard for rectitude of conduct and a duty demanded of all with regard to other human beings. To fail to honour rights is to threaten human dignity and constitutes a deviation from moral rectitude. The concept of “moral life” is a complex one which, for the purpose of this thesis, will follow Donnelly’s idea that a moral life is a life that goes beyond the basic necessities of biological life. It is a life governed by enjoyment of our rights and respect for those of others, a life that points toward a fuller life of social exchanges, a system of obligations and respect among individuals (Donnelly, 2013).

A key premise about the connection between rights and dignity is that the fulfillment of rights is a need that goes beyond the basic necessities for natural or biological life to be possible. While basic necessities such as food and shelter are included in the list of human rights, they are ultimately intended to fulfill needs that are conducive for a “life of dignity, a life worthy of a
human being” (Donnelly, 2013, p. 15). Human rights are concerned not so much on what human beings are but on “what they might become” (Donnelly, 2013, p. 16). Their focus lies on the moral nature rather than the natural aspect of humanity. They call for and enforce the changes and principles required by society to foster the moral dimension of human nature (Donnelly, 2013). Dignity conveys a demand for respect, that is, human beings must be respected because of their inherent dignity. Historically, as Donnelly suggests, dignity has been the privilege of a few. The universality of human rights builds on the idea that this elite privilege is no longer valid, and all human beings are equal heirs of this dignity, a dignity that has fundamental demands for respect.

Because human rights are essentially connected to being human, they have unique and non-negotiable features that flow from human rights’ intrinsic nature and that exist in order to ensure a just enjoyment of life by all human beings. Human rights are inalienable and universal (Donnelly, 2013). Under this aspect, not granting equal access to human rights to some groups or individuals would mean that they are considered somewhat less than or non-human. The fact that human rights are inalienable means that “one cannot stop being human” (Donnelly, p. 10) and thus one cannot stop being entitled to human rights. Universality, on the other hand, means that all members of the human species hold the same rights, not that some humans have access to rights while others do not (Donnelly, p. 28). Furthermore, human rights must also be treated as a whole body of interdependent elements in an indivisible reality and not as a list of items that one can choose from at will. Every human person is entitled to these common, universal rights without exception or risk of termination.

The dynamics behind the exercise of human rights are certainly dynamics of power. As Donnelly (2013) highlights, it is the individual who has the right that is “actively in charge” (p. 8) and has or should have the faculty to exercise his or her rights at will. He suggests that “rights
empower, not just benefit those who hold them” (p. 8). Thus, violations of rights are indeed attempts at disempowerment, a “particular kind of injustice” (p. 8). Human rights claims are then exercises of this power inherent to the right holder. As Donnelly asserts, “human rights claims express not merely aspirations, suggestions, requests, or laudable ideas but rights-based demands for change” (p. 12). It follows that respecting these rights lays the foundation for freedom, justice and peace to be established throughout the world.

Because of its role in the power structures in civil society, the modern state has established itself as potential player in both the enforcement of human rights as well as its primary threat. Respect for the dignity of groups and individuals rests in the hands of this dominant entity. This role of the state emerges “because of its political dominance in the contemporary world” (Donnelly, 2013, p. 33). It can thus be expected that many of the struggles for rights recognition and inclusion are power struggles with the state, whereby groups take on the state and demand that their rights be respected, seeking to lay hold of the power inherent with their rights. The role of the state, according to Henry Shue (1978) can be summarized in four duties which are respect, protect, provision and aid. The state must respect the rights of citizens, protect them against deprivation, and “provide what is necessary to ensure that right-holders are able to enjoy their rights” (p. 36). It must also assist those who have been deprived of their rights. Conflicts and abuses of human rights emerge when these responsibilities are overlooked, and the state does not assume its role of rights enforcer, helper and provider.

2.5 Accounting for group rights and human rights

It is important to note that the concept of human rights is far from being non-controversial as it contains a tension between individual and collective needs. Many political thinkers (Cranston, 1973; Sue, 1978; Bedau, 1979) have expressed a concern that human rights, as upheld by the
United Nations’ Human Rights Declaration, focus so much on the single person that they foster an excessively individualistic approach that ignores the individual’s relationship with others (Donnelly, 2013). This focus can risk dispossessing the perspectives and worldviews of disadvantaged groups for whom the individual exists in intricate social relationships within their communities. In defence of the individual focus of human rights, Donnelly argues that individual rights do not “presume atomized individuals” who exist in isolation (p. 46). These rights take into account the dynamics of interaction among groups. He suggests that there is no need for specific consideration toward group rights if societies enforce policies of “non-discrimination and freedom of association and participation” (p. 46). That is, a person’s individual rights should not be affected because they belong to a particular group such as a racial, cultural or sexual minority, for example. Following this line of thought, Thornberry (2005) argues that there is no justification for specific group rights since existing laws and approaches to human rights are enough to ensure respect for human beings and groups.

Other scholars suggest that while the focus of the approach upheld by the United Nations Human Rights Declaration or UNHRD still considers that the human person is, above all, an individual engaged in relationships with other entities, it ignores the way of life of some groups such as Indigenous groups. For them, individual identity is usually so closely connected with the community and with the land that a life of dignity outside of the life of the group or outside of their traditional territory is beyond understanding. Human rights for Indigenous people must indeed include enforcement of non-discrimination because of affiliation or belonging but this is a basic first step when it comes to human rights. It is crucial to consider group rights, keeping in mind those groups’ special ways of life. This would ensure they can enjoy the moral lives envisioned by themselves as communities and not the ones enforced by external individualistic approaches.
2.6 The challenge of multiculturalism

The work of political philosopher Will Kymlicka offers key ideas that can help us understand the dynamics behind human rights conflicts in multicultural societies. His book *Multicultural Citizenship* (1995) made a crucial contribution to political theory, highlighting the importance of cultural identity in the public sphere. While this work was indeed criticized and questioned because of his definitions of culture and nation (Young, 1997; Ley & Spinner-Halev, 2016), his work remains a point of reference in the consideration of the rights of minorities as they relate to their broader and often dominating societies. In this section, I provide an exploration of some of his central arguments as they will offer a basis for this thesis’ analysis of the rights of the Mayangna peoples, an ethnic minority within the Nicaraguan mestizo-identified state.

Kymlicka’s (1995) work on multiculturalism asserts that western political tradition cannot continue to remain silent when it comes to the question of diversity. This silence has been present even in the face of a multiethnic recorded history that has seen ceaseless instances of “conquest and long-distance trade in human affairs” (p. 2). Political theory has built on idealized assumptions that considered that society was made up of citizens that shared a “common descent, language and culture” (p. 2). This idealization did not remain an idea but was a goal to be attained by enforcement of policies toward cultural minorities. Kymlicka suggests that diversity represents a dangerous potential for division when left ignored or addressed in an unjust manner. When they come together, minorities inevitably enter into conflict over a number of concerns such as “language rights, regional autonomy, political representation, education curriculum, land claims” and much more (Kymlicka, p. 1). In a very concrete way, World War II brought to the world’s attention the fact that the previous approach to minority rights had to change (p. 2).
Building on the achievements that were set in motion after World War I, the approach of post-World War II movements further stressed that securing individual rights for all human beings was key to dealing with minorities and with social conflict. If every member of society enjoyed respect for their individual rights, conflicts of the magnitude the world had seen would be prevented. These efforts, while an improvement to past approaches, failed to make reference to ethnic groups while making the assumption that “members of national minorities do not need, are not entitled to, or cannot be granted rights of a special character” (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 3). This marked a focus “shift from group-specific minority rights to universal human rights” (p. 3), a philosophy that was adopted by the United Nations in its Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and, hence, by many governments around the globe. Kymlicka suggests that this approach was certainly not the answer. He suggests that the ongoing struggles of minority groups seen throughout the world are evidence that the traditional approaches to human rights that focus on universal human rights do not give us the needed answers to work toward justice for these groups and foster peaceful, diverse societies. Traditional human rights principles must be complemented with a theory of minority rights in order to resolve these issues fairly.

The first key idea that we must consider when exploring the complex dynamics of multiculturalism is that not all multi-cultural societies are the same or face the same challenges. The way in which minorities have been incorporated and the relationship they want with society has concrete and unique consequences for each group. Kymlicka identifies two main patterns of cultural diversity that revolve around two minority groups, “national minorities” and “ethnic groups” (p. 10). These groups tend to display distinct histories, modes of incorporation and desires when it comes to social relationships. National minorities are “self-governing, territorially concentrated cultures” (p. 10) that existed in a given place and that were incorporated into larger
states. They usually desire to retain a distinct cultural identity, apart from that of the majority, and often demand self-government in their quest for cultural survival (p. 10). Ethnic groups, on the other hand, arise out of individual and family migration. They tend to look for integration in their new societies and be “accepted as full members of it” (p. 10). They may request laws that accommodate cultural differences but do not aim for self-government as is the case with national minorities.

Following this general distinction, Kymlicka (1995) suggests that culturally-diverse states usually fall under one of two categories: multinational states or polyethnic states. In a multinational state, a historical community that once occupied a territory and that shares language and culture comes into contact and relationship, willing or unwillingly, with other, often more powerful, groups. That is, a “country which contains more than one nation is, therefore, not a nation-state but a multination state” (p. 11). Kymlicka suggests that these nations are frequently small in population, geographically isolated and are, therefore, marginal to the identity of the state within which they exist (p. 12). Alternately, immigrant groups cannot be considered nations under this conceptualization as they do not occupy their original homeland. It is fitting to acknowledge that Kymlicka’s ideas and distinction between these two primary groups can raise a number of questions, particularly for immigrant groups that do not wish to be assimilated by the primary culture of their host states. My discussion will focus on multinational states as I suggest that the case studied in this dissertation falls under this category.

This distinction between multinational and polyethnics states has concrete repercussions for the rights of Indigenous peoples when countries define their national identity. Kymlicka (1995) cites key examples of “new world” countries such Australia, New Zealand and South American countries, among others. These states have claimed to be immigrant countries without national
minorities. This claim had the potential to exempt “New World countries from international scrutiny of their treatment of indigenous peoples. As a result, the rights of indigenous peoples in the Americas, New Zealand, and Australia have been violated with virtual impunity” (p. 21). Kymlicka sees this as evidence of racist attitudes that see Indigenous peoples as non-existing or as incapable of self-government. This history calls for mechanisms to be put in place in order to protect the rights of cultural minorities because it perpetuates the “invisibility of their claims of justice” (p. 22) as well as the discriminatory policies that threaten their cultural survival.

Because the concept of collective rights touches upon the struggles and goals of many minority groups as well as organization, Kymlicka suggests that it is helpful to refer to “group-differentiated citizenship” when we seek to address the concerns of minorities, particularly, Indigenous people (p. 35). This group-citizenship model identifies three forms of “group-differentiated rights” (p. 26). These rights make it possible for individuals to form groups that can help them to adapt to civil society as well as to “promote their views and interests to the wider population” (p. 26). These are, namely, self-government rights, polyethnic rights and special representation rights, their expressions may vary according to each group’s priorities regarding their relationships with broader society.

Self-government rights ensure that minority groups have the capacity to exercise and develop their interests and culture by accessing political autonomy and jurisdiction over their land or territory. This right, often addressed by federal systems that divide authority in collaboration between central and regional governments, is challenged by a need to balance autonomy and centralization (p. 28). Another difficulty emerges from the fact that national minorities such as Indigenous groups do not constitute a homogenous unit. They are groups that encompass smaller units with often differing and unique desires and goals (p. 30). Kymlicka posits that while the
establishment of self-government is important, the pressure of land loss by settlers becomes a more immediate goal since “the single largest cause of ethnic conflict in the world today is the struggle by indigenous peoples for the protection of their land rights” (p. 30). Polyethnic rights are measures that seek to obtain for groups the ability to express their culture openly and without fear of any negative political, social or economic repercussions. These rights, however, have as a primary goal the integration of ethnic groups into society and not self-government (p. 31). Finally, special representation rights aim to ensure that political process reflect a given population’s diversity. These rights respond to systemic barriers that have kept minorities out of power while allowing continued domination by historically elite groups such as “middle-class, able bodied, white men” (p. 32). The challenge with special representation rights lies in the fact that central governments often see self-government and representation as mutually exclusive alternatives, thus compromising Indigenous communities’ ability to make decisions at a local level.

Regarding group-differentiated rights, Kymlicka (1995) suggests that national or ethnic groups’ claims fall under two kinds, namely internal restrictions and external protection that have as a common goal the cultural survival of the group. Internal restrictions include rules and regulations that a given group would choose to implement in order to protect itself from internal divisions and dissent. These regulations may include enforcement of traditional practices or punishments for unacceptable behavior. We could say that internal restrictions aim to strengthen group cohesion and unity while dealing with group dynamics. External restrictions are concerned with outlining the group’s relationship with external agents, groups and institutions. Their purpose is to protect the group from whatever external factors may threaten their unity and existence. These may include economic or political decisions of central governments as well as land encroachment on behalf of non-group members.
All three of the group-differentiated rights, self-government, polyethnic and special representation, can potentially bring about protection against external pressures since they can contribute toward reducing a group’s vulnerability to economic or political pressures and restrictions (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 38). Concretely, this vulnerability particularly relates to land protection when it comes to the establishment of reserves “where the land is held in common and/or in trust and cannot be alienated without the consent of the community as a whole” (p. 43). Historically, settlers divided up the communal land and granted individual titles to the Indigenous people. This led Indigenous land to be open for settlements since once “land is divided and alienable, it becomes possible for the wealthier members of the larger society to buy up the land and other resources on which the community depends” (p. 43). The quest for addressing this vulnerability continues to be at the heart of the issue of rights for Indigenous people since land is deeply connected to their well-being as we have mentioned above.

2.7 Historical understanding of Indigenous rights

International law, building upon the United Nations 2007 approval of Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, recognizes that Indigenous rights specifically seek to address the unique social, economic and political needs of groups whose relationships with other groups have been marked by the dynamics of colonization. Indigenous groups tend to have cultural and ancestral connections to pre-colonial peoples who inhabited the land for which they currently compete with settlers (Valadez, 2012a). This history established societies where their Indigenous people face circumstances that “make it necessary that they be “protected by rights that take into account their special group needs and interests” (p. 696). Historically, Indigenous groups were not recognized as worthy or entitled to rights both individually and collectively. Their political organization was often unacknowledged or dismissed. They were also considered to be primitive,
less than human and, therefore, unworthy of holding even the basic human rights for food security, shelter or land (p. 697). Indigenous people can enact what are referred to as internal and external rights in order to rectify what this history has caused. Internal rights are those “that an Indigenous group can appeal in order to prohibit or require certain actions of their members” (p. 698). Furthermore, Indigenous rights are “external protections that Indigenous groups can rely on to defend themselves from the detrimental decisions of the larger society” (p. 698). These external protections become key in societies where the rights of minority groups have been “systematically violated by majority groups “(p. 698), as is the case in most Latin American countries.

The need of Indigenous people to strengthen their relationship both internally and externally to secure cultural and physical survival must be addressed in connection to political organization, land and cultural expression. Valadez (2012a) sees this articulated in the rights of “self-determination, territorial autonomy and preservation of cultural integrity” (p. 699) which are interconnected and key in ensuring that Indigenous people can be free to regulate their own destiny by having the capacity to make choices that relate to their economic and political well-being as well as to their way of life. These rights are deeply related since Indigenous people have a “profound spiritual and material connection to the land” (p. 699) that is born out of the ancestral mandate to be stewards of the earth. Cultural integrity asks that Indigenous people preserve the land for future generations, within their own communal contexts. A disrespect for any of these three rights by either internal members or external entities places Indigenous communities at risk with regard to the integrity of their human dignity.

Valadez (2012a) considers that, even though there is still a lot of work ahead, recent decades have seen some steps toward recognition of Indigenous people’s concerns, particularly with the United Nations General Assembly’s 2007 approval of the Declaration on the Rights of
Indigenous Peoples. This document shows a focus change in international law from “sovereignty and state-centered interests to one that embraces human rights” (p. 697). The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples or UNDRIP (2007) is often cited as a landmark publication, a turning point in the struggle for Indigenous people’s rights, re-empowerment and justice. The UNDRIP is best described as both a product and an instigating agent. It is the product of decades of dialogue and instigator of further re-articulations of power (Wiessner, 2012). The centuries that followed colonization have seen violent and catastrophic attempts to extinguish Indigenous voices and cultures. The approval of this document in 2007 testifies that this “onslaught has not been completely successful” (p. 33) since Indigenous communities continue to make their voices heard even when they had to adapt in order to survive hardships. Its publication was the result of more than thirty years of dialogue and was generally welcomed by Indigenous leaders on an international level. However, they recognized it as a starting point for a much-needed discussion and not as a final way to address all issues faced by Indigenous peoples across the globe (Champagne, 2013).

The UNDRIP claims to be built upon the conviction that recognizing Indigenous peoples’ rights “will enhance harmonious and cooperative relations between the State and indigenous peoples” (United Nations. General, A., 2011, p. 3). These relations are based on “principles of justice, democracy, respect for human rights, non-discrimination and good faith” (p. 3). However, this harmony needs the active participation of governments as the document encourages states to “comply with and effectively implement all their obligations as they apply to indigenous peoples under international instruments” (p. 3). The rights outlined in this Declaration are described as applying both collectively and individually. The document first establishes the equal status that Indigenous people ought to have in society as compared to others. It also established that
Indigenous peoples have a right to self-determination and autonomy, specifically in matters that relate to their internal affairs. Thus, the relationship between Indigenous peoples and states is laid out as a relation of equals, one that requires good will and respect for its positive implementation.

Most of the Declaration articulates the rights of Indigenous people pertaining to culture and rights to the land they traditionally occupy. They are not to be the subjects of discrimination or violence based on their cultural affiliation. Their culture ought to be respected both by protecting its historical heritage and by ensuring its future survival. The importance of education systems, media and cultural revitalization as a way to protect this cultural heritage is cited in many of the Declaration’s articles. It further establishes that Indigenous people have a right to development in accordance to their own cultural practices and tradition.

Articles 25 to 29 specifically address the land rights of Indigenous peoples. Their spiritual connection is first acknowledged as it is stated that they have “the right to maintain and strengthen” (Article 25) this spiritual relationship and to ensure that future generations maintain it as well. The articles recognize that Indigenous people approach land tenure differently and these systems of tenure must be acknowledged by states in order to ensure the implementation of justice for them. Development and control of the resources that are present in their traditional lands also belongs to the Indigenous communities who have traditionally occupied it. Relocation of Indigenous communities is also addressed by the document as it posits that Indigenous people ought to be in agreement when it comes to issues of relocation. Finally, the conservation and protection of the environment are also a right of Indigenous peoples according to this declaration. The document calls on the states to “establish and implement assistance programmes for Indigenous peoples for such conservation and protection, without discrimination” (Article 29.1). As it will be assessed in greater depth in subsequent chapters, this role of the government is repeatedly called into question.
by Mayangna leadership in Nicaragua. They argue that the Nicaraguan central government does not do their part toward maintaining the harmonious relationships that the UNDRIP hopes to facilitate.

2.7.1 Indigenous rights in Latin America

Indigenous people, in general, constitute a group that stands out among other minority groups as one that has experienced rights abuses of historic proportions such as genocides and land dispossession (Postero & Zamocs, 2004). In Latin America and other regions of the Global South, the effects of these abuses are still seen in concrete social markers that show that Indigenous peoples live in disadvantage as compared to non-indigenous peoples. This reality lets us affirm that in “Africa, Asia and Latin America, Indigenous people are the poorest of the poor” (Thornberry, 2005, p. 18). For example, there is a large schooling gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children throughout the American continent. In Bolivia, Indigenous children are more likely to repeat a grade (Hall & Patrinos, 2006, p. 13). This is possibly connected to a lack of access to bilingual or culturally-informed education. Indigenous people also tend to die from treatable diseases such as malaria and diarrhea since in Latin America “many Indigenous people still lack access to mainstream health providers” (p. 17) and to health insurance. As a result, life expectancy among Indigenous people is much lower, as low as 15% less in Colombia, for example. Furthermore, Indigenous people have limited access to social assistance and employment. When they do have access to employment, they are subjected to wage discrimination. Historic colonial abuses have been perpetuated by a “formidable programme of violence” (Thornberry, p. 19) often exercised by the state as well as private institutions, as is the case in Guatemala and Ecuador where governments have allowed extractive industries to exploit Indigenous territories, exert use of armed force and put at risk the physical integrity of their communities (Rodríguez, 2016; Sánchez
Vásquez, 2017). These entities contribute to settler encroachment and resource extraction on Indigenous land, encouraging a climate of injustice and erosion in the quality of life for Indigenous communities. There is also a sociocultural system that has excluded them and considered them to be backward, inferior and lacking culture. This has translated into stereotypes and restrictions that have facilitated economic, cultural and political inequality (Martínez Espinoza, 2015).

Ironically, Latin America is considered a pioneer when it comes to articulation of policy with regard to the rights of Indigenous peoples. These rights, some argue, have failed to materialize since these policies remain only on paper (Courtis, 2001; Martínez Espinoza, 2015). The current state of Indigenous rights can be summarized as follows: there is a general acknowledgement at an international level that validates the juridical normative of the rights of Indigenous peoples but this, due to numerous reasons, is not implemented (Martínez Espinoza, 2015). Martinez Espinoza argues that a fundamental change is needed in order to remove the obstacles, a “refounding” of the State (p. 271) and a transformation in ideas of justice and human rights so as to facilitate the implementation of such well-articulated policies. As Stocks (2005) suggests, advances in policy articulation “are not necessarily advances in application, and it takes more than paragraphs in a document to change 500 years of colonial and postcolonial practice” (p. 86). Policy seems far removed from the reality of Indigenous people in Latin America and will continue to be so unless a profound change of attitude and implementation takes place (Van Cott & Lee, 2007).

In the Americas, the international organization that deals with issues of justice and human rights is the Organization of American States (OEA for its Spanish name: Organización de Estados Americanos). Through a process of evolving approaches, this entity came into being by the signing of its original charter in Bogotá, Colombia in 1948, a charter that has experienced a number of
amendments until the 1992 Protocol of Washington which entered into force in 1997. Initially, this OAS charter made general statements on human rights and focused on the establishment and strengthening of democracy in the region along with the “elimination of extreme poverty, social justice, and economic development” (Thornberry, 2005, p. 266). From its beginning, the OAS’ approach to Indigenous people and their rights was characterized by a paternalist approach that saw them as a problem to be dealt with. The State was seen as the primary entity that ought to deal with such problems by protecting and assisting Indigenous people, since they were perceived to be powerless and unable to protect themselves.

Since its beginnings, the OAS experienced a process whereby its approach to Indigenous people and their rights has evolved from disregard to paternalism and, finally, to an acknowledgement of the task of protection for Indigenous people as a “sacred commitment” as articulated in the 1972 amendment (p. 273). This acknowledgement is only the beginning toward a new stage in relationships. The OAS’ evolution has also seen the adoption of contradiction in its approaches. For example, the Inter-American Charter of Social Guarantee, adopted by the Bogotá Conference of 1948, recognized the real threat that put Indigenous peoples’ lives, freedom and property at risk of oppression and exploitation. It, however, constituted the State as the guardian of Indigenous people’s interests and entrusted it with the task of maintaining and developing Indigenous patrimony by fostering “the exploitation of the natural, industrial or extractive resources” (Thornberry, 2005, p. 267). Its focus on economic development considers this as a sure path toward emancipation while disregarding the cultural richness and human development of these communities.

Even in the midst of this evolution of approaches, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has established itself as an entity that watches over the rights of Indigenous people
when requested (Thornberry, 2005). Since the 1970s, it has handled significant Indigenous rights complaints cases such as the Miskito of Nicaragua, the Aché of Colombia and the Yanomami of Brazil. The Miskito alleged that, during the armed conflict surrounding the revolution and counterrevolution between the 1960s and the 1990s, the Nicaraguan government exerted “violence, forced relocation and ethnocide” (p. 275) against its Indigenous people. In this case, the commission sided with the complainants and required reparation by the Nicaraguan government. The Aché Indigenous group also alleged that their nation perpetuated “genocide, murder, torture, inhuman conditions of work, the sale of children and other violation of human rights” against them (Thornberry, p. 273). The Commission called the government of Paraguay to “adopt vigorous measures to provide effective protection for the Aché” (p. 273). Finally, in 1980, the commission ruled in favour the Yanomami against Brazil who denounced land invasion caused by gold prospectors and road construction. Once again, the Commission called upon the local government, reminding them of their obligation to protect their Indigenous people. We must note that the Commission’s demands are not fully binding, and governments often do not follow through with implementation and Indigenous people are still threatened by colonist encroachment as is the case in Nicaragua (Finley-Brook, 2016).

In the process of moving from policy to implementation in the past few decades, the protection of Indigenous rights in Latin America has focused on the reparation of past injustices and of ongoing discrimination. Internationally, Indigenous people are recognized as subjects of collective rights (Martinez Espinoza, 2015, p. 256) and these rights have as a foundation the right of self-determination (Anaya, 2005). The focus of this right of self-determination has been on holding governments accountable and ensuring that they enforce internal structures to ensure
Indigenous groups’ economic, cultural and political rights in order for them to face their own development needs according to their unique cultural characteristics (Martinez Espinoza, 2015).

Stevens (2014) has noted a general trend to establish national parks and protected areas on Indigenous land as an attempt to preserve biodiversity resulting in large areas of traditional Indigenous territories that are now designated as such on a global level. There is a general recognition that this approach can contribute toward global sustainability. However, it often comes at a high cost for Indigenous people when it comes to their collective rights since Indigenous communities are often excluded from participation in the governance of these protected areas. Some scholars (Stevens, 2014; Neumann, 2004) assert that protected areas have even become a “vehicle of state territorialisation” and been used to “seize greater control of Indigenous people’s territories and lives” (Stevens, p. 19). The creation of the BOSAWAS Biosphere Reserve in Nicaragua followed this trend and we can affirm that this case has encountered the general issues of governability and Indigenous rights noted by Stevens.

Humanity has lived a long journey of articulation of human rights after the twentieth century’s World Wars. This journey is far from being completed but a focus on the universal dignity of the human person has given way to considerations of the moral obligation that come inherently with each person’s rights. Human rights are now considered as essential to a life of dignity that rises above the basic biological needs of all human beings. These rights are not negotiable and disregard for them is an attempt to disempower those who are entitled to them. Because of its role in civil society, governments have the task to safeguard these rights, particularly when its social fabric is made up of diverse ethnic and national groups. The rights of these minorities need to be considered collectively since their well-being is often linked to that of their groups. Indigenous groups emerge as being particularly in need of rectification on behalf of the
states or societies within which they have existed, especially in Latin America. The dynamics of this co-existence, deeply marked by colonialism, injustice and disempowerment, call for special consideration of Indigenous rights as well as a profound change of attitude and social structures. Only then will the well-articulated national and international policies be translated into the lived reality of Latin America’s Indigenous peoples at last.
PART 2: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

This dissertation builds upon a number of concepts which provide an academic basis for understanding and analyzing the case studied here. The concept of conscientization is central since it is a term repeatedly used by the activists engaged in the Misión BOSAWAS movement as well as in the documentaries included in this research project. Conscientization, or the process of critical awareness, is a unifying thread that brings together subsequent, related concepts. Music, a key tool in conscientization, will be assessed through its historical contribution to social change. This contribution has been made primarily through the power of performance both historically as well as in the case studied here. Furthermore, performance is a vehicle for conscientization and re-articulating of Discourse. In this chapter, I provide definitions and analysis of these concepts, namely, conscientization, performance, Discourse and music as Discourse and how they contribute to this research. Figure 3.1 offers a summary of these concepts.
3.2 The concept of conscientization

Brazilian educational thinker Paolo Freire has made important contributions to the field of social justice, since his theories look closely at the relationships among individuals and groups in civil society. His focus on the dynamics of those who find themselves in oppressed roles and the power of engagement and critical thinking appeals to many Latin American theorists and activists to this day. While he wrote from an educational perspective, his work offers a relevant contribution to politics, Discourse and justice. Freire (1970), who coined the term conscientization or conscientização in Portuguese, evokes the idea of active engagement on behalf of the individual as a key factor in social change where the individual must have an analytical approach to receiving information and formulating solutions to social problems. The individual or learner is not a passive listener who records information but rather a critical thinker who can be changed through complex
dialogical processes (Freire, 1970). The conscientization of citizens thus becomes key for participation and social change (Bordenave, 1977). This idea has been a defining element in social movements in many Latin American countries where less-privileged groups have organized after critically considering the oppressive situation in which they lived. Social movements have incorporated this concept through the use of artistic disciplines such as theatre (Boal, 1985) and music (Tumas-Serna, 1992) in order to engage citizens in awareness-raising learning, active and critical engagement and analysis of society’s relationships. The Nicaraguan revolution of 1979 is but one example and will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

Paolo Freire’s notion of conscientization upholds the individual’s capacity for critical thought since this is a process of developing a critical appraisal of the social setting. He contrasts this engaging process with that of banking education, the authoritarian model that sees learning as a unidirectional, thoughtless transfer of knowledge between expert and learner. Banking education sees reality as “motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable” (Freire, 1970, p. 71) and assumes that the individual is an empty recipient, incapable of much reflection. Humanity is seen here as isolated from the world that surrounds it. In Freire’s words, “The objects that surround me are simply accessible to my consciousness, not located within it. I am aware of them, but they are not inside me” (p. 76). In the banking education model of learning, the expert has possession of all truth regarding a specific subject. Words are “hollow” and “alienated” (p. 71) and they lack the power to transform. This approach favours an authoritarian relationship that offers those in power the potential to manipulate people or treat them as incapable of intelligent analysis.

Conscientization, on the other hand, considers that individuals are engaged in their reality as well as with other human beings. The individual has the capacity to reflect, to become troubled by what they see, especially if what they are exposed to is contradictory to what they already know.
Freire (1970) argues that once individuals are “posed with problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world, will feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge” (p. 81). Once faced by real challenges and situations, people cease to be docile listeners and become “critical co-investigators” (p. 81) who can potentially become immersed in reflection and action. For this person, the cost of not responding or reacting to the oppressive reality is much too high. Challenging the status quo is the logical path to follow once he or she has carried out a critical analysis of reality.

Dorling (2012), in his book *Fair Play*, warns of the risk that societies run when individuals become accustomed to the status quo, when they have ceased to critique the system within which they exist. It is easy not to notice oppressive structures to a point that social inequalities can become natural and justifiable where groups and individuals follow expected behaviours out of habit and lack of careful analysis. Dorling argues that the only way out of this complacency is for people to become critical thinkers; they must “think their way out” (p. 348). For societies to engage in transformative justice, a critical examination of reality and historical assumptions must take place. I suggest that through conscientization, societies can carry out an examination of reality, which can set in motion processes of transformation.

While the work of Freire cannot be implemented in every social or educational context (Mooney, & Nolan, 2006), the idea of conscientization has become key in social movements in Latin America. His work has resonated with theorists such as Augusto Boal (1979), who saw that the arts, particularly theatre, had the potential to change Discourse and instigate critical analysis in individuals. Education was no longer considered to take place within the formal constrains of the classroom but as taking place in the daily exchanges of civil society and with the arts as a central element of engagement. This line of thought was crucial in the case of the Nicaragua
revolution, where Sandinista artists and activists appealed to peasant groups and young audiences through the use of music both recorded and performed such was the case of the concert for peace held in Managua in April 1983 (González, 1987). This concert and recording featured Nueva Canción musicians from various Latin American countries and enforced a message against US presence in the Central American region while harnessing support for the young Nicaraguan Sandinista revolution. Music, in this case, invited peasants to question foreign presence as well as the remaining Somocista support still present in the country.

3.2.1 Music and processes of conscientization

The case of the role of music in the Nicaraguan revolution was not an isolated phenomenon. Music as a conscientization factor played a vital role in many social and revolutionary movements in Latin America through what is called the Nueva Canción movement. The movement started in the 1950s in South American countries like Chile, Argentina and Uruguay and sought to raise awareness about specific social situations and bring about political change by recovering national identities through the use of folk sounds and rhythms (Tumas-Serna, 1992). Nicaragua experienced the effects of this movement after the 1960s. Music became an essential component in popular education during the Sandinista revolution which removed dictator Anastasio Somoza in 1979 and established the first communist government in this country (Borland 2002). Music played a didactic role in creating conscientization regarding the oppression experienced in Nicaragua during Somoza’s dictatorship (Monroy García, 2009; Pring-Mill, 1987). It also allowed revolutionaries to explicitly teach the public how to make weapons and join their ranks (Mejía Godoy & Mejía Godoy, 1979). This was accomplished precisely through music that captured the cultural imaginary of the Nicaraguan working class. Since then, music has remained central in social and environmental movements in Nicaragua such as in the case of BOSAWAS and during
the 2018 protests against the Ortega-Murillo couple and what many label as the new dictatorship (Nuñez, 2018).

Various cases have shown that music has been central in activism in several regions of the world. For example, Gospel music was central in the black movement in the United States (Spencer, 1990), and popular music was key in some twentieth century protests in France (Sweeney, 2001). This centrality of music comes from its characteristic as an “aesthetic symbol system” and its capacity to convey meaning that spoken language cannot articulate (Sellnow & Sellnow; 2001, p. 32). Psychologists suggest that music’s capacity to communicate comes from its appeal to the emotions (Bunt & Pavlicevic, 2001; Carroll, 1998; Kivy, 1989; Juslin & Sloboda, 2002). Eyerman and Jamison (1998) posit that, because of this capacity, music is the one key component that enables social movements to reconstitute culture and enact change.

In the book *Music and Conflict*, Urbain et al. (2015) carry out a detailed study of music’s role in conflict resolution across the globe. They suggest that music can indeed “elevate human kind to its noblest actions” (p. 1) and contribute to peace precisely because music can facilitate empathy among groups and individuals. The opposite is also true, and examples of music used by the Nazis during World War II for destructive purposes support this argument. Then, the Nazis used music to calm people down when they faced violent deaths (p. 2). We can assert that music has “tremendous power to move people in any direction, toward peaceful and noble goals, or violent and destructive ones” (p. 2). Urbain et al. (2015), however, focus on the peace building capacity of music and suggests that this capacity emerges out of music’s appeal to the emotions. This appeal allows us to enter the mind of another, to experience or at least understand their suffering and, therefore, to acknowledge our shared humanity.
Musical performance is a participatory experience of knowledge exchange where listeners, performers, dancers, etc. take part and are brought together in an ideal relationship, however temporary as it may be (Laurence, 2015, p. 15). This ideal relationship, Laurence argues, makes empathic identification possible, a feeling of fellowship that “allows us to feel the emotional state of another, and also to respond compassionately to another’s plight” (p. 16). The fellowship that can emerge among people who experience the same event or performance can potentially lead individuals to a “sense of a higher we” (p. 18), an identification, formation and strengthening of community. Studies have shown that such feeling of empathy can indeed elicit concrete empathic responses (Hornstein, 1978, Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987). Finally, Laurence suggests that empathy is key to peace building because empathic relationships are non-manipulative and cooperative as opposed to power relationships. Participation thus moves people away from divisive power dynamics and toward empathic ones.

In this section we have discussed how music performance constitutes an outstanding method whereby groups and individuals can engage in processes of conscientization. It can facilitate experiential learning opportunities where emotional identification can potentially foster sympathy as well as critical awareness. Music and theatre have been used repeatedly by activists in Latin America in order to awaken groups and to direct their reflection toward oppressive and unjust social dynamics or toward environmental and cultural concerns. Through performance, these activists attempt to articulate a Discourse that challenges the status quo and hope to generate reflection that leads to concrete social action.

3.3 Performance as embodied epistemology

One of the key concepts that guides this thesis is the concept of performance, specifically, music performance within the context of a festival. There are numerous scholars who have
explored this topic and expanded their theories based on observation and other methods of research (Aston & Harris, 2006; DeFrantz & Gonzalez, 2014; Lewis, 2013; Sotiropoulos, 2008). I would like to focus my analysis of this concept on some of the work by Diana Taylor (2003), Richard Schechner (1988) and Mohan Dutta (2011) who posit that performance is, first and foremost, a method of knowledge transfer, one that can play a key role in communities and in accomplishing social change. Schechner’s work is considered to have made a seminal contribution to the field of performance studies while Taylor is often cited as providing a unique Latin American perspective to the topic. Dutta, on the other hand, has been included in this section because of his articulation of the connections between performance and human rights. Because performance is such a powerful platform for educating, conveying knowledge and generating engagement in communities, it can be used as a challenge to the status quo as well as to reinforce it. Studies have shown instances when music performance has been used to exert and maintain social domination (Urbain, 2015). For the purpose of this thesis, however, my focus will remain on the power that performance can harness in order to convey epistemologies, usually excluded from the main social Discourse, by way of experiential learning. As Taylor (2003), Schechner (1988), and Dutta (2011) suggest, performance taps into the repertoire of communities and enacts an utterance that can articulate new possibilities for social justice.

In her book The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas, Taylor (2003) carries out an in-depth analysis of the concept of performance from a Latin American perspective. She defines performances as practices that stand out from other practices around them so as to draw attention to themselves. From rock bands to religious ceremonies, performances are knowledge that makes itself manifest through embodied expression. They are not a new phenomenon in society but have been central to the life of communities from early
civilization. In a manner of speaking, performances stop time, carve out a space to invite the audience into active re-enactment and participation into something out of the ordinary that is about to happen. In this extraordinary event, exchanges of values, cultures and Discourses take place, potentially challenging society’s norms.

For Taylor (2003), one of the main roles of performances is epistemological since they function as “vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity” (p. 2). They include such varied activities as “dance, theatre, ritual, political rallies, funerals—that involve theatrical, rehearsed, or conventional/event appropriate behaviors” (p. 2). Taylor considers that we continually rehearse and perform how we embody our sense of civic obedience, resistance, citizenship, gender etc. In this sense, performance is an embodied practice whereby we offer ways of knowing and being. Taylor also suggests that religious celebrations, a traditional feature of many Latin American countries since early colonial times, fall within the realm of performance. These practices incorporate details from ordinary life, such as clothing, processions, music and ritual elements, and make them stand out. They embody a system of beliefs and convey it to those who participate in it and those who witness it. For example, when someone engages in a communal religious ritual, their actions of bowing, singing and listening convey a belief in a higher power or in a sense of community. Thus, by performance, groups and individuals allow the participants to be part of the belief and to learn by experience by doing and engaging.

Performance in the form of spiritual or religious ritual functioned as a key education tool for Indigenous people prior to the arrival of the Europeans in the Americas. With colonization, however, a shift in how societies in the Americas transferred knowledge took place. The introduction of a new way of conceptualizing the importance of writing displaced the previous methods of knowledge transfer practiced by Indigenous groups and dismissed their methods of
knowledge transfer. Taylor affirms that when the Europeans arrived in the “New World”, they “claimed that the Indigenous peoples’ past—and the ‘lives they lived’—had disappeared because they had no writing” (p. 16). There was now a divide between the repertoire and the archive. The repertoire refers to the embodied practices of knowledge that exist in the memory of the community and their practices. The archive is that which is considered permanent, namely, things that are placed in writing. “The repertoire, on the other hand, enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing—in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, non-reproducible knowledge” (p. 20). This divide has concrete repercussions for how writing and performance affect social hierarchies because the Europeans upheld the value of permanent writing as the definitive authority, the method of choice to pass down knowledge. Anyone who did not have the ability to write or read could then be excluded from the processes of knowledge transfer and the hierarchies that flowed from them.

Prior to colonization, indigenous groups such as the Aztecs, Mayas and Incas did practice writing, but this activity was secondary to “the performed utterance” (Taylor, 2003, p. 17). Writing was a specialized skill that was used to record information but the transfer of this information “depended on embodied culture for transmission” (p. 17), that is, it relied on performance for members of society to grasp and experience knowledge. This knowledge was passed on through “dances, rituals, funerals, colors, huehuehtlahtolli ‘the ancient word,’ wisdom handed down through speech), and majestic displays of power and wealth” (p. 18). With a focus on these embodied practices, education for the community was experiential and performative. With colonization, writing replaced performance and it was from then on, used as a tool for power and marginalization (p. 18). The non-verbal practices that were central to the transmission of knowledge were no longer considered valid.
Even though education and power dynamics have granted writing a place of prominence in the hierarchy of knowledge transfer, we can affirm that performance remains a unique and effective mode of transmission, one that has a unique capacity to play a role in society and open the possibilities for change. Schechner (1988) considers that performance has played a crucial role in social movements by staging what he calls a “social drama” (p. ix), moments when a person or movement captures the attention of a large portion of society. This social drama is precisely what disrupts or attempts to disrupt the status quo. One of the greatest embodiments of this process was the iconic work of Martin Luther King Jr. and his speeches within the civil rights movement. Performance has the potential to become, therefore, a political act because it can challenge existing configurations of power. Taylor (2003) posits that performance carries the possibility of challenge, even self-challenge, within it. As a term simultaneously connoting a process, a praxis, an episteme, a mode of transmission, an accomplishment, and a means of intervening in the world, it far exceeds the possibilities of these other words offered in its place (p. 15). Every performance embodies a way of seeing the world and it is inevitable that our systems of belief become expressed through performances in one way or another. Taylor states that “Every performance enacts a theory, and every theory performs in the public sphere” (p. 27). That is, our worldviews tend to surface and become tangible through performance.

When communities and individuals engage in play and performance, the establishment of rules and the value we give to time and artifacts carve out space and time so that the particular moment exists as separate from reality to offer an alternative reality. Often, artifacts become the focus of the activity and acquire a value that is unique within the performance itself, such as props, costumes, a song, or a soccer ball. Schechner (1988) also sees rules as essential components to play and performance. Humanity’s capacity to create rules allows people, through play and performance, to create a special world, to “rearrange time, assign value to things, and work for
pleasure” (p. 13). He sees in these activities of play and performance expressions of social fantasy, ways to stand apart from ordinary life, to imagine an alternate reality in order to both idealize and criticize the ordinary.

The centrality of performance in the life of communities is explored by Schechner’s research and theoretical explorations (1988). He posits that performance has a deeply communal purpose and has the capacity to carry out concrete actions for the collective, in connection to the community’s spirituality. He uses ethnographic data collected in Papua New Guinea and Australia and sees that performance is not only used to communicate to the spiritual world but also to enact communion among individuals. Among indigenous groups in Australia, the shamans experience a life-changing communication from the spirit world and receive a mission through song and dance. At the beginning of his mission, the shaman lives an experience of dislocation whereby his soul is taken apart. While this journey is experienced by the shaman in a very personal way, it is a journey that happens in intimate connection with the community. It is a social experience as Shechner affirms: “The shaman’s journeys are neither gratuitous nor for private use. He goes to get something, and he must deliver what he gets back to his people” (p. 34). The act of singing, performance, and ritual are key components of this experience. Without them, there would be no instalment of the shaman or fulfillment of his vocation. Considering the experience of the Kaiko peoples in Papua New Guinea, Schechner sees an example of where performance brings about specific events and actions in a community. The Kaiko engage in the Tsem Baga ritual that begins as a dance that incorporates the actual trade of meat in its performance. It concludes with a celebration where individual members share their food with others. Dancing here elicits concrete relational aspects that function as a pivot of transformation into concrete community alliances.
3.4 Performing social change

Dutta (2011) sees performance, primarily, as a site of resistance where public spaces are used to represent issues of “social injustice, oppression, power, control” (p. 195). This is done through the use of “aesthetic forms of representation” (p. 195). Dutta posits that it is performance’s capacity to disrupt the status quo which can present a challenge to dominant configurations, dominant ways of seeing the world. It has the possibility to awaken society, so to speak, out of a habitual, dormant state into new ways of thinking. This status quo is maintained by the circulation of embodied, self-reinforcing conservative cultural symbols. Performance can move a world fixated on a rational order and expresses alternative rationalities. Dutta suggests as follows:

These alternatives open up new possibilities for imagining states of being, feeling, and living, and thus bring about shifts in consciousness in how social realities are approached, lived in, reaffirmed and challenged. It is through these shifts that possibilities are opened up for material transformations (p. 195).

He argues that not just performers have a role to play in this dynamic representations and challenges to social injustices. For him, participants at the performance site also collaborate by interacting with performers. Performers, however, play a particularly significant role since they have the capacity to embody alternative cultural symbols “Through songs, cultural articulations and narratives” and thus “create avenues for structural transformations” (p. 205). Artistic artifacts have, for Dutta, the potential to articulate a specific Discourse. Song performances have proven to accomplish this in very notable ways throughout history as the author states:

songs offer their identities of social change processes by communicating the message of the collective, by noting the stories of exploitation and oppression; on the other hand, songs mobilize solidarity, communicate points of action, and communicate specific tactics and strategies in processes of social change (p. 206).

Songs can then function as artifacts that enunciate and embody a specific message for justice and solidarity, bringing listeners to participate and consider a new social reality.
Performance remains a primary platform for communities to transfer knowledge through embodied practices. It can provide a way to foster sustained participation of individuals in activism through its emotional appeal. Indigenous peoples have traditionally engaged in various methods of embodied knowledge transfer such as rituals and dance in order to pass on cultural knowledge. Education has been for them an experiential and performative endeavour. This embodied epistemology became secondary with the arrival of the Europeans and their prioritization of writing as a permanent, linear way to convey information. Performance, however, has remained very much present in the lives of communities and continues to provide a site for resistance against injustice and oppression, engaging performers and audiences in interactive exchange of knowledge and experience.

3.5 The Politics of performing indigeneity

As we have explored so far, by setting aside and defining time, rules and artifacts, performances have the capacity to communicate the values, priorities and concerns of social groups. They can, as Dutta (2011) suggests, provide a platform for challenging societies and their complacency regarding social justice issues. This challenge can take place when performances articulate the knowledge and worldview of groups that may have been historically excluded from societies. Musical performance, particularly, has provided for a platform of interaction and opportunity for Indigenous people in the Americas to assert their rights and preserve their cultures which have not been acknowledged throughout history. In Bolivia, for example, music provides new methods to promote the survival of languages and cultures that are at risk of disappearing, as is the case for indigenous musicians (Hornberger & Swinehart, 2012). Music performance also functions as a unifying agent and an embodiment of values, cultures and Discourse, a Discourse that denounces Indigenous rights abuses as is the case in Mexico. This has been accomplished by
the power of performances, the possibility to carve out extraordinary time out of the ordinary and direct attention to themselves so as to engage the participants in an exchange of epistemologies.

In Bolivia, indigenous young musicians mix Spanish and Aymara languages in Hip Hop music, allowing for their culture and language to become known beyond the local and into a transnational context. This is an act of performance that empowers these musicians on behalf of their communities to combat traces of colonialism as it is experienced today in society and in the music industry (Hornberger & Swinehart, 2012). As these authors argue, “these sites, ideologies, and language practices constitute productive spaces for Indigenous language speakers to intervene in a historically and enduringly unequal, globalizing world” (p. 501). For these young musicians, musical performance provides an opportunity to embody the ever-evolving nature of language and Indigenous identity as they see and experience it while challenging the ongoing forces of colonialism today.

The musical sphere of Hip Hop, which has been dominated first by the English language and, locally, by Spanish, carries with it a history that resonates with the younger generation of indigenous migrants of El Alto, Bolivia. Hornberger & Swinehart (2012) argue that these young artists find it possible to identify with the history of racism, discrimination and poverty which is inherent in the African American culture of Hip Hop. They find in it a platform where they can introduce expressions of Aymara culture such as its language, musical instruments and clothing. Many of the Hip Hop musicians of El Alto live far from their traditional communities; most of them live in urban settings where the impacts of globalization are strongly felt. This distance does not prevent them from engaging deeply with their indigenous language and identity. For them, as Hornberger & Swinehart posit, “language choice is tied to ideologies around raising the status of Indigenous languages and reversing the denigration of Indigenous identities in a heterogeneous
and multilingual society” (p. 505). Music then, provides a platform to combat this historical dismissal of indigenous language and identity.

A unique example of performance’s capacity to instigate social change comes from Mexico. In the past few decades, Wirikuta, an Indigenous sacred site located on the central mountains of this country, has been a place where conflicting worldviews have clashed and where music has been used as a key element in activism. Here the rights and worldviews of indigenous communities came into conflict with those of mining companies and the Mexican government over access to land. In this case Indigenous musicians from the Wixárika tradition and artists join efforts with their mestizo counterparts in an annual festival to raise awareness and enact social and environmental change (García Trejo, 2012). Since 2012, the festival brings together more than 50,000 people and offers an opportunity for non-indigenous Mexicans to get to know and experience aspects of indigenous culture such as pre-hispanic dances, temazcal baths while also giving them an opportunity to join the political efforts to remove mining companies from Wirikuta.

Wirikuta is a sacred mountain for the Wixárika, a site for pilgrimage that exists in relation to their ritual calendar. Their relationship is not limited to visiting it but includes also the duty of protecting it. The Wixárika believe that they have received an ancient mandate to be caretakers of this sacred site and this mandate is passed down from one generation to the next (Valadez, 2012b). Mining would disrupt this people’s cultural and spiritual heritage as well as their natural environment. Boni et al. (2005) consider that the heart of the conflict around Wirikuta is directly related to opposing ways of “experiencing, valuing and using ‘place’” (p. 761). For the Wixárika, ‘place’ represents a connection to the spiritual world and the balance which this connection can bring. For the mining companies and the Mexican government, ‘place’ represents the potential for resource extraction and economic development. Music and visual arts are considered by the
Wixárika to be inspired by their sacred mission of protectors and it tells the story of their connection to the land (Valadez, 2012b). Artistic performance is a channel for communicating and concretely carrying out their mission. This act of performance prompts an analysis on behalf of non-indigenous Mexicans and moves them to be part of various strategies such as lawsuits against the mining companies and protests both in Mexico and in the United States.

Musical performance has become a creative strategy for reimagining Indigenous identity and culture in the Americas. The cases I have briefly examined attest to music’s capacity to educate and exchange ideas and foster resilient identities in such mixed societies as those that can be found in the continent. For the Indigenous people of Bolivia, musical performance has allowed them to preserve their traditional language by interacting with new musical forms and appealing to younger generations. In the case of Wirikuta, music performance has not only made possible solidarity alliances but has also provided experiential learning opportunities for Indigenous and mestizo citizens. This knowledge exchange enabled the Wixárika to preserve their culture while asserting their land rights in the face of corporations and the government. Music performance has been a central, engaging and attractive element in all of this.

3.6 Understanding Discourse and music as Discourse

For the purposes of this thesis, it is important to expand the understanding of what constitutes Discourse beyond the focus on its textual or linguistic aspects, particularly since music is considered a key element of processes of conscientization and Discourse articulation. Discourse, rather than being a linear spoken or written text, is a process of relationship and communication. It establishes norms and parameters of interaction and power distribution. In this short section, I briefly explore Discourse from this perspective, taking into account the work of Wood & Kroger.
(2000), Michel Foucault (1990) and some aspects of critical Discourse analysis (Way & McKerrel, 2017; Nattiez, 1990). I outline considerations that will be key in subsequent analysis carried out in this thesis. It is important to note that other authors such as Mikhail Bakhtin (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981) and Max Horkheimer (Abromeit, 2011) made essential contributions to the understanding of Discourse and the fields of critical theory and semiotics. However, an assessment of their work is well beyond the scope of this thesis. The authors included in this dissertation were selected based on the direct relevance of their theoretical contributions to the topic of performance and its relationship to Discourse articulation.

In their book *Doing Discourse Analysis*, Wood and Kroger (2000) highlight the fact that Discourse goes beyond written or spoken language and beyond how these have been traditionally understood. Discourse analysis involves looking closely at how things are uttered, at the way in which people and groups relate and communicate. These authors posit that Discourse is, in fact “the medium for interaction” and that to engage in Discourse analysis is to carry out an “analysis of what people do” (p. 146). What people do through Discourse, they argue, is to establish norms and define realities and relationships. Following this line of thought, Sara Mills (2003), in her study of Foucault’s perspectives on power, argues that Discourse is not only a set of statements but, rather, a complex set of practices that encompass “all utterances and statements which have been made which have meaning and which have some effect” (p. 53). In other words, all of what can convey meaning, whether it is “written, spoken or reproduced in any form” (Wood & Kroger, p. 57) can be argued to be Discourse. We can then suggest that, in the case studied in this research, music is a way to interact, create meaning and build reality but it does this within a complex system of social norms and among other methods that create Discourse such as written text, policy documents, speeches and publications.
The connection of what is being said in the public sphere both governs and is governed by dynamics of power. This idea was developed by French theorist Michel Foucault in many of his works (1990; 2002). For him, stating or articulating values and perspectives had everything to do with how power was established in society. Foucault, as cited by Mills (2003), posited that Discourse “transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines it and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it” (p. 54). That is, an individual’s or group’s capacity to articulate things can potentially either obey or challenge power dynamics in society. Often, the power structures render individuals or groups unable to create their own Discourse. Other times, these disenfranchised groups or individuals can break away from these confinements and, through articulation of Discourse, can bring attention to oppressive forces, thus inviting the public to critically analyze these forces and challenge them. It can be argued that conscientization is a process whereby the power dynamics of society that govern the creation and circulation of Discourses can be challenged and examined through thoughtful awareness. I suggest that the Discourse of music is the primary way in which the Misión BOSAWAS’ activists seek to provoke an examination of power dynamics and their role in building reality and perpetuating social justice issues in Nicaragua.

Because the utterance of Discourse builds reality, Wood and Kroger (2000) affirm that Discourse is not just ambiguous talk but that it is directly related to actions that build up the very objects of our world. As they affirm, “talk is what moves the world, both in the private and public sphere” (p. ix) and it contributes in a substantial way to the establishment of social constructs that govern potentially oppressive interactions such as the understanding of justice or the way in which Indigenous groups are perceived by mainstream society, for example (Capehart, 2007). This way, what we do as societies and as individuals is accomplished by the Discourse that is enforced and
circulated and generally accepted by most. This Discourse is often taken for granted and, eventually, institutionalized through policy and social norms. It follows that doing Discourse analysis can help us to “point to the ways in which certain practices serve to obscure and therefore perpetuate what is taken for granted” (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 14). Discourse analysis can provide us with a tool to assess how relevant social constructs such as our understanding of Indigeneity, identity and justice have been engrained in our social consciousness and practices.

The emergence of methodologies such as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Social Semiotics brings to our attention music’s role in articulating ideological and power Discourses. These methods allow for an analysis of media that was not traditionally studied such as cultural media which includes videos, posters, toys, video games and music (Way & McKerrell, 2017). The premise behind these perspectives is that music must be approached as a multimodal Discourse, one that exists in dynamic relationship with text, image and movement. Way & McKerrell (2017) posit that our analysis must build upon and go beyond musicology’s focus on the “what and the why of music as a cultural object” and shift our emphasis toward the “how and the when of music as communication” (p. 2). This will allow for a deeper analysis of music’s role in the articulation of Discourses of power in society because it considers the context and impact within social relationship and music’s part in wider multimodal Discourses (p. 3). Way & McKerrell suggest that CDA’s primary concern lies with the relationship of language and power to “identify a social problem, choose the perspective of those who suffer the most and then, critically analyse those in power” (p. 6).

Moore (2012) suggests that one of music’s key characteristics is that it taps into the feelings of the individual as well as familiar ideas and connects these with new ideas so as to facilitate new understanding. This appeal of music flows from its characteristics as multimodal communication,
that is, its capacity to articulate and give meaning to songs, images and sound. Moore argues that the meaning articulated by music is both “emergent and performative” (p. 13) because it depends largely on the “social bodies that hear them” (p. 13). We experience music in an embodied way and from within our lived cultural experience. Class gender, race and other personal experiences also factor in when it comes to how we feel music.

Venturing into the realm of Discourse analysis inevitably brings us to consider key aspects of semiology, the systematic study of signs, especially because we are considering signs and symbols and their capacity to construct and communicate meaning. When we approach music as Discourse, the unit of study is certainly not as discrete as traditional written text or spoken language. It is a dynamic, multimodal unit that is deeply embedded into the culture where it emerges. It includes songs, instruments, rhythms, image, economic systems, and individuals such as composers, performers and audiences, for example. Nattiez (1990) organizes these multimodal layers into three dimensions of music as a symbolic phenomenon and which are important to the analysis carried out in this thesis. These dimensions take into account the creators and the audiences, as well as the product itself and considers that the exchanges in which all these engage are certainly non-linear and ever changing.

For Nattiez, music has a poietic dimension and an esthetic dimension that produce the trace as a result of their interaction. The poietic dimension refers to the process of creation, that is, the steps and experiences of the composer, musician or performer in this case. The esthetic dimension focuses on the receivers or audience and their process of meaning creation as they listen and interact with the music. Nattiez highlights that these “receivers” are not passive but rather active agents in the perceptual process. Finally, the trace refers to the symbolic form, the song, performance or recording that becomes physically embodied in a form that is accessible to the
senses. This form is the result of the interaction elicited by the poietic and esthetic dimensions and not a linear, unidirectional delivery of songs or auditory stimulation. Thus, music and its performance are a “total social fact” (p. 42) that varies according to context, culture and the specifics of this dynamic exchange of actors.

Since, as Wood & Kroger (2000) posit, Discourse establishes norms and defines realities and social relationships, carrying out an analysis of Discourse entails looking at the intricate connections that bring together various entities in society. It also means considering power dynamics and how these affect the public sphere. Furthermore, when we consider music’s capacity to articulate these dynamics, we are presented with a complex, multimodal Discourse built by three interrelated levels, the poietic, esthetic and the trace. These, in turn, point us to three experiences that, together, have the potential to assist in redefining realities, power dynamics, perceptions and social relationships. The musicians and activists of the case here studied hope to do this for the Mayangnas and for BOSAWAS in Nicaragua.

3.7 Summary

In the struggle for survival and preservation of their land and culture, the Mayangna experience the tangible repercussions of a social construct of justice that disregards Indigenous epistemologies and Indigenous rights. The Nicaraguan case is a vivid example of the Latin American tendency where well-articulated policies for Indigenous rights are poorly implemented or enforced. A history of colonization followed by a focus on attaining a neoliberal model of development on behalf of the local government and other organizations has placed Indigenous peoples at a disadvantage. This disadvantage is seen concretely in aspects such as health, education and other measures of well-being. Their lives are marked by preventable violence and disease as well as a disregard for the dignity and rights that are inherent in their humanity and
ancestral, collective heritage. By disregarding these rights, the government fails to fulfill its duties of respect, provision and aid in this multi-ethnic, multi-national state. However, not all is lost in this struggle. Key initiatives have emerged in the form of documents and organizations such as the UNDRIP and the OAS which provide milestones for further dialogue and implementation of group specific rights. Activism continues to be relevant in this journey and through processes of conscientization, groups and individuals become engaged in creative, participatory and performative ways. Through theatre and music, as is the case of Latin America, revolutions and social change have taken place, engaging audience and enabling processes of empathy and critical analysis. These activists have, to some degree, brought forth Indigenous perspectives on well-being, justice and development. Through music performance, communities and groups transfer knowledge and challenge systems of injustice, articulating new Discourses and thus, hoping for social transformation to begin to take place.
4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research methods implemented in this dissertation and the conceptual framework that guided it. First, the chapter presents an overview of this analytical framework, establishing connections with social constructivism and critical Discourse analysis. It also draws important connections to a social justice framework and Indigenous approaches to knowledge. The second part of the chapter provides specific details regarding the choice for a qualitative research design, focusing on a single case research design and the justification for the case selected. The third section will present the research process with a focus on data collection: primary data through semi-structured interviews, and secondary data which include government documents, forestry reports, published journal articles, audiovisual material such as documentaries and news reports, and recorded song lyrics. Lastly, the final section will discuss some important ethical considerations pertinent to this research as well as the researcher’s positionality and its implications for this project.

4.2 Analytical framework

The research undertaken as part of this dissertation takes a social constructivist approach, particularly informed by aspects of Critical Discourse Analysis or CDA. It considers that meaning is deeply embedded in the social systems that produce it (Bresler, 2016), since societies establish and perpetuate definitions of constructs such as those of social justice and Indigeneity (Capehart, 2007; Díaz Arias, 2006). It also looks at music performance and recording as part of such systems and as text within social Discourse. Music is considered here to be a multimodal text that is produced within social systems in order to either strengthen or challenge dynamics of power (Way & McKerrell, 2017). This multimodal text is the product and instigator of dialogical relationships.
of Discourse (Nattiez, 1990). Examining the role of music in this process of Discourse articulation and its relationship with social justice for Indigenous people in Nicaragua calls for a holistic approach to research, one that not only examines lyrics and performances as text, but that also looks closely at the historical Discourse and power distribution in the social system within which these events and utterances exist (Locke, 2004).

4.2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

In order to understand CDA and its relevance in this dissertation, let us briefly consider the components evident in its name. This threefold name points us toward a social commitment, a unit of analysis and methodological considerations. The critical aspect of this approach refers to a social commitment, a problem-oriented focus and a concern and goal to “transform problematic discursive social practices” (Lee & Otsuji, 2009, p. 67). CDA builds on and is oriented toward social justice (Lapan et al., 2012; Gee, 2004) since it intends to examine social systems in order to understand how societies work to produce favourable as well as detrimental relationships (Fairclough, 2015). The ultimate goal is to identify injustice and its expression in social practices so as to instigate social change. Building on Fairclough’s assessment, Lee & Otsuji suggest that CDA needs to raise the following central questions, among others: “What is it about existing societies that produce poverty, deprivation, misery, and insecurity in people’s lives? What possibilities are there for social change which would reduce these problems and enhance the quality of the lives of human beings?” (Lee & Otsuji, 2009, p. 4). Another way to look at it would be that CDA asks questions with regard to power such as, who has the ability to dictate the norms to be followed in social relationships, and who suffers because they do not have such power (p. 12).
CDA emerges out of the “linguistic turn”, a twentieth century scholarly trend that looks at linguistic formulation as having the capacity to construct and mediate meaning within specific social and cultural contexts (Locke, 2004, p. 11). Here, language is the unit of analysis, the focus of academic research since its meaning construction capacity has concrete social consequences. CDA considers that meaning and knowledge production and dissemination are “culturally situated and mediated by particular forms of textual practice” (Locke, p. 11). Looking beyond a traditional understanding of literacy where texts were considered to hold inherent and unique meaning, CDA posits that literacy must be considered not as a single, discrete thing but as a “set of socially constructed practices that readers and makers of texts are apprenticed in as members of a particular social group” (p. 13). This perspective allows researchers to consider the plurality of literacies and texts, the importance of the contexts within which they emerge and evolve, and the groups and individuals that set them in motion.

When it comes to defining the concept of Discourse, scholars differentiate two categories. First, Discourse (with a capital ‘D’) stands for the social practice and way of believing. Secondly, discourse (with a small ‘d’) represents a countable noun, units of utterance such as texts, paragraphs and genres, for example (Gee, 2012, p. 21; Locke, p. 13). Discourse (with a capital ‘D’) has a regulatory aspect since it “defines and produces the objects of our knowledge” (Le & Short, 2009, p. 6), that is, it sets the parameters by which societies construct a given topic and govern its meaning. We can assert that Discourse, the social practice, is made up of and encompasses instances of discourse as these smaller units fit within the broader social practice reflecting it, enforcing it, and, at times, challenging it. As Le & Short suggest, Discourse “sets about defining its own truth. It defines what can be said about a particular subject, what can be
seen as the logic of an argument, and what are understood as the acceptable premises in such argument” (p. 6).

CDA is not so much a methodology for research as much as paradigm, an orientation, and a standpoint. It is, by definition, inter-disciplinary and incorporates a number of methodological approaches. It is “a problem-focused approach, a particular theoretical preoccupation with, and orientation to, power, and a transformative agenda flowing from that orientation” (Lee & Otsuji, 2009, p. 66), that is, it identifies a problem, looks for explanations with the ultimate goal of transformation. Even though there is no articulated method to carry out research following this orientation, the work of scholars such as Van Dijk (1995) and Fairclough (2015) has been crucial in providing some general areas of focus and outlining some tasks that have proven to be important in CDA informed research.

This research incorporates CDA, taking into account these authors, particularly the work of Fairclough (2015) who provides one of the most articulated paths for scholars to follow in order to implement CDA in their practice (Blommartert, 2005). He outlines a tripartite framework for conceptualizing and analyzing Discourse that considers Discourse as text, as discursive practice and as social practice and which brings about the tasks of description, interpretation and explanation (Le & Short, 2009). Looking at Discourse as text examines concrete grammatical patterns and vocabulary and asks what linguistic features are incorporated in the specific instance of Discourse at hand. Considering Discourse as discursive practice takes into account social context as here Discourse is “seen as something which is produced, circulated, consumed in society” (Le & Short, p. 8). Finally, looking at Discourse as social practice looks at the “ideological effects and hegemonic processes in which Discourse is seen to operate” (p. 8).
These three considerations imply three tasks for the researcher. First, when we consider Discourse, the texts before us, we must first focus on describing its linguistic and textual features. Then, the researcher can move on to interpretation of the social practice, shedding light on how “participants arrive at some kind of understanding of Discourse on the basis of their cognitive, social and ideological resources” (Le & Short, 2009, p. 9). Finally, the explanation allows the researcher to draw conclusions and incorporate theory as he or she attempts to “reveal the ideological underpinnings of lay interpretive procedures” (p. 9). By looking at each of these aspects, the researcher is able to gain a fuller perspective of the Discourse studied.

4.3 Social justice and Indigenous research considerations

This research acknowledges that analytical frameworks and approaches to research are born and informed by a researcher’s worldview and his or her approach to epistemology, the nature of knowledge and the manner of gathering it (Le & Short, 2009). It also acknowledges that academic research has historically built upon positivist philosophies that consider the existence of one, absolute truth and which have provided justification for colonial approaches to knowledge production (McKinley et al., 2012). With this in mind and by adopting a CDA approach, this research questions power dynamics in the implementation of and respect for Indigenous rights while considering ways in which to incorporate Indigenous knowledge in its data collection and analysis.

While this research does not formally follow Critical Indigenous Research Methodologies (McKinley, et al., 2012), it incorporates Indigenous voices in its data collection methods, conceptual framework and analytical framework. For example, the focus on performance seeks to gather knowledge from this privileged way of knowledge transmission for Indigenous people in Latin America (Taylor, 2003). With the semi-structured interviews in a relaxed dialogical
environment, I also sought out the voices of the Mayangna who currently live in BOSAWAS. These interviews, combined with those of the mestizo participants, were used as a guideline in the identification of themes for the analysis of lyrics and texts carried out in this research project. Furthermore, the Indigenous epistemology of Buen Vivir was central in informing this research’s approach to social justice and human development (Barranquero-Carretero, & Sáez-Baeza, 2015). Finally, careful attention was paid to honour and adhere to Mayangna Indigenous leadership’s direction in the BOSAWAS territory. For example, the researcher obtained all necessary permits and interviewed with the GTI leaders and with Musawás’ Chief prior to entering the core zone of BOSAWAS upon her arrival in the Bonanza municipality. Following these steps, this project strives to gather and honour Indigenous epistemologies and autonomy.

4.4 Qualitative and interdisciplinary approach

This research is primarily qualitative in nature and follows an interdisciplinary, mixed methods approach to data collection and analysis. Interdisciplinary research is defined as

A process of answering a question, solving a problem, or addressing a topic that is too broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline or profession. IDS draws on disciplinary perspectives and integrates their insights through construction of a more comprehensive perspective (Klein & Newell, 1998, p. 393).

This design was considered more apt to gather the stories, hopes and concerns of all participants, Indigenous and mestizo, in such as complex problem as the issue of land encroachment in BOSAWAS. Quantitative data was collected from secondary sources and was analysed in order to complement and contextualize the qualitative findings. Specifically, this research carried out an in-depth, single case analysis of the Unidos por Bosawas movement and their undertakings which included concerts, documentary showings and education campaigns from 2012 to 2016. The centrality of music evident in the Misión Bosawas movement was also key to this project’s
data collection and analysis. This was reflected in the questions asked to all participants as well as in the textual analysis of song lyrics carried out here.

4.5 Single-case research design

Scriven (1991) identifies the goal of case study research as the intensive examination of the particular in order to view each aspect of it in a close manner. A case study seeks to thoroughly describe and explain complex realities, uncovering systems and relationships (Moore et al., 2012). A single case study was deemed to be the most appropriate design for this project’s goals and objectives, namely, to closely analyze the relationship of music, Discourse and conscientization as well as the dynamics of power behind the formation of this Discourse and Indigenous people and the repercussions of this relationship on their experience of justice in the BOSAWAS context. It also sought to gather concrete recommendations toward addressing such power dynamics, in line with CDA’s approach to research (Getty, 2010). The situation of BOSAWAS is a complex one where intricate relationships of power, corruption and national identity converge. This uniquely complex situation required the close analysis favoured by a single case study, undertaken from a critical perspective and an interdisciplinary approach.

Many other cases from Southern Mexico and Central America come to our attention as similar instances where music performance has been central to activism for the protection of the rights of Indigenous peoples and their territories (García Trejo, 2012; Esteban, 2017). Some of these cases have been considered successful such as the Wirikuta Festival in Mexico which achieved its goal of keeping mining companies out of the sacred mountain, even if temporarily, in 2014. I selected the Nicaraguan case study for its unique features that include the recent emergence of the movement, the involvement of Indigenous and mestizo youth and activists, the use of diverse methods of engagement and participatory learning such as documentaries and concerts, and the
central role of musicians in the movement (Allgood & De Castro, 2014). Other contextual aspects were taken into consideration in the selection of this case such as the unique and well-articulated policies and laws aimed at protecting Indigenous territories and autonomy already in place but not implemented in Nicaragua, the increasing rate of forest depletion in BOSAWAS and the country’s history of musical activism for social change and its impact on similar movements in Central America (Borland, 2002). The Nicaraguan case can, indeed, offer valuable insights into the repercussions of social power dynamics on Indigenous people and the role that music can play in processes of conscientization. Some of these insights may offer knowledge that can further shed light on similar cases in the region.

4.6 Research process

4.6.1 Data collection

Initially, this project was planned with a holistic approach to data collection and with a focus on the Unidos por BOSAWAS Festival 2017 as the unit of analysis. The objective was to interview as many participants in attendance including audience members, musicians and organizers, and would also include interviews with the Mayangna musicians who performed at the festival in Managua. This data would be complemented with participant observation data collected by the researcher while attending the festival, as well as secondary data obtained from newspaper articles, documentaries, news articles, government documents, and reports from the non-profit sector. Due to the unforeseen sudden change in leadership of the Misión BOSAWAS movement in late 2016, the last Unidos por BOSAWAS festival was held in July 2016, a year prior to the allotted time for data collection for this project. The research thus had to be modified focusing on contacting musicians, activists, organizers and audiences after the fact, and asking them about their prior involvement and experience as well as their perspectives on the issue. Individuals contacted
included participants who could be identified through the Misión BOSAWAS remaining leadership as well as by contacting well-known musicians and activists through publicly accessible means such as e-mail and social media. Figure 4.1 offers a detailed chart of this process of data collection and subsequent analysis.

The primary data collected for this dissertation includes semi-structured interviews. The interviews were carried out in two parts. From May to August 2017, the researcher identified, contacted and met with musicians and leaders in the cities of Granada and Managua and its surrounding area. During this period, an initial plan was established for a visit to BOSAWAS later in the year. This visit was carried out from November 27th to December 4th, 2017. During this time, the interviews with Mayangna community members and leadership took place in Musawás, the capital of the Sauni As territory within the core zone of BOSAWAS.

Reaching the Mayangna community and musicians was considered to be of utmost importance for the project’s commitment to gathering Indigenous voices and knowledge. This, however, presented a logistical challenge since these musicians do not speak Spanish and live in remote, rural communities deep within the BOSAWAS Reserve which are not easily accessed from the Pacific region of Nicaragua. The trip was arranged in collaboration with one of Misión BOSAWAS’ founding members who accompanied the researcher to the Reserve and introduced her to the Mayangna leadership and community. Having the support and collaboration of this mestizo leader, who has a long-standing relationship of collaboration with this community, made it possible for the researcher to enter into a relationship of trust and familiarity with the Mayangna and their leadership and provided invaluable support for the logistics of such an arduous and challenging journey.
Figure 4.1: Research methods flowchart
4.6.2 Identification and collection of secondary data

4.6.2.1 Government documents

An initial survey of academic and grey literature brought to the forefront the importance of documents promulgated by the Nicaraguan government and that pertain to the articulation of Indigenous territorial rights in this nation. These include Decree 44-1 (1991) and Decree A. N. 3584 (2003) and Law 445 (2002). Decree 44-1 is seen by scholars and Mayangna communities and leaders as a pivotal document in the quest for Indigenous land rights and environmental protection (Stocks, 2005). Decree A. N. 3584 officially lays out the laws governing Indigenous autonomy of the Caribbean regions of Nicaragua. This autonomy and the process to obtain it are crucial elements in the context within which BOSAWAS emerged. Finally, Law 445 specifies the policy for Indigenous community property in BOSAWAS. Analysis of these documents was, therefore, included in this research project.

4.6.2.2 Documentaries

The problem analyzed in this research was first recognized by the researcher through Allgood & De Castro’s 2014 documentary *El Canto de BOSAWAS*. This film provided valuable content to be analyzed since it presents interviews with Indigenous and mestizo leaders, communities and activists. This material offered to this project much needed content since, for this research, not all the communities of BOSAWAS could be reached or interviewed in great numbers. A subsequent online search highlighted other key audiovisual material produced by Nicaraguan news agency “Confidencial” documentary *El Ocaso de BOSAWAS* (2014) which provided a detailed analysis of the legal aspect of the BOSAWAS crisis. The content of these
documents provided valuable quantitative data from the perspective of Nicaraguan media and journalists.

4.6.2.3 Articles (journal, newspapers, magazines)

The academic literature as well as an online search indicated the importance of the work carried out by anthropologist Anthony Stocks (2005; 2007). His quantitative research provides evidence of the impact of colonists in BOSAWAS and compares it to that of their Indigenous counterparts. The work published by the Centre for International Forestry Research (Deakin et al., 2016) also provides an important forestry perspective and quantitative analysis of this context. Online newspaper articles were identified as sources of information regarding the ongoing violence in BOSAWAS as well as the coverage of the Unidos por BOSAWAS festivals.

4.6.2.4 Grey literature

Other quantitative data was gathered through reports generated by the non-government sector. The Humboldt Institute of Nicaragua was contacted by the researcher and they facilitated documentation via e-mail regarding Mayangna communities, their territories, and the threat posed to them by the mining and cattle ranching industries. This document was a report entitled *Territorial Matrix of the Mayangna Sauni Bu Territory*. The Mayangna leadership also provided reports from the IBIS organization regarding the increased presence of colonists in BOSAWAS by 2015. These reports were included in this project.

4.6.2.5 Song lyrics

Considering the centrality of music in the initiatives implemented by the Misión BOSAWAS movement, songs constitute a central component of analysis for this project. Because physical attendance at the Unidos por BOSAWAS festival was not possible, the songs analyzed
here were identified through the audio recording carried out by Misión BOSAWAS in 2014 entitled *Bosawas* and included the work of the main musicians who took part in the annual festivals. Songs were further selected through questions in the interviews with all participants so as to identify the most salient and meaningful songs of the festival.

4.6.3 **Primary data collection**

A total of 19 individuals were interviewed for this project. All participants were recruited through a snowball sampling strategy and were interviewed in person and through a semi-structured format. Interviews were between 30 minutes to one hour in length, depending on the participant’s engagement. This included 6 Indigenous and mestizo musicians (2 females and 4 males), 7 activists (5 females and 2 males), 3 Mayangna elders (all males), 2 Mayangna community leaders (males), 1 Mayangna community member (female) (See Table 4.1 for a list of interview participants). Mestizo participants were interviewed in Managua and in Granada, Nicaragua either in their homes or local cafés. Mayangna leaders and community members were interviewed in BOSAWAS in public areas such as the schoolyard or the health centre after a community meeting as well as their homes and GTI offices. An interpreter was needed to interview most Mayangna individuals since they only speak their traditional language. Field notes were also recorded by the researcher as documentation of interactions with Indigenous leadership as well as participant observation during a day-long meeting between the Mayangna community of Musawás and the various levels of government (GTI and Central Government) as they negotiated the peaceful release of 8 imprisoned colonists. This meeting brought to the forefront key governance issues in the region.
4.6.4 Data analysis

All interviews were transcribed by the researcher while in the field. Documentaries were also transcribed to prepare them for analysis. All data was categorized according to type and method of collection. Qualitative data was catalogued using NVivo 12, a software designed to organize and analyze such data (Richards, 1999). Qualitative data was categorized as interviews, reports, news articles, documentaries and song lyrics. Quantitative data from reports and journal articles were grouped in their own category.

Table 4.1: Characterization of interview participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Interview Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activists</td>
<td>Activist 1</td>
<td>Managua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activist 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activist 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activist 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activist 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activist 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activist 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musicians</td>
<td>Musician 1</td>
<td>Managua and neighbouring municipalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Musician 2</td>
<td>BOSAWAS (Mayangna musicians)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Musician 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Musician 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Musician 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mayangna musician 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elders</td>
<td>Elder 1</td>
<td>BOSAWAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elder 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elder 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community members</td>
<td>Mayangna community member 1</td>
<td>BOSAWAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community leaders</td>
<td>Mayangna community leader 1</td>
<td>BOSAWAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mayangna community leader 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the analysis of the qualitative data, coding was carried out implementing inductive and deductive approaches (Neale, 2016). The deductive stage of coding adhered to categories stemming from the research questions, since, as Neale affirms, data analysis must have a guiding
purpose which is to eventually contribute toward answering the original research questions (p. 1098). An inductive approach to coding was implemented as themes and concepts emerged from the interview questions. These codes were later applied to the analysis of song lyrics.

The first segment to be coded and analyzed were the interviews which were also subdivided by questions asked to the participants as well as by type of participant. An analysis of each group was carried out as appropriate, allowing for a comparison of responses based on their role in the Misión BOSAWAS movement as well as their geographic location (Pacific vs. Atlantic). This first analysis generated emerging themes and subthemes for further consideration and for the analysis of song lyrics. Subsequently, government documents, news articles and documentary transcripts were coded and analyzed by the researcher using NVivo 12 in order to obtain contextual information. Finally, song lyrics were coded and analyzed according to the themes that emerged from the analysis of the Interviews. Further analysis of song lyrics was carried out implementing aspects of Critical Discourse Analysis following Fairclough recommendations for research (2015).

4.7 Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations for this project were not few and the researcher sought to address them throughout the entire duration of the data collection, analysis and dissemination of findings. For example, all interview participants freely volunteered to be part of the research. The interviews were transcribed while in the field, and the recordings destroyed immediately. This was done in order to ensure their privacy. A valuable tool to ensure that all ethics considerations were addressed was the process of approval by the Research Ethics Board (REB) of the University of Guelph. This process required specific training and review of the research plan adhering to the Tri-Council Policy: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), with special attention to the Cross Cultural Research Guidelines. Final approval was granted on January 30th,
2017 for research to be carried out from January to December 2017 (REB Certificate # 16NV042). A copy of the REB certificate is included in Appendix 2.

These ethical considerations emerged from the fact that this project engaged Indigenous communities who continue to live in situations of oppression. These communities have historically been constructed as “other”, as less civilized and inferior by mainstream society. In the past, research has been used from this perspective as a tool to strip Indigenous communities of their identity and rights, rendering it “one of colonialism’s most sordid legacies” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This concern was taken as a guiding element during the interviews and observations with the Mayangna. As a commitment toward the Mayangna community, the researcher will give a report on this project’s findings and will provide edited audiovisual material of their meetings with the government as requested by the community’s leadership.

The research also involved interviewing activists, some of whom have been, in the past, the recipients of violence or threats because of their work in fighting corruption in Nicaragua’s land access system. Ensuring their confidentiality was thus an important task for the researcher. It is important to note that confidentiality was not as important for musicians and performers since their involvement and stance regarding the issue was very much public knowledge because of the nature of such involvement.

A final, unexpected ethical consideration emerged during field visits to the community of BOSAWAS. Upon arrival in Musawás, it came to the knowledge of the researcher and her companion, musician and activist Ernesto López, that Mayangna leadership had recently captured eight colonists. Relationships among all levels of government, both Indigenous (territorial and communal) and mestizo, were quite tense at the time of the visit. GTI and community leadership
allowed us into the territory and asked that we document the conflict as best we could since the presence of reporters and researchers as well as recording equipment is quite scarce in the zone. While the researcher and companion still attended the negotiation meeting, recorded all testimonials and Discourses, we abstained from becoming involved by adhering to our observant roles.

4.8 Positionality

The topic of positionality is one that is often addressed by proponents of CDA-informed research. For example, Fairclough (2015) considers that, in carrying out CDA, the researcher brings a repertoire of knowledge, cognitive processes and experiences that inform the analysis he or she carries out. Van Dijk (2003) suggests that one of CDA’s strengths is that it is, indeed, biased since it departs from the premise that power dynamics in society need to be adjusted in order to address issues of social justice.

For this project, my position as a researcher is deeply informed by my identity as a mestizo, Nicaraguan-born woman. At the same time, I cannot deny my identity as a Canadian-trained researcher and the repercussions of this identity on the dynamics at play during the stages of data collection, particularly. Finally, my sensitivity and commitment toward the Misión BOSAWAS movement is heightened by my identity as a musician. This multi-factored identity, added to my personal sensitivities toward Indigenous struggles in Central America, have greatly influenced my investment and analysis throughout this project. At the same time, this identity has limited my access to the Mayangna community, specifically the women in Musawás. Not speaking Mayangna required that I rely on a translator who, in Musawás, were all male community members.
I come to this research with some assumptions that are compatible with a CDA approach and that are informed by existing research and personal observation. Such assumptions include the premise that articulation of national identity, development and justice in Nicaragua has placed Indigenous people at a position of disadvantage. I also come with the belief that the power dynamics behind the official Discourse in Nicaragua continue to enforce this position of disempowerment. Departing from these assumptions, I have set to evaluate these power dynamics in great detail, seeking conclusions that may contribute toward change.

4.9 Limitations

The methodological choice for an in-depth case study constitutes one of the strengths of this research. This approach allowed for a careful look at many of the factors that compound the complexity of this issue. This research successfully gathered the perspectives of key informants both in Managua and in the Reserve, thus listening for the perspectives from the Pacific and the Atlantic. Furthermore, the triangulation of sources of data made this research project more complete as it includes official government documents, media, as well as lyrics. This was further complemented by primary data.

This research project also had some limitations. The first limitation relates to the timeliness of data collection. Due to necessary steps in the ethical review process, the data collection for this project could only begin in 2017. By this time, the organization Misión BOSAWAS was undergoing a major reorganization and the festivals were not held after 2016. This meant that I was unable to interview audience members while in attendance at the festivals. This limited the gathering of the experiences of those who attended the festivals and who were not connected to the movement or to the topic on a deeper level.
Additionally, the difficulties in travelling to the Reserve and within the Reserve limited the number of Mayangna musicians and community members who were interviewed as part of this project. Travel within the Reserve was further complicated by an outbreak of grisi siknis\textsuperscript{11} in an area of the Reserve as well as tensions among some communities due to accusations of illegal selling of land. Finally, only one Mayangna woman was interviewed, and this limitation was a result of the fact that Mayangna communities tend to be male dominated. The women tend to avoid speaking to outsiders and the researcher was not fluent in Mayangna. The translators in these communities were all male. This research then, only gathered the voice of one Mayangna woman and this was filtered through the presence of a male interpreter.

4.10 Summary

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the methodology and the methods used in this research project. First, by providing a synopsis of the project’s analytical framework, the chapter establishes the contribution of CDA toward this problem-centered research. I also present the criteria behind the choice of case within this research design, arguing that carrying out a qualitative, in-depth, single case study is conducive to closely examining the power dynamics evident in the Discourse around justice, human rights, Indigeneity and development in Nicaragua. Through semi-structured interviews, this research has attempted to gather voices of as many entities involved in this movement as possible, with special attention to those of the Mayangna

\textsuperscript{11} Grisi Siknis is considered a culture-bound illness described as an involuntary spirit possession where the host displays erratic violent behaviour. This illness has been reported among the Miskitos and Mayangna of Nicaragua. More information can be found in Wedel’s 2012 article entitled “Involuntary mass spirit possession among the Miskito” in Anthropology & Medicine, 19(3), 303-314.
leaders and community. Drawing from the field of forestry, the quantitative data provided greater context and concrete evidence of the environmental impact and implication of increasing colonist presence in BOSAWAS. All of this was carried out from a position of solidarity with the Mayangna as well as respect and careful attention to the ethical questions inherent in this project.
PART 3: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

5 HISTORY AND ESTABLISHMENT OF BOSAWAS

5.1 Introduction: A history of displacement, divisions and interventions

In order to gain a fuller understanding of the current context and influencing factors in the situation of land loss in the BOSAWAS Biosphere Reserve, we need to consider Nicaragua’s history and process of national identity formation from the time of colonization to the present. This history has influenced the patterns of land use in this Central American country as well as the attitudes toward Indigenous peoples as experienced by the Mayangna communities to this day. This chapter identifies key historical events, delineating the general trends that established the perception of Indigenous peoples by Nicaragua’s mainstream society, particularly during the defining decades surrounding the 1821 independence. It also analyses how the construction of the definition of Indigenous identity was solidified and used during the processes of revolution from the 1960s to the late 1970s, how this revolution led to the dislocation of Indigenous communities in Nicaragua’s Caribbean region during the counter revolution of the 1980s and, finally, the significance and ongoing challenges of the establishment of the Biosphere Reserve of BOSAWAS (see Figure 5.1 for a timeline of key historical events).

In this chapter I will illustrate that the misconceptions and prejudice toward Indigenous peoples which emerged during European colonization, set the stage for systemic discrimination in such a way that Indigenous people are seen as expendable and as obstacles to the establishment of the Nicaraguan state and development. I will first carry out a brief analysis of the divided nature of Nicaragua, a division that is influenced by the country’s geography and location in the continent
as well as of its competing colonizing agents. I will then consider the influences of this on the struggle to define what it meant to be Nicaraguan, what was the desired identity construction and its connection to legitimate access to land. In doing so, I will also consider how this duality evolved into antagonistic political currents and, finally, I will examine the role of Indigenous peoples in the revolution, counter revolution and their effect in situating Indigenous peoples in contemporary Nicaragua. Overall, through this chapter, I intend to expand our understanding of Nicaraguan society’s perception of Indigenous identity and to set a base line as we analyze the deep repercussion of this perception in the lives of the Mayangna communities currently living in BOSAWAS.

The established identity that a nation portrays internally to its citizens and externally to other nations is a social construct. This construct provides a reference for groups and individuals, and outlines parameters for belonging and for exclusion (Inac & Unal, 2013). The creation of this construct is set in motion by individuals and groups in positions of power (Borland, 2002) who make concrete decisions regarding the cultural practices and the groups to be included or excluded in this process. This identity is built by the Discourse articulated by these entities in positions of power, a Discourse that constitutes social roles, identities and relationships (Wodak, 2009). Such Discourse follows specific ideologies which concretely build the community that they have imagined (Anderson, 1991). The solidification of this identity involves a constant attempt to make this imagined community a reality. In the case of Central America, the processes of identity formation were tumultuous and crucial in the years immediately preceding and following the region’s 1821 independence from Spain, and centered on dealing with what was labeled the “Indigenous problem” (Díaz Arias, 2007). In Nicaragua, this process of identity formation has been far from simple. Indigenous communities today still experience the residual effect of the
deeply-rooted divisions and attitudes articulated by those with the power since the time of colonization.

5.2 The Nicaraguan process of identity formation

5.2.1 Nicaragua’s physical geography and national identity

When it comes to its physical geography, Nicaragua is divided into three main regions: “The Pacific lowlands, the central highlands, and the Caribbean lowlands” (Merrill, 1994). The Central highlands provide a natural, physical division for the two lowland regions. Each region has unique characteristics that have influenced its economic and sociocultural development. The Pacific lowlands, an area that has been extensively exploited for commercial agriculture (Newson, 1987), is mostly flat, except for a number of active volcanoes. This region is also characterized by the presence of two large lakes: The Nicaragua Lake and the Managua Lake, also known as Cocibolca and Xolotlán (McKaye et al., 1995). The presence of these lakes, the enriching ash from the volcanoes, and the flat terrain have made it possible for this region to be “densely populated and well cultivated” (Merrill, 1994, p. 56). The Central highlands are located northeast and east of the Pacific lowlands. This region’s terrain is rugged and mountainous and has “very few significant streams” (Merrill, 1994, p. 56). However, moisture and rain from the Caribbean have made the region suitable for farming even though the area remains “lightly populated” (Merrill, p. 57). The largest region in Nicaragua is the Caribbean lowlands, making about 50% of the country’s territory. This region is characterized by a hot and humid climate. Its forests are tropical rainforests and most of its soils are infertile. The Caribbean lowlands are scarcely populated and are home to a number of Indigenous communities (Baracco & González, 2016).

The Nicaraguan process of identity formation has been a very complex one, marked by displacements, divisions (Stocks, 2003), U.S. interventions (Bulmer-Thomas, 1990) and a negative
construction of Indigeneity (Días Arias, 2007). To this day, Nicaraguan identity is characterized by a duality clearly demarcated by the country’s geography and its accompanying history: a history that is permeated by the repercussions of foreign intervention and deeply-rooted colonizing or political efforts of competing forces. National identity formed, and continues to be formed, under the catalytic agents of these antagonistic factors, competing to gain or recover power (Henighan, 2014). In a constant struggle over domination, entities such as the Spanish and the British crowns and, later, the Conservatives, Liberals, Sandinistas Revolutionaries and Contra Revolutionaries tried to overcome their opponents by establishing a sense of unified identity. This identity has experienced a number of historical adaptations but has generally been expressed as the homogenous mestizo12 race that erased or ignored the role and rights of many indigenous and black peoples living in the territory (Díaz Arias, 2007). The current situation of BOSAWAS falls within this complex and difficult historical and social context.

In his book Sandino’s Nation, Henighan (2014) describes Nicaragua as the only Central American country where driving from the Pacific coast to the Atlantic is impossible. The mountainous terrain and lack of well-maintained roads limit both public transportation and private vehicles from making the journey even as of 2018. As Henighan attests, this geographic isolation is truly an embodiment of this region’s historical settlement patterns by “people of different backgrounds who spoke languages that were not mutually comprehensible and were governed by different regimes” (p. 21). From the 1860s until around the 1960s, the Spanish and the British regimes, exerted two different approaches to colonization, one based on force and the other by establishing alliances. Their conflicting interests fostered antagonistic relationships between

12 In Latin America, a “mestizo” is an individual of mixed ancestry, usually Indigenous and Spanish.
groups in the Pacific and Atlantic regions as each aligned itself with one colonizing power over the other (Ortega Hegg & Bulloven, 1987).

5.2.2 A nation of dualities

The struggle between British and Spanish styles of colonization contributed in concrete ways to the duality of Nicaraguan identity (Baracco, 2016; Dozier et al., 1985). After their arrival in 1502, the Spanish colonizers, at times divided among themselves, settled in the Pacific region and established centers of power in the cities of León and Granada while the British established themselves in the Atlantic coast (Henighan, 2014). The names of the main cities of the Pacific were already a symbol and exercise of Spanish domination as well as of the rivalry within the Spanish leadership in the colonies. These cities were named after cities located in different regions of the Spanish Kingdom. León is located in the Catholic-influenced Castille, the North of Spain, and Granada in Islamic-influenced Andalucía, the South (Barton, 2009). In Nicaragua, the León and Granada rivalry became embodied in the dispute over the location of the capital until the city of Managua was established as the center of power in 1852 (Borland, 2002). The Spanish colonization model was based on the use of military and religious power to violently assimilate the inhabitants (Ortega Hegg & Bulloven, 1987). In the meantime, the resistance of ethnic groups in the Atlantic coast against slavery and Spanish colonization was strengthened by the arrival of pirates originally from England and other surrounding countries (Pineda, 2006). By 1610, they had driven the “last Spanish mission out of the Atlantic” (Henighan, p. 23), further removing the Atlantic Indigenous communities from Spanish influence and increasingly dividing the nation.

13 The ethnic groups of the Caribbean include Indigenous groups as well as peoples of mixed African and Indigenous ancestry, namely the Miskitos.
The colonization of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua followed the “model of indirect rule” typically attributed to the British who took advantage of the resistance against Spanish domination already existing in the Atlantic (Ortega Hegg & Bulloven, 1987). By establishing military alliance with the Miskito, the coast’s largest, best-defined ethnic group, the colonizers were able to keep Spanish presence at bay. This alliance, Ortega Hegg & Bulloven argue, strengthened the Miskitos and established them in a “hegemonic role in the region in relation to the other ethnic groups that were subdued and even enslaved” (p. 604). Among these minority groups were the Mayangna who began to be referred to as the “Sumus”, a derogatory term that means “dumb or stupid” in Miskito language (Howard, 1998). The dominant place of the Miskito became further consolidated through the work of Moravian missionaries who, in their religious zeal, developed the written form of the Miskito language. These missionaries ensured the primacy of the Protestant faith in the Atlantic, bringing about yet another significant difference from the Pacific coast of Nicaragua, known for its deep Catholic roots (Hardman, 2010) and Spanish-influenced architecture and Cathedrals (Henighan, 2014; Bethell, 1984). This British and Spanish influence and evangelization were key in deepening the dual identity favoured by a geographically divided territory.

5.2.3 Political opposites, foreign intervention and national identity

In the West, as the Spanish colonizing presence became further established throughout the 17th century, children of Spanish colonizers born in the colonies and known as the “criollos” or creoles, further established their seat of power in Granada and León (Radell, 1969). Once their

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14 A style usually favoured by British colonizers, used in Latin America, Africa and other colonies. Under this model, Indigenous or local leaders would oversee the daily activities of communities, holding power over their own people but always holding an inferior, subservient role before the colonists. This fostered divisions among ethnic groups.
interests began to clash with those of the authorities in the Spanish Kingdom, they began campaigning for independence from the European stronghold. These interests included taxes, profit distribution and the push toward expanding their trade relationships beyond Spain and into Britain (Lynch, 1985; Ann, 1985). Their position of power ensured that the political life of Nicaragua revolved around the Pacific (Henighan, 2014). Political tendencies eventually evolved into polar forces with divergent views such as the “trade-oriented, often free-thinking Liberals and agriculture-based, more devout Conservatives” (Henighan, p. 24). Besides this, Nicaragua’s history of identity formation and economic development has taken place in a war of opposites and the perpetual presence of U.S. interventions, competing alongside whichever party happened to be in power, for access and control of this nation’s natural resources (Berryman, 1984). Diamond (2013) argues that the conflicts between these parties and foreign powers often left peasants, Indigenous and black Nicaraguans forgotten and struggling to survive. The process of independence was in many ways then, similar to previous processes of exclusion and struggle for homogeneity in favour of access to power by these entities.

The period that came after the 1821 independence from Spain was one marked by “class antagonism and political tyranny” (Woodward, 1985, p. 471). Ortega Hegg & Bulloven (1987) argue that, after independence, the Spanish pattern of assimilation in Nicaragua with regard to the multi-ethnic nature of the region continued with renewed force. The creole elite secured the establishment of a “single market economy, one single law and one single language” (Ortega Hegg & Bulloven, p. 605). Ethnic plurality was considered to be a threat to this unity and, therefore, the groups in the Atlantic were forced by the Pacific creoles or mestizo to “abandon their characteristic identity and assume that of the majority population of the Pacific and central parts of the country” (p. 605), thus establishing Nicaragua’s identity as a mestizo nation. Within this system of national
formation, race became connected to levels of economic power, culture and education in concrete and constructed ways. Indigenous communities suffered the disintegration of their families since their men often had to leave their communities in search of agricultural labour while a growing mestizo population held better jobs and had land and capital. As Henighan (2014) asserts, the Indigenous identity became associated with “social and economic disadvantages” (p. 22) and this caused many individuals with Indigenous ancestry to reject their “Náhuat-Chorotega heritage” (p. 22).

Howard (1998) argues that the attitudes that materialized in laws and sociopolitical patterns during the colony and later independence, are still behind the conflicts concerning land and natural resources in BOSAWAS. These attitudes are ones of prejudice and ethnocentricty that have negated “linguistic and ethnic plurality” since their inception (Ortega Hegg & Bulloven, 1987, p. 106). This negation had concrete consequences that followed the process of national formation. Once the removal of the Spanish monarchy as a source of identity and political power became effective, the region’s creole leadership faced the challenge of bringing together a nation, an “imagined community” that could defend itself from external threats and whose ties depended on a “perceived sense of cultural homogeneity” (Tatar, 2005, p. 182). Díaz Arias (2007) suggests that even though this construction gained force after independence, it began even before this pivotal event since the official Nicaraguan Discourse denominated this nation as one that was homogenously “mestiza” or mixed. This left both Indigenous and Black groups from the Atlantic and the Pacific out of the construction of national identity.

Earle (2007) argues that the concept of Indigeneity as a cultural and ethnic category was a colonial invention. The original inhabitants of what is now known as the American continent were often unaware of the existence of other societies or denied connections with them prior to the
arrival of the Europeans. The construct of “Indian” was a tool to incorporate them “into the elite idea of the Nation is Spanish America” (Earle, 2007, p. 2). As nations established their identity, reference to Indigenous heroes pointed toward the future and not the ancient past. This construction was relevant in the Nicaraguan process of identity and nation formation. Indigenous people were practically erased from Pacific Nicaragua through policies that forced them to abandon their languages, cultural practices and, most importantly, their communal lands (Gould, 1998). Having lost these elements, communities were ruptured, and Indigenous people were thrown onto the labour market where they occupied the lowest places. The elite, then perpetuated the myth of a mestizo Nicaragua.

As this homogeneous sense of identity solidified, there were concrete repercussions for Indigenous groups who were dispossessed of their ethnic heritage as well as of their lands. As Díaz Arias (2007) asserts, society transformed the “indio” into a ladino or person defined as non-Indigenous, in order to absorb their land. Taking land from Indigenous groups was justified by the year 1893 as the Liberal party projected an image of these groups as primitive obstacles to progress because they were ignorant and did not make efficient use of communal lands. As Gould (1998) suggests: “Elites projected images of Indians as marginal primitives who blocked progress because of their ignorance and wasteful practices on their communal properties” (p. 13). The belief that they were ignorant and that they lacked education also rendered them as unworthy of having the same access to rights that other citizens had. This justified the dismantling of their communities through land appropriation and devaluing of their traditions. The abolition of the ejidos or Indigenous communal lands in the mid 1800s in the Pacific stripped Indigenous families, individuals and communities of their identity; they began to consider themselves “simply Nicaraguan peasants” (Henighan, 2014, p. 27) and reference to their heritage became undesirable.
Stocks (2003) recognizes in this understanding of identity was a way to construct and enact access to resources through justified dispossession. By building up the argument that Indigenous peoples and communities were ignorant and incapable of sound administration of their land, it followed logically that non-Indigenous people would be more conducive owners and administrators. According to Howard (1998), this attitude seems to permeate the BOSAWAS land conflict as will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

5.3 The Somoza and Sandino historic struggle

On February 21, 1934, a key event took place in Nicaragua, one that would mark new, violent beginnings of domination and resistance to it and which will continue to exist in the Nicaraguan consciousness for decades. On this date, Nicaragua’s National Guard, under the direction of Anastasio Somoza García, killed rebel guerilla leader Augusto César Sandino. A deep investigation of what this assassination meant is beyond the scope of this thesis. It is important, however, to examine what these two key figures and the political ideologies they embodied meant in order to deepen our understanding of the construction of Indigeneity in Nicaragua as well as what the Sandinista revolution did for Indigenous people and governance of their land. Henighan (2014) posits that the death of Sandino marked the beginning of what historians and other scholars (Crawley, 1979; Colburn, 2012) labelled the “Somoza Dynasty” whereby Anastasio Somoza García passed down the presidency to his sons Luis Somoza Debayle and Anastasio Somoza Debayle until the triumph of the Sandinista Revolution of 1979. For more than 40 years this family controlled a number of industries in the nation through ownership of major companies in the
ranching, mining, cement, agriculture and blood sectors\textsuperscript{15} (Diamond, 2013). The endorsement and military support from the United States allowed Somoza and his family to amass economic power very quickly and granted them the military power to intimidate the Nicaraguan people with their cruelty and violence (Gobat, 2005, p. 273). Sandino, a mestizo peasant, armed himself with the support of other peasants and his claims to Indigenous ancestry. He is quoted as stating as follows: “I am Nicaraguan, and I am proud because in my veins flows above all the blood of the Indian race, which by some atavism encompasses the mystery of being patriotic, loyal and sincere” (Barraco, 2011, p. 204). He became an adamant fighter against United States’ intrusion and control of the resources of Nicaragua, which he believed should ultimately belong to the peasant working class (Henighan, 2014).

The amount of economic power that was accrued rather quickly by the Somoza family was a key component of what the opposition protested against. Sandino and his followers, as well as Conservatives and some Liberal opponents, found the unequal distribution of resources and land and the tax breaks granted to Somoza companies unacceptable (Williams, 1985). It was also unacceptable that the peasant population had to struggle to survive without improvements in the health and educational systems while Somoza owned more than 10% of this country’s agricultural land (Diamond, 2013). In a system of corruption and appropriation, many rural families in central Nicaragua were dispossessed by the National Guard or other large-scale coffee or cotton producers and cattle ranchers. They were often expected to work temporarily, clearing forests and planting crops. Many of these families had to eventually migrate to the Atlantic because the Pacific and

\textsuperscript{15} Somoza owned the Plasmapherisis company. This company was in the business of purchasing blood from Nicaraguans at low cost and reselling it to the health system in the United States. This company was burned by Sandinista rebels during the revolution (Diamond, 2013).
central regions were already owned by Somoza or other families (Heyck, 1989), thus setting a
trend in the perception of the Atlantic as empty land that was free for the taking. Inspired by the
heroic figure of the fallen Sandino, Somoza’s opponents grew gradually stronger and more upset
over this dispossession and uneven distribution of resources. Many argue that the most significant
catalyst for the fall of this family’s dynasty happened after the 1972 earthquake that destroyed the
capital city of Managua (Kirk 1992; Diamond 2013; Williams 1985; Weber 1981). In a most
extreme embodiment of corruption, Somoza used the foreign aid sent for the victims of the
earthquake to purchase construction material from his own companies, to start his own family
bank, and to expand his family’s capital. The indignation felt by the opposition was a real impetus
since now the general population could see the degree of corruption and disregard for suffering
Nicaraguans and, thus, many offered their support to the young revolutionaries who were growing
more organized.

5.4 The Indigenous face of the revolution

An important aspect in the construction of indigeneity in Nicaragua comes from the Pacific
region and is deeply connected to the events surrounding the revolution and the role of the
Monimboseños\textsuperscript{16} in its organization. From before the time of colonization to the present day, the
City of Masaya and, particularly, the town of Monimbó has been considered the home of the
Chorotega Indigenous group and cultural heritage (Field, 1999). However, Monimbó’s identity
and Indigenous culture has evolved into a hybrid expression of Catholic religiosity and Indigenous
traditional elements. We find vivid examples of this in the celebrations of Catholic Patron Saints
such as St. Sebastian and St. Jerome where folkloric dances are central to the town’s festivities

\textsuperscript{16} Demonym for people from Monimbó, a small town in the province of Masaya.
The role of the Monimbó population in the revolution became decisive when, after Somoza’s government’s assassination of journalist and opposition leader Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, the community gathered to offer a Catholic Mass on two occasions as a sign of protest. Both gatherings were marked by clashes with Somoza’s National Guard (Henighan, 2014). Monimboseños “resisted, using home-made bombs, hunting rifles and improvised weaponry” (Tatar, p. 184). This act of resistance turned Monimbó into a symbol of courage and revolutionary impetus since “Monimboseños became important not only as the guardians of the nation’s Indigenous traditions, but also as the exemplars of revolutionary action” (Borland, 2002, p. 86). This was later reflected in the music and dances which were crucial in uniting a resistance well beyond the triumph of the revolution on July 19th, 1979.

The arts, particularly music and dance, were key to the triumph of the revolution as well as to the period of renewed national identity formation immediately following it. Through music written and performed by the Mejía Godoy brothers, among others, the Sandinista movement raised awareness, disseminated information and secured support for the revolution. Such was the case that after the 1979 triumph, Commander Thomas Borges reportedly affirmed that the revolution was accomplished “with guitars and poems, and with bullets” (Borland, 2002, p. 86). Once Somoza was ousted, music was a privileged way in which this revolution reorganized the social hierarchy established by this dictator because it gave prominence to the work and creativity of ordinary Nicaraguans, the poor mestizo and Indigenous peasants who were the protagonists of the revolution (Borland; Cardenal, 2004). Dance, along with music, became more than just a symbolic representation of resistance to foreign interventions, particularly U.S. interventions. The Sandinista government sought to identify Nicaraguan identity as a mestizo race with profound Indigenous and revolutionary roots. Borland attests that folk dance that “featured the Indigenous-
identifiable baile de la marimba (marimba dance), proved an accessible vehicle for uniting the various regions of the country in a shared national identity and for demonstrating the nation’s unique character to the world” (p. 77). The arts were then a tangible celebration and reorganizing agent of a society that acknowledged the historic contribution of Indigenous people to the revolution and cultural identity of Nicaragua.

5.5 The post-revolution period (1979 - 1984)

The leaders of the Nicaraguan popular revolution faced an overwhelming challenge after Somoza was ousted and the National Guard dismantled. The revolution had left this nation of about three million people with 50,000 dead, 100,000 wounded, and significant destruction in cities such as León and Managua (Krujit, 2011). Not only did the Sandinista leadership have to deal with this human and material loss, but they had to also unify the nation before internal and external threats. The revolution stood as a challenge to foreign domination of economic resources. Recovery of national power and equal access to resources was paramount for the new government, at least in their expressed priorities (Ortega Hegg & Bulloven, 1987). The epitome of the external challenge was articulated as U.S. Imperialism while internal threats were articulated as social inequalities. The new project of nation and identity formation had to be strong enough to counteract both of these threats. Bulloven (1989) argues that “in order to construct a new understanding of centuries of exploitation, the Sandinista revolution aimed at a collective construction of a new society; ethnic division would be a serious obstacle in that project” (p. 129). This fear of division caused a neglect of the ethnic dimension of the liberation struggle. Building a solid, unified nation that stood in defiance to the United States and foreign intervention was crucial. Diversity would have been considered a hindrance to achieve this much needed unity. The rhetoric used by the Sandinista made references only to the history of foreign interference in
the nation’s economic development, focusing on reinforcement of a homogenously mestizo ethnic identity. The specific needs of groups, particularly Indigenous groups in the Atlantic, were minimized or erased under this approach. This further deepened the historical colonial mentality that the Nicaraguan mestizo population has had on Indigenous people and their communities, particularly those of the Atlantic. Once again, after the revolution, this relationship became marked by “an imposed ethnocentric vision” (Ortega Hegg & Bulloven, p. 606) that neglected to recognize the cultural, linguistic and ethnic pluralistic nature of Nicaragua.

Beyond the tangible losses of the revolution, the period following its triumph saw a process of cultural assimilation and homogenization very similar to the ones lived during colonization and independence. Even though music and dance incorporated Indigenous and peasant contributions in a central way, it was the non-Indigenous, middle-class elites who made the important decisions regarding what was presented as aesthetically desirable and authentically Nicaraguan now that Somoza was not there to do it. Borland (2012) argues that these judgements contributed to a renewed “reproduction of unequal social relationships by giving dominant sectors the power to define the terms of the cultural debate” (p. 79). The new impetus of the revolution sought to redefine folk music by reviving the marimba music and dance of the Monimboseños and their Chorotega heritage. The focus on folklore aimed to strengthen feelings of connection and affinity, glossing over ethnic differences and leaving Indigenous groups from the Atlantic out of the new process of identity formation. Again, Borland suggests that by refocusing on the dances and music of the folk and reviving and revaluing traditional arts, the Sandinista found a way to “create a ‘new man’ and in the process, transform traditional culture” (p. 86). Even if the new man that made up the new Nicaragua had Indigenous roots, he was homogenously mestizo and of the working class.
This Indigenous cultural heritage not only came exclusively from the Pacific but was a seed planted in the past, one that was carried in the blood of revolutionaries (Mejía Godoy, 1977).

The Somoza dictatorship and the material losses, such as loss of lives and destruction of infrastructure, experienced during the revolution and later, the counter revolution, further deepened the trend of Indigenous and peasant migration, displacement and land encroachment. Near the end of the revolutionary war, for example, when the image of peasants and Indigenous people as violent revolutionaries was deeply engrained into the national perception, the Somoza-led National Guard dedicated themselves to destroying rural communities in the “North Central highlands of the Pacific between 1975 and 1976” (Hansen et al., 2016, p. 160). This included destroying crops, homes and livestock (Enriquez, 1991). As Hansen et al., articulate: “An estimated 80% of the rural population in the northwestern countryside was uprooted and displaced during this period, many into temporary refugee camps or remoted forested areas such as Siuna” (p. 160). We must highlight that Siuna is located near the Atlantic, about 80 km east from the boundaries of the BOSAWAS reserve. Furthermore, the years of revolutionary war saw profound loss of property and increased poverty, particularly in rural Nicaragua. Hansen et al., see this as a result of the “barbaric military campaign” (p. 161) championed by both Somocistas and Sandinistas. Poverty and oppression were a significant factor that pushed “migration into agricultural frontiers during the late 1970s” (p. 161).

5.6 The years of counter-revolution (1981 – 1990)

The drastic changes implemented by the revolution such as the exclusive control of government by the nine revolutionary commanders of the Sandinista Party (Krujit, 2011), the agrarian reform and the nationalization of property formerly owned by the Somoza family and their collaborators (Ahmar, 1984; Krujit), alongside the Sandinistas’ clear leftist political leanings,
elicited serious opposition from loyalists to Somoza. The agrarian reform promptly implemented by the new government, for example, was an attempt to reduce class-based inequality and involved large scale land expropriation from wealthy landowners. In this process, “approximately 3 million mz\textsuperscript{17} from nearly 6000 properties were confiscated; nearly one third was from the Somoza family and people with close ties to it” (Deakin et al. 2016, p. 162). Opposition to these measures generated a decade-long struggle that affected Indigenous people of the Atlantic yet again. Key actors of what evolved into the counter-revolutionary war included the Somoza loyalists, the Catholic Church hierarchy and “prominent members of the National Guard, members of the Somoza family and those groups whose interests were hit hard by the revolutionary reforms” (Krujit, 2011, p. 67).

Among these entities perhaps the strongest and most important was the U.S. military assistance which established the Contra army with a training base in the forests of neighbouring Honduras. These forests connect to the forests that today make up BOSAWAS. The system that exacerbated this counter revolution, or Contra-Revolución as it is commonly known, is a complex and multi-dimensional one with many sides to the story. For example, while the Sandinista government condemned U.S. intervention and Somoza’s monopoly of resources, the contra and other opposition argued that the Sandinista were corrupt in how they distributed the land taken from the Somoza family, that they betrayed the revolution (Cardenal, 2004), carried out mass executions and human rights abuses, and mistreated Indigenous people (Krujit, 2011; Russell, 1983). Scholars argue that this conflict was fueled by the polarity of the Cold War since the Sandinista were supported by the Soviet Union while the Reagan administration supported the

\textsuperscript{17} The abbreviation ‘mz’ is used for the unit of measure “Manzanas”, commonly used in the Central American rural context. It is roughly the equivalent of a city block.
Contras (Staver et al., 2017; Pineda, 2006). A fair assessment of the two primary sides of the struggle and of their main political stances is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, this work considers the concrete effects of this conflict upon the Indigenous people of Nicaragua, its contribution toward the social perception of these communities and the need for and general attitude toward the unoccupied landscape of the Atlantic.

The Contra war primarily took place in the northern Atlantic Nicaraguan forests between 1980 and 1990 (Stocks, 2007). The location of the U.S.-supported military training camp in rural Honduras was the primary reason for the location of this conflict. Miskito and Mayangna communities, which had traditionally lived in this region, were evacuated from their land during this decade (Stocks; Howard, 1998). The Sandinista army cleared this population in order to be able to defend the rural areas against increasing contra activity. Those who remained to protect their farm or land “risked being kidnapped by the contrast and taken to Honduras” (Hansen et al., 2016, p. 164). This conflict implemented a “low intensity” strategic approach to war by the United States where conflict was of low impact but steady (Ortega Hegg & Bulloven, p. 603), and which, by the midpoint of its ten years, had seen more than 34,000 Nicaraguan deaths; 51.4% of these were contra forces. This armed group’s fighters were primarily young men who came from peasant families from rural communities in Central and Atlantic Nicaragua (Hansen et al. p. 168). Furthermore, Ortega Hegg & Bulloven report that about one third of the damage caused by this war took place in the Atlantic coast and that the number of displaced persons reached more than 25,000 by 1990. Thus, the forests and cities nearest to what would later become the BOSAWAS Biosphere Reserve were the stage for deep human and material losses that were the result of violent encounters between armed groups.
5.7 The road toward autonomy of the Atlantic regions

The Sandinista revolution’s focus and efforts at the construction of a new society that eliminated the oppression of lower classes from an economic perspective left aside the question of ethnic diversity. This translated into policies that glossed over the unique plight of Indigenous people, particularly in the Atlantic. It was believed that Indigenous people needed to be part of the homogenous process of land reformation in order to improve their quality of life, according to the national model. Considering that this approach left Atlantic communities at a loss, Moravian leadership among these communities promoted an attitude of resistance toward Sandinismo and its communist ideology. As early as 1980, one year after the triumph of the revolution, a uniquely Indigenous opposing force emerged. Miskito, Mayangna and Rama Indigenous groups came together to form MISURASATA\(^\text{18}\) which, for many years to come, would be the primary entity that defended the interests of the ethnic communities of the Atlantic until the formation of Yapti Tasba Masraka Nani Asia Takanka (YATAMA)\(^\text{19}\) in 1988 (Cambell, 2007; Ortega Hegg & Bulloven, p. 607).

The animosity that marked the relationship between MISURASATA and the Sandinista government soon became characterized by armed conflict when they demanded recognition and independence for the region. Bulloven (1989) suggests that the United States and MISURASATA

\(^\text{18}\) The MISURASATA Indigenous organization emerged in Nicaragua soon after the triumph of the revolution in 1979. Its acronym stands for “Miskito, Sumu, Rama and Sandinistas together” and its primary goal was to establish autonomy for the Indigenous communities living in the Atlantic region of Nicaragua (Bulloven, 1989)

\(^\text{19}\) The YATAMA is a Miskito organization. Its name derives from the Miskito name: Yapti Tasba Masraka Nani Asia Takanka which means “descendants of Mother Earth. This group emerged out of the MISURASATA, following the Miskito traditions and, eventually became an organized political party. The YATAMA was key in the autonomy process for Caribben Indigenous communities (Campbell, 2007).
mutually benefitted from each other. The United States’ anti-Sandinista inspired and, eventually, provided financial support for MISURASATA while the United States “saw benefits in an Indian struggle against a Latin American state” (p. 124). MISURASATA argued that their traditional territorial claims and identity as an ethnic nation were not addressed by the agrarian land reform that the government offered Nicaraguan peasants. For them the issue was certainly more than just one of class differences; it was an ancestral, historic struggle for self-determination, access to natural resources, communal property and the ability to express their traditional ways of life (Bulloven). The Sandinista government could not ignore the increasingly strong Indigenous organization. Thus, the Commission for Peace and Autonomy was established in 1984 as an attempt on behalf of the government to deal with these unique issues in a non-military manner.

The establishment of the National Commission for Peace and Autonomy showed a new approach by the Sandinista to finding a solution to the ethnic problem while still strengthening the revolution into a united, yet multi ethnic nation (Bulloven, 1989). Some suggest that this was the Sandinista’s attempt to control the many sources of armed conflict throughout the country. Appeasing the Indigenous communities of the Atlantic would allow the government to focus military resources on the contra struggle while earning the loyalty of the Indigenous communities (Pineda, 2006). This commission embarked on a long process of consultations and negotiations to ensure the self-determination of ethnic groups in the Atlantic. The commission’s work culminated in the adoption of the statutes for regional autonomy on September 2, 1987 (Baracco, 2011; González, 2011), the first of its kind in Latin America (Bulloven). These statutes established the RAAN (Región Autónoma Atlántico Norte) and the RAAS (Región Autónoma Atlántico Sur) and declared that the forests, water and land that had traditionally belonged to Atlantic communities, fell under the jurisdiction of their respective autonomous governments. It declared that
“communal land is inalienable; it cannot be sold, donated, encumbered or mortgaged; and that inhabitants of the communal lands have the right to work parcels of the community property and to the use of the produce of their work” (Austin, 1999, p. 1). Overall, the process of autonomy is considered to have been a positive start with great potential for new relationships between the central government and Indigenous people (Díaz-Polanco, 1998). This seemingly positive step, however, was still characterized by challenges, as described in the section that follows.

5.8 Post-Sandinista era and establishment of BOSAWAS (since 1991)

The Sandinista electoral defeat of 1990 brought about yet another major overhaul in Nicaragua’s political landscape and national unity and highlighted the need to deal with issues of land tenure. Violeta Barrios de Chamorro became the first female president of a country in economic recession (Hansen et al., 2016), with a foreign debt of over US $10 billion and a 40% to 50% unemployment rate (Arnson & Holiday, 1991). Another major challenge in the midst of this economic landscape was the demobilization of the Contra and Sandinista armies. About 100,000 soldiers and military officials had to be reincorporated into other industries and regions. One of the ways in which the Chamorro administration dealt with this was to resettle them in an area close to the Atlantic, the area surrounding what is now the BOSAWAS Biosphere Reserve (Staver et al., 2007). This process of resettlement brought its own set of conflicts among settlers and between the settlers and Indigenous residents already living in the region. The creation of the BOSAWAS Reserve was an attempt to curtail these conflicts while preserving the region’s biodiversity and sovereignty of Indigenous people (Stocks, 2007).

Foreseeing the threat from increasing demands on the land as a result of the influx of families to the region in the process of disarmament, the Chamorro government signed Decree No. 44-91 in November, 1991, officially establishing BOSAWAS as a National Reserve (Asamblea
Nacional, 1991). The document states that its primary intention was to halt the expansion of the agricultural frontier (Staver et al., 2007). This would protect biodiversity and Indigenous people from the pressures of mining and timber companies as well as the potential expansion of the agricultural frontier driven by settlers (McNeely, 2003). Deakin et al. (2016) note that the government did not consult or survey the area properly so that demarcation of the reserve “placed several communities and Sandinista cooperatives north of the Siuna-Waslala highway inside the BOSAWAS nuclear zone” (p. 171). Conflict emerged out of the fact that the decree asserts that BOSAWAS was created for the conservation of biodiversity, water and livelihood of Indigenous communities while strictly prohibiting commercial exploitation of forest resources (Howard, 1998, p. 21). These Sandinista communities and cooperatives were already well established and already engaged in production for the profit and benefit of their non-Indigenous members.

5.8.1 The BOSAWAS forests and biodiversity

According to official documents, the BOSAWAS Biosphere is the largest protected tropical rainforest in Central America. The Reserve belongs to an area formally referred to as the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor (Deakin et al., 2016) and encompasses a total of 8,000 km² (see Figure 5.1). It is divided into a 3,300 km² core zone and the remaining area is the buffer zone. Agriculture is not allowed in the core zone while specific restrictions regarding land and forest use govern the buffer zone (Staver et al., 2007). The only human presence allowed by official decree in the core zone is the presence of this forest’s traditional inhabitants, the Mayangnas and the Miskito Indigenous people. The reserve is home to about 8,000 to 10,000 Mayangnas and about 4,000 Miskitos scattered through the core and buffer zones. This makes up to 90% of their total population in Nicaragua. BOSAWAS’ climate with high temperatures and abundant yearly rainfall promotes a richly diverse flora and fauna that is estimated to represent 3.5% of global
diversity (Howard, 1998). This includes “500 species of butterflies, 200 species of dragonflies, 50 species of bats, 400 residential and 756 migratory birds, 120 species of mammals, 120 species of amphibians and reptiles, and 180 families of flora, including 400 species of orchids” (Hansen et al., p. 141). These include 12 endangered species and 18 others that are extinct elsewhere in Central America (Staver et al., 2007).

5.8.2 Unmet goals and expectations

The preservation and respect for the land intended by the creation of the BOSAWAS Biosphere Reserve has been far from a reality since the beginning. A number of complex factors are behind this, such as flaws in systems of governance, views on development and colonial attitudes toward Indigenous people (Díaz Arias, 2007; Vuotto, 2003). Patterns of deforestation trouble Central America’s rainforests as a result of expanding agricultural frontiers and BOSAWAS is no exception to this reality. In BOSAWAS, the expansion of the agricultural frontier is believed to be caused by the increasing presence of non-Indigenous colonists. Besides growing agricultural activity, another key problem in the area are the demands of cattle ranching introduced by these colonists, which causes further clearing of forests. MARENA estimated the presence of about 20,000 head of cattle in the BOSAWAS core zone prior to the year 2016 (Hansen et al., 2016). Nicaragua is considered to have one of the highest rates of deforestation in the region and, within Nicaragua, municipalities that share jurisdiction over BOSAWAS such as Waspam, Rosita, Siuna and Bonanza were assessed in 2012 to be “hot spots” of deforestation. Hansen et al. consider that this deforestation is a direct result of historical factors “including conflict, policy change, economic conditions, dictatorships, natural disasters, droughts, and wildfires” (p. 184).
Howard (1998) suggests that at the heart of the land and resources conflict in BOSAWAS is deeply engrained “discriminatory attitudes and laws toward Indigenous people. These are a continuation of colonial laws and attitudes that further seek to incorporate the economies of colonized nations into the world market through production of commodities” (p. 20). The colonial attitude has evolved and been ever present in many expressions in Nicaragua as Indigenous people of the Atlantic have been “marginalized, discriminated and exploited economically” (Ortega Hegg & Bulloven, 1987, p. 605). Neglect has been exemplified by the isolation and disconnect expressed in the lack of communication infrastructure between the Pacific and the Atlantic. Up to the time of the revolution there was “No telephone, no road connecting the Atlantic with the Pacific, nor telegraph” (p. 606), thus showing the lack of prioritization of the needs of the Atlantic communities. The isolation and physical distance that was fostered by this lack of communication infrastructure further contributed to a systemic mutual prejudice. The state was absent, laws were written, and decisions made without serious consideration of the needs and struggles of Indigenous people and people of the Atlantic (Ortega Hegg & Bulloven). Following this, it is also evident that Indigenous communities in the newly formed BOSAWAS were viewed as obstacles to the new economic development and not a priority in a nation struggling to end military conflict and feed its people (Hansen et al., 2016).

The absence of effective government presence, escalating armed conflict and illegal activities have created a true frontier in BOSAWAS (Staver, 2007), a breeding ground for conflict of ownership and access to land and resources. As early as 1991, demobilized soldiers and displaced peasants resettled in the area with existing communities of peasants and Indigenous people (Stocks, 2007). Only 5 years after the establishment of BOSAWAS, an estimated 10,000 colonists lived in its core zone. Stocks (2003) posits that this increase was favoured by the
government’s unwillingness to protect the Reserve as well as by the armed protection given to colonists by “residual armed movements in the area” (p. 348). These migration patterns of peasants are intensified by land depletion from extensive agriculture in their places of origin (Howard, 1998). Corruption at the level of government is also a factor. For example, in 1991, regional government officials in the Caribbean Coast “granted illegal land concessions to his associates in the vicinity of BOSAWAS” (Howard, 1998, p. 22). The creation of BOSAWAS at a time of confusion, violence and corruption has set the tone for the years to come.

5.9 Summary

The Mayangna living in BOSAWAS continue to face the repercussions of historic processes of identity formation in Nicaragua. These processes have fostered an attitude in mainstream Nicaraguan Discourse that labelled them as obstacles to development (Howard; 1998). Furthermore, Nicaragua’s geography as well as its colonial and military history have contributed toward the current issues of governance, land tenure and encroachment which are threatening the BOSAWAS Biosphere Reserve. The separation of this region and its communities from the centers of political power in Managua is not only the result of geographical distance; it is also a product of Nicaragua’s history of colonization by competing powers with different styles of domination. This domination caused increased polarity and differences in this country. The Pacific, which remained Spanish and Catholic, fostered a national identity that placed creoles and mestizos higher in the ladder of socio-economic status. The Atlantic acquired an English, Moravian identity and placed the Miskito as the privileged ethnic group. Throughout this country’s history of independence, revolution and counter revolution, the identity of Indigenous
people has been constructed as something of the past and as secondary to the mestizo homogenous construction of the elites.

Indigenous heroes remained a force of the past and in service of a mestizo, peasant revolution. Indigenous groups such as the Chorotega, Mayangna and Miskitos were to remain obscured and secondary to the primary goals of the revolution so as to build a solid Nicaragua identity that stood in challenge before external and internal threats. As the lyrics of Mejía Godoy’s iconic song “Vivirás Monimbó” (1977) suggest, in the revolution as in its colonial beginnings, Nicaragua was born out of the spark that flew out of heroic and rebellious spirit of the Indigenous blood of its revolutionaries. This spark, however, had the struggle against the United States and class inequality as its priorities and not the historic struggle for self-governance and cultural survival experienced by the Indigenous communities of this Central American nation. The Mayangna communities of BOSAWAS struggle with the threats of this reality in their daily lives.
Figure 5.1: Key historical events
PART 4: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

6 RESEARCH FINDINGS – AN ANALYSIS OF SECONDARY DATA

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the findings from a targeted analysis of secondary document data. This encompasses grey literature, media coverage on the festival and current situation, and song lyrics. Specifically, the grey literature includes existing policy regarding Indigenous people’s rights in Nicaragua and two reports from the non-profit sector: a document by Centro Humboldt and a book published by IBIS and the European Union in partnership with the Indigenous Government of the Mayangna Sauni As Territory (GTI). Data from media coverage includes online news articles, a television interview and two documentaries used in connection with the Unidos por BOSAWAS Festivals. Finally, the lyrics of songs include some of the songs performed during the festival and some that were included in the 2014 album *BOSAWAS*. This analysis will be complemented by the next chapter which will present the findings obtained from primary data analysis. The results presented in these chapters will be further discussed in Chapter 10 in relation to the theory that frames this research.

This chapter is organized as follows. First, I begin by presenting an overview of Nicaragua’s policy for Indigenous territorial rights and environmental protection. This overview is important since this is the policy that the Mayangna and Misión BOSAWAS seek to have implemented and that is often referred to in the Discourse articulated by their efforts. The overview of the policy will further complement the targeted literature provided in Chapter 5 and that explored the construction of Indigeneity in Nicaragua from colonization to the present. I
present a synopsis of two reports, one from the non-government, non-Indigenous organization Humboldt Institute of Nicaragua and one by the Mayangna Sauni As government in collaboration with international agencies. These documents will offer information regarding the context of the Mayangna communities, the impacts of colonist presence and the background of these colonists. This information will help understand the complexity of the problem.

6.2 **Review of Nicaragua’s existing policy for environmental protection and Indigenous autonomy**

Nicaragua’s policy regarding the rights of Indigenous peoples and their impact on land access and property are outlined in three government documents that also deal with the rights of other “ethnic” peoples of the country. These documents are *Decree 44-91*, approved and published in 1991 and revised in 1997; the *Law of Autonomy of the Atlantic Regions* (hereafter named *Law of Autonomy*), approved in 1986 and published in 1987; and *Law 445 on the Common Property of Indigenous Peoples and Ethnic Communities of the Autonomous Regions of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua and Rivers Bocay, Coco, Indio and Maíz*, approved and published in 2003 (hereafter named *Law 445*). These documents, while making references to the country’s construction of Indigenous and ethnic identity, establish the norms for the autonomy of the Atlantic Regions (RAAN and RAAS) as well as the rules that were to govern access to land and the rights of communities that live within and in overlapping zones of the region. They deal with topics such as delimiting territories (e.g., establishing BOSAWAS), determining who can carry out scientific, economic and extractive activities, what communities and individuals have the right to live within it and use its natural resources, and what can be done to remove individuals who are in these territories without entitlement. The following sections describe each document and their significance in relation to the rights of Indigenous people in the Atlantic.
Decree 44-91, officially declared in Managua in October of 1991 by the government of Violeta de Chamorro, first draws the reader’s attention to the vast territory of virgin tropical forests in the north of Nicaragua and the need to preserve it. This need emerges because this land is recognized as being national patrimony of Nicaragua and as making a vital contribution toward climate regulation of the region and protection of the ozone layer (Items I-V20). The document highlights that the territory is inhabited by the “ethnic groups” which it labels “Sumo21 and Miskito” (Item II) and which have a historical dependence on this land and its biodiversity both for physical and cultural sustenance. Item III notes that the ecological balance of this environment is delicate and would be altered by the “disorderly reactivation of the agricultural frontier and exploitation of forest resources22”. This vulnerability makes the need for policy articulation and the establishment of natural reserves an urgent matter (Item IV).

Decree 44-91 is significant because it outlines the geography, officially delineates the territory and dictates who has the rights to carry out activities inside the boundaries. It is stated that the territory includes approximately 8,000 square kilometers and Article 1 provides specific details regarding the boundaries of the territory, following river paths and mountains (see Figure 6.1). The main regions included in the Reserve are the areas surrounding the Bocay River, the Saslaya Hill and the Waskpuk River, hence giving the name of BOSAWAS to this Reserve. In addition to establishing the boundaries and rights of use, the decree grants permissions for scientific research (Article 4), since BOSAWAS is recognized as a “genetic bank of great potential” (Item V). Opportunities remain for eco-tourism, environmental education activities and

20 The original document includes five items for consideration as a preamble to its seven articles.
21 The Mayangna communities refer to themselves by their traditional name. The name “Sumus” stemmed from a Miskito derogatory term and it is no longer used in official documents.
22 The English citation here is the author’s translation.
forestry management to ensure the protection of the watersheds. Navigation of these rivers and lakes is permitted providing they do not put the stability of the ecosystems at risk.

Most of the 1991 decree and its subsequent revisions in 1997, deal with the intricate system of governance of the BOSAWAS Reserve. It entrusts the management of the Reserve to Nicaragua’s central government through IRENA (Instituto Nicaragüense de Recursos Naturales y del Ambiente23) which became MARENA in 1994 (Ministerio del Ambiente y Recursos Naturales24). MARENA was later specified as the governing body of the BOSAWAS Commission in the 1997 decree revisions (see Table 6.1).

The BOSAWAS Commission was established in the capital city of Managua and had a threefold mission: 1) to inform policy for the management of the Reserve, 2) to secure financial, technical and scientific assistance for its conservation, and 3) to make recommendations for the implementation of the Decree (Article 6). MARENA, as head of this commission, was to curtail commercial forest exploitation, extraction of flora and fauna and colonization as well as other forms of exploitation or penetration that would threaten the Reserve’s ecology. These were deemed detrimental to the lives of Indigenous communities that had traditionally lived in the region.

23 Nicaraguan Institute of Natural Resources and the Environment.
24 Nicaraguan Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources.
Figure 6.1: Location of BOSAWAS in relation to Nicaragua's Autonomous Regions

*Source: Staver et al., (2007).*
6.2.1 Autonomy and land rights

BOSAWAS was established in the context of Nicaragua’s revolution of the 1970s and the counter revolution of the 1980s, a few years after the promulgation of the *Law of Autonomy of the Atlantic Regions* (1987). Even though the Atlantic Regions extend beyond the area of the BOSAWAS Reserve (See Figure 6.1), the statutes that surround this declaration of autonomy had implications for governance of the Reserve. This topic of governance, in relation to the land rights of Indigenous people in Nicaragua, is specifically addressed by the *Law of Autonomy* approved in 1986 and published in 1987 by the first Sandinista administration of Daniel Ortega, and *Law 445*, approved and published in 2003 during Daniel Ortega’s second term in the presidency. This second document was a response to a need to provide policy for concrete protection for Indigenous and ethnic communities and implementation of land titling for them. Both documents address, in great depth, topics such as territorial jurisdiction, the rights and identities of ethnic and Indigenous
communities, the exploitation of natural resources and participation in the economy, property
titling, governance and the problem of colonists. The 1987 Law of Autonomy in particular, deals
with these topics while establishing a strong connection between Indigenous identity, rights and
the recent revolution. Safeguarding the rights of the Indigenous and ethnic groups of the Atlantic
is naturally linked to the values of the Sandinista revolution and subsequent communist
government (Item IV25).

The Statute of Autonomy describes and defines the Atlantic Regions and their diverse
population. This region, which makes up about half of Nicaragua, was home to about 300,000
inhabitants or about 9.5% of the country’s population in 1983. This population was divided as
follows:

One hundred and eighty-two thousand Spanish-speaking mestizos; seventy-five thousand
Miskito with their own language; twenty-six thousand English-speaking Creoles; nine
thousand Sumos with their own tongue; one thousand seven hundred and fifty Garífunas,
most of whom have lost their language, and eight hundred fifty Ramas of which only thirty-
five speak their language26 (II).

The document defines Indigenous peoples as the collectives and communities that have a
historical, continual connection with pre-colonial societies and which still maintain specific social
characteristics such as values that place them in direct relationship with the land. These are listed
here as the Miskitos, the Sumos (later acknowledged as the Mayangna), and the Ramas. Ethnic
communities are defined as those of Afro-Caribbean ancestry, which also have traditional practices
and customs in relationship to the land and which are different than those of mainstream, mestizo
society (Law 445, Article 3). Among these we find the Miskitos (or Misquitos), the Creoles, and
the Garífunas. It is important to note that the Miskitos are recognized in this document as unique

25 This document includes 8 items for consideration as preamble to its 45 articles.
26 Author’s translation.
since they are considered both an Indigenous and an ethnic group as most of its members have mixed Indigenous and Afro-Caribbean ancestry. The Statute of Autonomy stresses that these communities are part of the one Nicaraguan State and that they enjoy all rights and responsibilities that correspond to them according the Nicaraguan constitution (Article 10). While the Autonomy law was designed to protect both ethnic and Indigenous groups, the document goes into greater depth in its outline of the rights of Indigenous peoples and the relationship between their traditions and respect for land rights.

The Statute for Autonomy brings to the forefront the injustices lived by Indigenous peoples throughout Latin America and the debt that the Nicaraguan people have toward them. Indigenous peoples have been impoverished and marginalized and have been the subject of exploitation and assimilation. This history demands a profound transformation of social and political systems (Item I). According to the document, this demand is a moral obligation for Nicaragua and, subsequently, for all Latin America, because Indigenous ancestors, such as Diringén of Nicaragua, Cuauhtemoc of Mexico, and Tupac Amaru and Caupolicán from the Andes region, were rebellious leaders who led and inspired social and political change across the continent. Moreover, the document states that the ultimate reason for the commitment to Indigenous people in Nicaragua comes from the mixed ancestry of Augusto Cesar Sandino, inspiration for the Sandinista movement, who took pride in the Indigenous blood running through his veins (Item III).

Following the values of democracy and equality endorsed by the Revolution, autonomy in the Atlantic regions is presented as contributing to the cultural and economic development of the country, while ensuring the physical and cultural survival of the communities of the Atlantic. The Statute of Autonomy makes it clear that good use of the natural resources of the regions will not only benefit the Atlantic but the entire country, thus facilitating the survival and development of
its cultures. Here, development is seen as economic development in line with the goals and socialist reforms of the Sandinista government. The document insists that economic profit will be reinvested in the Atlantic as well as in the rest of the country (Article 4). Extractive activities for economic gain are not outlawed in the Autonomous Regions as stated in the 1986 Statutes. However, the local and central governments are required to acknowledge the rights to communal land and to benefit the Indigenous and ethnic inhabitants of the land in “fair proportion” (Article 9). Furthermore, Law 445 recognizes a need to ensure respect for the property rights of Indigenous and ethnic communities on behalf of Autonomous governments and states that these governments must, in coordination with the Central Government of the country, delimit and title communal land in order to ensure respect for it (Article 15).

The Statute of Autonomy document clearly establishes that Nicaragua is a multi-ethnic State that acknowledges the rights of the communities of the Atlantic to preserve their cultures, religions, languages and traditional medicinal knowledge. These communities are also entitled to enjoy the “rivers, forests, and communal land” and to live according to their traditions (Item VIII). Autonomy serves to promote traditional cultures and their patrimony and to foster exchange, cultural and economic, with the rest of Nicaragua. The most salient implications of these rights are reflected in the concept of communal property held by the community for its sustenance as opposed to individuals. Such conceptualization of land has concrete repercussions on the use of natural resources and ecological systems (Article 4).

Both the Statute of Autonomy and Law 445 detail the meaning, history and implications of communal property in the Atlantic and within the context of the country. Article 36 in the Statute of Autonomy states that communal property encompasses “the land, water and forests that have traditionally belonged to the Atlantic coast communities”. This property is governed by two
primary provisions. First, communal land is “inalienable”. It cannot be donated, sold, taken away or registered to one person. It is also stated that the communities that live on these communal lands have the right to work them and to gather and enjoy the benefits that may generate from this labour. Citing Nicaragua’s Political Constitution’s articles 5 and 89, Law 445 affirms that such approach to property is a legitimately recognized form of ownership that acknowledges the relationship with land that has historically been characteristic of the Indigenous and ethnic communities of the Atlantic.

Law 445 is the only one of the two documents that specifically deals with the tasks of land titling and with the issues that may come up from this. This document states that Indigenous and ethnic communities have the right to hold the title to the land that they have traditionally occupied and that these must be recorded in the appropriate public registries. Article 45 breaks down this process into five steps that acknowledge possible conflicts, the need for mediation and the eminent stage of “saneamiento” or “cleansing”, the removal of those who have no right to be in the communal land. Regarding this task, the original Statute of Autonomy had appointed the National Army to enforce order and security in the Autonomous Regions.

This issue of third-party occupants of Indigenous and ethnic communal land is addressed again in Law 445. First, the law acknowledges that the historical rights to occupation of Indigenous and ethnic communities prevail over any title granted to third parties who had never occupied the land but wished to occupy it after 1987. The law also recognizes the fact that, before 1987, communal land already had non-Indigenous and non-ethnic individuals living and carrying out agricultural and cattle ranching activities, some legally and others illegally. Regarding these individuals, the document states that anyone who holds an “agrarian” title to the land and who, indeed, occupied it, can continue to do so. Should he or she decide to sell, it must be sold to the
Indigenous or ethnic community. Anyone who obtained such title in an illegal manner, would be repaid in order to return the land to the community. Finally, third party occupants who have no title to the land must leave the land without repayment. Should they wish to remain in the land, they would have to pay a leasing fee to the community.

*Law 445* addressed the topic of granting of concessions for the use of subsoil resources and forestry. Article 12 stipulates that rational exploitation of these resources is allowed and that these are granted in a process of dialogue between Indigenous communities, municipalities and the central government. The communities have the right to accept or refuse and the Regional Council must negotiate with them until the community is satisfied. The community must be retributed for any damage or potential harm and, should potential damage exceed the accepted threshold, the community can be relocated with its agreement. The document, however, states that the communities must participate in a direct manner and that the protection of natural resources should be the primary goal of these negotiations.

Regarding the governance of Indigenous and ethnic communities, *Law 445* states that the Autonomous Regions divides their administration in municipalities while conforming to the traditional practices of the specific communities. These municipal divisions will be grouped by Regional Councils, according to traditional similarities. Municipalities will administer health, education, culture, transportation and community services in coordination with the Central Government and its Ministries. Protected areas will be managed by the community and by the central government represented by MARENA.

According to these documents, respecting and honouring Indigenous land and peoples in Nicaragua follows two historical facts. First, it responds to the role played by Indigenous people
in revolutions, both in the continent and in Nicaragua. Secondly, it stems from the values of equality and justice endorsed by the Nicaraguan revolution. The Statute of Autonomy establishes a strong connection between the rights of Indigenous and ethnic communities and Nicaragua’s revolutionary struggle (Item IV). According to Item IV, the revolution built a new, multi-ethnic and multicultural nation. The proclamation of autonomy of the Atlantic Regions is a logical result of the implementation of the revolutionary values of “democracy, pluralism, anti-imperialism” and the Marxist goals of elimination of social exploitation. The Sandinista government, through this document, argued that it was guaranteeing equality in diversity, while strengthening the national unity needed for the implementation of the revolutionary reforms. A summary of what each of these documents accomplished can be found in table 6.2.

6.3 Understanding land loss and forest depletion

Two reports provide us with a greater appreciation of the complexity of the issue of forest depletion and lack of policy enforcement in BOSAWAS. They offer deeper understanding of the social context within which this problem develops and the capacities and vulnerabilities that are characteristic of the territory. These documents were identified and obtained through a survey of existing publications in the non-profit sector and through the interviews carried out during the data collection stage of this project. They include a report by the Humboldt Institute entitled Matriz Territorial (Territorial Matrix) (2016), and a report entitled Actualización del Territorio Mayangna Sauni As, en Especial de las Zonas Afectadas con la Presencia de los Colonos (Guevara et al., 2015), written by the Sauni As Indigenous government, in conjunction with non-governmental international entities.
Table 6.2: Summary of influential governance instruments in the BOSAWAS Reserve

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decree 44-91</th>
<th>Law of Autonomy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Establishes and delineates the BOSAWAS territory</td>
<td>• Established two autonomous regions in the Atlantic (North and South)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Established governance structure</td>
<td>• Acknowledges cultural heritage of Indigenous and Ethnic communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Outlined rights of use, research and tourism</td>
<td>• Defines communal property rights</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Law 445</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Indigenous Territory titling</td>
<td>• Rights of refusal of activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Acknowledges cultural heritage of Indigenous</td>
<td>• Steps for dealing with non-Indigenous inhabitants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Ethnic communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Defines communal property rights</td>
<td>• Strengthened governance structure of Indigenous regions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3.1 A perspective from the environmental sector

The *Territorial Matrix* provides an in-depth look at the Mayangna Sauni Bu (or MSB) – (See Figure 6.2) territory within BOSAWAS building on quantitative data gathered about the 16 communities living within this area of the Reserve. This report reflects the perspectives of Nicaragua’s Humboldt Institute, a non-government entity with the mission of promoting environmental protection. This international organization promotes the enforcement of policy for environmental protection, particularly in relation to mining. This document offers a non-Indigenous perspective on the problem and assesses the zone’s social, environmental and economic vulnerabilities. It also looks at the capacity building efforts implemented in the Territory as well as its history, peoples and government. The document states that BOSAWAS, created in 1991 and instituted Biosphere Reserve and Patrimony of Humanity by UNESCO in 1997, is made up of two zones which together total 2,042,535.91 hectares. Out of these, 735,491.35 are the core zone and 1,305,044.56 are the buffer zone. Its primary ecosystem is that of a tropical rainforest, the largest in Central America and it makes up 25% of the Atlantic Biological Corridor.

27 More information about this institution can be found here: https://humboldt.org.ni/centro-humboldt-presenta-los-resultados-del-estudio-de-mineria-metalica-en-nicaragua/
various untouched ecosystems, watersheds and riparian zones are of great regional importance, particularly as they are part of the larger Mesoamerican Biological Corridor.

Figure 6.2: Division of Mayangna and Miskito territories in BOSAWAS

Source: Hansen et al., (2016)
Two Indigenous communities are mentioned as having their home within the borders of BOSAWAS. These are the Miskitos, who live in three territories which are the Miskito Indian Tasbaika Kum (MITK), Kipla Sait Tasbaika (KST) and Li Lamni Tasbaika Kum (LLTK), near the banks of the Coco River. The Mayangna live in three territories as well; these are Mayagna Sauni As (MSA), Mayagna Sauni Bu (MSB), and Mayagna Sauni Bas, also known as Sikilta (MSBAs). These Mayangna territories are in the central areas of BOSAWAS by the Rivers Pis-Pis, Waspuk, Bocay and Lakus. Specifically, the MSB Territory, which is assessed in this report, is located near the Bocay River; it can be navigated in its entirety in about eight hours. The Mayangna Sauni Bu Territory has an autonomous government and is made up of 16 communities whose leaders are elected democratically through community meetings. The GTI (Gobierno Territorial Indígena) oversees that the communities follow the rules regarding social order, natural resources management and traditional governance.

The report suggests that MSB’s vulnerabilities emerge from the extreme poverty in which its communities live and from the corresponding limitations that come from it. Lack of organization makes it difficult for communities to act orderly and effectively during emergencies such as extreme weather events. There is also a lack of human and physical resources for education. For example, not all communities have elementary or secondary schools because they lack buildings and qualified educators. Often, children and youth do not have the financial capacity to study outside of their communities. Lack of public transportation and road infrastructure bring about vulnerabilities for the communities’ economy and health. First, the zone’s difficult routes make commercial efforts a challenge and families are not able to transport their products easily to other communities. Furthermore, the movement of the sick during illness
or disasters is an arduous task, usually done under the sun or rain in a hammock or boat. Pregnant women who need medical attention travel for more than five hours to get it.

The food security and physical safety of these communities is threatened by the local climate, climate change and by lacking financial stability and agricultural diversification. There are no sources for employment in the zone and the lack of financial resources leaves families undernourished. Extreme weather such as droughts and excessive rainfall often hurt the bean production, a staple food for these communities. There is very little diversity in their diet since they rely on what they can produce and when they can produce it. These products include beans, bananas and yuca. These challenges leave the communities malnourished and at risk for illnesses during the months of June, July and August, when there is no food production.

The Territorial Matrix highlights capacities that have been developed or implemented in the MSB territory. First, the abundance of land already designated for agriculture in the community is large enough to allow for diversification and for obtaining maximum benefits and yields, thus preventing the progression of the agricultural frontier. Communities are also organizing. Some of them have women’s groups and committees for the mitigation of disaster impacts. With the support of non-government organizations, these groups have made progress in the areas of health, natural resources and protection of watersheds. The report also recognizes that despite colonist presence, communities have reforested areas and protected its existing forests and fauna. Communities have been permanently connected to others with the construction of bridges. Finally, this report considers that the abundant biodiversity and striking geography of the territory open opportunities for rural, environmentally-conscious tourism.
The report offers an assessment of the territory’s environmental risks. These can be broadly divided into water related risks, pollution, natural disasters and advancement of the agricultural frontier. First, the water-related risks include the risk of flooding, drought and pollution. The territory is subject to high levels of precipitation in the winter months, especially in September and October which, coupled with hurricane activity, poses a risk for the communities. On the other hand, the report argues that climate change has caused drought conditions during the summer months in recent decades. This decreases food production and increases the risks for forest fires. The threat of fires during the dry season is exacerbated by the colonist activities of forest clearing through slash and burn techniques.

The pollution of the environment in the MSB Territory is also discussed in this document. This pollution is identified to be the result of lack of education or capacity building among the Mayangna communities and colonist settlements. First, solid and liquid waste is treated inadequately. The report notes that animals, including pigs, chickens, and horses, transit freely through the communities leaving behind their excrement. There is also a lack of order with the use of latrines, increasing the risk of preventable diseases. Finally, the watersheds of the region are polluted by colonists’ agricultural practices including the use of chemicals which make their way to the rivers along with these other pollutants.

The geographic location of the MSB Territory places it under yet another environmental risk. Nicaragua’s Caribbean region is an area of higher hurricane activity as compared to the rest of the country. Communities such as Amak, Peñas Blancas and Samaska, which are located near lower parts of the river basins, are at greater risk of flooding of their homes and plantations. Finally, the presence of colonists is assessed as a source of conflicts and problems. These include
disproportionate exploitation of natural resources, increased pollution of land and water as mentioned above, deforestation and harm to plant and animal species.

6.3.2 GTI report on the Mayangna Sauni As Territory

In 2015, the Indigenous Government of the Mayangna Sauni As territory carried out an extensive study regarding the current situation of the conflict with colonists in their region so as to provide an update regarding the progression of the damage to the Reserve as seen in their jurisdiction. With the technical and financial support of IBIS, a Danish organization for international development, and the European Union, this study assessed the socioeconomic, environmental and legal aspects of this conflict as communities and local government seek to carry out the stage of “saneamiento” of their communal lands. The results from this study were published in a book in Nicaragua under the title Actualización del Territorio Mayangna Sauni As, en Especial de las Zonas Afectadas con la Presencia de los Colonos (Guevara et al., 2015). Even though this research was carried out with the help of international environmental organizations, it was done in partnership and consultation with the Indigenous government of the Mayangna Sauni As Territory. Mayangna leaders had an active role in the study design and in the decisions involved in this research. Through it, the GTI called for an urgent enforcement of the policy regarding the removal of non-Indigenous individuals in the Mayangna Sauni As Territory. The report highlights the tangible impact of colonist presence of forest depletion, their demographic background, and the reasons behind their migration into the BOSAWAS Reserve. This report contributes to a more

28 “Cleansing” or removal of colonists from the territory.
29 Update on the Diagnostics Study of the Mayangna Sauni As Territory, Specially of the Areas Affected by Colonist Presence.
in-depth understanding of the complexity of the situation of land loss and forest depletion in the area.

The book reports that the colonist population of MSA Territory has increased from about 600 between 2010 and 2012 to close to 1000 in 2015. Out of these individuals, 48% come from nearby municipalities and 29% from areas in Nicaragua that have traditionally been agricultural and cattle ranching regions such as Chontales and Matagalpa. The authors of this report suggest that the origins of the colonists support the belief that most of the colonist occupation occurs because of agricultural and cattle ranching purposes as well as illegal land transactions.

The report suggests that some of those arriving from the La Cruz municipality in the South Autonomous Region may be peasants who were paid for their land during the construction of the Tumarín Dam which begun in 2015. This peasant group was categorized as a social class “with money but without land” (Guevara et al., 2015, p. 24) and was forced to look for new places to live. At the same time, those colonists who arrive from the North Autonomous Regions come from mining municipalities where there are no projects dispossessing them of land. The researchers recognize that this is a group that needs to be further studied and that cannot be considered a group without land but a group that is looking for further opportunities for investment and economic gain.

The report establishes a comparison between these colonist’s practices and those of the Mayangna peoples, arguing that the Mayangna worldview makes for a more sustainable system. This Mayangna worldview is informed by ancestral traditions, still taught by their elders and which upholds respect for mother Earth and the forests. The values upheld by the Mayangna are incompatible with colonist agricultural and cattle ranching practices. Some of the colonist
activities identified as threats to the natural environment in BOSAWAS include illegal sale of land, deforestation, commercialization of precious wood, inadequate agricultural and cattle ranching activities, uncontrolled hunting and advance of the agricultural frontier. All of these affect the tropical rainforest, its rivers, animals and, ultimately, its communities and cultures.

The colonists that settle in the MSA Territory do not live in the traditional homes and communities in which the Mayangna live. These traditional communities live about 10 kms. from their assigned agricultural land while the colonists live in their family-owned farms. The MSA communities have elementary schools which are not frequented by colonist children. Like the Mayangnas, the colonists’ primary source of water is the rivers. Only a few of the colonists included in the study acknowledge the construction of latrines, leading the researchers to believe that most of them defecate in the open areas. 60% of those surveyed reported not having a systematic way to get rid of garbage and just throw it away; 15% burn it, 4% bury it and 21% did not respond (Guevara et al., 2015).

The main activity of these colonists who were surveyed is agriculture while cattle ranching was the secondary activity. They hold considerably large parcels of between 50 to 300 manzanas\textsuperscript{30}. This is in stark contrast to Mayangna practice who typically assign 3 or 4 mz per family on a rotation pattern. Cattle ranching is practiced a lot less but still in significant numbers since up to 25% of families admittedly are dedicated to this activity. Other activities such as hunting and fishing were also reported and the researchers consider that these practices are not sustainable because they are done in excess by the colonists, not following traditional Mayangna practices.

\textsuperscript{30} A manzana is a unit of measure equivalent to 2.47 acres which is commonly used in Central America.
Finally, the document also reports that some colonists dedicate themselves to artisanal mining practices, removing gold from the reserve for their financial gain.

The report categorizes the colonists as either peasants who never had land, or who have lost their land due to human activity or natural disasters. They find in BOSAWAS a way to access cheap or free land and are illegally assisted by entities such as municipalities, lawyers, politicians or even Indigenous community members. Among the colonists one can also find ex-military individuals who became peasants by necessity. This group is deemed to be the most difficult to deal with since they are often armed. The colonists who were interviewed reported a diverse array of reasons for having moved to BOSAWAS. For example, 22% said they moved out of necessity, 15% because they had no land, and 7% because they were poor or did not have employment, among other reasons. Many of the colonists have documents that support their claims for land tenure. These include letters from the municipality, documents issued by lawyers, and handwritten letters detailing a sale. The authors hold that these documents are illegal and highlight the need to adhere to Law 445, removing these colonists from the territory without compensation.

An analysis of the document literature brings to our attention the concrete challenges to policy enforcement in the region. The Indigenous communities of BOSAWAS face many threats to their well-being, some because of the region’s geography, climate and natural environment, and others because of human activity. The Humboldt report presents their situation from an economic development perspective, suggesting a need for assistance from the government and non-government sectors. The GTI book focuses on the negative impact of colonist presence and activity in the Mayangna Sauni As Territory, while acknowledging the complex origins of these individuals. It further recognizes a deeply engrained system of corruption and illegal transactions which exacerbate the situation.
6.4 Summary

In this chapter, I have examined three policy documents and two reports emerging from the environmental sector. The policy documents outline Indigenous rights in Nicaragua and establish a connection between a revolutionary identity of Indigenous people and the country’s obligations toward them. These policies aim to regulate access to natural resources, common property and governance in favour of Indigenous and ethnic groups in Nicaragua. The environmental reports offer details about two Mayangna territories, their capacities, challenges and the complex reality out of which colonists emerge.

This chapter has expanded our understanding of the social and historical context that has shaped the construction of social justice and its implications for Indigenous people in Nicaragua. This has been seen in the policy documents and their articulation of Indigeneity first in connection to a revolutionary identity and, eventually, as cultural patrimony of the country. This understanding will assist toward attaining the objectives of this research and will be discussed in detail in Chapter 10.
I now turn my attention to media’s portrayal of the BOSAWAS issue as well as the depiction of the festivals entitled “Alarido por BOSAWAS” and, later, “Unidos por BOSAWAS”, organized by the Misión BOSAWAS movement from 2012 to 2016. The analysis is presented in three subsections. The first segment will look at the representation of the matter of environmental damage and land encroachment in BOSAWAS. The second segment will move to a reconstruction of what took place during the festivals as covered by news articles and the television interview. Finally, the last section will provide an analysis of the music recorded as part of the Unidos por BOSAWAS Festivals. This analysis will help to identify the current articulation of Indigeneity and environmental issues in Nicaraguan mainstream media. It will also assist in attaining the research goal to investigate participant’s perspectives regarding values, goals of their involvement and their suggestions regarding effective practices for activism around this issue. The knowledge gathered in this media analysis will be used in Chapter 10 to offer suggested strategies for implementation.

This analysis is based on seven articles published by online newspapers and one website (UNESCO), and one interview of two activists broadcasted through local television and uploaded to the YouTube channel belonging to Nicaragua’s Confidencial News (2013) (See Table 6.3 for a list of all media included in this analysis). The criteria for selecting these items included that the materials be available in Spanish and accessible online. Preference was given to Nicaraguan platforms, hence the reason for the limited number of articles. Out of the platforms included in this analysis, five are based in Nicaragua, one is from Costa Rica and one is an international platform, namely, the UNESCO website’s section on Indigenous peoples and programs. The
analysis carried out on this qualitative data was a thematic analysis that generated the following themes: 1) the historical presence of Indigenous peoples, 2) loss of biodiversity, 3) social impacts of violence and encroachment, 4) the apathy demonstrated by the central government, 5) the contribution of international entities and 6) perspectives on the future. In the following pages I present a description of each of the themes.

7.1.1 Media coverage of current situation (2008 – 2017)

**Indigenous Historical Presence.** Out of the articles considered in this overview, the article located in *El Nuevo Diario* (2008) is the only one that makes a historical reference to the Indigenous presence in the Territory of Bosawas and their experience of dispossession. This text describes the situation that emerged after the revolution of the 1970s and the contra war of the 1980s. Because of these conflicts, the Indigenous peoples living in the Reserve migrated to Honduras and the article asserts that, during this displacement, seventy-five children and nine mothers died. When they returned to their land they found that non-Indigenous people from the Pacific began to “invade and destroy the Reserve with encouragement from the Central Government”. Thus, these communities have not been able to become re-established after these armed conflicts.

**Loss of Biodiversity.** The loss of biodiversity and environmental damage and UNESCO’s concern for this situation is highlighted by two articles (UNESCO, 2017; *CR Hoy*, 2014). The *CR Hoy* article focuses on the loss of forest in BOSAWAS and mentions that, since 2010 the Reserve loses an average of 42,676 hectares per year. The Saslaya Hill, described as the heart of the protected zone, is said to have lost 15.2% of its virgin forests or 9,073 hectares due to increased colonist presence. The UNESCO report, published on their website, on the other hand, describes that these interconnected biological and cultural systems are threatened by the rapid advance of
the agricultural frontier. This brings about “growing pollution of water generated by illegal felling of trees as well as commercialization of endangered animals and plants” (UNESCO). From the perspectives of these publications, the problem is primarily one of loss of biodiversity and of the natural heritage this territory constitutes.

**Human Rights and Social Impacts.** Some of the articles indicate that there are serious social and human rights impacts experienced by the Mayangna communities as a result of colonist invasion, illegal trade in the area and abandonment by the central government. These include a lack of food and health security, and displacement (Nuevo Diario, 2008). Articles published in La Prensa in December 2017 (Calero; Garth Medina; Romero) narrate the repercussions of the violent retaliation of colonists on the Mayangna community of Wilus. This recent escalation is considered by the Mayangna leadership and community to be directly connected to the arrest and processing of eight colonists in the capital of BOSAWAS in November 2017. The retaliation has exacerbated the lack of food security and other social problems experienced by the communities.

As early as 2008, the Nuevo Diario article drew attention to the issues related to food and health security in the BOSAWAS territory. The article’s author remarks that, even though the Miskito and Mayangna communities live in such rich natural environments, they face “hunger and misery on a daily basis as they struggle against extreme poverty”. This poverty is identified as caused by the “forgetting” of central governments which the author blames for dedicating themselves to “destroying the vast forests by authorizing permits for forest exploitation, especially in the 1990s”. This abandonment caused them to face illnesses, lack of medical attention, lack of schools and lack of latrines. What affects them most, however, is the destruction of the Reserve and the resulting migration of animal species traditionally hunted in the region.
The year 2013 is noted as a year when the violence escalated significantly in the region to the point of claiming the life of one Indigenous community member (CR Hoy, 2014). The conflict is described as caused by colonist invasion into Indigenous land since they are armed while they clear the forests. More recently, in December of 2017, nineteen communities were declared as being in a state of emergency by the Mayangna Sauni As government because of colonist invasions (Garth Medina, 2017). In her article, Mabel Calero of La Prensa (2017) cites Cristina Feliciano, a leader of the Mayangna Women, as stating the following: “It has been a while now that we do not sleep out of fear of being killed by colonists. We are very concerned. The situation is critical because the ones who suffer the most when we have to leave our communities are the women and children. There is a lot of insecurity and fear. We do not know if we will wake up alive the next day”. This testimony evidences a continual state of physical insecurity experienced by these communities.

In December 2017, Mayangna representatives are described by Calero’s (2017) and Romero’s (2017) articles as bringing their complaints to the CENIDH (Nicaraguan Centre for Human Rights) in Managua, asking the Nicaraguan State to stop the colonist invasion. This invasion, the article states, has forced them to be displaced from the core zone to the buffer zone of the Reserve. Dr. Nuñez de Escorcia, president of CENIDH is quoted as stating that “it is urgent and necessary for the government to tend to this situation since there is a clear violation of human rights”. This situation, Calero states, has aggravated insecurity on many levels but specially on a food security level. Citing CENIDH’s president Nuñez, the author states that the government is “being part of one of the gravest violations of human rights on an international level”. Romero further explains that the Indigenous leaders encountered a lack of response on behalf of the national and municipal governments.
**Government Apathy.** A predominant theme that emerged from the articles relates to the sense of apathy that Indigenous communities believe exists within the central government toward this issue. Garth Medina’s article (2017) mentions that the Mayangna Territorial leader, Emilio Bruno Simeón, has requested help from the National Police and the Army but has received no answer. Furthermore, the *CR Hoy* article mentions that UNESCO’s representative in Nicaragua, Claudia Valle, asked the Ortega government for greater attention to the Reserve and obtained no response. Romero’s article, appearing in *La Prensa* in December of 2017, states that the government body MARENA has not been concerned with this situation of environmental damage. Because of this, the problem has become much bigger and armed colonist groups have become more organized. The author states that, apparently, the illegal “land possessions are encouraged by influential people who send these groups to invade Indigenous land”. Community members are forced to organize and protect themselves since neither the army or the police respond to their complaints and they do not know who to turn to. This is becoming a situation that the government may not be able to control. The problem is described as becoming more complex because of the participation of Indigenous individuals who have sold land to colonists and now want them to leave.

**International Contribution.** The contribution and perspectives of international organizations is also addressed by at least two articles. First, the UNESCO publication speaks about the contribution of the LINKS program (Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems), and the *Nuevo Diario* (2008) article provides details about the presence and work of the Humboldt Institute in Nicaragua. UNESCO’s perspectives are articulated by their representative in Nicaragua, Claudia Valle. The accelerated process of deforestation in the “lung” of Central America is concerning. UNESCO is seeking to achieve this by preserving Indigenous knowledge.
through the LINKS program. This program has documented and created teaching material with the Mayangna perspectives on fish and environmental sustenance, for example. The publication of the book *Conocimientos del Pueblo Mayangna Sobre la Convivencia del Hombre y la Naturaleza* (Gros & Frithz, 2010) in Spanish and Mayangna, seeks to understand and preserve the knowledge that informs the relationship between the Mayangna and their environment including animals, plants, etc.

The 2008 article from *Nuevo Diario* draws significant attention to the role of international aid in the conservation efforts in BOSAWAS. This article recognizes the contribution of non-profit organizations and makes special mention of the projects undertaken by the Alexander Von Humboldt Centre in Nicaragua, commonly referred to as “Humboldt Institute”. In partnership with the Danish Embassy, the Danida Aid Agency, the European Union and Oxfam International, they have carried out work that has been recognized as positive by Indigenous leaders. In 2008, Humboldt had 15 years working with the Miskito and Mayangna communities in projects of economic development of the communities living in the core and buffer zones. These projects included rehabilitation of community infrastructure from 1998 to 2002, such as schools, offices, community centers, water systems, and bridges after hurricane Mitch. From 1999 to 2005, Humboldt carried out another series of projects with the goal of sustainable management of natural resources in the Reserve as well as investing in seeking the titling of the territories and preventing the agricultural frontier from advancing.

**Uncertain Future.** The CR Hoy (2014) and Calero (2017) articles allude to the uncertain future of BOSAWAS. The Mayangna, CR Hoy states that experts “calculate that the Reserve will

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31 Knowledge of the Mayangna Peoples on the Coexistence of Man and Nature.
no longer exist in ten years”. Calero, citing an Indigenous leader, suggests that the Nicaraguan government must take seriously what is going on right now since this situation will generate serious problems in the future. Preventing and protecting is a better route. Nicaragua already has a vast Reserve and “we will not need to reforest it if we care for it today”, the Indigenous leaders affirm. The communities are having to take things in their own hands to “prevent our children from being massacred”.

While media bias is a factor that cannot go unmentioned, a deeper exploration of the political influences behind these articles and publications about the issue is beyond the scope of this thesis. This analysis on what these publications articulate does offer us valuable information regarding how this issue is depicted by these media and how this has contributed to the national Discourse on Indigenous rights and environmental issues. I will now turn to how some media depicted the festivals themselves.

7.1.2 Media coverage on the festival (2013 to 2016).

Six articles and one audiovisual interview are thematically analyzed here as a way to reconstruct the festivals organized by Misión BOSAWAS in Nicaragua from 2013 to 2016. That is, through the descriptions conveyed in these media, we will be able to understand concrete facts about the festivals such as what activities were included, which actors from civil society participated, and the Discourse articulated by the festival organizers in order to describe the events (See Table 6.3 for a list of all media included in this analysis). All material was retrieved from their online archives and were selected because of this online availability. The interview included in this analysis comes from footage found on Confidencial News’ YouTube channel. For this
segment, the agency invited Jorge Real, of Centro de Entendimiento con la Naturaleza (CEN\textsuperscript{32}) and Ernesto Lopez of Misión BOSAWAS, both musicians and activists. This interview was part of this news agency’s contributions to the promotional efforts for the 2013 Festival entitled “Un Alarido por Bosawas” (A Howl for Bosawas). In this interview, both young men describe the situation and speak about the ongoing efforts for the conservation of the Reserve carried out by their organizations. They also provide a brief assessment of the complexity of the problem, a description of the Festival’s activities, a brief account of the achievements obtained by their movements, and recommendations for the future.

This analysis will assist in investigating the perspectives of participants regarding the values and goals of their involvement since it will give us a clearer understanding of what took place during the festivals. Furthermore, the analysis will help us understand the national Discourse that is promoted by the media regarding the movement. Specifically, the themes that emerged out of this analysis include the following: 1) environmental focus, 2) engagement, 3) lack of focus on the Mayangna, 4) the impact of musicians and music on this engagement and 5) knowledge sharing 6) achievements and 7) hope for the future of BOSAWAS. Additionally, the news articles assess the festival as having three main tasks: 1) to gather initiatives, 2) to articulate the problem and to 3) address it. These themes are discussed in the following pages in greater detail.

\textsuperscript{32} Center for Understanding Nature, an environmental project located in the south region of BOSAWAS.
Table 7.1: Media included in analysis

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<th>Platform</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Media on current situation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>CR Hoy Newspaper (2014)</td>
<td>“La Unesco preocupada por la desforestación de la reserva BOSAWAS en Nicaragua”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Prensa Newspaper (2017)</td>
<td>“Indígenas abandonan comunidad por enfrentamiento contra colonos”</td>
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<td>“Indígenas entregan a ocho colonos en Bonanza”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Peligrosa situación en BOSAWAS tras invasión de colonos a territorios indígenas”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Indígenas Mayangnas llegan al Cenidh a pedirle al Gobierno que frene la invasión de los colonos”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Media on festivals</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Confidencial News (2013)</td>
<td>“Voces unidas en ‘un alarido por BOSAWAS”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diario Metro (2016)</td>
<td>“Ambientalistas piden salvar la reserva BOSAWAS”</td>
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<tr>
<td>El País (2016)</td>
<td>“Artistas y activistas piden salvar la reserva BOSAWAS en Nicaragua”</td>
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<td>La Prensa (2014),</td>
<td>“Unidos por BOSAWAS” (May)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Unidos por BOSAWAS” (February)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nuevo Diario (2014)</td>
<td>“Festival Unidos por BOSAWAS será en dos ciudades”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Documentaries</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cale Productions (2014)</td>
<td><em>El Canto de BOSAWAS</em></td>
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<td>Confidencial News (2014)</td>
<td><em>El Ocaso de BOSAWAS</em></td>
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*Environmental focus.* The *Diario Metro* article (2016), describes the festival as an “environmental” festival where a number of ecological organizations “made a call to the public to save the BOSAWAS Reserve”. The 2016 festival is described as a full day event where at least
24 organizations from across the country presented their environmentally-friendly products. The organizations included Nicaraguan cooperatives of artisans and producers who gave out information about their products and about caring for the environment. The festival’s environmental character is strongly depicted in all of the articles analyzed in this project as they all refer to it as the “Environmental Festival Unidos por BOSAWAS”. The activities mentioned as being part of the program include teaching regarding waste management in schools, a recycling campaign of cardboard and plastic, distribution of 1700 cedar and oak trees, free yoga lessons, meditation, and face painting.

When describing the problem at hand, both young men interviewed by Confidencial identify this as an environmental problem that results from living in an “environmentally dysfunctional” society, as articulated by Ernesto. The problem in BOSAWAS is aggravated by the territory’s large size since it is difficult to secure every point of entry. The heart of the issue is that the agricultural frontier in BOSAWAS keeps advancing and that the forests are being destroyed while the efforts of those who attempt to protect it remain futile. Ernesto and Jorge also describe the festival as an environmental event. They narrate that this festival is a joint effort carried out by several musical and environmental entities such as Rock Nica, Misión BOSAWAS and CEN. The concert is described as a fun yet educational concert, designed to raise consciousness about our relationship with water and the environment.

Engagement. One of the main aspects included in the news coverage is the engagement and participation of musicians from Nicaragua. El País (2016) mentions participation of 14 bands. This includes young, upcoming, pop and contemporary bands, and well-established musicians with a long cultural history such as Katia Cardenal and the Mejia Godoy brothers. Nuevo Diario lists one band from California as participating in 2014. Three sources list the Príncipes de Paz band as
participating in the 2014 festival (Nuevo Diario 2014; Webmaster, 2014; Lopez Vida, 2014). Diario Metro, La Prensa and El País highlight the central role of lyrics and songs in the artists’ contributions toward the process of engagement. Lyrics were described as an important aspect of their contribution toward solving environmental problems. A key contribution is described as attention is drawn to the 2014 Album BOSAWAS described as a project of Duo Guardabarranco Foundation, Gobernabilidad Democrática and Misión BOSAWAS. It includes national artists including Mayangna musicians Príncipes de Paz and Estrellita, and was released in May 2014.

**Lack of focus on the Mayangna.** Out of the six articles assessed, only two make a brief mention of the Mayangna community in relationship to the festivals and the issues they attempt to address. In La Prensa, the vocalist of Príncipes de Paz is cited as articulating the following “loving and respecting BOSAWAS, its richness and the Indigenous peoples is very valuable in order to change and help the nation at an intellectual level”. The Nuevo Diario article states that the Festival is organized by the Dúo Guardabarranco Foundation and Misión BOSAWAS as part of “their commitment toward the protection of the Reserve and defending the Mayangna and Miskito territories”. The remaining four articles make no mention of the Mayangnas or Indigenous groups.

**Knowledge sharing.** This coming together of activists and civil society is a platform for interaction and knowledge sharing regarding how Nicaragua can be in harmony with the environment and deal with problematic environmental practices. Diario Metro states that the organizers mention that “solutions cannot only come from the state” but must also come from activism. Finally, La Prensa sees the festival as a “vehicle for reflection to unify, interact and share with our families”. One of the project’s main goals is articulated as making visible the beauty of BOSAWAS and Nica News articulates the aim as raising the sensitivity of young members of our families toward green initiatives and improved relationships with the environment.
Achievements. The achievements of the project, as articulated in Confidencial’s interview, can be categorized into environmental restoration and informing public opinion through civic engagement. The CEN’s institutional achievements are highlighted by Jorge who attests that they have reforested 800 manzanas of Reserve around Peñas Blancas over the past twenty years. This has resulted in tangible outcomes such as the return of the Jaguar and an increase in Quetzal population. Another area of achievement described in this interview is the process of informing public opinion through engagement. Ernesto highlights that change happens slowly and only with a lot of work. He sees that media coverage is positive since it generates debate both at the public and government levels. He attests that some positive things have been accomplished since the government has begun investigating corrupt lawyers who issue illegal land titles in BOSAWAS in recent months. Ultimately, the first significant step is that society is asking the right questions and generating engagement in civil society, in the private sector, and within the government through the presence and action of MARENA.

The future. Finally, in Confidencial’s interview, Ernesto stressed that the challenge ahead is not small, but that educating young generations is the most important way to ensure a positive future. He highlighted that universities can play a vital role in this change by making a serious commitment to offering careers that “can help us cope with climate change, facilitate a new economy that we ought to have, one that is based on sustainability”.

The media coverage assessed here helps to assemble a fuller picture of the current situation as well as of the efforts and achievements by Misión BOSAWAS and other key institutions. This primarily written material was complemented by two important documentaries which were used extensively by the organizations in their efforts to raise awareness about the situation of BOSAWAS. In the next section, I will turn my attention to these documentaries.
7.1.3 Two documentaries for critical awareness

The efforts carried out by the Misión BOSAWAS organization involved the use of audiovisual material produced in collaboration with Nicaraguan-based media entities. Two documentaries have been identified in this project as making a significant contribution in educating Nicaragua’s mainstream population about BOSAWAS and its communities. They were selected for analysis because of their extensive use by the Misión BOSAWAS movement. The first of such works was produced by the online news organization “Confidencial” and it exposes the corruption and apathy that facilitate increased colonist presence in the region while also introducing the initiatives of Misión BOSAWAS. The second documentary is Calé’s production El Canto de BOSAWAS, a film that was featured during Misión BOSAWAS’ conscientization campaigns across Nicaragua in 2014. This film attempts to familiarize mainstream Nicaragua with the rich and invaluable culture of the Mayangna communities of BOSAWAS. Each documentary has a specific focus. El Ocaso de BOSAWAS is primarily concerned with bringing to light the corruption that deepens the problem, while El Canto de BOSAWAS focuses on the cultural heritage of the Mayangna expressed through its music. They do, however, converge in some of the themes that emerge from within them (see Table 6.4 for a full list of the themes generated from the documentaries). This subsection will be organized as follows. A brief synopsis of each of the two documentaries will be given and this will be followed by a presentation of the themes identified in this analysis. This analysis will foster a greater understanding of the legal challenges to policy enforcement and the musical Discourse articulated as part of the initiatives of Misión BOSAWAS.

7.1.3.1 The documentaries

El Ocaso de BOSAWAS (2014) was produced by journalist Carlos Salinas Maldonado of Nicaragua’s news group “Confidencial”. It was accessed through their official website. This film
explores land encroachment in BOSAWAS through a narrative that centers around key topics such as pain, indignation, corruption, conscientization and hope. This work is set within the forests of BOSAWAS, depicting the daily lives of the Mayangna including their animals, hunting practices, religious traditions and community life. Beginning with the sunrise over the forest, the viewer is introduced to daily morning routines of the men, women and children in the Reserve. Through this visual journey, the documentary explains the sorrow, the corruption and uncertainty surrounding this land and its people. Referring to them as “invasores” or invaders, the film introduces the colonists and their practices. The documentary also assesses the system of corruption that has exacerbated the situation, contributing to increased violence and forest loss in the region. The sunset, alluded to by the title and visually depicted toward the end of the film, brings with it connotations of this uncertainty as well as a glimmer of light and hope for the Mayangna communities living in BOSAWAS through the introduction of the youth of Misión BOSAWAS.

The documentary El Canto de BOSAWAS (2014) was produced by Allgood and DeCastro of Calé Productions. The film features the Mayangna’s cultural heritage through their music as it follows one of Misión BOSAWAS’ founding members on his journey to capture the sounds and rhythms of the Mayangna. This was a visual journey into the core zone, a way to get to know the community that, until now, had been voiceless and invisible to the rest of Nicaragua. Superficially, the team’s goal was the professional recording of Mayangna musicians. On a deeper level, they hoped to have a tool for creating a bridge between cultures, the mainstream, mestizo culture of Nicaragua with the ancestral traditions of the Mayangna. Headed by percussionist and activist Ernesto López or Matute, as he prefers to be called, the team ventures into the jungles and finds many beautiful and richly musical communities. While the focus is indeed BOSAWAS, the
Mayangna and the environment, the documentary’s perspective and narrative centres on Matutue who, as a musician and environmental activist, comes to a life-changing experience as he meets the Mayangna musicians and their communities. The themes emerging from the documentaries are described in the next paragraphs. A summary of these can be found in Table 6.4.

**Suffering.** The theme of suffering is identified as central in Confidencial’s documentary. The film begins by presenting the viewer with the ultimate cost and negative repercussions of the conflicts between colonists and the Mayangna in BOSAWAS. The first introduction to the issue depicts the harsh reality and sorrow of a Mayangna widow and mother of six young children. Her husband was shot and killed in 2013 by colonists who were questioned by the unarmed Indigenous patrol group regarding the recent invasion of the forest. The woman now faces a difficult future, raising her six children alone. The Mayangna leadership articulates what is happening to the communities living in BOSAWAS as a problem of suffering. The film shows that the men from the Mayangna community patrol cry before newly-discovered devastation. These tears, the response to a discovery of new damage in the forest, is described as the feeling that feeds their desperation.

**Government apathy and corruption.** The apathy and lack of response on behalf of the government are identified as central in Confidencial’s documentary. The community leaders of Musawás, the capital of BOSAWAS, are depicted as asserting that the central government is responsible for this escalation. They strongly articulate that their people have been forgotten by the government since it is not committed to protecting Indigenous communities. A sign of this lack of support and commitment lies in the fact that the government does not provide enough forest rangers to cover the entire Reserve. This apathy has allowed the colonists to take root and become a more serious problem as time goes by. For example, there are only six rangers for 1,668 km²
and the Mayangna reiterate that six rangers are too few for such large territory. The video suggests that the death described in the beginning of the documentary is a painful sign of this abandonment.

This documentary also posits that central government’s apparent apathy is linked to its internal corruption in dealing with the issue. The Mayangna and their supporters, including lawyers, state that BOSAWAS is caught up at the crossroads of legal insecurity, even with the existence of Law 445. This law is not implemented since there is little presence of state authorities in the region and there are increasing instances of corruption among lawyers and government officials. The documentary claims that when this illegal activity is reported, the authorities do not act.

The corruption of individual politicians and lawyers is also cited as a factor within this complex system of legal insecurity. The documentary asserts that political and economic interests are behind the invasion. Political parties and individual politicians make promises at times of elections in order to secure support and votes. Many of them specifically promise land to families in order to do this. The documentary states that individual leaders are also involved in illegal purchasing and settling inside of the core zone of BOSAWAS. The journalists suggest that there is complicity between colonists and politicians and a general sense of fear on behalf of those who wish to follow the law. For example, Judges are afraid to take these cases because they fear retaliation. When they do take the cases, the police do not obey them and do not enforce their rulings. The film also suggests that some cases do not get brought forward because the accused are relatives of the police.

Colonist practices and identity. The question of who the colonists are and what activities they engage in is explored by both documentaries. Confidencial’s film depicts colonists as lacking
respect for the forests’ natural cycles. Two main groups of colonists are identified in this documentary. Some work on behalf of wealthy ranchers from other regions of the country, while others work on their own and for themselves. In this second group, the documentary presents two further subgroups. Some of them act out of their own initiative while others claim that they have been given land by the central government programs. The film describes the main economic activities in which they are engaged, namely, cattle ranching, agriculture and wood trafficking. The documentary affirms that their approach to these activities, especially cattle ranching, is not sustainable.

To a lesser degree, Cale’s documentary also mentions the colonists and describes them as being primarily involved in cattle ranching activities. This activity increases the risks that BOSAWAS suffer the process of desertification that happened in the other cattle ranching and agricultural regions of Nicaragua. The documentary posits that colonists are not just poor peasants. While those who carry out the manual labour of clearing the forests are indeed poor, they do it on behalf of the rich cattle ranchers who send them to clear large portions of land to sell the lots or keep them as their own farms. These ranchers from Chontales hire people to do the physical labour to set up a second farm to move their cattle during the dry season since the region of BOSAWAS still gets more rain than central Nicaragua.

**Environmental losses.** Confidencial’s documentary places a lot of attention on the environmental losses taking place in BOSAWAS. It cites a 2012 report published by the GZI\(^\text{33}\) (Agencia Alemana para el Desarrollo Sostenible) and UNAG\(^\text{34}\) (Unión Nacional de Agricultores

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\(^{33}\) German Agency for Sustainable Development

\(^{34}\) National Union of Farmers and Cattle Ranchers

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y Ganaderos) which states that the Reserve loses 42,000 hectares of forest per year. From 1987 to 2010 this loss totalled more than 564,000 hectares. The reported reasons for the loss of primary forest include the advance of the agricultural frontier, increase in cattle ranching activities, and selling of wood and illegal concessions and permits. This report suggests that the situation in BOSAWAS is critical since satellite images and computer simulations show that 30% of the Reserve could be lost by 2023. Cale’s documentary also makes reference to this loss through similar statistics shown at the end of the film.

**Economic system.** The role of the broader economic context in Nicaragua is only presented in Confidencial’s documentary. The economic system in Nicaragua not only facilitates the dynamic through investment but also pressures the agricultural frontier to grow as cattle ranchers and farmers run out of fertile land and water in Central Nicaragua, trying to meet the demands of the market. This topic is not dealt with in-depth but only mentioned as important.

**Militarization of the region.** Confidencial’s documentary also describes the militarization of the region. This process has been facilitated by Daniel Ortega’s government’s creation of the “Batallón Ecológico” (Ecological Brigade) branch of the army with 700 soldiers to oversee 20,000 km2 of forest. Its head, Colonel Paniagua reported to the interviewers that they had organized numerous control plans including the “Action Plan for the Defense of Mother Earth” and the “Green Gold” operation. The Mayangna, the documentary argues, consider that the ecological brigade is but one way to help stop the invasions; however, these invasions still continue in the midst of increasing violence.

**Knowledge and education.** Both documentaries mention the need for education and knowledge sharing as a first step in dealing with the problem in BOSAWAS. Confidencial’s
documentary cites lawyer Blanca Molina García, who worked as legal counsel to the Indigenous communities in 2009 and 2010. She believes that the problem in BOSAWAS has to do with a lack of education regarding natural resources and suggests that if BOSAWAS is to survive, it is necessary to address this need for knowledge and education. Matute’s articulates his expectations for this project as follows: “That more people come to know about BOSAWAS, about the Mayangna Territories and the Mayangna cultures. How can we save or protect something that we do not even know, something we do not know that exists?” Matute acknowledges that mainstream Nicaragua does not know even basic information about the Mayangna.

**Hope.** Confidencial’s documentary ends with a sign of hope. This comes with the presence of non-Indigenous youth who arrive in BOSAWAS to get to know the Mayangna way of life. One of the leaders of the Misión BOSAWAS movement claims that their mission is the conscientization of young non-Indigenous people about what is happening on the Reserve. They want to inform their opinion and generate future change and they want to establish collaboration with Mayangna youth. This leader believes that there is “political good will for change”.

**Connection with nature and with each other.** The contrast between mainstream Nicaragua and Mayangna’s worldview is highlighted extensively in Cale’s *El Canto de BOSAWAS*. The Mayangna believe in a connection between humanity and nature while mainstream Nicaragua has been “separated psychologically and physically from nature”, as articulated by Matute. This separation has allowed society to be contaminated by an economy that centers on coffee production, cattle raising and large-scale agriculture. We do not place importance on conservation but rather on immediate satisfaction. The Mayangna, on the other

35 Author’s translation.
hand, are portrayed as having a spiritual connection with nature. For Matute, it is of vital importance that mainstream Nicaragua recognize this unity not only with nature but also with the Mayangna.

**Song, nature and culture.** *El Canto de BOSAWAS* focuses on depicting the natural beauty of BOSAWAS and establishing a connection between this beauty and the songs of the Mayangna. This is accomplished by the choice of image and sound. For example, the documentary introduces the viewer to imagery of the landscape and all life that exists within it. The opening frames showcase images of butterflies, other insects, exotic birds and colourful frogs. We then come to the human faces of BOSAWAS, the faces of Mayangna young men, children and women. The viewer also hears a duo of women singing acapella in Mayangna with the thick forest visible at a distance. Matutue’s voice then offers basic information of BOSAWAS and he describes this project as joining his two passions of music and the environment.

**Music and community.** Music is portrayed as a deeply communal experience for the Mayangna and as a tool for education in *El Canto de BOSAWAS*. For example, when the recordings take place in Salkawás, a bell calls the musicians and community to the school. Outside of the school, sitting on a school chair and surrounded by children, adults and elders, the local leader welcomes the visitors, letting them know that they support their efforts to share and broadcast Mayangna songs. This film depicts music as a tool for education and for the conservation of the Mayangna culture. Musawás’ chief acknowledges that the recordings that are emerging out of these initiatives will help them communicate their way of life to the rest of society. It will also help to preserve their traditions for future generations. Music, he suggests, can be used to keep the government’s interest in the Reserve. The chief sees the recordings as a first step in giving a voice to the Mayangna.
Cultural heritage. The invaluable worth of the cultural patrimony that Mayangna culture represents for Nicaragua is articulated by Matute in *El Canto de BOSAWAS*. The documentary ends with images of Mayangna children playing in the river and Matute’s voice is heard:

If we truly love our children, if we truly love Nicaragua, we have to save BOSAWAS. [We have] to recover that vast Indigenous knowledge which is our only legacy, the only thing left after 500 years of colonization. I want people to understand and know that what is at play here is much more important than any economy.

Finally, as the viewer is presented with images from the forest, rivers and animals of BOSAWAS, key information about biodiversity loss in the Reserve is presented.

7.1.4 Section summary

Confidencial’s documentary allows us to grasp the legal and social complexities of land access in BOSAWAS. It puts a human face to the conflict by showcasing the concrete suffering that this issue generates. The documentary exposes a lack of policy enforcement and a deep system of corruption engrained at various levels of government and local police departments. It also assesses the militarization of the zone by the central government when it comes to the enforcement of Law 445. A glimmer of hope is introduced by hinting of a bridging of cultures and, ultimately, a bridging of the divide that has existed between the Atlantic and the Pacific regions. This hope is generated by the presence of non-Indigenous young people who arrive in BOSAWAS with the interest of getting to know the ancestral Mayangna heritage, still alive in the communities depicted in the film. These young men and women are raising awareness about a need for environmental justice and social justice for the Mayangna. The hope comes from this knowledge exchange never seen in Nicaragua before. Cale’s production brings together Nicaragua’s two halves, the mestizo from the Pacific and the Indigenous from the Atlantic. The Mayangna’s cultural heritage, specifically its music and its relationship with nature, is presented as wealth that has gone
unrecognized by previous generations. The film brings to the centre a crucial difference between worldviews and it challenges young audiences to a new awareness.

The documentaries considered here have provided audiences with a bridge, a new vision of things that were beyond their knowledge and understanding. While *El Ocaso de BOSAWAS* exposes the corrupt system that has fostered the increasing presence of colonists, Cale’s production appeals to the heart of young Nicaraguans and invites them to reassess their priorities and values. The situation is indeed complex, and the social reality of colonists cannot be ignored either. Both documentaries accomplish that first step that Matute speaks about, the step of gaining knowledge. This knowledge provides a starting point to protect and defend Nicaragua’s ancestral heritage from a tainted economic and legal system that lacks communal and environmental responsibility.

**Table 7.2: Themes emerging from analysis of documentaries**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>El Canto de BOSAWAS</th>
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<td>Hope</td>
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<td>Militarization</td>
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<td>Suffering</td>
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7.2 Song analysis

This subsection will offer the results of a thematic analysis on a total of eight songs. This analysis will focus on lyrics while still paying attention to musical style and instrumentation. These songs were examined so as to understand the musical Discourse conveyed during the festivals and through recorded music. This analysis was carried out on seven of nine songs recorded in the 2014 album *BOSAWAS* and one song identified by interview participants as the first song ever written about BOSAWAS. The album *BOSAWAS* emerged out of the efforts of Misión BOSAWAS and the songs recorded in it are a compilation of many of the songs not only performed during the 2014 festival but also during all subsequent festivals. One of its most significant characteristics is that this album includes Mayangna and mainstream musicians and includes a mixture of rhythms, languages and instruments representative of both the Atlantic and the Pacific regions. This subsection will provide a synopsis of each of the eight songs while noting important historical and cultural references, composer or performer’s identity, musical styles and the articulation of worldviews related to nature and the role of Indigenous people in this relationship. The main themes found in this process are summarized in Table 6.5. The analysis carried out here will provide us with a basic, yet important understanding of how the issue of Indigenous rights and environmental justice was articulated through musical Discourse.

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36 Some of these songs are available on the Misión BOSAWAS’ soundcloud, accessible via this link: [https://soundcloud.com/misi-n-bosawas](https://soundcloud.com/misi-n-bosawas). They are also available on YouTube via this link: [https://www.youtube.com/user/MisionBOSAWAS/videos](https://www.youtube.com/user/MisionBOSAWAS/videos).
7.2.1 “Somos Agua”

La Cuneta Son Machín Band’s “Somos Agua” (“We are Water”) opens the album **BOSAWAS** with an upbeat cumbia\(^{37}\) rhythm. This band is described as a young, yet well-established music group in Nicaragua which was the recipient of a 2017 Latin Grammy Award in the United States. This band was part of all the festivals and concerts organized by Misión BOSAWAS. Their distinctive sound blends modern instruments and rhythms with folkloric instruments such as the marimba\(^{38}\). They describe themselves as influenced by the storytelling tradition of Nicaragua’s music (Bennett, 2016). This song is, precisely, a narrative that situates the listener “at the heart of the mountain”, explains the problem, suggests solutions and establishes a sense of communion between listeners, musicians and nature.

The first three stanzas of this song provide the context and setting for the listener. Nature is described as a joyful place where water flows, and animals and plants live in harmony. There are references to the sounds of nature as the lyrics mention native birds and insects such as the “sensontle” (mockingbird), the cicadas, and the colourful butterflies, as well as native trees such as the “nogales” (walnut trees) and native pines. Water is depicted as instilling life upon all beings and biodiversity is depicted as harmonious and joyful. The third stanza alludes to a restoration taking place in the forests and the Central American Jaguar is depicted as coming down the roads and conquering the rivers that “were once empty fields”.

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\(^{37}\) While cumbia was born in Colombia, it is one of the most widely danced and performed rhythms in Central America.

\(^{38}\) The marimba is a wooden percussion instrument similar to a xylophone. It is part of the cultural heritage of many Central American countries.
With the choice of verb and pronoun, the refrain creates a sense of unity. “We are” and “I am” are intertwined, connecting listeners, musicians and nature in one. “We are water, we are forest, we are life. BOSAWAS, I am BOSAWAS”. This refrain is easy for an audience to learn and sing along. Continuing with its narrative style, the song then moves to a specific story and conveys the account given by a local man “Don Francisco”. He tells the story of how, “everyone in his town preferred to dedicate themselves to cattle ranching”. This seemed like a good and lucrative business but there was a “silent problem: it destroyed the forests and finished up the water”. In Don Francisco’s story, the town decided to live in harmony with nature and recover the forest. They “began to protect all the rivers and thus, take care of life”.

This song features some typical aspects of Nicaraguan culture such as its lighthearted storytelling style. Some sections of the song include spoken words which are articulated in popular Nicaraguan accent and colloquialisms. For example, a voice alludes to the traditional legend of the “Sisimique” (Costenla, 1995), an ape-like character from the mountain that was believed to kidnap young people who misbehaved. In a jovial tone, the voice indicates that if we do not protect the water, the “Sisimique” will take us away. With this song, the Cuneta Son Machín draws the audience’s attention to the heart of the problem. Clearing forests for cattle ranching affects the water sources of BOSAWAS. This affects all of us because “we are BOSAWAS”. Leaving the forest alone will allow it to regenerate, thus letting the animals return to their harmonious, joyful realm.

7.2.2 “No Podrán”

The recorded version of “No Podrán” (“They will not be able to”) features musician Nina Cardenal interpreting the work of her late uncle Salvador Cardenal. Salvador was a renowned composer, known for his dedication to revolutionary and environmental music in Nicaragua.
Along with his sister Katia, Nina’s mother, he founded the Guardabarranco Duo in 1979 (Roa & Poveda, 2010). This song focuses on the future, is a call to action, and establishes a connection between sentiments of love with concrete defence of nature. It describes the person who loves nature and contrasts them with those who destroy it.

The first stanza describes that a person who loves “the land” is characterized by the carrying out of concrete actions such as planting flowers and protecting the forests. The act of planting alludes to the idea of freedom as the person who plants, leaves nature free to spread its aroma in the wind. There is a connection between love and action both from a preventive approach to one that stands up in defence. Contrasted to the person who loves the environment, the song depicts the one who “tumbles the forests”. This person is immediately described as someone who “calls for prison”, that is, tumbling the forests calls for imprisonment and punishment. The song goes one step further and specifies that those who “grant permission” for this should also be punished. While these perpetrators of destruction do indeed cause harm, the hope that lives in the heart of the person who loves nature is stronger. As the song articulates, those who destroy the environment will not be able to uproot the hope that lives in the heart of those who love nature.

It is important to note that the song includes the refrain “they will not be able to uproot even a flower from my heart” sung in Mayangna by the Estrellita Duo. These two Mayangna women are also featured in the Canto de BOSAWAS documentary. The refrain refers to those who destroy the forests as being unable to suffocate the hope that lies in the singer’s heart. The destruction of nature causes pain to those who love it, but that sorrow is also a source of hope and change. Pain is deeply connected to action as follows: “The tears of the people will bring to fruition, the parched land that was once green…the green land that saw my birth”. Recalling the
pain caused by environmental destruction is a call to action, a call to bring those who perpetuate
the destruction to account for their crimes against nature.

7.2.3 “BOSAWAS”

The song entitled “BOSAWAS” (2011), which was performed by singer Katia Cardenal
during the Unidos por BOSAWAS festivals, was part of Salvador Cardenal’s last album
significantly titled *Verde Verdad* or *Green Truth*. Even though this song was not included in the
2014 album BOSAWAS, it is considered the first song ever written and recorded about
BOSAWAS (Musician 1). Cardenal’s *Verde Verdad* is a collection of songs, specially dedicated
to nature and to humanity’s relationship with it as seen by Cardenal. The songs recorded in this
album are an anthology of Cardenal’s legacy and spiritual vision on nature. For him, nature was
a beloved entity like a “girlfriend” (Musician 3) and a point of encounter with God (Musician 1).

The song “BOSAWAS” is a direct address, written in the second person, to the forest of
BOSAWAS. The forest is described as having lived in peace in the past and the song conveys the
sense that this peace has been interrupted. It is a request to those who want to touch BOSAWAS
to leave it as it is. A connection between air, water and life is established in this song.

The forest is described as a source of water and oxygen and nature as a friendly entity.
There is a marked contrast between the splendour and harmony of biodiversity and the damage
cau sed by “the human species”. Stanza three lays out that BOSAWAS is beneficial to Nicaragua
since its air and water support life beyond national borders. Its flora and fauna are medicine for
humans and a peaceful refuge for the animals. In stanza four, the author juxtaposes Indigenous
people, the Mayangna and Miskito, with those who “come to it from the outside”. The outsiders
are the ones who damage these virgin forests and they are labelled as criminals. Wood sellers are
depicted as “cutting the future of children” and gold collectors are represented as taking “from the
rivers” and not even putting out their fires. On the other hand, Indigenous communities “do not cause fires and do not deplete the forest”.

The idyllic world of the animals and their natural balance is contrasted with the world populated by humans. The hawk and eagle are depicted as flying freely. Rivers and jungles exist in “brotherhood”, and the existence of the Waspuk and Bocay Rivers is described as being deeply connected to the protection of the Saslaya Mountain. Jaguars and pumas are further described as drinking the waters of the Cocowanki River, but they drink in fear as they watch “armed people pass on their boats”, thus making a reference to armed colonist presence. The last stanza, once again, makes reference to this interrupted idyllic environment. This time, the quetzal\(^{39}\) is recalled flying like a “blue ray” in fear. The song of the composer is connected to an expression of this bird’s grief or “cries”. The stanza concludes by addressing the forest directly once again and by criminalizing those who destroy it as follows: “whoever harms you is, to me, a criminal”.

7.2.4 “Hoy le Quiero Cantar”

The contribution of the Cardenal family was further felt in the concerts and recordings by the presence of the well-known singer and composer, Katia Cardenal. Katia, who celebrated 40 years of musical career in 2018, is a very active leader in the Nicaraguan music scene. She organizes a number of festivals in the country and has advocated for musician rights. With her brother Salvador, she founded the Guardabarranco\(^{40}\) duo from 1980 until his death. With him, she focused on writing and performing songs for social change and is considered the pioneer of

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\(^{39}\) The quetzal is a bird that exists in Mesoamerica and which is connected to the spiritual worldview of many Indigenous groups in the region.

\(^{40}\) The Guardabarranco is the local name for Nicaragua’s national bird. This bird is a symbol for freedom since it never survives in captivity (Noguera, 2018).
Nicaraguan environmental music (Noguera, 2018). Katia is the head of the Guardabarranco Foundation which was an organizing partner in many of the the Unidos por BOSAWAS concerts.

Her song “Hoy le quiero cantar” (“Today I want to sing”) is formulated as a dedication and begins with the following words “Today I want to sing to the ancestral forests”. She expresses that she is singing for the ceiba tree, the quetzal and the “cloud that drinks from the ancestral forest”. Without making a specific mention to the Mayangna, she alludes to the Indigenous communities who have this ancestral connection to the land and states that she sings for the people who love this land with “the love of a child”. She states that she will give continuity to this “song” which is a cry and a request to “save BOSAWAS”. The song articulates that it is natural for her to raise her voice in order to awaken the desire to fight for BOSAWAS.

7.2.5 “Alarido por BOSAWAS”

The song “Alarido por BOSAWAS” (A howl for BOSAWAS) was performed during the 2013 festival with the same name and recorded in the album BOSAWAS by the well renowned singer and composer Carlos Mejía Godoy. His name is synonymous with Nicaraguan music, specifically with revolutionary folk music. With his brother Luis Enrique, they secured popular support for the Sandinista Revolution of 1979 through performance and recorded music (Pring-Mill, 1987). This song is a narrative and convocation, a style typical of Carlos. The narrative tells the story of how peaceful things were in BOSAWAS once and how this peace was interrupted. The song establishes that the act of music-making brings together the people in protest and social action. Its rhythm is joyful and upbeat, and similar to Nicaraguan traditional music. The song also has a traditional drumming section which includes a voice over, referring to and calling upon various ancestral identities in Nicaragua.
The recorded version of this song opens with background sounds of water, birds taking off in flight and song. It begins with a male voice, singing in a slow tempo over a background of these nature sounds, accompanied with a keyboard playing chords slowly. The narrative told by the lyrics begins by situating the audience in the past “only half a century ago” when “our land was a republic of birds”. For birds, borders do not exist, and this highlights the natural unity that binds the Mesoamerican corridor. This unity is interrupted by those who arrived “one day”, the “Señores” or “Lords”, men in power who are like “wood-hungry termites”. They ruptured the silence of the forests “with the hell of the chainsaws”.

The refrain offers a notable change in rhythm as it begins the happy guitar strumming characteristic of “son Nica”41 style with marimba accompaniment. The lyrics focus on explaining what this song is and is written in the first-person plural, that is, the refrain is the voice of a collective. “This is much more than a simple scream”, it is a “howl” that denounces and gathers. This “howl” or cry is described as coming from the depths of the soul of the singers “This is a howl that gathers; this is a howl that claims to God; this is a clean and pure howl from the heart of the mountain itself”.

The spoken word section changes after the first time the chorus is sung from the initial story-telling to one of defiance against bureaucracy and politicians. Carlos Mejía’s voice narrates the following: “The cries and lamentations are over, the pleas and requests are over, we have used up all our ammunition, there will be no more tolerance or patience”. This sudden change in approach is a response to the slow process of policy enforcement as expressed in these words:

41 The “Son Nica” rhythm is a uniquely Nicaraguan style of guitar strumming. It was created by Camilo Zapata, follows a 6x8 strumming pattern and use major chords primarily.
“Because, while the dignitaries gather to philosophize over our proposals, plundering and greed continue to violate our Mother Earth”. The refrain continues, once again, to describe the song’s role of gathering and denouncing.

The song then comes to a sudden halt in this rhythm after the refrain and this break is led by the sound of thunder. The beat is kept by traditional drums and other percussion instruments. Carlos’ voice, once again, articulates a message that is deeply connected to Nicaragua’s context and Indigenous heritage. “Let all brethren come together; let them come from the Pacific and the Atlantic. Let the Indians from Subtiava come, those from Monimbó and Totogalpa, the arrow warriors of Yukul and Matagalpa. Let the Garífunas and Creoles come; let them come from the entire Nicaragua. Let us sing today for the Mayangna nation”. First, by calling on the brothers or brethren from the various regions of the country, this song bridges the gap between Pacific and Atlantic which is characteristic of Nicaragua’s geography, history and culture. He calls upon key Indigenous groups, connecting the issue of BOSAWAS to specific moments in Nicaraguan history.

The Subtiava “Indians” have their ancestral roots in the Pacific in the Departments (provinces) of León and Chinandega (De Stefano, 1972). They were recognized in the early 1900s as the champions for labour rights for peasant workers in colonial Nicaragua when the government acted to destroy them as an ethnic group. The Monimbó Indigenous group has a strong connection to the Nicaraguan revolution and folk music as their roots are in Masaya, the cradle of Nicaraguan marimba music and a stronghold during the revolution (Borland, 2002). The Totogalpa group comes from what is now a small town near the Honduran border, toward the centre of Nicaragua. This region was a site of conflict during Sandino’s armed resistance in the 1920s. The arrow warriors of Yucul in Matagalpa fought alongside the Nicaraguan army against American invader William Walker in the 1880s. They are considered heroes and symbols of anti-American and anti-
imperialist resistance. Finally, the Garifunas and Creoles are ethnic groups from the Atlantic with strong cultural connections to Honduras (Bithell et al., 2014). All of these groups are invited to sing on behalf of the Mayangna and come to their aid in the current struggle.

After the refrain is repeated one last time, two important lines are harmonized by numerous voices. These lines establish a direct connection to the revolution through intertextuality. “Vivirás BOSAWAS” echoes the refrain of a song that would be familiar to most Nicaraguans: “Vivirás Monimbó”. This piece was a crucial tune for the revolution and identified the Monimbó “Indians” as revolutionary examples to follow. “You shall live BOSAWAS” is articulated as a promise to stand in resistance, in defense of the well-being of the Mayangna and protection of the Reserve.

7.2.6 “Todas las Voces por BOSAWAS”

The song “Todas las Voces por BOSAWAS” (“All Voices for BOSAWAS”) was performed and recorded by Luis Enrique Mejía Godoy, Carlos Mejía Godoy’s brother. With him, he proved to be pivotal for the triumph of the Revolution as their music allowed the Sandinistas to reach the largely illiterate group of peasants. The song’s lyrics denote a command as it is written in the imperative. It establishes a connection with the Mayangna’s ancestral rights to the land and the musician expresses that this song is his contribution to this struggle.

From its beginning, it is clear that the song gives an order for the forest invaders to “Get out” (“salgan”) and it states the reason: “this is sacred land that belongs to my Mayangna brethren”. There is a need to join our voices for BOSAWAS. This idea, articulated by the refrain, is repeated like a mantra many times throughout the song. The song explains who the Mayangna are and what is BOSAWAS. They are the protectors of “the inheritance given by their ancestors”. BOSAWAS is described as a place where animals from the South and the North come together.
and where rare animal species still survive. These include the quetzal, the eagle, the puma and the jaguar. Then, the song highlights that this life is being “killed” and this is a crime that must be stopped. The singer expresses that he is offering his song and guitar to “support the struggle of the Mayangnas in BOSAWAS”.

7.2.7 Mayangna songs

The BOSAWAS album included four songs by Mayangna musicians. These songs were entitled “BOSAWAS”, “BOSAWAS Sauni”, “Mayangna” and “Mayangana Like”. Out of these, two are bilingual (Spanish and Mayangna) and two are exclusively in Mayangna. The bilingual songs were also performed by the Principes de Paz band during the Unidos por BOSAWAS festivals. This section includes an analysis of these two bilingual songs. A song that is unique and important to mention here is “Mayangna”. This song was recorded completely in Mayangna and one of its key characteristics is that its melody centres on the use of the marimba and the Son Nica rhythm, a rhythm characteristic of the Pacific and upheld as folklore by mainstream Nicaragua. This song, then, provides a tangible connection between this country’s two diverse cultural and geographic sectors.

The instrumentation and rhythm of the “BOSAWAS Sauni” song evidence a strong Caribbean influence as it is typical of Mayangna music. The accompaniment includes keyboards, guitar and drum set, played in a Caribbean style. The recorded version of the song is a short piece that lasts two minutes and 45 seconds but that can be extended in live performances. The first

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stanza and the refrain are sung in Mayangna and then the song repeats the same verse in Spanish. The lyrics of this song focus on what one can see in the Reserve and the imagery depicts a zone filled with biodiversity including tigers, lions, panthers, flowers, wild hogs, rivers and the mythical “sisimique”, an ape-like character from folk tales from the mountains of Central America.

The Principes de Paz’ song “BOSAWAS” is perhaps their most well-known work. Their recording of this song was widely used in marketing efforts and was central to the documentary *El Canto de BOSAWAS*. In a Caribbean style and slower tempo, the song features guitars, the voices of several men and the contribution of Carlos Mejía Godoy’s accordion and spoken word. The song begins in Mayangna both in song and in narrative as a Mayangna spoken verse bridges the song into the Spanish verses. The lyrics are quite short and repeat themselves in both languages. The focus of the song remains on the beauty of BOSAWAS, the musician’s love for it and the commitment to defend it. The spoken segment is first done in Mayangna by a member of the Principes de Paz band and then in Spanish by Carlos Mejía Godoy: “BOSAWAS, we love you, we respect you and we pledge to defend you”.

7.2.8 **Summary of song analysis**

Having provided a synopsis of the songs while identifying themes in their lyrics as well as some stylistic, instrumentation and rhythmic considerations, we can draw some conclusions and observations on the musical Discourse articulated by these performances and recordings (See Table 6.5 for a summary of themes). With regard to language, it is noted that Spanish remained the predominant language in music performance and recording. This seems like an appropriate choice since the festival audiences and listeners were mestizo Nicaraguan for whom Spanish is the primary language. The musical Discourse, however, brought the Mayangna language to the centre,
both through the Mayangna and through mainstream musicians, in a way never seen before in the Nicaraguan mainstream.

Regarding the music styles, a bridging of cultures and a message of unity took place; since the most popular styles heard in Nicaragua were represented such as Son Nica, Cumbia and Caribbean music. A significant musical moment took place when the Mayangna performed and recorded the song “Mayangna”, mastering a style not usually characteristic of the Atlantic. This was, in a way, a process where the Mayangna entered, through music, mainstream Nicaragua and were considered part of a heterogenous cultural and national identity.

When we consider the themes that emerge out of the lyrics of the songs considered here, we can notice that there is a focus on uttering a call to action. The beauty and the love for the Reserve and for Nicaragua’s natural resources should move the listener and the musician to act and to call upon politicians to enforce the existing policy. There are strong connections to historical moments and protagonists from Nicaragua and, like them, the listener must take action in support of the Mayangna and their sacred duty of protecting natural resources. Music emerges as an important vehicle for denouncing the crimes against nature and against the Mayangna. It is a reminder that we are all connected with the environment and with each other in solidarity and action.

7.3 Summary

This chapter has analyzed secondary data sources that include media articles, one interview, two documentaries, and eight songs. The media coverage conveys the problem in BOSAWAS as affecting Indigenous communities at various levels. The media articles, interview and both documentaries illustrate the magnitude of the damage to the Reserve and place much attention on the central government’s failures in enforcing existing policy. The documentary El
Canto de BOSAWAS privileges the music of the Mayangna as a privileged vehicle for change, as it has the potential to educate, record language and bridge the cultures of the Atlantic and the Pacific. The festivals are described as places where encounters happened since they brought together various elements of civil society to join efforts for change in favour of environmental and Indigenous justice. Finally, the songs articulate a Discourse that establishes ancestral and revolutionary solidarity with the Mayangna. The idyllic world of the forests is depicted as suffering a violent disruption in the invasions and destruction by colonists and government bureaucracy. The songs are a call to action, to respect the beauty and richness of Nicaragua’s natural resources.
Table 7.3: Song themes and characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song title</th>
<th>Performer and/or composer</th>
<th>Language aspects</th>
<th>Key instruments</th>
<th>Rhythm / style</th>
<th>Main themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Alarido por BOSAWAS</td>
<td>Carlos Mejia Godoy (performer and composer)</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Marimba, acoustic guitar</td>
<td>Son Nica</td>
<td>Revolution, historical / Indigenous connections, government apathy, call to support the Mayangna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 BOSAWAS</td>
<td>Principes de Paz (performers)</td>
<td>Mayangna, Spanish</td>
<td></td>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>Beauty of the Reserve, call to action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 BOSAWAS</td>
<td>Katia Cardenal Salvador Cardenal (composer)</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Acoustic guitar</td>
<td>Pop</td>
<td>Harmony in nature, vital importance of BOSAWAS, humanity’s damage to nature, Indigenous people as guardians of BOSAWAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 BOSAWAS Sauni</td>
<td>Principes de Paz (composers and performers)</td>
<td>Mayangna, Spanish</td>
<td>Keyboard, guitar</td>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>Beauty of the Reserve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Hoy le quiero cantar</td>
<td>Katia Cardenal (performer and composer)</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Acapella, soft keyboard, forest sounds</td>
<td>Pop</td>
<td>Music to denounce and defend, Indigenous people as guardians of nature, call to action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Mayangna</td>
<td>Principes de Paz (composers and performers)</td>
<td>Mayangna</td>
<td>Acoustic guitar, keyboard, marimba</td>
<td>Son Nica</td>
<td>Merging of cultures and rhythms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 No podrán</td>
<td>Nina Cardenal (performer) Salvador Cardenal (composer) Duo Estrellita (chorus)</td>
<td>Spanish, Mayangna</td>
<td>Acoustic guitar, electric guitar</td>
<td>Pop</td>
<td>Call to action, connections between love for nature and social action, legal repercussions of forest clearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Somos agua</td>
<td>La Cuneta Son Machin</td>
<td>Spanish, Nicaraguan colloquialisms</td>
<td>Marimba, accordion, guitar</td>
<td>Cumbia</td>
<td>Unity, damage by cattle ranching, possibilities for forest regeneration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Todas las voces por BOSAWAS</td>
<td>Luis Enrique Mejia Godoy (performer and composer)</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Guitar Keyboard</td>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>Mayangna sacred duty to protect BOSAWAS Call to remove colonists</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8 THE PROTAGONISTS AND THE UNIDOS POR BOSAWAS MUSIC FESTIVALS

In this chapter, I present the results of semi-structured interviews with activists, musicians both in Managua as well as in BOSAWAS and with Mayangna leadership and community members in BOSAWAS. The list of questions that were asked during the interviews is provided in Appendix 1. These questions provided a starting point for conversation. However, individuals interviewed did not always answer them directly but rather spoke about topics and issues they found to be important. This was particularly the case in BOSAWAS where the elders and leaders focused their conversation and narrative on storytelling, speaking about ancestral connections and expressing their love for the land, animals and cultural traditions. Nineteen interviews were conducted while in Nicaragua between May and December 2017. Out of these, seven were carried out inside the Reserve. Table 4.1 in Chapter 4 provides a detailed list of all interview participants. The results are presented in two sections. The first section focuses on how participants viewed and experienced the festival, and the second section presents their perspectives on the problem.

8.1 The festival as described by interview participants

This section presents the results of a thematic analysis of the transcripts from the semi-structured interviews. Common and dominant themes were identified as interview participants spoke about the festivals. These themes are explained below, and they include the following: 1) festivals as experiential learning, 2) engagement of environmentally-conscious business initiatives, 3) youth involvement, 4) conscientization, 5) role of music and musicians, 6) personal commitment, 7) accomplishment of Misión BOSAWAS, and 8) opportunities for Misión BOSAWAS. These themes are explained in depth as follows.
The festival as experiential learning. The participants interviewed in this research described the festival first and foremost as a gathering, a point of encounter where experiential learning took place. This learning was facilitated through recreational activities (Activist 5), exhibits (Activist 3), the sharing of the documentary *El Canto de BOSAWAS* and other media (Activist 7, Mayangna Musician 1) and music and artistic performance (Musicians 2, 5). The recreational aspect included free yoga and meditation sessions, theatre plays and contemporary dance workshops. The central message supported by these diverse activities was one of environmental sustainability and of humanity’s multi-level relationship with nature. The Mayangna knowledge system was recognized by some interviewees as a main contributor to this message which was disseminated through the various components mentioned above in a context of gathering of diverse sectors of society. For example, Activist 1 mentioned that, while the music, colours and energy seen in the festival were attractive elements, what drew his attention the most was the sense or the action of “encountering”. This event brought together activists, students, families, small business owners, government, musicians and other artists from many sectors and regions in Nicaragua, including the Caribbean, in one common experience of celebration and knowledge sharing.

**Engagement of environmentally conscious business initiatives.** The small business initiatives that were present in the festival as exhibitors offered environmentally-friendly and innovative products and workshops such as leather recycling, preparing healthier home-cooked meals, and sausages made through small scale initiatives. Activist 3 described this as follows “The festivals attracted many artisans that were doing work with recycled materials; they were small businesses, making clothing and jewellery from repurposed material”. This description was complemented by Activist 5 who stated that the festival was “a point of encounter for innovative
initiatives which, at least, created some change”.

Activist 2 found it encouraging to visit the exhibits and see so many young people involved in socially conscious work. For Activist 5, these exhibits offered a new, more human and responsible relationship with the environment and a new way of looking at consumption. All who attended the festivals had access to these products and knowledge.

Youth involvement. Activist 5 affirmed that these events brought together a unique group of young people. They were mostly university students who took the time to become informed about what was happening in the country and who wanted to do something about it. For Activist 7, the music concerts were the way by which he came together with people who informed him; he made friends after the concerts with young people from the Misión BOSAWAS group. Musician 5 also spoke of a more involved relationship with the movement. He stated that he had worked with the concert organizers in other events and he was asked to help. He assisted with promotion and with the event itself as a volunteer. He described the experience as follows:

For me it was like offering my support to tell Nicaragua that we need to stop doing this, stop the destruction. I saw that they [the musicians] were trying to spread the word in a peaceful way about what was happening. It was not about publicity for them but about touching people with a message.

Conscientization.

Two subthemes emerged under the topic of conscientization. These included the role of the documentary and conscientization of youth.

The documentary. Regarding knowledge transfer and conscientization, the documentary El Canto de BOSAWAS was identified by many participants as a tool of dissemination and critical discussion. This campaign included the showing of this film in two cinemas in Managua, school
showings, open air mobile theatres throughout Nicaragua and film festivals in the United States and Canada. A social media publication by Calé productions affirmed that by February 5, 2015, 17,110 people had watched this documentary. As Activist 1 stated, “this allowed many adolescents and families to be informed about what was happening”.

Activist 5 spoke of this production as an attempt to reduce the gap between the Caribbean Nicaraguan population and its Pacific counterparts. He articulated this as follows:

It is not possible to bring the entire population of the Pacific to the Reserve. It was much more practical to documental their lifestyle and bring a cultural output that could help us bring with us an artistic element, something easy for Nicaraguan society to relate to.

This documentary was noted by a number of interviewees as very important because it showed “the musical part and the journey that it takes to get to the Reserve. It allowed you to have a visual experience of the place” (Activist 7). One of the Mayangna musicians interviewed mentioned that Misión BOSAWAS offered several showings of the documentary on the Reserve. He acknowledged that this was a positive tool to bring Mayangna culture and their current struggles to the attention of the greater Nicaraguan population. He also acknowledged that it is impossible to include everything in only 45 minutes of a film (Mayangna Musician 1). Activist 4 mentioned the documentary as having taught him the ways by which the Mayangna have survived globalization as well as providing a way to get to know their culture and music.

**Conscientization of young people.** For Musician 1, awareness raising was a very integrating process and considered that the festival did indeed facilitate conscientization among many people. This musician stated that the festival “awakened a love for a part of Nicaragua that was not known to many people. It has sensitized many people and has awakened good will to change many things”.

For Activist 7, this all-encompassing experience, which brought together children, adolescents and entire families, certainly generated critical awareness. Musician 4 spoke
of this and asserted that the festival addressed a general level of ignorance in society. He stated that about 90% of Nicaraguans did not know who the Mayangna were prior to these initiatives. Therefore, any effort to save the Reserve with such low levels of awareness would be fruitless since “how can you save something that you don’t know is there?” After the festivals, these participants affirmed that at least a greater part of the population knows now what BOSAWAS is, primarily through the documentary and through the exhibits and performances. “There is still a lot more to do, but it is a start”, asserted Musician 4.

**Role of music performance and musicians.**

Two subthemes also emerged under the topic of the role of music. These included the role of performance and the relationship between music and conscientization.

**Performance.** Music performance was recognized by all interview participants as a central component used to animate crowds and bring people together. It provided a way to share values and encourage behaviour in line with those values, specifically the values of environmental protection (Activist 1). Several of the interviewees mentioned that the contribution of music surpassed the festivals, as music was a key motivator for many of them to become engaged in environmental initiatives that went well beyond the Misión BOSAWAS movement. Also, during the festivals, the content of the music disseminated a message of unity, reconciliation, and environmental awareness, and established some connections to the Nicaraguan Revolution. Music also elicited empathy for the Mayangna communities and knowledge of their values.

Activist 5 believes music was the most logical element to include in this initiative since there is a general trend of cultural consumption in Nicaragua. That is, most Nicaraguans have a high level of interest in music, poetry and other performance arts. Music is, then, a common and
attractive language to reach them, hence the decision to record a music album including Mayangna musicians. Furthermore, the impact of the musical element of the festivals was made possible by the level of musician engagement. Performers included artists of “a certain category like Katia Cardenal and well recognized bands such as La Cuneta, Ecos, Alejandro and The Mejia brothers” (Activist 7). The 2015 festival also included musicians from the Atlantic, beginning with the Mayangna band Príncipes de Paz, as well as other musicians from the South Caribbean Autonomous Region (RAAS) and Bluefields.

The experience of performing was also identified by some of the performers as having an impact upon themselves. Musician 5 spoke about performing and sharing with Mayangna musicians as follows:

I was especially touched and impressed by the BOSAWAS Musicians, the Príncipes de Paz band who performed acoustically. They told us, with their own voices of their experience. I was so impressed by their presence since they came to tell us and express themselves but with pain. They were leaving the Reserve to sing, to bring some happiness to us but at the same time, they came to tell us the reality that they were suffering. I had mixed feelings because we had an opportunity to share with them in their happiness and their sadness.

For this performer, getting to know these musicians provided a lived experience of knowledge exchange. The Mayangna shared in the joy of celebrating through their rhythm while also articulating their knowledge and concerns in a way that many, including other musicians, had never seen before. For Musician 2, the experience of doing music alongside the Mayangna band Príncipes de Paz was also memorable. He stated that hearing the Mayangna moved him because they sing about what they have seen with their own eyes. “Their songs come from a truthful place and not as propaganda”, he stated. Their music was perceived as being sincere and, therefore, as having the capacity to touch people’s hearts.
Music and conscientization. Some of the individuals who were interviewed in this project expressed that they understood that one of the primary goals and accomplishments of the festivals was to awaken a consciousness among Nicaraguans. This awareness or concientización, as they referred to it, was centered on the beauty of their country, their relationship with natural resources and the Mayangna’s struggles in BOSAWAS. Musician 3 mentioned that awareness and education may encourage middle and higher-class Nicaraguans to value the “wonders that there are in our own country.”

For Activist 1, the first level of awareness that was attempted by the festival was related to environmental sustainability. This initiative aimed to foster a realization among audiences that what happens in BOSAWAS is not something remote or separate from the rest of Nicaragua. It affects them in immediate ways such as through climate change and economic impacts. Activist 1 suggested that this awareness was the goal of every campaign and concert as they tried to convey that BOSAWAS “has a lot of potential for the country’s development not only in economic terms but also in social terms”. Furthermore, the goal was to change a negative perception and apathy and to focus on the fact that BOSAWAS must be protected for three reasons “first because it is a focal point of biodiversity, second because it is also filled with riches that go beyond biodiversity and, finally, because there is a human component at the heart of BOSAWAS” (Activist 1). The conscientization process included yet another critical element, bringing the Atlantic and the Pacific closer together at a human and cultural level. This coming together, primarily through music performance, the music album, and the documentary, allowed those who attended the festival to recognize that there were communities in the Atlantic that have “something to tell us” (Activist 1).

The participation of musicians was also key in the conscientization of those in attendance. Musician 5 saw their role as an act of “giving music and creating awareness”. Activist 1 spoke of
the impact this festival had in their own life as follows: “I was captivated and sensitized at every level of awareness. This moved me to give continuity to what I learned in my profession and daily life.” Activist 6 considered that the concerts were able to bring together two important things “Discourse and music.” Music, he suggested, has the capacity to unify minds. It is a medium that is “easily digested by the young population.”

Another one of the main messages that was conveyed by the music, as attested by Activists and Musicians, is one that highlights the connection between humanity and nature. Cardenal’s “BOSAWAS” articulates the fact that everyone is affected in one way or another by what happens in the BOSAWAS Reserve because all are connected to its ecosystems and to the life within it. This connection should lead us to learn from it. Musician 2 attests to this and suggests that coming closer to nature teaches a message of unity and reconciliation, something that is very much needed for change to happen in Nicaragua. This musician states as follows: “It is natural for the earth to forgive. We continually harm her, and she never gives up.”

Music was also mentioned as a vehicle for eliciting feelings and actions of empathy and solidarity among audiences, thus potentially strengthening the impact of this movement. Musician 1 articulated this as follows: “When you hear an environmental song, something awakens inside people. You kindle a love for nature, noble feelings that are perhaps inexplicable.” Music brings connections among people and audiences, feelings of empathy that bring people together in solidarity. As this musician suggested, music brings us together because it is, first of all, such a personal experience that can reach our hearts and move us with a unifying energy toward others.

Promotion of environmental protection was yet another one of the messages of music. An important aspect about this is that it was connected with the Mayangna worldview since
environmental protection was articulated as being an act of solidarity with the Mayangna. Thus, environmental protection also meant support for Indigenous communities. The Mayangna perspective on the environment was conveyed as being a unique and central aspect of their culture. Musician 1 sees that the music sung by the Mayangna came from their daily experience and reflected their values, including their Christian faith, traditional beliefs, and relationship with nature. The music performed in Managua and other cities was the music that they use during feasts and gatherings in BOSAWAS. Mayangna community Leader 2 considers that it is important to share this because music can reach mind and heart, and this is a good way to protect the Reserve. Activist 5 considers that this made the presence of the Príncipes de Paz so effective, that they sang something that truly came from their culture. Elder 3 also spoke of this as follows “Our people, like others, sing about the water, trees and we sing so that others know that we are protecting and defending things that others do not think we have.” He also believes that music allows them to promote their ancient traditions and dances.

**Personal commitment.** Musicians and organizers spoke of their personal commitment to environmental and social justice causes as a primary impetus for their involvement in the festivals. Some of them referred to a family history of commitment to music and activism. Activist 2, for example, spoke of her parent’s influence on her formation and concern for the environment. She stated, “For me, environmentally conscious music was the result of my mother and father’s direct influence”. They introduced her to the music of the Guardabarranco Duo in the 1990s and made her aware of the work of other musicians such as the Pancasán group which made the transition from the topic of the revolution to environmental topics. This was also the case for Activist 4 who came across the Guardabarranco Duo through a cassette given to her family in rural Nicaragua. The music conveyed sensitivity and love for nature and Nicaragua.
Musician 2 spoke about growing up in a family that was committed to environmental conservation through music. This participant stated: “Literally, from the time I was born I have been listening to environmental music as part of my musical and spiritual teaching. It was natural for us to follow this tradition.” He recalled that from his upbringing it was natural for him to be concerned with nature and it was difficult for him to encounter a lack of concern for the environment when he went to elementary school and high school. He stated that “it was quite an experience to realize that the common tendency, the normal, was not to care about the environment. Seeing this, I decided to use my voice to make a difference.” This was like the experience related by Musician 4 who spoke of his childhood experiences with nature. He related how, as a child he visited the Matagalpa region often and came to believe that harmony with nature was the best logic to follow. He stated “wherever I went, I had that image of how things should be. This followed me until I became a musician.”

For Musician 1, the commitment to sing for BOSAWAS is much more than participating in just another project. For her, BOSAWAS evokes personal convictions and music is the one logical way to promote its protection. For her, music of any kind has an unmatched capacity to bring people together and to raise awareness. She stated that: “When you bring people together to listen to any type of music, there is an inexplicable connection that takes place.” For her, environmental music has the capacity to awaken the positive things which may be hidden inside people’s hearts by “lighting up love for nature and noble intentions that may be, otherwise, incomprehensible”. This connection that emerges goes well beyond reason or logical explanation for this musician and singing for BOSAWAS has an important emotional and spiritual connection. For her, this connection was especially felt during the recording of a song for the “BOSAWAS”, a process she described as “highly emotive and creative.” For this project, all musicians travelled
to the Peñas Blancas studio in BOSAWAS to record inside the territory’s natural environment. She described the moment of recording and music creation as taking place in union with nature.

For Musician 4, this project is also part of a life-long commitment and relationship with nature, music and social change. When asked why he got involved in the Unidos por BOSAWAS concerts, he narrated his involvement with various environmental initiatives. He spoke of how, about 13 years prior to this interview, he got together with a number of Nicaraguan musicians to form the Rock Nica Ecológico Group (Environmental Nicaraguan Rock Group) which tried to educate people in Managua by doing awareness campaigns on city corners, filming short videos and uploading them on to social media. As he described it, they “began to carry out campaigns among the middle class in Managua.” They also made use of concerts in order to promote this type of message, particularly about not throwing trash around the city streets. This project later evolved as they travelled together to different natural reserves in Nicaragua in order to film and raise awareness through audiovisual presentations. During these trips, which took place between 2006 and 2007, he came to the Peñas Blancas region inside BOSAWAS where he fell in love with the place. Musician 4 recognized that more has to be done in conjunction with the concerts. For him, this has taken the form of purchasing deforested land in order to let the forest regenerate and to establish sustainable agriculture. He believes that “the solution is to buy as much land as possible and let the forest grow back”. This is his personal contribution which he considers less risky as it takes you away from protest, etc.

**Influential musicians.** Musician 1 further identified the late composer and singer Salvador Cardenal of Duo Guardabarranco as the first person who brought BOSAWAS to the public’s attention through his music. He used to organize a yearly environmental concert at the prestigious Ruben Dario Theatre in Managua until his death in 2010. These concerts begun to break a cycle
in Nicaragua that ignored the serious issues lived and faced by the Mayangnas in BOSAWAS. For this musician, Salvador was the “tip of the arrow” that spearheaded the movement with his music, especially with the song “BOSAWAS”. His work allowed people to begin to get to know about “the horrors” that were taking place in the region.

When asked what moved them to become engaged in the Festivals, either as audience or as volunteers or organizers, four of the activists interviewed also spoke about the influence of the work by the Guardabarranco Duo (Katia and Salvador Cardenal). This included songs such as “Guerrero de Amor” (Warrior of love) (1998), “Cocibolca” (2011), “BOSAWAS” (2011) and Salvador’s last album before his death “Verde Verdad” (Green Truth) (2011). These songs were mentioned as leaving an indelible mark on the minds and experiences of these activists. Out of these, the song “BOSAWAS” is considered to be an emblematic song, a first effort in bringing the issues to the attention of the general public. This song emerged out of Salvador’s experience in BOSAWAS and his work as a biologist in the territory (Activist 5).

**Connections with the revolution.** For Activist 3, the festivals had a connection with aspects of the Nicaraguan Revolution and some of the social movements that rose from it. This activist recognized the Guardabarranco Duo as one of the groups that played a role in this revolutionary process through their music. Later, they shifted from revolutionary music in the 1980s to environmental music. Their song “Gerrero de Amor” (“Love Warrior”) was recognized as influential by this activist as it made them come to know the work of Katia Cardenal and focused on other types of battles that have to be fought in Nicaragua, namely the battle for social and environmental justice. Guardabarranco’s music was also identified by Activist 4 as helping them identify with nature and influencing their career and activism choices. For Activist 7, this connection to the revolution was quite strong as one of the groups that performed during the last
Unidos por BOSAWAS Festival performed the song “El Sensontle Pregunta por Arlen Siu”. This was a song that came out during the time of the Revolution and was dedicated to a young woman who lost her life during this period. For this activist, this was a point of connection for many of the young people in attendance, as several of them identify with some of the Revolution’s values and see themselves as “young people who want to make change happen” (Activist 7). For Musician 3, this connection with the revolution was also felt in the contribution of Carlos Mejía Godoy, a musician deeply connected to the events surrounding this historical event.

8.2 Accomplishments by Misión BOSAWAS

Interview participants identified various accomplishments by Misión BOSAWAS, particularly through the concerts and documentary showings. These included knowledge diffusion, conscientization, political influence, unification of the country’s cultures, and bringing together activists for change, research, cultural conservation, environmental awareness and initiatives. While these individuals also noted that there is still much to do and that, at times, change may not be readily noticeable, these accomplishments pave the way for further change to take place in the future. This subsection provides an account of these accomplishments as described by the interview participants.

Knowledge diffusion. The documentary *El Canto de BOSAWAS* was mentioned as an accomplishment through its contribution to knowledge diffusion, particularly knowledge about the Mayangna and their cultural practices (Activist 2). Through music, this video managed to show how these communities engage in creative processes to generate music within their territory and to use this music to get themselves known beyond the Reserve. Activist 2 added:

I believe that through their music they will manage to become valued and that their place in our country and vital role in that zone will be recognized. Just having a document that supplements the knowledge about the Mayangna is of value in and of itself.
The accomplishment lies in that, for the first time, there is a record that allows Nicaragua to recover and share some of its nearly lost Indigenous heritage.

This topic was further discussed by Activist 5 as they suggested that the concerts and documentary offered a new perspective on the Mayangna.

The festivals offered a different face, something totally different than what was expected. They [the Mayangna] do not resemble the typical image of the ‘indian’ that you could have. They are well educated people, human beings who live in precarious situations because of the violence they live. They have their story to tell but they also have a lot to tell us about their culture and identity.

This activist considered that this cultural story was articulated through social media. Activist 6 identifies music as an important component in how this cultural knowledge and information about the issues in BOSAWAS was disseminated.

**Music and cultural knowledge.** In the interviews carried out on the BOSAWAS Reserve, Elder 3 spoke on the topic of cultural knowledge diffusion through music. He considered that a lot was accomplished through the music recordings of the Mayangna and through their participation in the concerts in Managua and other cities. Music was for him a way in which they were able to reach people who are physically far from them. He stated:

We need to think of more ways of promoting Mayangna culture through music. Somehow, through music, we are able to reach people who are far away, people that do not know us but that can listen to us through it. They can hear about who we are, about our richness and how we survive.

On this topic, Elder 1 suggested that music accomplished a twofold feat when it comes to cultural preservation. First it shared their identity with outsiders while also strengthening this sense of identity among themselves internally through cultural conservation.
For Elder 1, the internet presence attained by the efforts of Misión BOSAWAS is of great value. Before this, the Nicaraguan radio stations and other media had never broadcasted Mayangna music recordings because they did not even exist. He stated that, through music, the greater Nicaraguan community was able to hear something new such as “how the Mayangna play their musical instruments, how they sing, how they scream, how they express their inner feelings.” He sees music as an agent for cultural conservation, as a way to rescue their language and culture and its relationship with the forests. He considers that it is important that this knowledge be shared because other cultures can benefit from it. This Elder stated that “We must remember that we Indigenous peoples are the only ones who have forests and rivers. Many peoples have forests, but they are not like the ones we have here.” This element of cultural conservation was also discussed by Musician 4 as he described the experience of seeing the Musawás Chief’s reaction when he first heard the Mayangna recordings. He described this as follows: “When the chief heard the recording, he began to cry. If I can be at peace about something, it is about this product. It truly contributed to conserving their language.” He suggests that he has seen that this product gave an impetus to their collective self-esteem.

**Conscientization.** Some interview participants made specific reference to the concept of conscientization as one of Misión BOSAWAS’ primary accomplishments. Activist 1 suggested that, had this movement not carried out its many initiatives, the topic would be completely forgotten. This activist affirmed that while it is not possible to evaluate the full impact of this conscientization, it is possible to state that it has kept the topic on the “agenda of the government and society.” In this person’s words “the situation is like in a coma, so to speak. The concerts have helped keep it alive.” Building on this topic, Mayangna Musician 1 considered that the awareness raised by the documentary was a step forward. Now people had at least the basic
knowledge that the Mayangna exist. This musician believes that the act of raising critical awareness is the first step in making change happen; as he states that, prior to these initiatives, “most of the Nicaraguan population had no idea of the existence of the Mayangna Indigenous peoples.”

This concept was also brought up by Musician 3 who sees the festivals as having been able to “crear conciencia” or “raise awareness”. This critical awareness is primarily related to environmental sensitivity, something that was not common in Nicaragua before. The idea of bringing the environmental topics to the forefront in Nicaragua was also mentioned by Musician 2 who believes that the concerts have accomplished the task of “making environmental awareness popular” while there is a lot to do still. This awareness was built upon by concrete actions that came out of the festival. Musician 3 sees a positive trend in younger generations and considers that they will “make more environmentally-friendly decisions, thinking from a sustainable point of view” because they are going through these processes of awareness.

**Gathering.** The festival’s capacity to gather activists, entrepreneurs, and the public was mentioned as an accomplishment by Activist 5. This activist considered that bringing people together, people who could think and come up with solutions collectively, was one of the most positive accomplishments of the movement and its initiatives. This was also able to combat the isolation that many activists can experience as they face numerous issues in Nicaragua. As well, it made evident that many individuals and institutions are interested in making change together.

**Political influence.** Political influence, connected to the process of conscientization, was also mentioned as an accomplishment of the festivals. Activist 2 articulated that, while this political influence may be localized and still a minor one, it can reach further with time and
dedication. The festivals “planted a seed in people’s mind, people who live in Managua”. Mayangna Musician 1 recalled that their Mayangna recordings raised awareness among the mainstream population, building the capacity to put pressure on politicians. This musician stated as follows: “The politician cares about the public’s opinion and, if the public does not care about BOSAWAS, the politician will not care either. However, if everyone speaks about BOSAWAS, the government will recognize that there is something important here.” Musician 3 considers that even though this is a slow process, the political repercussions will be felt in the future since the young people who are experiencing this change in awareness will be the ones who will make decisions in the years to come. Musician 5 further added that the media attention that these festivals drew also contributed greatly to what they accomplished. The festivals generated a lot of “noise” about the topic and this drew the media’s attention. The media, in turn, helped spread the news and give “greater credibility and awareness to what is happening over there [in BOSAWAS]”. The media brought to light key issues in the complex situation, bringing greater political pressure for policy implementation and enforcement.

**Cultural bridge.** Another recognized accomplishment of these festivals was the bringing together of what is often perceived as two distinct cultures in Nicaragua, the Pacific and the Atlantic. Activist 3 articulates this as follows:

A cultural bridge was built, and we realized that we are not that far from each other, the Pacific and the Atlantic. At least, this is true when it comes to the arts and what we are going through. We have a united heart when it comes to the environment.

This activist considers that these initiatives brought together the two cultures in a way that does not often happen in Nicaragua. The role of social media was essential in accomplishing this since the music recording (*BOSAWAS*) and the documentary were made available through various
channels so that they could have a greater reach and impact. This was, for this activist, the greatest accomplishment of Misión BOSAWAS: “to be a bridge between two communities.”

**Fundraising.** Finally, one accomplishment that was briefly mentioned by one activist was that through the festivals, Misión BOSAWAS raised funds for a study on the public’s perception of environmental issues in Nicaragua. Activist 3 reports that with the research carried out with these funds, they discovered that for six to eight out of 10 Nicaraguans, BOSAWAS meant nothing before the festivals.

**Optimism.** The interview participants spoke of Misión BOSAWAS accomplishments with a lot of optimism. At the same time, they tended to also acknowledge that the situation in BOSAWAS has not improved in any significant way in recent years. They know that the challenges are many; however, they remain positive as they trust the process of conscientization among young people. Musician 1 considers that the festivals’ greatest accomplishment was the act of “planting the seed”, the seed of knowledge and awareness which will fall in fertile soil because “we, human beings are like that. We have fertile soil in our hearts.” When asked about what she believed was a contribution made by the Misión BOSAWAS or what her hopes for the future are, she responded that it is better to focus on the positive. She focuses on the good things that her songs bring about in people’s hearts. When she gets discouraged as she sees the negative things in society. She stated:

> Sometimes when I ask myself why I should continue singing if the world is so chaotic, I remember something I once read, that if there was not more goodness than evil in the world, we would no longer have a world by now. I hold on to that thought.
8.3 Opportunities

When discussing some of the shortcomings of the movement and the festivals, interview participants listed various challenges as being behind these shortcomings. These included, society’s compartmentalizing worldview, limited reach of the initiatives, corruption, the country’s ailing economy, limited Mayangna representation, and the complexity of the issue.

**Worldviews.** Activist 3 considers that the limited success of the festivals is not so much an issue of the movement itself but with the worldview upheld by Nicaraguan society. This activist described Nicaragua as a society that is “distracted, demotivated, sceptical and apathetic.” People do not believe that the problems from across the country affect them directly and, therefore, do not assume responsibility for the environment. Musician 3 sees this as a belief in a lack of unity and states: “I believe we have lost the belief that we are part of a whole, that what we do has an effect and a reaction.” The solution for this is to find our connection, to change our worldview. This would lead us to make decisions that are better thought through and change will flow eventually. This musician believes that we need to consider that the situation in BOSAWAS affects each one of us, even economically, and we need to believe in that connection and act accordingly.

**Audiences.** Another challenge that was faced by Misión BOSAWAS and its festivals was the limited audience that took part in its initiatives. Those who attended the festival tended to be people who were already interested in the topic (Activist 3). The message, therefore, did not reach far beyond this small circle. The impact accomplished was not a long-term impact but something that began to dissipate once the media stopped covering the issue. Mayangna Community Leader 1 believes that, while a lot was shared about the Mayangna, this awareness needs to reach farther. The Mayangna are still not as well-known as they need to be.
**Economy.** The country’s current economic situation has a big impact on the apathy toward environmental issues that is generally noted in the Nicaraguan population and this is another challenge faced by Misión BOSAWAS. People are:

…focused on meeting their immediate needs which are generated because of social issues. They do not care about deforestation that takes place far from them because they have social pressures that overwhelm them. They do not have the capacity to be concerned about the long-term health effects of environmental issues (Activist 4).

Musician 1 also refers to this and affirms that the abuse of natural resources often happens because of financial needs and not because people are necessarily evil. People see themselves without land, without food, and they need to find solutions. Often, these individuals are also not well informed and “they are not bad people. This is just a result of their ignorance.”

**Corruption.** Another important factor that plays into the ongoing nature of the issue in BOSAWAS is the issue of corruption. This corruption has reached the Mayangna communities and various levels of government. While the massive extraction of wood and resources carried out by industries is a real problem, this is aggravated by Mayangna individuals who engage in illegal sale of land. Activist 6 considers that they often do this because the government does not provide enough for them, so they need to find ways to meet their needs. Elder 1 echoed this assertion as he mentioned that the positive things that are accomplished sometimes become tarnished by corruption. For example, he mentioned that some of the individuals who recorded and performed music in defense of the territory “deviated from this social commitment they pronounced in their music.” He then, considered that it is important to find other musicians, other people who can show that they are truly committed to what they are singing. Musician 4 also referred to the issue of corruption as follows: “In my relationship with the Mayangna, I have come
to realize that they are also corrupt and sell their land. They are like us, a mixed society with good and bad things.”

**Representation.** The issue of representation was recognized by Mayangna Musician 1 as one of the challenges that Misión BOSAWAS encountered, and which limited its impact. He stated that the music of the Príncipes de Paz was but one example of the many, varied forms of music from BOSAWAS. He stated: “those songs were one Mayangna music, but only one.”

**Complexity of issue.** The complexity of the issue around land encroachment and forest loss in BOSAWAS is finally recognized as one of the reasons that limited the impact of the festivals. Such a complex situation cannot be changed easily or quickly. Musician 1 stated as follows: “In BOSAWAS you have issues of drug trafficking since they can hide, plant and keep the drugs in the mountains. This brings along many other issues such as prostitution and other illegal activity.” This complexity is a conglomerate of corruption, economic pressures, a culture of environmental apathy, limited resources and leadership and limited audience. This makes the BOSAWAS issue a complex one to address.

### 8.4 Summary of perspectives on the festivals

The interviews carried out in this research have made it possible to reconstruct not only the events that took place during the festivals from 2012 to 2016 but also how participants experienced and perceived them. A summary of these themes can be found in Table 7.1. The festivals are first described as places for gathering and knowledge exchange. The knowledge, greatly informed by the Mayangna worldview, attempted to raise awareness about the problem of land in BOSAWAS, Mayangna culture and alternatives for a sustainable relationship with nature. This awareness was fostered by the exhibits, entertainment activities, and by the engagement of musicians through
their songs and lyrics. For the musicians, participation was a result of lifetime commitments to environmentalism and social justice. Audiences and activists also brought attention to the role of music in their own personal formation and commitment to the environment and to Mayangnan culture and struggles. Mayangna Elders and community members, in turn, recognized the value of music performance and recording as a method of language and cultural conservation and dissemination. While the challenges that the Misión BOSAWAS and the situation face are far from being few or minor, musicians and activists tend to see the organization’s achievements as positive. They have great hopes for the future as younger Nicaraguans are becoming informed and engaged in social and environmental change.

Table 8.1: Themes emerging from festival descriptions

- Experiential learning
- Youth involvement
- Conscientization
- Role of music performance and musicians
- Music and conscientization
- Personal commitment
- Influential musicians
- Connections to the revolution

Accomplishments and opportunities for Misión BOSAWAS

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8.5 Perspectives on the problem

A number of themes regarding the complexity of the problem in BOSAWAS emerged out of the interviews. Participants identified factors such as the historical and current exclusion of Indigenous people by Nicaragua’s government and mainstream society, the social construct of Indigeneity, divided knowledge systems, food insecurity and environmental degradation, governance and lack of policy enforcement, issues faced by Mayangna youth, a need for education and international support. Interview participants also identified several areas of improvement and made recommendations for addressing the challenges inherent in such complex situation. A summary of these themes can be found in Table 7.2.

Exclusion. Exclusion was recognized by activists, as well as Elders and Mayangna community leaders, as one of the characteristics of the relationship between Indigenous people and Nicaraguan mainstream society. Activist 1 affirmed that there is a general, intentional pattern in the system that is designed to exclude Indigenous communities even though they are the original peoples of this land. This has generated a risk of cultural extinction for the Mayangna. According to this activist, there is a division in the country; Nicaragua is divided in half and we have constructed an “us vs. them” or an “us and them” attitude. For Activist 2, this exclusion has also generated dispossession of forests and other resources. Because of the mistreatment that the Mayangna have experienced in the hands of non-Indigenous Nicaraguans, “they no longer respect us either but look upon us with contempt.” Exclusion has also generated a feeling among people from the Caribbean region; they do not feel Nicaraguan and do not consider that they have much in common with the population of the west. This idea was brought up by Activist 5 who suggested that each segment of Nicaraguan society “has very different ideas about history, violence and politics”. The Mayangna, for example, have created the notion of their own nation because of the
limitations and exclusion they have experienced by those who hold power and who generally come from the Pacific.

Mayangna Elder 1 sees exclusion primarily as a political act. He considers that politicians chose not to communicate with the Mayangna. They are reaping the benefits of taking the wood and resources while excluding the communities and not providing basic supports such as a health centre. Activist 5 also sees exclusion in the legal system. The system does not promote bilateral collaboration but rather focuses on excluding and expelling individuals by force out of BOSAWAS without offering alternatives, thus perpetuating a cycle of violence. Finally, Mayangna community Leader 1 sees this exclusion in the area of knowledge, but this can be overcome by entering into contact with one another. He stated: “The Nicaraguan society from the Pacific does not know us but when we come together I have seen a very friendly relationship become established.” For him, any form of knowledge exchange is a first step for overcoming mutual exclusion.

Mayangna Community Leader 1 spoke about the historical exclusion of Indigenous peoples and cultures in Nicaragua. This pattern, which continues today, was established during the time of initial colonization when cities and towns were renamed to reflect European domination. However, there is evidence that the Mayangna were a significant group both in the Atlantic and Pacific. They are a resilient people and this resilience is evident in the Mayangna city and town names that predominate even in the Pacific. This community leader suggested that names of region such as Waspan, Wiwili, Paiwas, Tuma and even Managua are in Mayangna since these were the homes of his people for a very long time even though governments do not recognize this.

Historically, there was a lot of misinformation about the Mayangna prior to 2008. Musician 1 mentioned that they had never heard the name “Mayangna” before this year.
Textbooks referred to them as the Sumos even though this was not a name they used themselves. “Sumo means dumb or slow” in Miskito language and this was the information that was used in order to create educational material. This musician acknowledged that, growing up, they heard of the three Indigenous groups, the “Sumos, Miskito and Rama” as being “somewhere over there, in the Atlantic coast” separated from the rest of Nicaragua. Activist 6 further illustrated this misinformation as follows: “There is large percentage of Nicaraguans for whom the Mayangna do not exist. Many would tell you that the Atlantic is a region where there are only black people, exactly with those words.” Activist 7 also attested to the fact that there is a lack of knowledge about Mayangna culture, especially among older generations who were never concerned with learning about the people who were here before they were. Musician 5 also considers that Nicaraguan society does not value the Mayangna. This musician articulated that for Nicaragua, the Mayangna are “non-existent.”

Many of the individuals interviewed spoke of the need to recognize the common identity that the Mayangna share with the rest of Nicaragua. Musician 2 considers that they are the true Nicaraguans. However, this shared identity has not always been recognized. Activist 5 stated:

I do not think of them as people who live far away from me but as Nicaraguans. They are Nicaraguans who, like me, did not chose to be born in a particular region of the country. They were born in this country and we share that national identity.

For this individual, the Mayangna share in a common humanity with the rest of us and it is upon this humanity that we should build a connection (Activist 5). Many participants recognized the Mayangna as people who have suffered throughout history. Activist 6 defined them as “original peoples who have been rendered invisible, massacred and dismissed by other ethnic groups.”

Exclusion and discrimination were identified as not being only a characteristic of the relationship between Indigenous people and mainstream Nicaragua. They were also identified as
a feature of the relationships between Indigenous groups. For example, Activist 4 mentioned that “the Ramas, Mayangna and Miskitos do not like each other.” This idea was further enforced by Mayangna Community Leader 1 who attested that the Miskitos discriminate against them when it comes to the formation of governments in the Autonomous Regions. For example, these regional governments should rotate leadership among all Indigenous groups but there has never been Mayangna representation. This situation of mutual discrimination further contributes toward the complexity of the problem in BOSAWAS, especially in areas of governance and policy enforcement.

**Ignorance vs. education.** Expanding on the topic of mainstream society’s ignorance regarding Indigenous people, many interview participants suggested that the problem in BOSAWAS is primarily an issue of exclusionary knowledge systems. It is particularly deepened by the lack of education that is generally exhibited in Nicaragua. First, the idea of mutuality was explored by Activist 1 who suggested that ignorance goes in both directions as follows: “they ignore certain things about us and we ignore many things that they know.” He considers that this mutual ignorance must be fought as both knowledge systems are not opposite but rather complementary. Activist 3 recognized that mutual respect has not been part of the historical relationship between Indigenous people and mainstream Nicaragua and stated that “Education in our society has been linear and unidirectional.” Indigenous peoples have been the ones expected to learn Spanish while mainstream Nicaraguans are not expected to learn Mayangna, for example. This Activist suggested that Indigenous communities, in turn, have also excluded mainstream society from their priorities since previous experiences of them have been negative.

Some of the individuals interviewed further identified an inherent problem in the Nicaraguan educational system which contributes toward aggravating the environmental problems
and the exclusion of Indigenous peoples of Nicaragua. Education seems to hold environmental topics as something external to the daily lives of Nicaraguans (Activist 1). Television, a key contributor to general education, does not promote Indigenous cultures or topics such as their relationship with the environment. For Activist 3, it is unfortunate that the educational system does not teach young Nicaraguans Indigenous languages. It also does not teach children worldviews that are different from those of mainstream society. The system “teaches the minimum and, usually, describes Indigenous people as being a thing of the past” (Activist 4). Most people in Nicaragua only have a vague idea of what BOSAWAS is, and know much less about the Mayangna (Musician 1). Musician 1 also mentioned the fact that, in the past, textbooks and course materials even named the Mayangna incorrectly referring to as the “Sumos” which is a derogatory term used by the Miskitos (Activist 4). Because of this, older generations, especially, have little to no knowledge of Mayangna culture (Activist 7). The media were identified by Elder 2 as having the power to begin to change this ignorance. He argues that it is important for the media to broadcast correct information about the culture and the situation of Indigenous people so that mainstream society can take a step toward acknowledging the value and struggles of Indigenous peoples.

Activist 3 also affirmed that the issues with the educational system are worsened by a lack of integration between subjects and disciplines in schools and universities. The system does not promote collaboration among them and often follows outdated models. This activist believes that the formation of most professionals in Nicaragua is based on a system that promotes production without paying attention to sustainability. Activist 3 also believes that this approach causes negative attitudes toward topics of environmental defense.
When it comes to the Mayangna, improving the educational opportunities for them will help them face the challenges presented by modern society. These ideas were discussed by one Activist and a few members of the Mayangna community. Activist 1 considers that technology moves youth to leave their traditional communities. This was a pattern that already took place in the Pacific as there is an “aging of the fields.” There is also a stigma toward peasants who are seen as “ignorant and backwards” (Activist 2). Working in the fields is seen negatively and youth are not attracted to it. Elder 3 expressed his desire for Mayangna youth to have opportunities that he did not have. He experiences the negative repercussions of his limitations, such as not being able to speak another language and not having studied, etc. He would like to see the government offer better education for Mayangna youth so that they can defend the territory more effectively. Education will prevent them from being manipulated as many of the community members have been. Mayangna Community Leader 1 considers that while it is important for youth to learn to work the fields, they must also focus on learning from other areas. For example, he believes that Mayangna youth need to study law so that they could participate in government decisions and planning and to enforce respect for their human rights.

**Recognition of Mayangna culture.** Interview participants acknowledged that one of the best things that the festivals have done to address the issues in BOSAWAS has been to help them gain a greater understanding of the richness of Mayangna culture. They identified the Mayangna as a group that has a specific cultural identity and rights, but that nevertheless shares in a common citizenship with mainstream Nicaragua. At the same time, they continue to experience specific suffering connected to the transgressions against their rights, culture and relationship with nature. Activist 1 acknowledged that now he sees the Mayangna as one of “Nicaragua’s original groups” which has managed to preserve its culture. Their ancestral culture and ancient presence in the
territory grants them rights which are “more legitimate than those that others can hold” (Activist 1). Musician 3 suggested that their rights in connection to the land should be supported more by governments and society since they have greater knowledge about nature than any other group in the country.

Many of those interviewed recognized a deep connection between the Mayangna culture and nature and the role that this knowledge can have in addressing the problem of forest loss in BOSAWAS. Activist 2 sees them as the “guardians of the forests.” For Activist 4, this relationship with nature is informed by their culture and religion. Their strong values have made it possible for them to survive globalization and preserve this relationship in a more concrete way than other Indigenous groups have done (Activist 4; Musician 1). Musician 3 mentioned that the Mayangna’s relationship with nature is much deeper than the one displayed by Nicaraguans who live in the cities. Musician 1 pointed out that this relationship has recently begun to break with the introduction of a different approach to the economy and with the invasion of colonists.

Learning from the Mayangna knowledge system would be of great benefit to Nicaraguan mainstream society since the Mayangna have a sustainable approach to the environment. This idea was addressed by some of the interview participants. For example, three activists spoke of the value of the Mayangna’s ancestral knowledge and its potential contribution to a sustainable future for Nicaragua since, through traditional practices, the Mayangna have been able to meet their food security needs. Indigenous people from other regions in the country have already lost this knowledge and connection but the Mayangna still hold on to it. Activist 4 mentioned that the Mayangna, unlike the rest of Nicaragua, follow a model that is still sustainable since they use what they need while preserving what they have. They produce according to the cycles of nature and thus, have a more balanced relationship with the environment. “Their communities have very low
incidence of kidney disease, cancer and respiratory problems as compared to other regions in the country. People die of old age in these communities.” Nicaragua’s mainstream society could certainly benefit from some of the Mayangna’s remaining cultural values and knowledge.

**Food insecurity and environmental degradation.** The interviews highlighted that the current problem in BOSAWAS is also an issue of food insecurity in connection with environmental degradation. Elder 1 recounted the fact that up until about twenty years ago, hunting was much different than it is today. He stated that “until twenty years ago, we did not need to travel very far in order to hunt mountain hogs, tapirs, deer and other animals that are part of our diet.” Now with the severe loss of forest, it is much more difficult to find these animals and hunters “need to go very far and sometimes they do not even find them.” This is a direct result of the destruction of the forests; the natural balance of the forest is interrupted, bringing about droughts during the summer and floods during the winter, he argued. The hunting practices of the colonists also contribute to this situation since they “use hunting dogs and kill everything” (Elder 1). They consume the same things that the Mayangna consume but on a larger scale. Elder 1 is afraid that this will become a deeper problem and that his community will suffer famine in the future.

Elder 2 also described the problem in BOSAWAS as one of environmental degradation because of colonist invasions. He spoke of his fear of what the Reserve will be like in ten years: “The animals will fully disappear; the rivers will dry up and we will have no forest and no mineral resources.” Elder 3 spoke of evidence that their traditional practices have ensured the survival of plant species native to the region. He spoke of the “Tuno” tree which is used to make bags, blankets, shoes and clothing and that “in the region of Cucalaya you are no longer able to find this
tree”. This tree is, on the contrary, thriving in Mayangna regions; this Elder considers that this is because the Mayangna know how to harvest it without destroying it.

**Governance.** The topic of governance was discussed by many interview participants in BOSAWAS. The central government’s apathy and slow processes, lack of policy enforcement, and competing levels of government were identified as contributing to the escalating problems in the region. The solution lies in implementing policy and this may mean having to imprison people (Elder 1). Elder 2 stated that they need the government to help them remove the colonists from the territory. He made a reference to the recent incident of the eight captured colonists and articulated the following: “We ask the government to help us remove them and that people may understand that this is a private property and not empty land since we hold our land title”. This lack of policy enforcement was also recognized as an aggravating factor in this issue. Mayangna community Leader 1 pondered that the lack of good governance could be one of the reasons that led Indigenous people to sell land illegally. He stated that they sell land because they “see that others sell land and the government does not take action. Others are reaping the benefits and we kill ourselves taking care of the Reserve and we do not enjoy it.”

Elder 1 argues that the many organizations that are supposed to help have not done so effectively. He suggests that the Indigenous Government (GTI) has been absorbed by the system of the central government and has allowed the problem to grow. Elder 3 considers that the GTI has not provided adequate leadership. He also considers that the situation has worsened significantly with the current central government since this government has disrespected the relationship between humanity and nature while becoming richer and without considering the negative effects of this approach. This government has allowed the continued entry of colonists. Public servants such as police and other government workers are “against the people” (Elder 3).
and a lot of personal interests come into play, he argued. This issue of governance is deepened by the contradiction in perceptions by different levels of government. Mayangna Community Leader 1 described this discrepancy as follows:

For example, the leader of the Mayangna Nation positions himself as the highest authority, the GTI is second and the community would be at a third level according to him. For us, the first level is the community because they have a specific culture and language and authority is born from within it. Each community makes their own decisions according to their hierarchy.

He considers that the Mayangna Nation leader has ignored the plight of his Indigenous brethren because of financial interests.

Mayangna Community Leader 1 also expressed a lack of trust in the implementation of policy and agreements. Regarding the recent negotiations pertaining to the eight captured colonists, this leader expressed his doubts about the central government enforcing the conditions of their hand over. He stated “I know that the document we generated is nothing. What they wanted was to be able to take those people with them. Now they will simply release them.”

Mayangna Community Leader 2 expressed that government intervention in implementing policy and securing respect for Indigenous rights is key in preventing armed conflict.

Elder 3 mentioned that waiting for the government allows for situations to worsen. The government’s apathy has facilitated the violence that victimizes the Mayangna. Elder 1 stated that the community that is settled near the artisanal mines had received threats by colonists as follows: “For this month of December, the colonists have informed us that they have plans to annihilate everyone who is by the mines.” This annihilation can be physical but can also be economic. The presence of armed groups has repercussions on their health care since their threats make it difficult for nurses and doctors to visit and attend to the needs of their communities.
**International solidarity and assistance.** Some of the Mayangna who were interviewed mentioned that they hope to bring forth issues of human rights to an international level since the Nicaraguan government has shown a lack of action. Seeking international solidarity and international legal instruments seems to be the only hope. Mayangna Community Leader 1 sees the problem in BOSAWAS as a human rights issue that must be brought to international courts and the United Nations. Elder 1 expressed his lack of trust in the processes of Nicaragua’s central government since the reports and documents that are produced for the government are not usually implemented and “end up in a filing cabinet” (Elder 1). Because of this inaction, he sees a “need to speak, not only at a national level but also at an international level in order to see how others can help us”. International solidarity seems to be the only place left for the Mayangna to turn. Elder 3 also referred to this topic of international solidarity and stated that, since the government has not responded, there is an urgent need to seek help through the media to disseminate information about what is happening. He believes that, if their voices are heard internationally, the Nicaraguan government will be pressured to defend their rights and the environment.

An example of the positive impact of international attention was mentioned. For example, the Awas Tingi case, which reached the United Nations, gained a lot of attention for the Mayangna and people began to ask questions about who they are (Mayangna Community Leader 1). This leader articulated that, around this time, a number of books were written about the Mayangna and they were able to convey the message that the Mayangna are a strong people who survive, even though they were abused and forgotten.

International assistance carried out within Nicaragua must be approached with caution. This topic was exclusively discussed in-depth by activists and they suggested that this type of assistance is not always done in a manner that takes into account the wisdom inherent in Indigenous
knowledge systems. Activist 1 mentioned that assistance sometimes “corrupts a knowledge system that has worked well for the communities.” He gave the example of a community for which electricity was installed. Because electricity had not been part of their traditional lives, once this was accessible to them, they begun to acquire high debts because they were not used to idea of paying for these services, thus creating added pressures for them. This activist stated that instead of introducing new things, we need to approach work with these communities with humility and the belief that “we do not come to teach them but to learn and to look for things that are already there and that can be improved.”

Assistance can generate a dependency that is not beneficial to the environment and to the communities (Activist 1). For example, in the past a number of projects have promoted the indiscriminate use of agrochemicals. Later, once the communities are habituated to their use, returning toward a less toxic approach is confusing and difficult for them. Activist 2 sees harm done by patterns of assistance, particularly in association with natural disasters. This person added: “These communities got used to receiving short-term assistance and this has generated in them a feeling that things are owed to them and become even more demanding.” Providing monetary assistance is also counterproductive sometimes since an economic value is not something that their worldview assigns to nature. We begin to corrupt their value system (Activist 2). Providing monetary assistance affects sustainability as “monetary assistance takes away from their cultural value and moves them to become detached from their territory” (Activist 4). A lot of the development projects that have been implemented do not follow their worldview. We should be aiming to implement projects that align with the worldview of these communities.
8.6 Recommendations by interview participants

The interview participants identified a number of limitations faced by the initiatives to halt the land encroachment in BOSAWAS and other environmental situations in the country. They also articulated recommendations that could help the institution optimize their initiatives. A full list of these recommendations can be found in Table 7.2.

**Audience scope.** Activist 1 identified Misión BOSAWAS’ limited audience as one of its main obstacles to having greater impact in Nicaraguan society. This Activist articulated these limitations as follows: “The concerts had a great potential, but they could only be held inside the universities. Some external people attended but they were usually people who already knew about the topic and not the general public.” This activist considers that, while reaching the University population was a good first step, it would have been beneficial if they had moved beyond it.

**Integration with other activities.** Integrating the concert with other parallel activities was also mentioned as a recommendation. For example, going to smaller neighbourhoods and engaging other audiences that would not necessarily go to the University to one of these concerts. Activist 1 stated the following: “We must have multiple and simultaneous strategies in such a way that we do not just have a concert but also a cultural strategy that is integrated, persistent and systematic.” Activist 3 also made reference to this integration of solutions. This participant considered that this integration needs to engage a variety of professionals such as civil engineers. The concerts are the key, “but they need to be complemented with other actions” (Musician 2).

**Government and corporate engagement.** It was suggested that both government and private sectors have a role to play in the situation. Municipal governments need to be involved and pressured to better plan their cities. Better planning would mean having minimum
requirements for trees per city block. City planning should incorporate parks so that they promote a more pleasant environment and cooler temperatures. Corporate engagement is also key to long-term success. There is a need to change the mentality that sees environmental solutions as costly and rather see them as a long-term benefit (Activist 3). Musicians 3 and 4 consider that the government and corporations are often not held accountable for environmental damage and this needs to change. Specifically, Musician 3 stated that the government needs to establish and enforce strong policies that hold corporations accountable.

**Well-articulated political proposal.** A more concrete political proposal was recognized by some interviewees as a factor that could help bring about lasting change. Activist 6 remarked that for them, the concerts were somewhat a missed political opportunity. They stated the following: “I would have liked to see a more political proposal come from this. We had so many people in attendance and we could have organized.” Musician 3 suggested that the movement should call for public referendums when it comes to environmental topics.

**Continuity of the concerts and musical efforts.** Musician 4 and Mayangna Community Leader 1 suggest that the concerts need to continue. The concerts have fulfilled their purpose which is to disseminate the message, but this must continue. Musician 4 stressed the fact that for a message to reach people effectively, the message has to be conveyed in a way that is appealing. He stated: “If we want things to change, we need to make the environmental topic look beautiful. If we do not make use of the arts in order to make this message look beautiful, we will not accomplish anything.” For this musician, the concerts are a way to bring beauty to this articulation. Activist 3 believes that the festivals should continue since they not only brought attention to the problems in BOSAWAS, but they also gather artisans and individuals involved in sustainable projects.
The need for more music was mentioned by Elder 1. For him, music has contributed so much to the Mayangna that it is important to continue with these efforts. He considers that it is a positive thing to be able to hear music in their own language and also to share this message beyond the Reserve. This music allows them to defend their rights and to promote environmental protection. Mayangna Community Leader 1 mentioned that their community also needs more radio stations where they can promote their music.

*Formal appeals to international courts.* Mayangna Community Leader 1 suggested that one key element that is necessary for effective change in favour of Indigenous rights to take place is involving and appealing to the international community through institutions such as the United Nations or the Inter-American Court on Human Rights. He believes that involving these institutions would force the Nicaraguan government to respect policy. He argued that this approach seems to be the only option left for them since the government has not responded to the internal, national pressure that activists have generated in recent years. In the experience of this community leader, Mayangna people have only obtained positive results in cases such as the Awas Tingni case which was brought to the international courts for human rights.

*Increased Mayangna involvement.* The aspect of Mayangna participation in these initiatives was brought up by some Mayangna interviewees as having been lacking in previous initiatives and as being crucial in the future. Elder 1 spoke of the fact that the selection of musicians for the recording and for participation in Managua could have been expanded to include more groups from more areas of the territory. He acknowledged that this is a challenging task since the distances between communities and difficulties to travel make it difficult to gather people. He does consider that this is a very important element and that it is worth the effort to plan
it well. Mayangna Community Leader 1 stressed the importance of including a diverse array of musicians from the areas that are more vulnerable so that their voices are heard.

Mayangna Musician 1 spoke of the need for more engagement and communication between the non-Indigenous organizations and the Mayangna community. He mentioned that, while it was good for them to have their music recorded, the communication came to a halt and they did not hear more from the organizers or leaders. The limited participation of the Mayangna in the organization Misión BOSAWAS itself was suggested by Community Leader 1 as having been a flaw of this organization. While he acknowledged that a lot of good was done, he mentioned that the movement followed a model where others spoke on behalf of the Mayangna: “The ones who need to speak on behalf of BOSAWAS are the Mayangna. Only then will things actually change.”

8.7 Summary

This second results chapter has presented the themes that emerged out of primary data. The interviews gathered the participants’ perspectives on the issue, their accounts of the festivals and recommendations for the improvement of these initiatives. The festivals are seen primarily as places where engaged learning takes place, a learning that is facilitated by music and that can lead to conscientization. The issues were described as a problem of exclusion, lack of education, food insecurity and lack of governance. The interviewees have also offered observations regarding the challenges faced by these initiatives and ideas for future improvement of the organization’s efforts. The next chapter presents the implications of these results in relation to the theoretical framework used in this research.
Table 8.2: Perspectives on the problem and recommendations

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<th>Perspectives on the Problem</th>
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<td>• Exclusion</td>
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<th>Recommendations for Misión BOSAWAS</th>
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<td>• Increase audience scope</td>
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<td>• Increase government and corporate engagement</td>
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<td>• Well-articulated political proposal</td>
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<td>• Continuity of concerts and musical efforts</td>
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<td>• Formal appeals to international courts</td>
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<td>• Increase Mayangna involvement</td>
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PART 5: SUMMING UP

9 DISCUSSION

9.1 Introduction

With an analysis of secondary and primary data, the previous two chapters have offered a deeper understanding of the historical and social context out of which the problem of land encroachment in BOSAWAS has emerged and worsened. The chapters have also examined the accomplishments in the articulation of the policy pertaining to Indigenous people’s autonomy and rights, and in Nicaragua in relation to this context. Finally, the chapters presented the themes, accomplishments and opportunities emergent in Misión BOSAWAS’ conscientization initiatives that attempt to address the problem by promoting enforcement of the policy. These initiatives included the carrying out of music festivals and documentary campaigns for experiential learning. This chapter offers an in-depth discussion through data triangulation based on the research findings, while expanding on the connections between these findings and the theory that frames this research. This discussion will be guided by the research questions to address the research objectives. First, I will establish some connections to the key concepts of this research, namely, social justice, Indigenous rights, Buen Vivir and group-specific rights. Secondly, I expand on the relationship between the findings and the concepts of conscientization, performance and Discourse. Each of the research questions are addressed in-depth in Chapter 10 of this dissertation.

9.2 Conceptual connections

9.2.1 Social justice, human rights of Indigenous peoples and Buen Vivir

For the Mayangna, a life of justice and dignity is oriented by their worldview which is permeated by the philosophy of Buen Vivir. A life of dignity and happiness is constituted by their
ability to exercise their cultural duties and practices in connection to nature. The issue of land encroachment by colonists in BOSAWAS and its complicating factors were articulated by the Mayangna first and foremost as a social justice and human rights issue. In the Mayangna worldview, harmony with all the entities existing within the natural world is the ultimate source of a good life, both spiritually and materially. The loss of forest brings about other losses at many levels. First, it enacts a spiritual loss since their relationship with the land, a spiritual component for the Mayangna, is threatened as the forest continues to lose ground. It also represents a loss in food and physical security. It further causes the Mayangna deep sorrow and leaves communities in a state of stress and fear as they lack the support from the central government and the ability to protect themselves from physical violence.

Disregard for the rights of the Mayangna as human beings with a specific worldview brings about these interconnected losses. This disregard is facilitated by economic systems that treat natural resources as a commodity, a means for financial gain. The loss of forest from colonist activity, brings about a loss of spiritual connection and loss of food security, situations that are certainly new to the Mayangna. For the Elders interviewed in this project, the lack of access to plants, animals and clean rivers, besides raising food security concerns, is also connected to sorrow for the loss of life of the flora and fauna in BOSAWAS. Indeed, they have limited sources of food, but the lives that make up their natural world also have spiritual connections for them as expressed in their dances and rituals, and these connections begin to rupture. The Mayangna are a people who already experienced displacement, death and violence at the time of the revolution and counter revolution. They were forced to relocate, to leave their ancestral land to flee for safety at this tumultuous time in Nicaraguan history. Upon their return, they have not been able to lead the peaceful lives they so desire since their natural environment has been under constant threat, set in
motion by the economic systems, contexts and values of Nicaraguan mainstream society. The non-anthropocentric philosophy of Buen Vivir stands as a call to ask if the good life only comes about from development that focuses on economic gain, the neoliberal model that has planted the seeds for violence in Central America (Mowforth, 2014).

In Chapter 2, I explored the definition of justice while considering relevant literature on this topic. Among the authors considered, the work of Capehart (2007) offered a progression in the definitions of this concept. These included the traditional understanding of distributive and retributive justice, where societies allot a fair distribution of goods and punishments to all its members. They also discuss newer approaches to justice such as the restorative and transformative perspectives. In restorative justice the focus is on re-establishing and repairing relationships to their original state. Transformative justice seeks to eliminate oppressive patterns and to carry out a healing of relationships, a true transformation.

The Mayangna testimony and the data examined in this project suggest that this Indigenous group has not enjoyed justice from an Indigenous perspective that centers on the Buen Vivir principles of unity with the land, or from any of these Western perspectives. For example, regarding the distributive and retributive nature of justice, Elder 1 spoke of the fact that BOSAWAS is a rich environment and that the government and private sectors reap the financial gains of various extractive industries while the Mayangna barely have a functioning health care centre and limited education infrastructure. The government makes use of the environment without fairly retributing communities for the damage or harm they experience. While the policy is clear on this, this Elder acknowledged that reality does not reflect what the policy outlines. This Mayangna experience is not unlike that of other Indigenous groups in Latin America since their traditional knowledge has been historically excluded from the social construction of national
identity and the understanding of justice by Nicaraguan society. As Hall & Patrinos (2006) posit, Indigenous people across the continent fall well behind their non-Indigenous counterparts in development markers such as education, poverty, life expectancy and others.

When we consider the articulation of human rights at an international level, we can assert that the Mayangna, along with other Indigenous groups, have not had their human rights respected. For example, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948) established that rights are much more than an assurance of basic needs such as food and shelter being met. Human rights are the rights that we have because we are simply human, and they are connected to an improved standard of life connected to the conception of human dignity, a life that is governed by enjoyment and obligations. The dignity of Indigenous peoples is connected to the well-being of their community and ability to connect with the natural world. The Mayangna and other Indigenous and ethnic groups have been constructed as less than human during colonization, as obstacles to development and to processes of national identity formation, or as revolutionary (Diaz-Arias, 2006). Violations of human rights are an attempt to disempower Indigenous people (Donnelly, 2013); this has taken place in the Nicaraguan context as well. By taking away their rights through national identity formation and enforcement, they have been rendered powerless as the upheld identity of the nation moved citizens to strive to become less like Indigenous people and justified taking Indigenous land away. It is alarming that the state, which for Sue (1978) can be either the greatest defender of rights or the greatest threat, remains apathetic or unable to enforce respect for the rights of the Mayangna communities as stated by their leaders and Elders.

Looking at other levels of justice, Capehart (2007) stressed that justice must go beyond basic needs and look at oppressive structures that limit people’s ability for self-determination. Justice must seek to restore or transform social relationships that have set the parameters for this
stripping of power perpetuated by colonizing agents on Indigenous people. In the case of the Mayangna, a restoration would not serve justice since their relationship with Nicaraguan mainstream society has never been one of equals. There has always been a division, an “us vs. them” mentality (Activist 1) that has sought to dominate, erase, and construct them according to the agenda of political entities (Diaz Arias, 2007). A transformation of this relationship must take place for justice to be exercised, one which includes the Mayangna and other Indigenous people in concrete ways and that facilitates the enforcement of policies on their behalf. Transformative justice calls for a preservation of autonomy and distinctive identity and a focus on the damaged relationship of mistrust, mutual ignorance and mutual disrespect. This was one of the tasks attempted by Misión BOSAWAS. Through performance and gathering, they hoped to redefine relationships and establish a trend for mutual knowledge exchange and solidarity. They hoped to work on a somewhat new construction of Indigenous identity with a focus on environmental protection (Activist 5). The construction they offered was not all new as it still appealed to some of the historical, revolutionary connections of Indigenous people in Nicaragua. It did, however, take into account Indigenous knowledge systems in a way that had never been done before and facilitated the first spaces for knowledge exchange among Nicaragua’s two Regions.

9.2.2 Multiculturalism in a Nicaraguan context: Autonomy

In a country such as Nicaragua, which became diversified due to distinct colonial agents and where Indigenous and ethnic communities are very much alive, attention to the rights of national minorities is essential as posited by Kymlicka (1995). If we follow this theorist’s definitions, we can affirm that Nicaragua is both a multinational state and a polyethnic state even though in this country these definitions are not as simple. In a multinational state, a historical community, the Mayangna in this case, once occupied the territory and still shares the language
and culture that existed before their unwilling contact with European colonizers. Polyethnic states incorporate new minority groups which formed out of the forced migration; in the case these would be the African slaves brought by colonizers and whose culture and ancestry fused with Indigenous people to form the Miskito or continues to exist in the black Nicaraguan population of the Atlantic. While this dissertation has focused on the reality of Indigenous people, it must also be noted that the black and ethnic populations of Nicaragua have certainly been the subject of similar exclusions and discrimination along with the Indigenous communities by mainstream Nicaragua (Pineda, 2006). Regarding the Miskito, their unique ethnic identity is acknowledged in the government documents and in the process of autonomy of the Atlantic regions. The British approach to colonization through a method of indirect rule placed the Miskitos in a position of power in relationship with other ethnic and Indigenous groups in Nicaragua. This complex identity certainly raises issues when it comes to autonomy law since there is testimony of current rivalry and discrimination among various ethnic and Indigenous groups (Mayangna Community Leader 1, Activist 2).

The concept of group-differentiated rights, as defined by Kymlicka, can also help shed light on this analysis. He posits that to live in harmony, societies must respect three levels of rights for minorities, these are self-government rights, polyethnic rights and special representation rights. When a group is free to self-govern, he suggests, they are able to exercise and develop their interests and culture by accessing political autonomy and jurisdiction over their land or territory. Polyethnic rights allow them to express their culture openly and to cultivate in new generations without fear of negative social, political or socioeconomic repercussions. Finally, special representation rights ask if political processes reflect the population. These group-differentiated rights were articulated in a slightly different manner by Valadez (2012). For this author, these
provide for Indigenous people in Latin America the rights of “self-determination, territorial autonomy and preservation of cultural integrity” (p. 699).

Considering the results revealed in this research, we can assert that the Mayangna’s group-differentiated rights are not effectively implemented. They are not free to exercise governance over their land and territory as they have been unable to curtail the influx of colonists and contain the damage they inflict on the Reserve. There are ongoing challenges to governance as many entities, including the central government, share jurisdiction over BOSAWAS and sometimes this complicates processes of policy enforcement as decisions at the local level are done with the interference of the police and municipalities. When it comes to polyethnic rights, we can attest that the Mayangna live in fear of the negative social, political or socioeconomic repercussions that may come as a result of their defence of the territory. This was illustrated by the violence enacted by colonists after the detaining and processing of eight colonists in the community of Wilus. Their special representation rights are, finally, quite limited since the political processes of the central government do not reflect the population. For example, there is no representation of the Mayangna in the central government in Managua and there exists a language barrier since many of the Mayangna chiefs do not speak Spanish.

If we take into consideration institutional guidelines on the rights of Indigenous peoples, particularly those of the United Nations published through the UNDRIP, we can also assert that the Mayangna’s rights are being violated. UNDRIP Article 7.2 states that Indigenous peoples “shall not be subjected to any act of genocide or any other act of violence” and article 2B states that they ought to be protected against any “action which has the aim or effect of dispossessing them of their lands, territories or resources”. These rights are not enjoyed by the Mayangna. For example, the community of Wilus was the victim of violence and forced out of their land in
December 2017. Their right to “maintain and strengthen” (UNDRIP, Article 25) their spiritual relationship and to ensure that future generations can maintain it is also under constant threat as the resources which are central to this spiritual relationship are being depleted. The UNDRIP document calls states to assist Indigenous peoples in these tasks and the Nicaraguan State is not doing it, according to the data analyzed in this dissertation. The government is repeatedly condemned by various sources for not ensuring that conservation and protection of the environment is carried out as stipulated in the UNDRIP. Tired of the government’s inaction, Mayangna leadership places their hope on international organizations. They expressed a need to seek the help of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights which has upheld the governments’ responsibilities toward Indigenous people throughout the continent and which ruled in favour of the Mayangna in the Awas Tingni case in 2001.

Considering the data and analysis generated in this dissertation, we can conclude that the Mayangna are still far from living the good life or Buen Vivir upheld in their traditional worldview. Western perspectives on justice also make it clear that these communities are not adequately retributed with social supports such as health care and education infrastructure. Finally, international standards such as the UNDRIP leave no question to the fact that the Mayangna’s rights as Indigenous people must be better protected in Nicaragua.

9.2.3 Conscientization

The media coverage on the festivals and the interviews make it clear that the purpose of these initiatives was to ultimately raise awareness on the issue of land encroachment and forest loss. Awareness raising and information sharing about Indigenous rights, identity and the natural environment between Misión BOSAWAS in mainstream Nicaraguan society is seen by many interview participants as a first step toward change. Until recently, the Mayangna simply did not
exist in the awareness of the Nicaragua of the Pacific Coast. While information on many environmental topics and Indigenous worldviews were disseminated during the festivals organized by Misión BOSAWAS, this information was not given through a linear “banking education” approach (Freire, 1970) which, as explained in Chapter 3, sees education as a one-way process of information sharing, but rather in a way that invited audiences to be changed through complex dialogical processes. Audiences were encouraged to not remain as passive listeners, and they had opportunities to begin to move from awareness into action as they engaged with exhibitors, workshop leaders and musicians. Misión BOSAWAS hoped, like Freire, that young people “posed with problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world, will feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge” (p. 81). This was supported by the testimony of most of those who were interviewed in this project.

The approach to awareness raising appealed to the senses and emotions through music performance. In line with Dorling’s (2012) view on performance, the festivals were a way to warn Nicaraguan society of the status quo that it had fallen into, an oppressive structure that does not consider its environmental and Indigenous heritage. In a country where music has been uniquely used in social movements and in its revolution, these festivals were a call to awaken from apathy, ignorance and environmental dysfunctionality. Many musicians who have been involved in the socially aware music scene of Nicaragua were involved in the annual festivals. Also, young, upcoming musicians offered their styles and their articulation of the problem and its possible solutions as evidenced through analysis of their song lyrics. The Mayangna joined the festivals and experienced a bridge between the Pacific and Atlantic through music performance and recording.
9.2.4 Performance

According to Diana Taylor (2003), performances are practices that stand out from others in order to draw attention to something worthy of our attention (Taylor, 2003). Performances are also “events” for exchange of values and cultures, and articulation of Discourse, and music is the key to all of these. In this context, performances carved out a space in mainstream Nicaraguan society where the environment and the Mayangna became a focus of attention. While these initiatives were noted by many interview participants as needing to improve, they, nevertheless, provided a start to a new reality in Nicaragua. A space was taken out of the ordinary to hear Mayangna voices, hear of their story and challenges through the documentaries, acknowledge their cultural heritage and hear of their love for the Reserve in their song. As attested by many interview participants, their language was heard by many Nicaraguans for the first time and, also for the first time, they were addressed with their proper name of “Mayangna”.

During the festivals, performance was a “vital act of transfer” (Taylor, 2003, p. 2) in more than one way for the musicians, specially the Mayangna. For the musicians engaged in these festivals, music was a way to convey their views on nature and their role in its conservation. It was an embodiment of their values, hopes and epistemologies. Their knowledge system, especially in the case of the Mayangna, was embodied in the songs that were performed and recorded as part of these festivals. The songs, as evident through the lyric analysis, were something of a return to that favoured way to convey knowledge in precolonial societies of the Americas. The Mayangna sung out of their “repertoire” in the sense that Taylor (2003) sees it, sentiments, words and sounds that come out of their lived experience to share the non-reproducible knowledge held by their communities. In very simple ways, they sung of their relationship with BOSAWAS, this beautiful place that, for them, is “life itself”.

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In these festivals, music performance attempted to promote feelings of empathy and to function as an act of resistance against injustice. As Laurence (2015) attests, music can accomplish this by its appeal to the emotions as it can move us to understand the suffering of others and acknowledge our shared humanity. This was expressed strongly by Activist 5 and Musician 3 who, after hearing the songs of the Mayangna, were able to recognize their pain and the national and human identity that connects them. A temporary coming together made empathic identification possible, and Misión BOSAWAS hoped that this feeling could eventually become concrete responses. Performance was an act of resistance where the injustice, oppression and abuse of power (Dutta, 2011) exercised by colonists and the government against the Mayangna were placed in evidence.

9.2.5 Discourse

This thesis considers Discourse, beyond the focus on its textual and linguistic aspect, as a process of communication that establishes parameters of power distribution. Wood & Kroger (2000) suggest that Discourse analysis involves looking closely at how people and groups relate and communicate. Analyzing the medium for interaction concerning Indigenous people and justice is to analyze the parameters of power and the complex set of practices. This Discourse is much larger than that which was uttered by the Misión BOSAWAS efforts regarding forest loss in BOSAWAS. It is a historically-enforced system that set the rules for the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Nicaragua. The musical performances, interviews with media, and information disseminated through the various initiatives of Misión BOSAWAS were a first step toward re-articulating this Discourse.

Foucault posited that Discourse can either reinforce power as well as exposing it or challenging (1990). Considering the data gathered in this research, I posit that the festivals, media
coverage and documentaries have done some of both. For example, the Mayangna and Indigenous worldviews were sometimes excluded from the discussions in the media. When the problem was articulated, it was often described as an environmental problem, dismissing the struggle and the cultural heritage of the Mayangna. We must note, however, that these efforts constituted a step forward in this re-articulation as the Mayangna struggle was indeed spoken about in the songs and sometimes in the media. This articulation had the potential to challenge power dynamics since it raised awareness and kept the issue on the government’s agenda.

Music is a multi-modal Discourse and we must analyze the how and when of music’s role in the articulation of Discourses of power. Moore (2012) suggests that music taps into feelings of the individual while connecting these existing feelings with new understandings and ideas. This topic will be analyzed in greater detail in subsequent sections of this chapter. However, it is worth noting that the songs analyzed here -lyrics, rhythms and instrumentation- symbolically connected the Mayangna struggle with the struggles of mainstream Nicaragua. It built a bridge between cultures through styles and the various components of music. For example, the song “Mayangna”, which was recorded and performed in Mayangna language by the Príncipes de Paz Band, incorporates the Son Nica rhythm and the sound of the Marimba, an instrument typically associated with the mainstream culture of the Pacific and one which was used in revolutionary music. The audience recognizes this sound while it is paired with a new element, Mayangna lyrics, a language rarely heard in the Pacific. The song thus embodies the cultural bridge that was attempted by these performances.

9.2.6 The Discourse on Indigenous identity

The process by which the notion of Indigenous identity was constructed by Nicaragua’s mainstream society is one that has gone hand in hand with this country’s process of identity
formation from colonization to the present. Key historical events have contributed to the unique construction of what it means to be Nicaraguan and the place that Indigenous people occupy within this identity. Perspectives on Indigenous people were often used to justify specific actions as the country secured independence from Spain and, later, lived through the convoluted processes of revolution and counterrevolution. As explored in Chapter 5, Nicaragua is a geographically-divided country where Atlantic and Pacific have an unbalanced distribution of power and where distinct cultural identities exist mostly separate from each other. As the mestizo on the Pacific established seats of power in the cities of Granada, León and later, Managua, Indigenous people were constructed as expendable and as obstacles to the development and progress of the country. Indigenous people in Nicaragua were seen in recent decades as either a thing of the past, a heritage that is preserved by memory and history, or as heroic in the context of the revolution. As detailed in Chapter 6, even in policy documents emerging after the 1990s, the relationship between Indigenous people and protest and revolution is maintained. The efforts of Misión BOSAWAS stand before the daunting task of beginning to challenge the divisions which have articulated national and Indigenous identities in this country. While these efforts were not able to fully articulate an Indigenous identity detached from the revolution, it did, however, value the living heritage of these groups in connection to the preservation of the environment.

As examined in Chapter 4, a nation’s established identity is a social construct set in motion by individuals and groups in position of power. Those in power define social roles, identities and relationships and establish patterns of inclusion and exclusion in this process. Concrete actions build their imagined community (Anderson, 1991). The imagined community of Nicaragua, as was the case in other countries in the region, was one that dealt with the Indigenous problem by
assimilation and elimination. The Nicaraguan identity was established as a homogenously mestizo one which has ignored the role and rights of Indigenous and black people.

Within the revolutionary context of the mid to late 1990s, Indigenous people of the Pacific were valued for their capacity to support the revolution against Anastasio Somoza. Monimbó was seen as the cradle of the revolution and as ultimately Indigenous in nature. This city’s marimba music and dance was chosen as the music of the revolution, and later, as a key element in the construction of national identity. The Indigenous peasant was the protagonist of the revolution (Cardenal, 2004) and music upheld this construction. Indigenous identity was in service of the homogenous mestizo culture, the revolutionary peasant identity that made up the new Nicaragua. After the revolution, a country facing tremendous human and material loss needed to further strengthen this identity. Ethnic divisions would be a threat to the unified front needed to be presented to potential foreign invaders such as the United States. It was the non-Indigenous, middle-class elites that made decisions regarding the social construction of identity through the arts such as dance, music and poetry. The new man was a homogenous, mestizo peasant. As noted in Chapter 5, Indigenous ancestry was important, but only as the inspiration and strength of the revolutionary as was exemplified by Sandino.

After the revolution, the question of ethnicity was initially excluded from the Discourse that sought to establish a strengthened national identity. This period saw the rise of Indigenous groups who opposed this exclusion, such as the MISURASATA and the YATAMA. Their efforts pressured the Sandinista government to eventually declared the Autonomy of the Atlantic Regions. Violeta de Chamorro’s defeat of the Sandinista in 1990 brought about the demobilization of armed groups, leaving ex-combatants landless and unemployed. A process of resettlement threatened Indigenous land as the Atlantic forests were considered free for the taking (Staver et al., 2007).
The Mayangna and Miskito were considered obstacles to attaining this land. The Chamorro government’s 1991 declaration on the creation of BOSAWAS attempted to establish the vital connection of Indigenous people with environmental conservation. This document highlights that the forests of the Atlantic require preservation and appreciation because they are precious, national patrimony. This decree constructs the Indigenous people who inhabit it—the Sumos or Mayangna and Miskito—as deeply connected to this land and, therefore, an intrinsic part of this heritage.

This construction was quite different from the one established by the Ortega government. The first document that made direct reference to the rights of Indigenous people in Nicaragua was the 1986 Law of Autonomy and, in 2003, Law 445 focused on the topic of common property and titling for Indigenous people and ethnic communities. These two documents place attention on the diverse nature of the Atlantic region. Particularly, the Law of Autonomy constructs Indigenous people as having been the victims of historic injustice. However, they do not remain victims since, throughout history, they have risen in revolution and protest. Indigenous people in Nicaragua are connected in the document to the revolutionary leaders that emerged in Latin America since colonial times. Among these leaders, the connection to Augusto Cesar Sandino is more strongly articulated. He was a mestizo who took pride in his Indigenous heritage. This construction holds that the Indigenous person is, by definition, revolutionary. Indigenous people are then, victims and heroes to whom freed societies owe respect and autonomy. In these documents, there is no connection between environmental conservation and Indigenous heritage or knowledge. The focus remains on the political struggles of Nicaragua and the place Indigenous people occupied within these.

BOSAWAS and its adjacent forests were and still are hot spots of deforestation; Howard (1998) suggests that the conflict obeys “discriminatory attitudes and laws toward Indigenous
people” (p. 20). It is also indirectly caused by pressures from world markets that move colonized nations toward the production of commodities. Indigenous people have been constructed as either an obstacle to this development or simply as something of the past. Both constructions have led to the neglect and absence of the government referred to by many of those interviewed.

The festivals organized by Misión BOSAWAS and the media that emerged around them both challenged and reinforced some of these constructions of Indigeneity in Nicaragua. It built on the approach of Decree 44-91, appreciating nature in and of itself and the Indigenous communities that live within the protected regions. In some instances, media interviews, articles and songs focused on the environmental conservation, rendering Indigenous people invisible once again. In other instances, specific connections to the revolution are established, perpetuating the Discourse established by the Sandinistas. Yet, in others, the focus was placed on the Mayangna’s sacred, ancestral relationship with the land as the one reason BOSAWAS should be protected.

9.3 Media portrayal

9.3.1 Media on the problem

The media coverage examined in this dissertation focuses primarily on the environmental damage and the loss that this signifies for the biodiversity of the Mesoamerican corridor. A lot of attention is placed on the environmental benefits of BOSAWAS as it is identified as a source for clean air and clean water for the Central American region. Only the 2008 Nuevo Diario article speaks of the ancestral connection that the Mayangna have with the land in BOSAWAS. Their exodus during the revolution and counterrevolution wars is highlighted as the article touches upon the long-standing struggles faced by these communities. More recent articles from 2017 convey the social impacts felt by the Mayangna. These highlight the lack of food, threats to health, displacements and human rights violations brought to the Mayangna by external agents. In this
context, being Indigenous is connected to being extremely poor; Indigenous people are constructed as being abandoned by the government and victimized by colonist violence (Garth Medina, 2017). Indigeneity is connected to uncertainty as the future of their Reserve is uncertain. Of the articles assessed in this dissertation, only the UNESCO publication makes in-depth references to the Mayangna heritage that is threatened by environmental destruction.

9.3.2 Media coverage of the festival (articles and interview)

When it comes to media coverage on the festivals, it is evident that these events were constructed primarily as environmental festivals. They were described as gatherings of environmentalists and citizens in Nicaraguan society. It seems, from the interviews and the articles, that only in subsequent festivals (2014, 2015) was the Mayangna presence felt. However, their presence always fit within the environmentalist approach to festivals’ organization. They were represented by the musicians Príncipes de Paz and by Duo Estrellita. Their music was the one way by which they conveyed their worldview on nature and environmental conservation. Due to the physical distance between the Reserve and the cities where the festivals were held, Mayangna community members and leaders were not present during the festivals.

9.3.3 Documentaries

The two documentaries assessed in this research provide an alternate construction of Indigeneity in Nicaragua. The construction of Indigenous identity attempted by the documentary El Ocaso de BOSAWAS is one that connects the Mayangna of today with their ancestral traditions as the documentary inserts scenes of traditional practices, such as hunting and fishing, throughout a typical day in the life of the Mayagna. They are also portrayed as a community that is vulnerable and in pain because of the injustices that are perpetrated by colonists and corrupt officials and lawyers. Finally, they are depicted as a community with hope in its young children and young
people. Help from the outside also comes into this picture; the young people of Misión BOSAWAS arrive, not as saviours but as allies in their struggle. The documentary *El Canto de BOSAWAS*, even though it focuses on the journey of a mestizo musician and his team of foreign collaborators, manages to put Mayangna heritage at its centre. Ernesto “Matute” serves as a way into a Mayangna narrative that focuses not on its struggles, but on the beauty and richness of its culture and landscape. The songs of the Mayangna are part of the landscape as are their traditions, beliefs and daily life. Indigeneity is constructed as a rich heritage that surpasses “any economy”, as Ernesto articulates. They are constructed as being the guardians of a precious heritage, the only thing Nicaragua has left after so many years of colonization. Here, too, help arrives from outside in the form of Ernesto and his friends but, in this case, it is a presence that values this heritage for the first time.

9.4 The songs

The articulation of Indigeneity offered by the songs performed during the festivals and recorded in the album *BOSAWAS* conveys the ancestral nature of the Mayangna heritage. This heritage is deeply connected to environmental protection. Specifically, the songs that directly relate to this construction are as follows: Salvador Cardenal’s “BOSAWAS”, Carlos Mejía’s “Alarido por BOSAWAS”, Luis Mejía’s “Todas las Voces” and the Mayangna songs by Príncipes de Paz “BOSAWAS Sauni”, “BOSAWAS”, “Mayangna” and “Mayangna Like” as well as the presence of Duo Estrellita in the recordings.

Salvador Cardenal’s song “BOSAWAS” speaks of the Mayangna and Miskito as protectors of BOSAWAS and of its flora and fauna, the medicine for humans and animals. Furthermore, Carlos Mejía’s “Alarido por BOSAWAS” establishes a connection between Indigeneity and the idyllic natural world. This is a peaceful connection which, nevertheless, calls upon an ancestral
tradition of resistance and revolution. The song evokes various historic Indigenous groups of Nicaragua, all of which were defenders of Indigenous or peasant rights as well as helping fight off external threats to national sovereignty. The Mayangna are depicted as a strong nation since the Indigenous identity of Nicaragua is a unified force, brought together by resistance. Finally, in Luis Mejia’s song “Todas las Voces” the Mayangna are conveyed as owners and protectors of this sacred land where biodiversity from the north and south of the continent come together.

The Mayangna presence in the recording and performances provided an historic opportunity when it comes to a re-articulation of Indigenous identity in the Nicaraguan context. The Príncipes de Paz band and Duo Estrellita did something that no other Mayangna had ever done in Nicaraguan history. They crossed the constructed, imagined border between Pacific and Atlantic and positioned themselves at the center of the stage for a non-Indigenous audience. The songs they sung and recorded were the Mayangna’s articulation of their own identity and their perspectives on the territory. Their lyrics focused on their love for the land, the Reserve’s beauty and rich life that exists within it.

9.5 Music and the re-articulation of Indigenous identity

The interviews carried out in this research asserted that this Mayangna presence during the festivals was an opportunity for re-articulation of identity. Musician 5 stated that during the festivals, audiences could hear from the Mayangna themselves of their own experiences. Knowledge diffusion carried out by music was an opportunity for them to be valued and seen as having a vital role in the life of Nicaragua (Activist 2). As Activist 5 affirmed, a new construction of Indigeneity was attempted, especially by the documentaries. First the Mayangna were conveyed as educated people of the present and that their precarious living conditions were the result of injustice. Elder 1 also saw this as an accomplishment of music and the documentaries since they
offered a rendition of Mayangna culture that is closer to the truth. Finally, Activist 3 spoke of the festivals as a reconstruction of the identity of Indigenous peoples of the Atlantic as being one with the rest of Nicaragua.

9.6 Music, conscientization and policy

We cannot overlook the intensifying violence and the continued advance of the agricultural frontier in the BOSAWAS reserve. We also cannot fail to acknowledge that the context out of which the colonists have emerged is not easily dealt with. The alleged retaliation on behalf of colonists on the Wilus community makes it clear that the issue of policy enforcement is an ongoing one in the region and one that will certainly take either a long time or a social transformation of great magnitude to change. We can, however, affirm that the initiatives carried out by Misión BOSAWAS did make a difference in the area of policy implementation by contributing to the first step in this process: public awareness.

Conscientization was recognized by many interviewees as having been the greatest accomplishment of the festivals. The festivals and other initiatives kept the issue alive by first making the public aware of the fact that a problem existed. The festivals planted the seed of knowledge (Activist 2) as they offered alternatives, and conscientization was linked to action. Even though many of those interviewed suggested that more political organization would have been beneficial, activists tended to uphold that the first step toward policy implementation and enforcement is knowledge dissemination. As Ernesto affirmed in *El Canto de BOSAWAS*: “How can you defend something you don’t even know exists?” By drawing attention to the issue, particularly the aspect of corruption, the organization hoped to pressure the government toward policy implementation since “the politician cares about the public’s opinion” (Musician 3).
9.7 The festival experience

Considering that Discourse is a process of relationship and communication, we can affirm that these festivals were experiences of Discourse articulation for activists, musicians and audiences. Discourse both establishes and challenges norms and parameters of interaction and power (Mills, 2003) and these festivals did enforce some existing parameters while challenging others. For an analysis of how the public and the activists experienced the festivals, we will refer to Nattiez’ (1990) views on the various layers of multimodal Discourse processes. For him, music as a symbolic phenomenon includes three dimensions. The poietic dimension is the process of creation and, in this analysis, it will be specifically connected to the musician’s creative processes. The esthetic dimension refers to the audience’s non-linear process of meaning creation and interaction with music. Finally, the trace is the symbolic form which is, in this case, performed and recorded songs. Music and its performance are a total social fact taking place within the specific context of Nicaragua where music becomes the medium for interaction.

The Mayangna music that was performed and recorded as part of the efforts of Misión BOSAWAS, evolved out of an integrated process where nature and community are central. Their cultural practices are embedded into this holistic perspective so much that, for them, singing and sharing their musical creation is sharing their very lives and preserving their culture. Their recordings were true community events; they did not take place in a recording studio but in places of community gathering such as the church and the school. Musicians were surrounded by children, adults and Elders who wanted to be part of this event as depicted in El Canto de BOSAWAS. The creative process is a joyful process as described by Musawás’ chief who stated that, like other cultures become happy when they sing about themselves, the Mayangna “also rejoice, singing to our forests, our animals and rivers.”
Some of the non-Indigenous musician spoke of their own creative process (Musicians 1, 2, 4). For them, creativity flows out of a deep love for nature, the Nicaraguan landscape and a commitment to solidarity with the Mayangna. For Musician 2, music creation evolved out of the spiritual teachings he received growing up. A life commitment was also expressed by Musician 4 for whom childhood memories of harmony with nature inspired his creative process as a musician. BOSAWAS and the Mayangna also evoked a personal commitment for Musician 1 who saw music as the logical way to promote protection of the Reserve. Creating music is, for this musician, a way to gather people in common experiences that touch emotions. Finally, all the artists were brought into an experience of nature in connection with the creative process; as the recording of the album BOSAWAS took place at the CEN’s recording studio within the Reserve. In summary, the poetic process was one of unity with nature and community, joy and an expression of culture and personal commitment for these musicians.

The esthetic aspect that focuses on the audience’s interaction with the music, was also influenced by the aspect of commitment and knowledge sharing. During these festivals, the audience first interacted with the music as receivers of information, one which elicited critical awareness (Activist 7). For Activist 7, attending the festival was the result of deeper involvement in the environmental movement. Activist 1 saw music as an opportunity to hear what the communities from the Atlantic had to share. For Activist 6, his role as an audience is connected to his career where music formed his sensitivities and captured his attention. Music appealed to the mind for him and he considered that this is a medium easily processed by the young population. Similarly, Activists 2 & 4 expressed that her upbringing and personal commitment to environmental causes was key in her reasons for attending the festivals.
The trace, in this case, was the songs that were a tool for education, a cultural bridge and an act of recognition. Music became the cultural bridge which is very much needed in Nicaragua and it became a somewhat new articulation of Discourse which opened space for the Mayangna musicians to tell their story (Activist 7), share their rhythms and let Nicaragua know, by their presence, that they are not a group that died in the past (Activist 5). They play a part as protectors of Nicaragua’s heritage, natural and otherwise. The Mayangna songs incorporated traditional sounds and rhythms from mainstream Nicaragua such as the Son Nica strumming pattern and the sound of the marimba. Through music they gained recognition (Activist 2). The music of non-Indigenous artists was also an important element in the process of knowledge sharing as environmental values were shared and they included reminders about the rights of the Mayangna and the need to implement the existing policy. Some songs criminalized the activities of colonists in BOSAWAS and those who disregard environmental protection throughout Nicaragua. Songs thus brought people together in ways that were both familiar yet new.

While these festivals were organized by non-Indigenous young people, the presence of the Mayangna, both physically and in the lyrics of some of the songs, did express a different Discourse. The Mayangna, erroneously called Sumus in the past, are a rich Indigenous group, something that mainstream society ignored until recently. Singing and recording their music opened possibilities for knowledge sharing for the Mayangna; through song they can teach both their children and outsiders about the way in which their ancestors have related to the mountains and the animals that live within it (Allgood & De Castro, 2014). Activist 2 considers that it is of value in and of itself that, with the recorded songs, the Mayangna have a document that captures some of their knowledge. To some degree, they were able to re-articulate this Discourse, challenging the mainstream construction of Indigenous people as something of the past or as heavily revolutionary.
They are here depicted just as they are: Nicaraguan people who were born in the Atlantic, who live according to their ancestral traditions and whose lives and future are dependent on the survival of the Biosphere Reserve of BOSAWAS.

The complexity of the problem of land encroachment in BOSAWAS is certainly not easy to resolve. While it is easy to blame the colonists and construct them as the enemy, the data points to the exacerbating factors that have made it possible for a group such as this one to grow. This problem takes place in a country whose economy is based on the production of raw commodities and extractive industries. If we add to this the effects of the Somoza dictatorship, the Sandinista Revolution, counterrevolution and political divisions, we are led to acknowledge that the reality of peasants in this country is far from simple. Much of the data identify the colonists as peasants who work for wealthy land owners from other regions in Nicaragua while others are recognized as coming from regions where large projects have forced them to relocate (Guevara Flores et al., 2015). The GTI report on the territory paints a clear picture of this complexity and we cannot overlook the fact that, even though their activity is clearly illegal, many of the colonists are trying to find land or funds to survive or to get out of poverty. Some of the data even suggests that the government encourages them to squat on land from the Reserve. Education is certainly an important element for change in Nicaragua but, at the same time, the economic situation of peasants is one that would also need to be addressed to deal with the root of the issue.

9.8 Summary

Based on the data analysis carried out in this research, I argue that the Mayangna in Nicaragua have had their rights dismissed by mainstream society and that the Misión BOSAWAS movement has made modest progress in changing this reality. The processes of identity formation that took place at key points in this country’s history constructed a uniform, mestizo identity
through Discourse articulation. This Discourse established Indigenous identity as undesirable and, later, as heroic and revolutionary. More recently, Indigenous people had been considered as something belonging to the past, alive only in the memory of the revolution. Nicaragua is a country that still faces economic struggles, and environmental sustainability or conservation have not been a priority, to say the least. Natural resources, including land, are a means to an end, a potential for economic stability and gain. The values that stand behind the actions taken by mainstream society have not included an appreciation for Indigenous knowledge systems or the well-being of these communities.

The efforts undertaken by Misión BOSAWAS certainly had important limitations. The Discourse articulated through its various platforms both reinforced and challenged long-standing constructions of indigeneity that rendered Indigenous people invisible. Through music, however, these activists and musicians have taken a first step toward bringing about change through critical awareness. The Mayangna presence and songs at these festivals crossed existing boundaries. Non-Indigenous musicians also offered their contribution, their solidarity with the Mayangna and their commitment to working for a sustainable future. The festivals created a bridge, as limited as it was, facilitating exchanges between the distinct, alienated cultures of Pacific and Atlantic Nicaragua. Noting areas where this organization could have improved does not dismiss its accomplishments. Interview participants attested to these successes while observing the lessons they learned from what was already done. The following chapter offers recommendations based on the research and which may be useful to Misión BOSAWAS and similar organizations.
10 CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I have presented the complexity of the issue of land encroachment and forest loss in the Biosphere Reserve of BOSAWAS. I have also investigated the efforts around the use of music by Misión BOSAWAS as an agent of conscientization in Nicaragua. The problem, introduced in Chapter 1, was studied through a series of research questions and objectives, using an interdisciplinary, in-depth analysis of a single case study. In Chapter 2, I carried out a literature review that explored the topic of justice and the rights of Indigenous peoples with special attention to this reality in the region of Latin America. The guiding framework for this research, explored in Chapter 3 has built on several key concepts: conscientization, performance and Discourse. Within these, music has been considered a central element, a multimodal Discourse capable of evoking conscientization through performance. The methodology implemented in this research project was detailed in Chapter 4. This investigation required an in-depth examination of the historical factors that have contributed to the construction of Indigeneity within this specific context, as described in Chapter 5. Chapters 6 and 7 offered research results; these were discussed in Chapter 8 with a focus on the research questions outlined in Chapter 1. In this final chapter, I summarize the main research findings by responding to the original research questions. I also present the main contributions of this research as well as the recommendations that emerge from it. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the research strengths and limitations and suggestions for future research.

10.1 How has the official national Discourse articulated in Nicaragua constructed the notion of Indigenous identity?

Throughout the history of Nicaragua, the need to establish a strong, unified identity at the time of independence and revolution was faced by the mestizo elite with processes of identity
formation through a national Discourse. This country historically developed in such a way that a cultural, geographic and political divide between the Atlantic and Pacific regions became a deeply established reality. This official Discourse has been characterized by exclusion, that is, Indigenous people, along with black people, have been constructed as “other” and as belonging to the Atlantic region. The established authority of the Pacific region facilitated the construction of a homogenous, mestizo identity and the cultural gap between Atlantic and Pacific has led Indigenous people to feel abandoned by the central government which is centered in the Pacific coast. This feeling of abandonment is intensified by the current apathy of which many of the interview participants accuse the central government. When they were recognized and included in the national Discourse, Indigenous people were constructed only as existing in service of this mestizo nation. This was most clearly seen in the period surrounding the revolution when Indigenous people were portrayed as heroic in the resistance against Somoza and, later, against other external threats to the newly established government. On the other hand, at the time of independence their presence was inconvenient, and they were thus rendered invisible by the national Discourse and by the actions of governments. This invisibility has continued until recently because, as evident through the interviews carried out for this research, the Mayangna did not exist in the awareness of mainstream Nicaragua.

10.2 How has the music performed and recorded during the Unidos por BOSAWAS Festivals contributed to the process of conscientization in favour of policy enforcement?

The use of music has permeated the efforts of Misión BOSAWAS. Music performance and the recordings that emerged out of these have accomplished the task of raising critical awareness among the Nicaragua public. As evidenced by interview participants, this was attained through the articulation of a Discourse that offered a nuanced construction of Indigenous identity.
Through lyrics that directly articulated the importance of environmental sustainability, the Mayangna were depicted as intrinsically connected to the health and survival of the Biosphere Reserve of BOSAWAS. In *El Canto de BOSAWAS* (Allgood & De Castro, 2014), music provided a path into the culture and lives of the Mayangna communities, an opportunity for mainstream society to get to know a previously disregarded rich heritage.

The physical presence of the Mayangna on the festival stages of the Pacific challenged the historic division between this region and the rest of Nicaragua. Their music, mostly sung in Mayangna, brought together rhythms, sounds and language that emerge out of their communities with those that have been upheld as part of Nicaragua’s mainstream folklore. Their presence had an important impact on audiences and performers who attested to this in the interviews carried out for this research. The Mayangna presence allowed non-Indigenous audiences and performers to listen to their suffering, their worldview and perspectives on the land, facilitating feelings of empathy and solidarity. Furthermore, the festivals offered audiences concrete options to put into practice the newfound knowledge on environmental sustainability and the Mayangna heritage. Knowledge sharing did not remain a linear transfer of information but one that elicited a critical approach to knowledge leading to action.

**10.3 How have activists and musicians experienced the festival?**

The festival experience for performers and activists was deeply linked to their personal experience and commitment to promoting environmental sustainability and respect for Indigenous rights. While the focus of the festival often rested on the environmental aspects, solidarity with the Mayangna did emerge as a key component in the festivals and as crucial for some of the activists and musicians interviewed.
The creative process, out of which the songs performed during the festival and recorded in the BOSAWAS album emerged, was informed by the musicians’ personal commitment to the environment and Indigenous rights. This was expressed by many non-Indigenous musicians. Furthermore, the creative process for the Mayangna was one that involved every aspect of their worldview such as nature and community. Music creation was a deeply communal experience and the love for the Reserve permeated the lyrics that were central to their performances and recordings.

Audiences received the performances with a lot of enthusiasm. On a superficial level, some of those interviewed spoke of the attractive rhythms that brought people together. On a deeper level, they spoke of the power of the messages conveyed by the lyrics and by the presence of musicians, especially the Mayangna musicians. The festivals were, thus, an experience that facilitated empathy and solidarity, disseminated knowledge and created a cultural bridge between the two distinct regions of Nicaragua: the Atlantic and the Pacific.

10.4 How can the initiatives surrounding this issue be optimized by Misión BOSAWAS and similar organizations so as to benefit Indigenous people and the environment?

This research has yielded information to support several recommendations to enhance festival initiatives to secure lasting change. This change could be characterized by the implementation of policy that upholds the rights of Indigenous people and environmental protection, especially in relationship to BOSAWAS. As mentioned above, the efforts of Misión BOSAWAS are recognized as being positive in that they raised awareness and shared knowledge that was previously unknown in mainstream Nicaragua about Indigenous people, their cultural heritage and the injustices they experience. However, the work of Misión BOSAWAS is, at the
same time, lacking in its representation of Indigenous people because the festivals often focused on environmental aspects more than on the Mayangna worldview and their struggles and suffering inside the Reserve of BOSAWAS. Interview participants suggested that it is important to continue organizing festivals, carrying out media campaigns, recordings, workshops and documentary showings, but that there should be greater attention paid to the ideas of inclusion and specific political and educational strategies. A synthesis of observed themes in these recommendations is offered as follows.

**Increased Mayangna representation in the organization.** This research yields a clear understanding that musical performance, songs, recordings, and festivals have generally been positive initiatives by Misión BOSAWAS and that they should continue. However, after the testimony given by Mayangna interview participants, I argue that attention must be paid to becoming more inclusive of the Mayangna as performers, audiences and organizers. The efforts of organizations such as Misión BOSAWAS should not follow the patterns of exclusion characteristic of Nicaraguan society, but should aim for inclusive representation of Mayangna people at every level of the organization, including in its leadership. For example, the Mayangna ought to be included in interviews with mainstream media so that it is not someone speaking on their behalf. As Mayangna Community leader 1 articulated, “Only then will things actually change”. Mayangna community members also spoke of the need to have more representation of Mayangna musicians from other areas of the Reserve, since the recording and the festivals only included musicians from one or two communities. Many communities and their musicians felt excluded from this project.

**Articulation of a political plan.** In order for the critical awareness attained by Misión BOSAWAS to have a lasting impact in Nicaraguan society, their initiatives need to be
accompanied by a well-articulated political plan that brings concrete proposals to politicians from every level of government. Among the political strategies, it was suggested that the government needs to be pressured to implement the policy presented in Chapter 6 and outlined in documents such as *Decree 44-91*, the *Law of Autonomy* and *Law 445*, and to protect Indigenous communities from the violence to which they are constantly subjected. Finally, this political plan should invite the government to revise the governance structure in BOSAWAS and surrounding municipalities so that new levels of authority can be established in a structure that respects the Mayangna traditional ways of looking at authority and power hierarchies. This approach places greater respect for local, traditional leadership than on higher government structures that are removed from the life and needs of the community.

*Integrated public awareness strategies.* There is an evident need for ongoing, integrated marketing and knowledge dissemination plans that target a broader Nicaraguan audience and that establishes partnerships with social enterprises and other businesses. A plan with a focus on a broader audience would be advisable in projects such as those undertaken by Misión BOSAWAS. It would be beneficial to expand the audiences that attend the festivals and reach more of the mainstream public. This would provide mainstream society with increased opportunities to participate in the engaging experiences offered by the festival events. The audience that attended these festivals tended to be centralized around the capital and inside the universities. Taking the festivals beyond this context and into smaller neighbourhoods in other cities would create these opportunities for an expanded audience as well as for new partnerships to become established. The marketing and diffusion strategies should also be implemented in partnership with social enterprises, environmentally-focused initiatives and larger corporations. Enlisting the support of bigger corporations may be possible by appealing to new trends that hold environmental
sustainability as attractive and marketable. This would help give greater visibility to the issues in a greater Nicaraguan context.

**Specific proposal for the Ministry of Education.** The importance of education and knowledge dissemination was noted in much of the data. Some activists and musicians identified deep issues within the Nicaraguan educational system, such as its curriculum which does not promote interdisciplinary collaboration, does not include Indigenous heritage or does not consider the topic of environmental sustainability. Addressing the shortcomings of this educational system calls for collaboration between organizations such as Misión BOSAWAS and the Ministry of Education to revise the curricula for both elementary and secondary education. The goal would be to provide Nicaragua’s new generations with accurate, updated information on Indigenous culture and the relationship between justice and environmental sustainability. These changes can help shape leaders that uphold the values of environmental sustainability and respect for the rights of Indigenous people.

**Establishing international alliances.** Activists, Mayangna leaders, and community members identified a need for Misión BOSAWAS to establish strong connections with international entities, such as the United Nations and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, to gain support through legal avenues. The idea behind this suggestion is that the Nicaraguan government has not taken action in defence of Indigenous rights even in the face of internal pressure. International pressure may have a different effect.

**Continuity with Mayangna community.** From the interviews carried out in the Reserve of BOSAWAS, it was identified that the festivals and engagement with the musicians need to be ongoing and not only for a limited project. Representatives from Misión BOSAWAS and similar
organizations should periodically visit Mayangna leaders in BOSAWAS and should actively seek and assist various and new musicians to share their work and culture with mainstream Nicaragua. These trips are costly, but the festivals themselves can be used as a fundraising opportunity to finance some of the costs of these trips and recordings. The ongoing visits would further strengthen the solidarity, cultural exchange and inclusion of the Mayangna communities and leaders in the efforts of Misión BOSAWAS.

10.5 Research contributions

Through this research I hope to make contributions in the areas of conceptual and empirical advancement. First in the conceptual area, it has expanded an understanding of the concept of conscientization as a first step in processes of social change. Awareness is the first step toward transforming patterns of social injustice, as some of the interviewees asserted. While not all awareness leads to critical thinking and to action, without it these latter processes cannot take place. This project has also deepened the understanding of the idea of performance as embodied epistemology. For example, through performances the Mayangna and other musicians have embodied a desire for unity and solidarity in Nicaragua. They have articulated a different Discourse, a new construction of identity that does not overlook the rich heritage of the Atlantic and its place within national identity. Performance in these festivals offered a challenge to a longstanding status quo that had ignored environmental and justice issues in relation to Indigenous people. Finally, this research has also explored the meaning of Discourse as going beyond its textual aspects and rather establishing patterns of social relationships. Within this understanding, music is a multimodal Discourse that carries within it numerous layers of articulation through lyrics, rhythms, sounds, and through its performance.
Under the empirical aspect, this research has yielded valuable data regarding the issue, as well as the voices of many of its stakeholders. Among these, the perspective of the Mayangna holds an important place in this dissertation. The data also contribute to our understanding of the creative processes that were part of the musicians’ experiences within this movement. Finally, the data yielded important recommendations for the improvement of these and similar initiatives in the future.

10.6 Future opportunities for research

This research highlights a need for further research in the areas of governance and intergenerational differences in the Mayangna communities, among others. The topic of governance emerged during the negotiations between the Mayangna leadership and the police about the eight detained colonists. A contradictory understanding of the hierarchy of authorities made negotiations challenging. It would be beneficial to understand how these perspectives can work together. On the topic of intergenerational differences, the Mayangna Elders spoke of a fear of the challenges that the young Mayangna will face in the near future. At the same time, Misión BOSAWAS aims to engage young people both in mainstream Nicaragua as well as within the Mayangna communities in their initiatives. A study of the perceptions of these Mayangna youth and the impact of these initiatives would offer greater insight into their perspectives on the problems and challenges that they face.

10.7 Conclusion

The challenge to stop the encroachment of the agricultural frontier in BOSAWAS is far from resolved. The young activists who recorded the Mayangna songs that came to my attention in 2012 have certainly not accomplished everything that was hoped. This research has highlighted that this problem is a complex one and that solutions to this problem will not be attained quickly
or easily. Misión BOSAWAS, led by courageous and creative young musicians and activists, has taken a significant step toward re-articulating a national Discourse that has historically failed to include and enact justice for Indigenous people and the environment. While their initiatives and organization were far from optimal, they made use of a powerful language that was familiar to the Nicaraguan public. The language of music performance conveyed the mestizo musicians’ concerns for environmental sustainability and solidarity with Indigenous people. For the Mayangna, music performance carved out a space for them to embody their worldview, their stories and their love for BOSAWAS, the ancestral forests that are crucial for their cultural survival. This culture is, in the words of Ernesto López in El Canto de BOSAWAS “the only thing we have left after five hundred years of colonization”. Some could argue that the impacts of these efforts have not been felt concretely in the area of policy implementation. While this may be true, these musicians and activists have, however, begun to instigate processes of awareness and conscientization among Nicaragua’s younger generations, the first steps toward social action and lasting change.
Epilogue: The current situation

In this epilogue I share some field notes that offer an understanding of the current situation. These notes narrate the experience of visiting the core zone of BOSAWAS from November 30th to December 2nd, 2017. For this trip, I was accompanied by musician and activist, Ernesto Lopez (Matute) and Lusben Taylor, Mayangna translator. During this meeting, various levels of government negotiated the terms for the handing over of eight detained colonists held in Musawás. I share relevant details regarding our trip to the region as well as some observations from a day-long negotiation meeting in the community of Musawás.

The long journey from Managua to Musawás, capital of the Mayangna Sauni territory in BOSAWAS, revealed the divisions between the two worlds of the Atlantic and Pacific in Nicaragua. The fastest method of travel from Managua is to take a flight with regional La Costeña in one of its twelve-seater planes, then drive as far into the core zone as possible and, finally, walk for about 12 kms. From Managua, the flight to Bonanza lasts about one and a half hour. For this research, travel from Managua to Musawás took a total of eight hours.

Our plane departed at 10 am and arrived in Bonanza by 11:25 am. The airfield is one long gravel runway on the outskirts of the mining town of Bonanza. We were met by Bruno, the head of the GTI at the airfield; he helped us secure a taxi that would take us to the center of Bonanza. Bruno would later meet us at the GTI offices where we would obtain the permit to enter the Reserve. We arrived in Bonanza close to noon where we purchased some food, toilet paper and water for the journey. We also needed to hire a truck that would take us as far as possible along the rocky and muddy road toward BOSAWAS. Many drivers turned us down since they would need to drive through two rivers and they were afraid their trucks would not make it. We secured a hauling truck that took us to the GTI offices and then as far as past river Kuabul.
At the GTI offices we were welcomed by a number of Mayangna leaders including Musawás’ chief. They asked for the reasons behind this trip and I confirmed this was part of my research. Along with my companion, we were welcomed and identified as allies in their struggle for the defense of BOSAWAS. The chief of Musawás welcomed me in Mayangna and our assigned translator conveyed the message: We were welcome because we, like them, were concerned about Indigenous rights and the environment. The leaders all took turns speaking to me of the situation they face and brought us up-to-date regarding some recent events in the communities. They also presented me with a copy of a book that provided evidence of the forest loss in BOSAWAS in recent years.

The first thing they alerted us about was the recent arrest of eight colonists near the community of Wilus in the Mayangna Sauni As territory. These colonists were being held in the capital, Musawás; they told us that the situation was tense. They asked that we document all that was going on and that we make the material available to the national media. The second situation they alerted us about was an outbreak of Grisi Siknis in the community of Alal, which would limit our ability to visit this area of the Reserve, which would prevent us from interviewing musicians from the Principes de Paz band.

After about two hours, a Mayangna young man arrived with our permit, signed by the pertinent authorities. We then boarded the back of our truck and headed toward BOSAWAS. The truck left us soon after we crossed the Kuabul River since the road was still under construction. From then, we entered narrow paths along the forest and walked up the mountain for about two hours. We arrived at the bank of the Waspuk river shortly after 5pm and we boarded a long boat to cross it. Upon arrival in Musawás, we were led to where we would stay during our time in the community: the home of our interpreter and his family.
The morning after we arrived in Musawás, we were invited to attend the community meeting where the fate of eight colonists would be decided. We were asked by the GTI to attend and to document every step of the meeting through video and audio recording. Issues of governance and disagreement of the various levels of authority were brought to my attention; some of the local leaders of Musawás told us we were not authorized to take photos. One leader questioned who I was and why I was there. The GTI leadership informed him that I was a researcher. The man still forbade us to film or take photos. Later, the GTI leadership came up to us to, once again, to tell us that we had been authorized to record the meeting.

We walked along with a crowd of community members who also made their way to the elementary school in Musawás where the meeting was to be held. I estimated that about 200 community members were in attendance -men and women of all ages as well as children gathered in the schoolyard. At the centre were the six men sitting on school chairs; they represented the various levels of governance and who would be engaged in the negotiations. Musawás’ chief, who only spoke Mayangna, was sitting next to his translator. Next to him were two men in police uniforms. One of them was Bonanza’s chief of police and the other one was the chief of police for the mining triangle (Bonanza, Siuna and Rosita). Next to them sat the leader of the Mayangna Nation. I was told by some Mayangna community members that they have no respect for this one leader since they consider him to have betrayed the interests of the Mayangna in front of the central government. Next to him was the president of the Mayangna Sauni As territory. There was one more chief of police sitting next to the GTI president. His role was unclear to me. There were also three police men in uniform, holding rifles and taking photos.

The community meeting was held as follows. First, a statement by the community was read in Spanish by a Mayangna man. The chief of police from the mining triangle spoke after this;
he addressed the community in Spanish. He was followed by the leader of the Mayangna Nation who spoke in Mayangna and Spanish. Men from the community spoke after them and this included Musawás’ school teacher, an Elder and several community leaders. All of the Mayanagna community members spoke in their language while the school teacher interpreted their message into Spanish.

The statement from the community mentioned the following points: The eight colonists are delinquent land-traffickers who invaded the core zone of BOSAWAS. They are guilty of environmental crimes and of usurping Indigenous communal property. In this assembly, the authorities of the Mayangna communities would officially hand over these eight men to the authorities of Bonanza and the Mining Triangle so that they be judged according to the law. The statement read that this was to be done in a peaceful manner. The Mayangna community, however, demanded the immediate “cleansing” of the region, that is, that all colonist families and ranchers be removed as part of the agreement.

The general message conveyed by community leaders and members alluded to the escalation of the situation. Their community is tired, and things cannot go on as they have. They feel that the central government does nothing and fear that, if they hand over these men, once again nothing will be done, and the communities will continue to suffer. The colonist did not come close to where the Mayangna communities are settled but, recently, they are coming closer, forcing the Mayangna to organize themselves. The community stressed their reluctance to hand over the colonists before the army removes all colonists from the area. At the same time, they showed a willingness to resolve this in a positive way.
The president of the Mayangna nation spoke first in Spanish, highlighting the involvement of many of the Mayangna in illegal sale of land. He stated that this was not the way taught by their ancestors. He invited the authorities in attendance to provide space for the community to express their concerns. The speech delivered by the chief of police from the mining triangle highlighted the things that they already do in order to protect BOSAWAS. He also stressed that corruption among Mayangna community members makes their job difficult.

After all the speeches concluded, the eight colonists were brought into a school classroom where only leaders could enter. Ernesto, our interpreter, and I were allowed into this room. The men were brought in and lined up against the wall. Bruno, the GTI president addressed them. They had resolved to hand them over peacefully. He stated that the Mayangna were running out of patience and that he knew that had the roles been reversed, the colonists would have killed the Mayangna. Most of the colonists spoke very few words and did so in a quiet voice. They were clearly anxious about their fate. They all mentioned that they came from neighbouring municipalities, that they were peasants and that they were tricked by one farmer, whom they mentioned by name; he had told them that there was free land for the taking and invited them to clear forest for settlement. They claimed to have been unaware of the fact that this was Indigenous land. To the disbelief of some in the room, they also claimed that they were not hired by anyone to do this clearing. One of the detained colonists thanked the Mayangna community because they treated the eight colonists with respect and kindness. They fed them, gave them clothing and allowed them to take a bath in the river when needed. Around 3pm, the eight men were tied in pairs at the wrist and were escorted out of the community by several armed police men and women. The community slowly dispersed, and we moved on to continue with the interviews.
This experience, of visiting BOSAWAS and spending some time with the Mayangna community of Musawás, left me with a clear understanding of the impacts of the situation on the community. Stress, anxiety and concern about their safety and their future are part of their daily lives. The high number and diverse ages of the community members who attended the meeting made it evident to me that each individual is an integral part of this community and that all seem aware of the fact that this impacts all of them. I also understood the profound difference in contexts between the Pacific and Atlantic regions of Nicaragua. I understood that the experience of the Mayangna who live in BOSAWAS is unique and distinct from that of the entire country, and that it is vital for them to be at the heart of organizations that defend Indigenous rights and that hope to protect this Biosphere Reserve.
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Questions

Activists, organizers and musicians

1. In your own words, how has Nicaraguan society viewed the Mayangna until now?
2. When did you first hear about the Mayangnas? And who are they for you?
3. Has your understanding of who they are changed in the past few years or so? How?
4. Can you describe the festival?
5. Why did you become involved in this festival and initiatives?
6. How are you involved in the festival or with the organization?
7. What role did music play in these initiatives?
8. What would you say is the main message conveyed by the music?
9. From the songs that were performed at the festivals, which one is your favourite piece?
10. What would you say have been Misión BOSAWAS’ greatest accomplishments?
11. What else should this and similar organizations do to bring about concrete change for Indigenous rights and environmental sustainability?

Mayangna Elders, community members and community leaders

1. How would you describe the problem of land in BOSAWAS?
2. What have the musical initiatives carried out by Misión BOSAWAS accomplished for the Mayangna?
3. What else would you recommend that this or similar organizations do to bring about concrete change for Indigenous rights and environmental sustainability?
Appendix 2: REB Certificate

RESEARCH ETHICS BOARDS
Certification of Ethical Acceptability of Research
Involving Human Participants

APPROVAL PERIOD: January 30, 2017
EXPIRY DATE: January 29, 2018
REB: G
REB NUMBER: 16NV042
TYPE OF REVIEW: Delegated Type 1
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Longboat, Sheri
DEPARTMENT: School of Enviromental Design and Rural Development
SPONSOR(S): SSHRC Scholarships
TITLE OF PROJECT: Music as Discourse: An analysis of Nicaragua’s Unidos por Bosawas Festival

The members of the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board have examined the protocol which describes the participation of the human participants in the above-named research project and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University's ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement, 2nd Edition.

The REB requires that researchers:
- Adhere to the protocol as last reviewed and approved by the REB.
- Receive approval from the REB for any modifications before they can be implemented.
- Report any change in the source of funding.
- Report unexpected events or incidental findings to the REB as soon as possible with an indication of how these events affect, in the view of the Principal Investigator, the safety of the participants, and the continuation of the protocol.
- Are responsible for ascertaining and complying with all applicable legal and regulatory requirements with respect to consent and the protection of privacy of participants in the jurisdiction of the research project.

The Principal Investigator must:
- Ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of facilities or institutions involved in the research are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research protocols.
- Submit a Status Report to the REB upon completion of the project. If the research is a multi-year project, a status report must be submitted annually prior to the expiry date. Failure to submit an annual status report will lead to your study being suspended and potentially terminated.

The approval for this protocol terminates on the EXPIRY DATE, or the term of your appointment or employment at the University of Guelph whichever comes first.

Signature: __________________________ Date: January 30, 2017

Stephen P. Lewis
Chair, Research Ethics Board-General