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# **The Indigenous Right to Self – Determination in the Translation of the Family Farming Policy of Ecuador**

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# Contents

<b>Chapter 1 Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Self-determination as an Indigenous Right	1
1.1.1 The Self-determination Right	1
1.1.2 Indigenous People and the Self-determination Right	2
1.2 Ecuador’s Development Model and Indigenous Population	3
<b>Chapter 2 Relevance and Objective of the Study</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1 Problem Statement	6
2.2 Research Objective and Questions	9
2.2.1 Research Objective	9
2.2.2 Research Questions	9
<b>Chapter 3 Conceptual Framework</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Chapter 4 Methodology</b>	<b>12</b>
4.1 Case Study Design	12
4.2 Data Collection Techniques and Participants	13
4.3 Procedure and Ethical Considerations	13
4.4 Analysis	14
4.5 Limitations	14
<b>Chapter 5 Findings and Analysis</b>	<b>15</b>
5.1 The Sub – Secretariat of FF: Merging Claims in a Bureaucratic Dance	15
5.2 The FF Policy Translated: Strengthening Waorani’s Culture with an Eye on the Market	19
5.3 Waorani’s Self – determination and the FF Policy Translated	25
<b>Chapter 6 Conclusions and Recommendations</b>	<b>29</b>

## List of Tables

Table 1 Participants of the Research	13
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## List of Graphs

Graph 1 % GDP share by Oil and Agricultural sectors	4
Graph 2 Poverty by 'ethnic group'	8
Graph 3 Extreme poverty by 'ethnic group'	8
Graph 4 No health insurance by 'ethnic group'	8
Graph 5 illiteracy by 'ethnic group'	8
Graph 6 Per capita income by 'ethnic group'	8
Graph 7 Adequate employment by 'ethnic group'	8
Graph 8 Level of education by 'ethnic group'	8

## List of Figures

Figure 1 Structure of the Sub – Secretariat of Family Farming	18
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## List of Acronyms

FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FENOCIN	Confederation of Peasant, Indigenous and Black Organization
FF	Family Farming
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
INEC	National Institute of Statistics and Informatics of Ecuador
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ILO	International Labour Organization
MAG	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock
MERCOSUR	Southern Common Market
NAWE	Waorani Nationality of Ecuador
REAF	Specialized Family Farming Meeting
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

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## **Abstract**

This research paper analyses to what extent the translation of the Ecuadorian Family Farming (FF) policy in Waorani communities reflects the enforcement of their indigenous right to self – determination. To do that, it employs a case study research design that combines primary and secondary qualitative data. Following the Policy Translation framework, the paper analyses the transformation of the policy as it travels from the central level of government to the front line of implementation. It puts agents, sites and scale at the centre of the analysis and considers the power relations embedded in the discourses that shape the policy.

Findings reveal that the FF policy set in 2017 was already a recast of previous policy ideas that arrived at Ecuador before the creation of the Sub - Secretariat. Furthermore, local agents implemented an adjusted version of the policy after recasting the cultural values of Waorani population and considering the limitations of their work conditions. Although the translated version of the policy seems more sensitive to the Waorani context, agents still keep a discourse that regards traditional agricultural practices as obstacles to productivity and does not abandon the goal to connect this population to the market. According to interviews with Waorani leaders, this translation might address some agricultural needs of this population that were provoked by the negative impact of the oil industry on their agricultural productivity and lifestyle. Nevertheless, the interviews suggest that their main agricultural aspirations are associated with recovering and maintaining the traditional lifestyle of their ancestors, something that seems to be out of the hands of the politically and economically weak FF policy.

## **Keywords**

Ecuador, Waorani, Self – Determination, Indigenous Rights, Policy Translation, Family Farming

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

While the Ecuadorian State has leaned towards an extractivist and neoliberal developmental model, some indigenous voices have fought for their own stance on development. Hence indigenous conceptual proposals such as *sumak kawsay* ('good living'), an alternative to the western notion of 'development' that conveys the indigenous vision of life and rejects the idea that Amazonian agricultural practices lack development (Viteri, 2002; Keleman – Saxena et al., 2017).

In 2017, the then-new government of Ecuador created the Sub – Secretariat of Family Farming allegedly to fulfil a demand from different indigenous and peasant organisations (El Telégrafo, 2017a; El Telégrafo, 2017b; FENOCIN, n.d.). This initiative came with a discourse of respect for the different cultures and nationalities that inhabit the country (FENOCIN, n.d.). At the same time, it announced the strengthening of agricultural production mechanisms and the improvement of farmer's economy in this sector (MAG, 2017), resembling the market-based model that has been troubling the respect of indigenous rights.

In that way, the creation of the new public body revives the tension between those two visions of 'development'. The present research paper addresses this tension by analysing the translation of the Family Farming policy in indigenous communities and how this translation finally compares with indigenous aspirations and aspirations on agricultural 'development'.

The current chapter provides the contextual background of the research. It starts by describing the context and development of the right of indigenous people to determine their 'development' path (self – determination right). After this, it provides the contextual background of the development model of Ecuador and the current social status of its indigenous population.

### 1.1 Self-determination as an Indigenous Right

#### 1.1.1 The Self-determination Right

The meaning and implementation of the self – determination concept has been continuously evolving in the last century and have been the subject of complex debates (Xanthaki, 2005). Its origin can be traced to the American and French revolutions. These events were the expression of communities that generated group consciousness, political awareness, and the will to liberate themselves from the rule and authority of what they considered "alien" governments (Raič, 2002, p. 173). Although these revolutions account for several aspects of the self-determination concept (e.g. the right of a community to determine their legitimate governors), they were based on a liberal approach that emphasises individual rights (Raič, 2002). The concept found additionally influence from the nationalism stream of thought that raised in the XVIII century. Contrary to liberalism, the nationalism trend emphasised the right of collectives (or nationalities) and posited the "existence of an objective right of nationalities to independent statehood" (Raič, 2002, pp. 176- 177).

The term self-determination, however, was used for the first time only in 1918 by the then-president of USA Woodrow Wilson (Kirgis, 1994). Wilson similarly conceived the term with the ideals advocated during the American and French revolutions. He employed it to posit that nations and peoples have the right to choose their democratic government (Raič, 2002). During the period of the World War I, Wilson sought to position the concept as a

core principle to perpetuate world peace after the war, but the term only emerged as a principle of international law in the UN Charter of 1945 (art. 1 and 55) (Kirgis, 1994; Raič, 2002; Pereira, 2015). Here, however, the term was not defined, and its inclusion only happened due to the pressure of the Soviet Union, which demanded decolonisation by Western Empires (Kirgis, 1994; Raič, 2002).

The principle finally appeared as a right in the UN Resolution 1514 Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples in 1960, where it was defined that

“2. All peoples have the right to self-determination: by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development” (UN Resolution 1514).

As it can be noted, so far, self-determination had been conceived mainly as an instrument for decolonisation (Kirgis, 1994). It received full recognition of the International Court of Justice as a legal right through which holders could claim an independent and sovereignty State (Tomuschat, 1993, p. 2). In that sense, it implied the transition of non-self-governing territories to self-governing nation-states. This way of implementing the self-determination right has been called external self-determination, since it “denotes the external determination of the international status of a territory and a people” (Raič, 2002).

Nevertheless, eventually, self-determination was expanded beyond its anticolonialism and external connotation and gave rise to the internal conception of the right (Tomuschat, 1993, Kirgis, 1994). Although there is no consensus about when this happened, this seems to range between the late 1960s and early 1970s. According to Raič (2002), this can be noted as early as in 1966 with the adoption of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966). Kirgis (1994) posits that this can be seen in the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relation by the UN General Assembly in 1970. Furthermore, Xanthaki (2005) points out that the shift was made with the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (Helsinki Declaration) in 1975.

In any case, the expansion of the meaning constituted the implementation of the self-determination right within the States (Raič, 2002; Kirgis, 1994). Thus, it referred to the realisation of self-determination of peoples that reside within an independent State, without this changing its external boundaries (Raič, 2002). What is to be considered “peoples” has been the centre of a long and challenging discussion (Dahbour, 2013; Jones, 1999), and it is out of the scope of this research. However, as will be shown in the next section, the indigenous population has gained their place as ‘peoples’ not only among scholars but also in international law.

### **1.1.2 Indigenous People and the Self-determination Right**

Indigenous rights have been widely neglected during modern history. European colonisers implemented indigenous dispossession practices by claiming the discovery of terra nullius; this is, a territory that is not under the power of another sovereign (Wiessner, 2012). These practices continued in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when settlers withdrew indigenous peoples from their legal personalities, despite the rise of instances of humanitarianism and fidelity to liberal principles (Havemann, 2016).

Moreover, although the UN advocated and supervised a decolonisation process after the World War II, this process was focused on the decolonisation of inhabitants from colonised countries, but this did not necessarily imply the decolonisation of the subjugated peoples (Wiessner, 2012). In other words, the independence was usually granted to the



descendant of European conquerors, whereas indigenous peoples remained as subjects of discriminations with little control of and dispossessed from their ancestral lands (Pereira, 2015).

In this context, indigenous peoples have been pushing through their recognition and respect, and, more specifically, their right of self-determination (Havemann, 2016). Wiessner (2012) posits that the 1960s and 1970s witnessed the rise of indigenous peoples, or how he describes it, the “indigenous renaissance”. However, these populations were not usually interested in forming independent States, but to preserve their way of life and make cultural changes as they wish (Wiessner, 2012). Thus, according to the literature on this topic, the kind of self-determination that indigenous people usually chase is its internal mode of implementation (Wiessner, 2012; Pereira, 2015). As can be noticed, indigenous mobilisation for the recognition of this right coincides with the shift in the approach to the self-determination right to a more internal mode of implementation.

From that period, there has been some progress in this right’s recognition for indigenous peoples in international law. In 1989, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) established the Convention N° 169, an international treaty that “recognises indigenous rights to land and natural resources and to define their own priorities for development” (ILO, n.d.). Moreover, in 2007, the United Nations (UN) adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which constitutes the international framework of indigenous rights that define minimum standards and the fundamental freedoms that apply to this specific type of population (UN, n.d.). This declaration proclaims that:

“Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development” (UNDRIP, Art. 3).

Despite this, States are still eager to fully recognise and enforce this right because it clashes against their duty to protect all citizen as equal (regardless of their identity) and because they represent an obstacle to their economic interests (Havemann, 2016). In the Latin America region, several countries have recognised the right through constitutional or law reforms. Nonetheless, this recognition has been unevenly distributed among them, from countries that have implemented mild changes to more pioneering countries such as Ecuador that recognised indigenous rights in its constitutions (Grugel & Fontana, 2018).

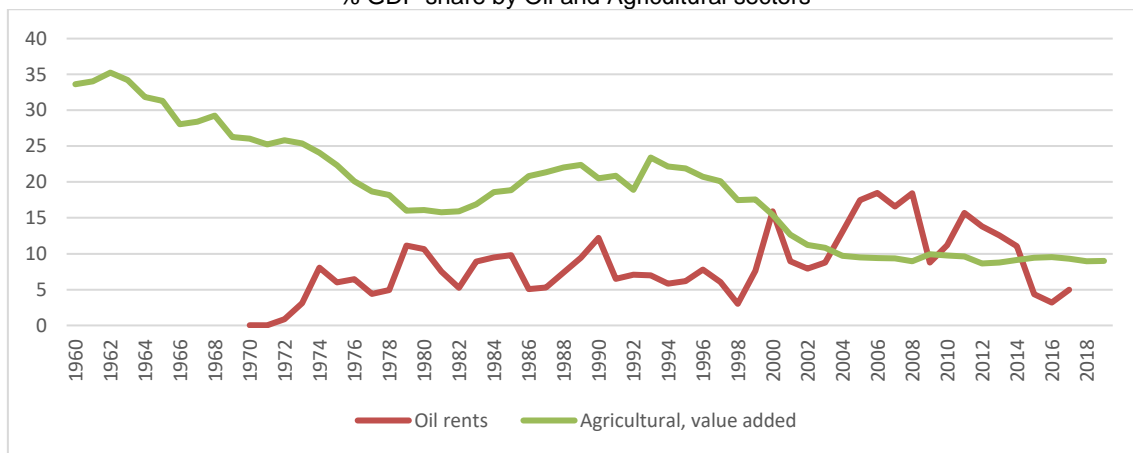
## **1.2 Ecuador’s Development Model and Indigenous Population**

Ecuador is considered a “developing country” with a high Human Development Index (UNDP, 2019). However, its low score in the Corruption Perception Index (Transparency International, 2019) and the low democracy support from its population (Corporación Latinobarometro, 2018) suggest that the country is still consolidating its democracy in the broad sense of the term.

In the last decade, the country adopted an extractive-based development model associated with the strengthening of the role of the State (resembling the classic developmental state), a focus on poverty reduction and the goal to eventually leave behind the dependency on primary commodity exports (Childs & Hearn, 2017; Arsel, Hogenboom, & Pellegrini, 2016). Arsel et al. (2016) labelled this model as the “extractive imperative”, defined as the “broadened, deepened and self-sustained form of extractivism” that has dominated most of the development policies in Latin American countries, most of whom have embraced it as their main means to achieve development (Arsel et al., 2016).

In this line, according to the last data available, the extractive industry represents the main export of the country, accounting for 40.3% of it (OEC, n.d). These exports include mineral fuels, oils and their distillation. Among them, oil is by far the most important product. Since 1972, when its production began, oil has represented a substantial share of the Ecuadorian economy (Childs & Hearn, 2017). Graph 1 shows the evolution of the national GDP share of oil revenues. As can be seen there, it has not only turned into a central piece for the country's economy, but since 2000 it has often surpassed the agricultural rents, a sector that used to account for a third of Ecuadorian GDP but that has decreased its share continuously over the decades.

**Graph 1**  
% GDP share by Oil and Agricultural sectors



Source: Graph made by the author with data from the World Bank (n.d.).

It is worth to notice, however, that the new government led by Lenin Moreno has implied a neoliberal turn for the Ecuadorian State. In this model, States favour individual and private property rights, which extended to businesses and corporations imply the deregulation of the market (Harvey, 2005). Behind this, there is also the assumption that free markets and free trade are the best way to eliminate poverty and that the State is highly inefficient (Harvey, 2005; Gardner & Richards, 2019). In 2019, Lenin's government implemented an economic policy that follows this model, reducing State's role in the economy by opening markets, laying off government workers and implementing financial deregulation through the elimination of subsidies (Salgado, 2019).

Regarding the indigenous population, the 2010 census conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics of Ecuador (INEC in Spanish) indicated that around 1 million people of the country self-identifies as indigenous, which represented 7% of the country's population (INEC, n.d.). Currently, INEC projects a total population in the country of 17.3 million (INEC, n.d.), but it has not projected how the indigenous population has evolved in the last ten years. While writing this paper, INEC is preparing a new census.

Martínez (2014), however, has cast doubt on INEC's numbers. The author reviews the different ways in which indigenous numbers have been minimised across the history of Ecuadorian censuses and posits that the one in 2010 is not an exception. According to her research, discrimination, and social conflicts between indigenous peoples and the government have discouraged indigenous people from identifying themselves as such. Besides, the author points out methodological problems such as interviewers filling census' instruments themselves without asking the questions to participants, and interviewers having particular characteristics (such as being mestizos) that could intimidate people into declaring themselves as indigenous. In this regard, a rival estimation is given by the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE in Spanish) who reckon that indigenous

population comprises between the 25 to 30 per cent of the Ecuadorian population (Minority Rights, 2018).

This population is characterized to be heavily dependent on agricultural and farming activities. For instance, according to the 2019 Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment National Survey (ENEMDU in Spanish), the 69.6% of people that self-identify as indigenous are involved in “agriculture, farming, hunting and fishing”, making this their first and foremost form of activity. Nevertheless, their participation in this sector differs depending on their nationality and/or community, a fact that holds among Amazonian indigenous communities. In this regard, Vasco et al. (2018) found that, although Kichwa communities have maintained a subsistence agricultural production model and their traditional agricultural practices, Shuar communities of their study have engaged with a commercial type of agriculture and have become more integrated to the market.

Also, while some indigenous communities have been going through this transition, other indigenous voices in Ecuador have defied the western notion of development in its entirety. Based on anthropological studies of the Sarayaku peoples, Amazonian indigenous scholars coined a new term that aimed to represent the indigenous alternative to the western concept of “development”: *sumak* (“good”, “beautiful”, “delicious” or “plentiful”) *kawsay* (“life”) (Keleman – Saxena et al., 2017). Viteri (2003), one prominent indigenous scholar, explains:

“In contrast with *súmak káusai*, development is conceived of only in regard to lack and problems, and consequentially it sets out a behind state of underdevelopment in order to appear like the ‘medicine’ or formula for overcoming this behind state through a lineal transit. *Súmak káusai* on the other hand functions as a social practice oriented precisely to avoiding a fall into aberrant conditions of existence” (Viteri, 2003, as cited by Keleman – Saxena et al., 2017, p. 211).

Based on this, *sumak kawsay* challenges the idea that traditional indigenous agricultural practices in the Amazon (such as hunting and swidden agriculture) were synonymous with “lack of development” (Keleman – Saxena et al., 2017). Instead, these practices constitute the base of an already achieved “*sumak kawsay*” or good life, as they ensure high levels of economic security and political autonomy to indigenous people (Keleman – Saxena et al., 2017).

In this context, one iconic indigenous nationality that still rejects developmental activities from the outside world (oil exploitation, agricultural development, road construction, etc.) are the Waorani (also Huaorani) (Lu & Wirth, 2011). Located in the Amazonian provinces of Orellana, Pastaza and Napo, they were contacted for the first time only in the late 1950s and currently constitute the most isolated indigenous nationality in the country (Rival, 2002). This isolation happens to the extent that their communities have significantly remained far from markets, urban areas and colonist population (Gray & Bilsborrow, 2020; Gray, Bilsborrow & Bremner & Lu, 2008), with two of their communities, the Tagaeri and Taromenane, currently living in voluntary isolation (Pappalardo, De Marchi & Ferrarese, 2013).

Furthermore, the livelihood of Waorani communities still depends on hunting, fishing and recollecting, even though these practices have slowly decreased over time (Gray, Bozigar, & Bilsborrow, 2015). And despite a recent increase in their connection to agricultural commodity markets, the Waorani communities still maintain smaller agricultural areas than other nationalities (such as the Kichwa or Shuar), which is related to the fact that they mainly practice a subsistence type of agriculture (Gray & Bilsborrow, 2020, Zurita-Benavides, 2017).

## Chapter 2

# Relevance and Objective of the Study

Even though the Ecuadorian State has shown a favourable discourse about indigenous rights in many of its policy documents, it has struggled to implement them and has witnessed tensions between its national development model and the development and aspirations of indigenous people that inhabit its territory.

The present chapter develops this issue and presents the case of the recent creation of the Sub-Secretariat of Family Farming and the new Family Farming (FF) policy it entailed, all of which allegedly was aimed to support indigenous people, but that also included market-related objectives. After this, the chapter poses the objectives and questions that guide this research.

### 2.1 Problem Statement

Formally, the Ecuadorian State has strongly recognised the indigenous right to self-determination. The country did not only sign the ILO Convention No. 169 in 1998 but incorporated in its constitution a chapter of collective rights for indigenous peoples this same year. Likewise, its new constitution of 2008 incorporated the prior consultation right of indigenous nations, defined the Ecuadorian State as intercultural and “plurinational”, and, by doing this, promoted the inclusion of historically excluded populations (Radcliffe, 2012). Similarly, the constitution includes a whole chapter on Rights of Communities, Peoples and Nationalities. Here, among other collective and cultural rights, it mentions that the State “will adopt measures to ensure their life, enforce their self-determination and will of remain in isolation, and preserve the observance of their rights” (Art. 57).

Likewise, the country has included this issue in its National Development Plan 2017 – 2021. This plan represents “the capital instrument to realise the constitutional mandates and the aspirations, desires and dreams of the population (...)” and “the instrument through which is enforced the guarantee of rights”. Moreover, Art. 280 of the Ecuadorian Constitution declares that the National Budget, policies, and programs will be subject to this plan.

The indigenous rights are added in Axis 1 of the Plan: Rights for Everyone Throughout Life. Specifically, in the second goal of this axis called for “Assert the interculturality and plurinationality, revalorising the different identities”. In this chapter, the Plan recognises the different indigenous rights granted by the constitutions. For instance, the plan mentions that “the collective rights are (...) an imperative for the historical remediation and building the country”. Furthermore, the document highlights the land struggles of this population and how lands are an essential part of the identity of the different collectives, peoples, and nationalities in Ecuador. Alongside, among the policies proposed to ensure this right, the document includes one that aims to

“Safeguard the ancestral lands and the intangible heritage, the strengthening of community organisation, alternative visions of development, the sustainability of resources and the protection of life and self-determination of indigenous peoples in voluntary isolation” (p. 63).

This recognition is not without a good reason. Ecuador is home of the strongest indigenous organisation in Latin America, the CONAIE (Altmann, 2016; Vásquez, 2014; Yashar, 2005). This organisation has provided a political voice to the indigenous population and allowed them to be part of the overturn of two Ecuadorian presidents (1997 and 2000) and

resist neoliberal reforms in the country (Jameson, 2011; Solano & Weissenstein, 2019; Yashar, 2005).

Analyses such as DPLF & OXFAM (2011), Flemmer (2015) and LaNegra (2018) emphasise these small legal wins of the indigenous population, especially the ones related to the right to land and advocate for incremental changes such as stronger institutions and more clear procedures for their implementation.

Despite this considerable recognition, the National Survey of ENEMDU conducted in 2018 and 2019 shows how (self-identified) indigenous population have scored worse than non-indigenous populations in many social and economic indicators such as poverty, labour conditions, health insurance, literacy (although in Spanish), income and education (Graphs 2 to 8).

Moreover, the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples conducted a visit to Ecuador in 2018 and analysed the issues that still exist regarding the enforcement of indigenous rights. In the case of the self – determination right, the report from the visit declared that most environmental protection measures restrict this right as they have been established without the consultation of indigenous people (UN, 2019). Consequently,

“They [indigenous communities] can benefit from [environmental] programs such as Socio Bosque or Socio Paramo, but in some cases, these programs pay incentives for forest conservation and at the same time bid oil activities in the same zones” (UN, 2019, p. 9).

Similarly, the UN Special Rapporteur pointed out that the State has not established the adequate measures to ensure the prior consultation right of indigenous people that is recognised in the constitution.

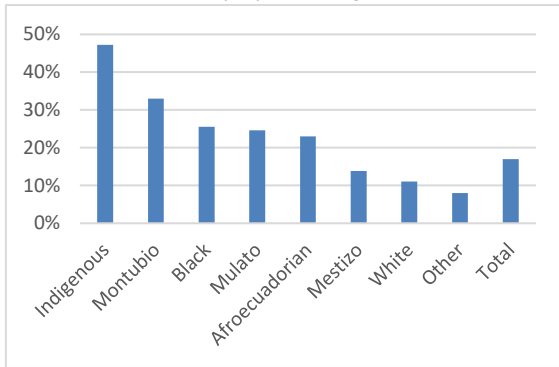
In this light, the report highlights the case of the Waorani nationality and the violation of their right to self – determination and self – isolation. The document narrates how the isolated groups Tagaeri Taromeriane have been displaced from their lands by extractive and logging activities, leading them to take an excursion into the territory of neighbouring Waorani communities and creating conflicts between them (UN, 2019).

On top of that, the Rapporteur expressed its concern about the new delimitation of the Untouchable Area Tagaeri Taromenane (ZITT in Spanish). Despite that this area would be expanded, the change would also allow new extractive and infrastructure activities in the buffer area, which in turn would expand the siege of extractive activities around the reserved area for indigenous, hinder their freedom of mobility and push them away towards the territories of other communities (UN, 2019).

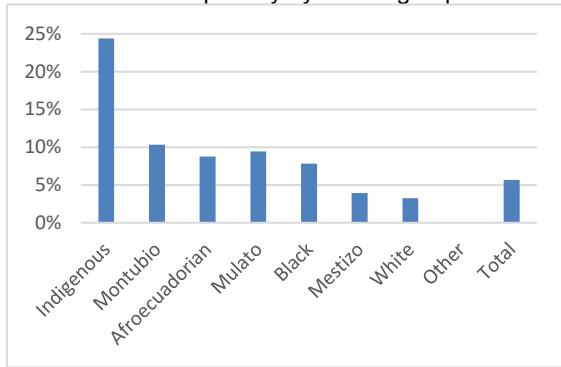
The ineffective recognition and enforcement of indigenous rights can be explained by the above-described development model of the country (Arsel et al., 2016). Even though the State recognised the *sumak kawsay* indigenous notion in the constitution of 2008, the term was deprived of its roots in the traditional ways of life of indigenous people and was reinterpreted to have a similar meaning to conventional “development” (Keleman – Saxena et al., 2017). Furthermore, in the name of “development”, the State has followed a pattern of indigenous dispossession, leading it, for instance, to zone more than half of its Amazon territory for oil activities that overlap with ancestral lands of indigenous groups (Merino 2012).

Additionally, the recent neoliberal turn of the Ecuadorian government could represent a danger to consolidate or worsen the poor enforcement of indigenous rights in this country. Across the Latin America region, this model has affected this population by, for instance, opening the market to the industrial agriculture at the expense of small-scale farmers (Gardner & Richards, 2019; Lapegna, 2013).

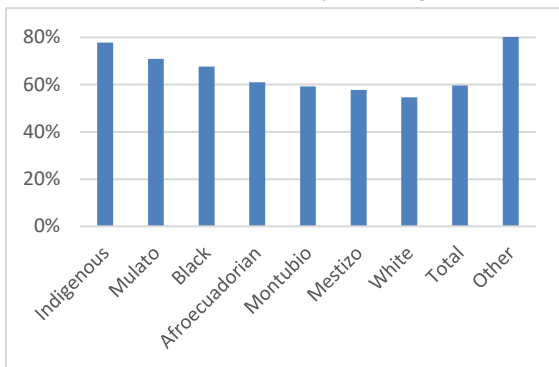
**Graph 2**  
Poverty by 'ethnic group'



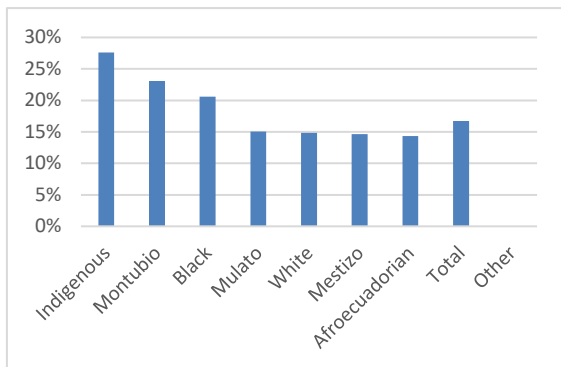
**Graph 3**  
Extreme poverty by 'ethnic group'



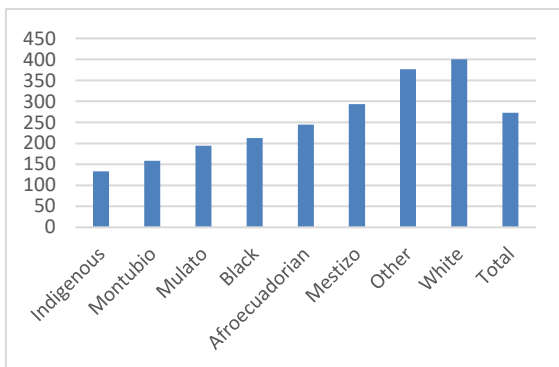
**Graph 4**  
No health insurance by 'ethnic group'



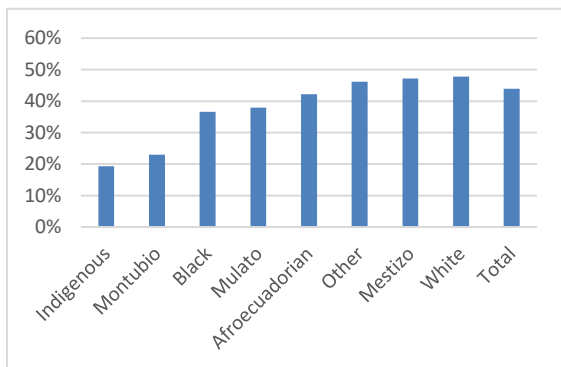
**Graph 5**  
Illiteracy by 'ethnic group'



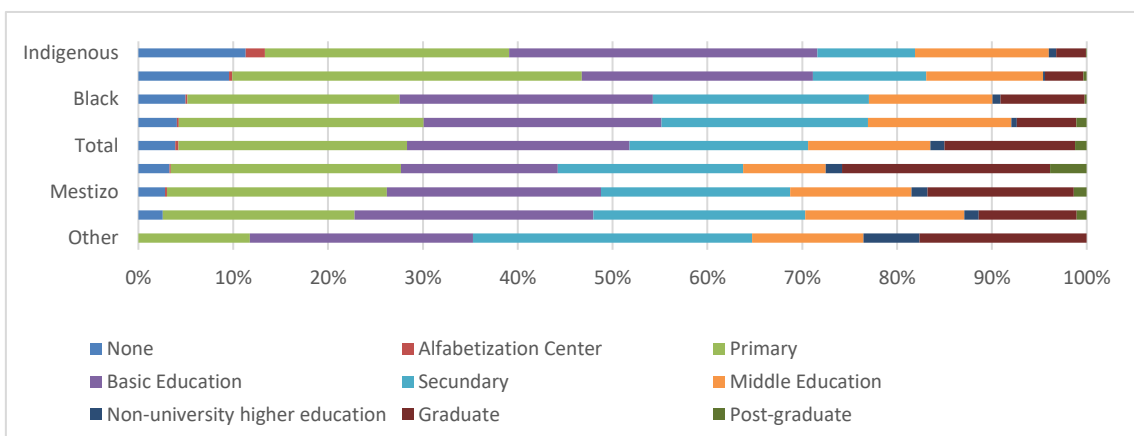
**Graph 7**  
Per capita income by 'ethnic group'



**Graph 6**  
Adequate employment by 'ethnic group'



**Graph 8**  
Level of education by 'ethnic group'



Source: Graphs made by the author. Graphs 2, 3, 7 and 8 use data from the National Survey of Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment (ENEMDU in Spanish) of 2018. Graphs 4, 5 and 6 use data of the ENEMDU of 2019.

In this context, the current government established a direct conversation with the National Confederation of Peasant, Indigenous and Black Organization (FENOCIN) at the beginning of its mandate. Among the demands from this organisation was the creation of a public body that would support FF (El telégrafo, 2017a).

This type of agriculture is characterised for having limited access to land and capital, using as its central workforce the members of the family, and being the primary income source of the family, usually complemented with other non-agricultural activities (FAO, 2011). In Ecuador, this agricultural sector is highly associated with indigenous communities, as they are one of the main population that practice it, and at the same time it has been the agricultural sector more left behind by the State (Houtart, 2018).

In 2017, the demand mentioned above was finally fulfilled with the creation of the Subsecretariat of FF (El telégrafo, 2017a, 2017b; FENOCIN, n.d.). The establishment of this public body came along with a discourse of respect for the different nationalities in the country (FENOCIN, n.d.). At the same time, however, it was created aiming to strengthen agricultural production mechanisms and to improve farmer's economy in the sub-sector of FF (MAG, 2017). Nevertheless, as seen in this chapter, market-based development has not been favourable for the fulfilment of indigenous rights. On top of that, the formal establishment of policies aimed to support the indigenous population has not necessarily been translated to the enforcement of their right (e.g. prior consultation, environmental protection measures). The present research aims to address this social puzzle analysing this new case of an indigenous-oriented policy.

Finally, this study also carries theoretical relevance. Although the translation of policies has been studied in different fields such as water management (Mukhtarov, 2013, 2014), education (Mukhopadhyay & Sriprakash, 2011) and circular economy (Jiao & Boons, 2017), not much work with this approach have been done in the agricultural sector, nor in the field of indigenous rights. In this regard, the study conducted by Larson & Aminzade (2007) might be one of the few exceptions. Here, the authors analyse the cases of Fiji and Tanzania and, although not positioning themselves in the translation framework, they unveil how indigenous rights advocates and policymakers have transformed global discourses on indigenous rights and used them in national political contention for power.

## **2.2 Research Objective and Questions**

### **2.2.1 Research Objective**

The present study aims to analyse to what extent did the translation of the FF policy in Waorani communities reflect the enforcement of their indigenous right to self – determination.

### **2.2.2 Research Questions**

As a result of the previous, the following research questions are proposed:

- To what extent did the translation of the FF policy in Waorani communities reflect the enforcement of their indigenous right to self-determination?
  - How did the translation of the FF policy in Waorani communities take place?
  - Why did the translation of the FF policy in Waorani communities take place?
  - How does the translation of the FF policy compare with Waorani's aspirations regarding agricultural “development”?

## Chapter 3

### Conceptual Framework

The present research paper takes a constructivist approach. Ontologically, this stream of thought posits that the world does not exist independent of our senses since different people will perceive the world differently according to their contextual setting (e.g. time, geography, ideology, etc.) (Moses & Knutsen, 2007). Furthermore, this position emphasises a differentiation between natural and social worlds; and argues that whereas the first one has a material and a given nature, the second one does not (Moses & Knutsen, 2007). Instead, different social worlds are socially constructed by human beings (Moses & Knutsen, 2007).

Moreover, this study is framed in the field of travel of policy ideas. This area has experienced an impressive amount of theoretical and conceptual development (Marsh & Sharman, 2009), a significant part of this has been labelled “the transfer approach” and includes classic concepts such as policy transfer (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996), policy diffusion (Braun & Gilardi, 2006) and policy convergence (Bennett, 1991), to name a few. In the last two decades, the policy translation perspective joined this conceptual development aiming to tackle the shortcomings of the transfer approach and to provide a constructivist alternative to the field (Blaustein, 2015; Mukhtarov, 2014; Stone, 2012; Lendvai and Stubbs, 2006, 2007). Policy translation can be defined as “the process of modification of policy ideas and creation of new meanings and designs in the process of the cross-jurisdictional travel of policy ideas” (Mukhtarov, 2014, p. 76). The present work takes this theoretical framework as it provides three relevant analytical tools to its objective.

First, from this point of view, the process of policymaking is considered the reconciling of the different meanings that a set of actors have about a given phenomenon (Freeman, 2009). Decisions, programmes and instruments derived from policy documents represent a recasting of claims about problems made by different advocates (Freeman, 2009). In this way, this angle is aligned to the constructivist ontology in the sense that it considers policy problems as socially constructed and not as naturally given. This perspective contrasts with the transfer literature, which usually approaches policy from a realist ontology, considering it as a stable, pre-existing, and uncontested reality, and regards policy transfer as a more-or-less linear process (Lendvai & Stubbs, 2006, 2007). Hence, the translation approach will allow the current research to critically analyse the FF policy as a product of different meanings and claims, and thus, interests.

Second, such approach unveils how the travel of policy ideas is a process of “continuous transformation, negotiation and enactment” that depends on contextual factors such agents, meanings, and sites (Lendvai and Stubbs, 2007). Therefore, this perspective sheds light on the intricate processes that lead to contextually mediated policy outcomes and that other, more structure-focused approaches do not address (Blaustein, 2015). Based on this, the translation perspective takes an agency approach. It considers how actors are part of the transformation and interpretation of policy ideas according to their particular interests (Lendvai & Stubbs, 2006).

To do this, this framework builds on the differentiation between ‘intermediary’ and ‘mediator’. While the first one transport meanings without transformation (inputs = outputs), the second one transforms the meaning/elements it carries in such a manner that its input is not a good predictor of its output (Latour, 2005). This last one resembles the role of policy translators, as they constitute agents that mediate the translation of policy ideas across “formal languages, levels, sites, agencies or cultures” (Lendvai & Stubbs, 2007; Clarke, 2005, p. 11).



In this vein, the framework also highlights the importance of sites. For instance, it proposes the concept of ‘contact zones’ which refer to the ‘the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect’ (Pratt, 1992, p. 7). In these zones, the encounters are usually not only about words and their meanings, but also about ‘claims-making, opportunities, strategic choices and goals, interests, and resource maximisation’ (Lendvai & Stubbs, 2006, p. 6).

This notion opens the discussion of the different stages, spaces and times in which the translation happens. The contestation of policy ideas occurs in different contact zones across the different stages of the translation process (Blaustein, 2015). Following Clarke (2005), this brings the analysis to the implementation process as the translation ‘moves from policy formulation to front line practice’ (p. 11). As the author mentions, levels or stages are never blank spaces that wait for new policies, but places filled with previous knowledges, orientations, habits and practices. This fact is supported by implementation theorists themselves, who have pointed out that policies are continuously transformed by implementing actions “that simultaneously alter resources and objectives” (Majone & Wildavsky, 1984, p.170). As noted by Sausman, Oborn & Barret (2016), policy implementation is defined and enacted in conjunction with meaning negotiations and leads to the adaptation of policies to local realities.

Moreover, Lendvai and Stubbs (2006, 2009) also point out that spaces and scales where translations take place are always socially and culturally constructed through plural and contingent actor networks. They build their argument on Gould (2004), who argues that a jump in scale implies not only a readjustment of quantitative indexes but a transition to different languages, rhetoric, ideals, justifications, and rationalities.

As the present research aims to analyse how the FF policy travels from the central government to Waorani communities, it benefits from these analytical categories (scales, agents and sites) to trace the change of meaning and purposes of the policy.

Third, and finally, translation scholars recognise that the travel of policy ideas represents a contestation process where power relationships lead to the suppression or displacement of some voices (Lendvai & Stubbs, 2007). In that sense, these authors argue that policies are inscribed in the language in which they were constructed and, based on Bourdieu and Waquant (1992)’s work, suggest that they entail linguistic relations of symbolic power, meaning that behind any linguistic communication there is a history of structures of power relations without which these relations cannot be understood. Correspondingly, Blaustein (2015), for instance, suggests that contact zones represent “a shared site at which various stakeholders seek to translate their institutional preferences into policy prescriptions and, ultimately, policy outputs” (p.83). As such, they represent sites or nodes of power through which policy meaning is negotiated (Blaustein, 2015).

This last element is especially important for this research, as it centres the analysis to the power relationships embedded in the interaction between the State and indigenous communities that take place during the translation of the FF policy.

# Chapter 4 Methodology

## 4.1 Case Study Design

To answer the research questions, a case study design is proposed. This design consists in “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (Yin, 2014, p. 53).

The case addressed here is the Ecuadorian FF policy’s interventions in Waorani communities during Moreno’s mandate (2017 to date). As such, it is limited in time and space. Regarding the first one, the case is limited to the last four years. This period corresponds to the mandate of the current government. In this period, the State created the Sub – Secretariat of Family Farming in the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG) and the FF policy this entailed based on the demands of indigenous and farmers organisations.

In terms of space, the research focuses on the Sub – Secretariat of FF, the Ecuadorian governing body of the FF policy that oversees and implements the State’s interventions in this agriculture sub-sector. Moreover, it is limited to the interventions in Waorani communities; this is, two provinces in Ecuador: Pastaza and Orellana (there are also Waorani population in Napo, but no FF activities are implemented with them). It is essential to notice that the case’s focus is mainly the public body, but that it was delimited to analyse one nationality in order to contextualise its interventions.

Considering the information presented before, the relevance of this case is threefold. First, this country explicitly recognises indigenous rights in its main national policies. In fact, the country is a pioneer in this matter by being one of the first and few countries in the world to recognise indigenous peoples as nationalities and acknowledge many of their fundamental rights in its constitution and its National Development Plan, including the self – determination right.

Second, despite the above, the country’s successive governments have adopted development models that hinder the enforcement of indigenous rights. Since the 1970s, the country has adopted an extractive development model, which has led indigenous communities to suffer the disposition of lands and livelihoods due to oil and mining concessions. Besides, the neoliberal turn of the new government posits a new risk for the consolidation or worsen of the inadequate fulfilment of such rights.

Third, the Sub-secretariat of Family Farming was created in Moreno’s government to meet a demand from indigenous and peasants’ organisations. As FF agriculture is highly related to indigenous communities, this public body has assumed the responsibility to preserve and promote their traditional agricultural practices. Nevertheless, the policy resembles a market-based approach that has been problematic for the enforcement of indigenous rights.

As a case study, the research aims to provide a thick and deep description and analysis of the phenomenon noted above, rather than generalise its findings to other public bodies of the Ecuadorian State or other indigenous nationalities (see Gerring, 2016). Moreover, it seeks to engage with the theoretical discussion of the agent-based policy translation (and therefore, the travel of policy meanings) at different scales and the enforcement of the indigenous right to self – determination.

## 4.2 Data Collection Techniques and Participants

The present research uses the Multiple Source of Evidence principle; this is, it triangulates different sources of evidence in order to secure the quality of the research (Yin, 2014). This convergence of techniques aims to provide a strong construct validity to the research by securing “multiple measures of the same phenomenon” (Yin, 2014).

Moreover, following the policy translation approach, the research focuses on discourses and agents. On this basis, it works with both primary and secondary data. Regarding the first one, it conducts prolonged interviews with different actors in order to secure the inclusion of different perspectives of the case. A summary of the participants is provided in the next table.

**Table 1**  
Participants of the Research

Participant	#
Public official at the Central Level – Sub secretariat of FF	4
Public official at the Central Level – Other offices	3
Public official at the Local Level – Technicians of FF	3
Waorani leaders	3
<i>Total</i>	<i>13</i>

The design of the interviews was different depending on the actor. At the central level of government, the interview guides explored the creation of the Sub – Secretariat of FF and the changes in the policy that this new body brought with it, the purpose of this policy, and its implementation with indigenous people in general and with Waorani communities in particular. In the case of the local technicians of FF, they were asked about interventions they conduct with Waorani communities, their purpose, the obstacles they confronted during their implementation, and how have these nationalities received such interventions. Regarding Waorani leaders, the interviews explored their agricultural practices, their obstacles and aspirations in this sector, and their relationship with the State (especially the Ministry of Agriculture).

Concerning the secondary data, the study analysed documents from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG) such as the policy documents that frame the FF interventions, meeting memos with international advocates of FF and with Waorani communities, and presentations of the FF interventions conducted the last four years. Additionally, it analysed national and international press releases regarding the FF policy implementation progress in Ecuador.

## 4.3 Procedure and Ethical Considerations

After the design of interview guides, the first contact with participants was arranged by a colleague of the researcher. This contact also worked for the MAG and became a participant in the study. From this starting point, a snowball technique was conducted in order to contact the rest of the interviewees. This is to say, the initial public officials contacted referred new ones to the researcher, these new contacts did the same, and this process was continued until it was possible to reach all the desired participants.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews were coordinated and conducted online. No research assistant was hired to secure the health and security of the participants. Therefore, these interviews were conducted by the researcher himself using video – call platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Skype, and Google Meets. However, in the case of the Waorani leader from the Orellana province, the weak internet connection of the participant did not

allow the use of these software packages, and hence an interview had to be conducted using a mix between WhatsApp call and voice notes.

At the beginning of each interview, the objective and ethical considerations of the research were explained. Thus, the interviewer explained to the participants that the conversation was going to be confidential and used only for research purposes. After this, the researcher asked the participants for their consent to record the interviews, all of whom accepted this. Finally, these recordings were transcribed in order to conduct the analysis.

## 4.4 Analysis

At a general level, the data analysis made use of the Explanation Building technique. This implies, as its name suggests, building an explanation about the case stipulating “how” or “why” something happened (Yin, 2014). In this study, the research sub-questions, which, in conjunction, address the main question, guided this explanation process.

At a micro – level, the analysis focused on the discourses of officials, local agents and indigenous leaders. This focus is guided by the policy translation framework, which puts emphasis on the social construction of policies and how this is transformed by different agents and at different sites and scales.

Based on this, a coding of interviews of public officials and local technicians were conducted using the software Atlas.ti 9. This coding looked for the different potential meanings and purposes that FF are given. Moreover, it examined different explanations of why and how this happens, and how the translated policy reflects the enforcement of the indigenous right to self-determination in Waorani communities. Lastly, the agricultural aspirations of Waorani were used as a proxy for the agricultural “development” path that these communities aim to.

## 4.5 Limitations

The main limitation of this research paper was the process of establishing communication with Waorani communities. Due to the COVID – 19 pandemic, the researcher was not able to travel to Ecuador and conduct in-person fieldwork. Despite this limitation, interviews with them were still conducted since their perspective was central for this research. Nonetheless, this was done with a limited number of participants and through online platforms such as Microsoft Teams and WhatsApp. This limitation also held for public officials and local agents despite their access to better communication technologies.

In all cases, in-person fieldwork would have enriched the researcher-participant relationship, and the information gathered since informal conversation before and after interviews build rapport and trust as well as provide some extra information that sometimes is missing in interviews.

Furthermore, this paper only focuses on the Waorani population. Yet, Ecuador is a diverse country with different nationalities and peoples that could not be addressed in the present study. Taking this into account, and although it proposes some analytical conjectures, this research does not intend to generalise its findings and conclusions to other populations and not even to the Waorani nationality as a whole.

## Chapter 5

### Findings and Analysis

The FF policy is translated from its formulation to its final implementation, but without ever losing its market-oriented core value. In the present analysis, the local agents are put in the centre of the translation process. They deal with the lack of funding and the weak political status of the FF policy, which in turn affect their organisational and material work conditions. On top of that, agents meet Waorani culture and juggle the tension between agricultural productivity and respect of the local culture. As a result, they implement a translated version of the policy that, while appears more sensitive to the local context, it keeps the pervasive logic of the market that, to some extent, might not be the final and primary aspiration of the Waorani participants. Instead, they emphasise an aspiration to recover and keep the traditional lifestyle of their ancestors, one that resembles more the notion of *sumak kawsay* than to the “development” concept implied in the international definition of self – determination right, an aspiration that the FF policy does not seem capable to address on its own.

The present section presents the findings and analysis that support these conclusions. To do that, it starts by analysing the creation and design of the Sub – Secretariat of FF and its policy. Second, it analyses the translation of the FF policy from the central level to the Waorani communities. Finally, it addresses the central question of the research: to what extent the translation of this policy reflects the enforcement of Waorani’s right to self – determination.

#### 5.1 The Sub – Secretariat of FF: Merging Claims in a Bureaucratic Dance

The creation of FF Sub – Secretariat portrays how policies are a recasting of claims about problems made by different actors (Freeman, 2009). As much as the public body and the policy it entailed were an initiative, they were a result of different advocacy movements at the international and national level.

Interviews and documents revealed how this policy was heavily influenced by FF interventions that were adopted by the MAG before the creation of the Sub – Secretariat. These interventions, in turn, were directly associated with FF Policy ideas promoted in spaces of regional cooperation. In that sense, an essential part of the current FF policy actions was not an innovation of Ecuador. Rather, they have travelled around the Latin America region and landed in the country as part of an international advocacy agenda.

This regional advocacy for Family Farming policies has its roots in Brazil. This State was one of the first ones to address this policy issue and use the term “Family Farming” in the region (Sabourin, Samper & Sotomayor, 2014). Based on that, in the 1990s it started a regional mobilisation to export or “transfer” its work hand in hand with international organisations such as WTO or FAO (Sabourin, Grisa & Filho, 2018; Porto de Oliveira, 2019).

In the same vein, many international organisations have also had an important role in the travel of this policy idea within the Latin America region. For the case addressed in this paper, it is vital to highlight the role of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR in Spanish). This organisation corresponds to a regional integration process that aims to “promote a common space that generates business and investment opportunities through the competitive integration of national economies into the international market” (MERCOSUR, n.d.). This organisation, of which Ecuador is an associated member, established the

Specialized Family Farming Meeting (REAF in Spanish) in 2004 to strengthen the policies of the FF sector, promote the commercialisation of FF products and facilitate their commercialisation in the region (REAF, n.d.).

In 2014, Ecuador participated in the XXI Specialized Family Farming Meeting, where the Brazilian delegation, among other issues, presented their draft of “Recommendations for the Family Farming Seal” and a discussion was held about the registry of family farmers (MERCOSUR, 2014). In this same meeting, the Ecuadorian Delegation pointed out that the REAF mission accomplished their visit and workshop in their country during June of the same year (MERCOSUR, 2014). An interview with a MAG officer revealed that it is in this year when the Ecuadorian State committed to implement FF policy actions such as the Family Farming Registry and Seal. Regarding the REAF’s workshop in Ecuador, the International Fund for the Agricultural Development (FIDA in Spanish), a program from MERCOSUR, reported that

“The exchange of experiences among participants left lessons learned on issues such as public policy building through the public-private dialogue, censuses and registries as tools for the design and implementation of differential policies, and operational and methodological aspects for a better operation of the National Sector of REAF’s Ecuador Chapter.” (FIDA, n.d.)

These policy ideas disseminated in the region, and to which the Ecuadorian State was exposed, are found in MAG’s policies before the creation of the Sub – Secretariat. Despite that MAG’s Institutional Strategic Plan 2017 – 2021 claims that topics of FF were incorporated within its structure in 2017 (the creation date of the FF Sub – Secretariat), a public servant reported that the starting point for the current State’s activities regarding this sector could be found in the FF’ definition of the Organic Law of Rural and Ancestral Lands enacted in 2016. Here, Family Farming is defined in Article 28 as

“a modality of production, farming, recollection, aquaculture or silviculture that implies a way of life and cultural reality that combines economic, environmental, social and cultural functions. It is characterised by a) limit access to land and capital; b) the predominant use of family workforce; c) its connection with the market through the selling of primary or finished products, wage labour, and the purchase of consumable or consumer goods; and d) the diversification of activities that generate income within the household”.

Based on this definition, article 30 of the law establishes four main modalities of FF. First, ‘the subsistence FF’, in which the family manage the agricultural cycle and allocate part of the production for auto consumption. The second one, ‘the transitional FF’, in which the agricultural production is implemented mainly with family workforce and the conditions allow to obtain surplus for commercialisation and the generation of savings and productive specialisation. The third, ‘the community FF’, is that one linked to productive units of communal or collective ownership. Finally, the fourth one, ‘the consolidated FF’, is that one constituted by productive family units whose productive conditions allow the generation of surplus, regular recruitment of labour, adoption of businesses models and integration to national and international chains and markets.

Taking the first, second and fourth modalities, the discourse of this law assumes a progression between modalities, that starts from an FF agriculture that only server to self-subsistence purposes and that ends in a final and more consolidated form of FF in which the defining characteristic is the generation of income, surplus and connection with the market. Thus, before the Sub-secretariat creation, a market-based (neoliberal) FF policy was already in place. This fact is also evident when the article 28 claims that the State will

“implement policies for the organisational strengthening, integration of the productive organisation, commercialisation, access to markets, technical assistance, technological innovation,

[and] training in associative management of FF farmers and for the support of their productive initiatives”.

A public servant pointed out that these policies were operationalised under the General Coordination of Commercial Networks mainly in the form of three activities: registration of FF families and producers, the labelling of products as FF produced for social recognition among consumers (FF Seal), and the connection of FF production with the market through the so-called Alternative Circuits of Commercialisation (CIALCOS in Spanish).

This last one refers to “the local spaces of direct encounters between producers and consumers in fair conditions wherein relationships are established in a way that goes beyond the buying and selling of products, but that value the importance of the farmer worker and the consumer and where food sovereignty and security are consolidated” (MAG presentation on CIALCOS, 2017). These CIALCOS could be, for instance, a fair in a local community where the same farmers sell FF production. According to the interviews, these circuits were created in opposition to regular circuits that served to monocultures or special rubrics (e.g. banana) with large productions and that travel longer distances (e.g. bananas of the coast sold in the highlands).

As can be noticed, these FF public interventions pre – Sub-Secretariat have, on one side, a market-based approach that resembles the purpose of the MERCOSUR. And on the other side, they resemble the policy ideas advocated by this regional organisation, such as the FF seal and registry. In that sense, international advocacy seems to have played an essential role in the initial FF public interventions.

It is in the context of these already existing interventions where an additional demand was raised by indigenous and peasant population in 2017. At the beginning of Lenin Moreno’s administration, the government established a more straightforward communication with indigenous and peasants’ organisations in comparison to Correa’s mandate (El telégrafo, 2017a). Based on the demands from the FENOCIN, the president ordered the creation of the Sub Secretariat of FF during his participation in the XII Congress of the FENOCIN in 2017 (FENOCIN, n.d.; El telégrafo, 2017b)

The FENOCIN claims that the president’s order to create the Sub – Secretariat came with an emphasis on the recognition of Ecuador as a ‘plurinational’ country and the importance to learn about the traditional knowledge cosmovision that regards human beings as siblings of water, mountains and rivers in a respectful relationship with the ‘Pachamama’ (an indigenous term that refers, in principle, to the mother earth) (FENOCIN, n.d.).

The document that appointed the creation of the public body (the Presidential Commitment 0093) could not be found in MAG’s webpage, nor the participants of this study were able to access it, despite having and sharing other similar documents. The current formal mission of the MAG FF matters could be found instead in the Ministerial Agreement N° 093 of 2018. This document declares that the Sub Secretary is responsible for the FF policy, which consists of the following:

“To strengthen the Family Farming through sustainable production systems, diversified designs, appropriate technologies, specific contexts, rural start-ups, direct commercialisation, organisational strengthening based on the dialogue of different forms of knowledge, considering the principles of Popular and Solidarity Economy, social control and fair commercialisation to guarantee agri-food systems with food sovereignty for the rural good living.”

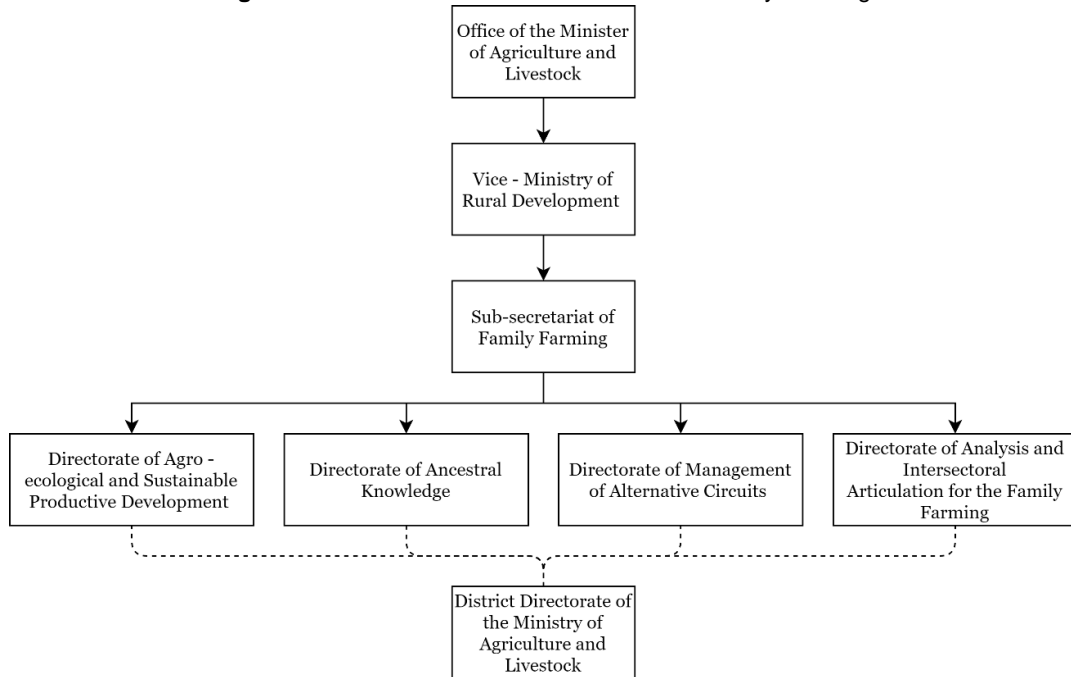
Although this mission keeps the market approach, it incorporates a sustainable approach and a consideration of different forms of knowledge that were lacking in the previous policy document. The creation of the Sub secretariat, then, came with a small turn in the focus of the MAG regarding its FF policy. The mission now is not only to improve the productivity

of FF agriculture but to do it sustainably and according to the contextual knowledge (including even the indigenous term ‘good living’).

The interviews with public officials and policy documents suggest that the structure and restructure of the then-new public body represented a small incremental change over the prior existing policy and depicted the change of its purpose and meaning.

The Sub – Secretariat was initially created under the Vice – Ministry of Rural Development with two Directorates: The Directorate of Agri-ecological and Sustainable Productive Development and the Directorate of Organizational Strengthening. In 2018, the MAG was re-structured, and so was the Sub-secretariat. The first Directorate remained unchanged, whereas the second one disappeared since another office in the Ministry already fulfilled its role. Two offices were transferred to the Sub-Secretariat: The Directorate of Management of Alternative Circuits (previously part of the General Coordination of Commercial Networks) and the Directorate of Analysis and Intersectoral Articulation for the Peasant and Family Agriculture (previously called Directorate of Norms and Policies). Finally, the Directorate of Ancestral Knowledge was created and still remains as the newest office in the Sub – secretariat. All this shaped the public body to its current structure (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1** Structure of the Sub – Secretariat of Family Farming



Source: Figure made by the author with information from the Ministerial Agreement N° 093

The inclusion of Directorate of CIALCOS and Analysis and Intersectoral Articulation supposed the continuation of the previous interventions of the FF policy, as they assumed previous FF activities such the connection of FF production to commercialisation sites, the FF register and Seal. On the other hand, the inclusion of the other two Directorates seems to correspond to the added mission of the current policy. The inclusion of the Directorate of Ancestral Knowledge directly responds to the national advocacy and discourse of the FENOCIN. Finally, the sustainability element is addressed with the inclusion of the Directorate of Agro-Ecological and Sustainable Productive Development.

On top of the influence of different advocacy groups to the slow mutation of the FF Policy, the interviews revealed how two contextual factors might be affecting its implementation and the fulfilment of its objectives. The first is the political pressure on the MAG by a substantial sector of farmers that demand the implementation of market-based agricultural policies. In this regard, an ex-public official indicated that monocultures farmers have



advocated for the implementation of subsidies, agricultural kits and debt forgiveness. This sector is composed of farmers that reside mainly in the coastal zone and is dedicated to the cultivation of rice, corn, and banana.

In 2018, for instance, this coastal agricultural sector declared the then-minister of agriculture personae non-gratae and organised several strikes (especially rice farmers) demanding the reduction of agricultural inputs (El Universo 2018a, El Universo 2018b). Eventually, and after impeachment for alleged corruption, this Minister resigned to its position (El Universo 2018b). According to an ex-public official of the epoch, the political survivor of Ministers of Agriculture highly depends on the implementation of policies that benefit this monoculture sector, and not much on the support to FF policies.

Secondly, the Sub – secretariat faces the austerity measures implemented by the new Government since 2017. Amid a drop in the oil price and alleging a mismanaged of the national economy from the previous mandate, Moreno’s government turned to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a substantial loan (Salgado, 2019). The international organisation declared that the loan would only be provided if the government applied structural adjustments to its economic policy, one of which consisted of austerity measures.

These measures not only sparked big mobilisations of indigenous populations, which were affected by the budgetary cuts in subsidies (BBC, 2019), but they also reduced the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture. Following the Decree 135: “Norms for the Optimisation and Austerity of Public Expenditures”, the MAG reports every six-month all the austerity measures implemented such as the cut in travel expenses and staff reduction. It is worth to notice that, additionally to the economic crisis and austerity measures, the Ecuadorian economy has also been heavily affected by the COVID – 19 outbreak (Oner, 2020)

In a context of austerity and economic crisis, it can be expected that an agenda with weak political power such as the FF policy suffers from a severe lack of funded. This fact was confirmed by some participants and by the Sub – secretariat’s lack of investment projects and significant international funding. This issue was also risen by the FENOCIN, which has demanded an increase of the Sub – secretariat budget (Letamendi, 2020).

Summing up, the dynamics of Ecuadorian FF policy in the last four years support the claim that policies are not naturally given, but in constant construction by different advocacy voices and the context (Freeman, 2009; Lendvai and Stubbs, 2007). The Ecuadorian context has shaped the FF policy that is weak not only economically, but also politically. In this context, the MAG performs a bureaucratic dance. It moves and creates Directorates here and there to accommodate within its organisation the oncoming claims of different advocacy groups.

## **5.2 The FF Policy Translated: Strengthening Waorani’s Culture with an Eye on the Market**

Agents and sites play an essential role in the transformation of the FF policy as it travels throughout scales (Lendvai & Stubbs, 2007; Clarke, 2005). When the FF policy idea arrives at the hands of local agents, ready to be implemented in Waorani communities, those actors reinterpret the purpose of the policy’s interventions. They do this based on the bureaucratic and infrastructure limitations they face day-to-day and on their own knowledge about the cultural context. Although this translation is perceived at the central level, the local technicians grasp its nuances and are the ones that finally shape what the policy is about when it is contextualised in the Waorani territory.

As a result, the policy does not entirely lose its core values, but it does mutate. Contrast is shown between the central level that highlights market-related objectives vs the local agents

that lean towards cultural ones. The market as a target, however, never completely disappears. The aim to increase farmer's production is always there in constant tension with Wao-rani agricultural practices, which in turn tend to be perceived as obstacles to improving productivity. The tensions between the cultural and the productive purposes of the policy are revealed, while its sustainable, registry and commercialisation elements fade away.

The present section depicts this process. It first describes the initial purpose of the policy in the discourses of officials at the central level, this is, to promote sustainable and cultural-appropriate agricultural production and commercialisation for family farmers. Second, it shows that, at the local scale, agents reinterpret what it has to be done taking into account material and organisational conditions, as well as the local culture. Third, it explains the tensions unfolded by this translation process.

From the top, it is crucial to understand how the policy idea departs from the central level officers. The participant of the Directorate of Analysis and Intersectoral Articulation gave a comprehensive description of what the Sub – secretariat of FF does, a description that articulates well with FF policy documents and the perception of other participants. This agent described it as a process that starts with the registration of FF farmers (and potentially the provision of a FF Seal), continues with technical assistance in sustainable productivity issues and ends up in the connection of producers with commercialisation spaces. This process is reflected in the training program provided to local technicians, also called Focal Points of FF, who in turn train producers in the field. The participant states the following:

*“The Sub – secretariat has a complete training program or capacity building program that must implement with producers. It starts, for instance, with the issue of the registration, as this is the characterisation of the current situation. But after that, for example, the Sub – secretariat itself has to provide technical assistance in the production issue. Thus, we are working very hard in the topic of ecological agriculture production [...], which is when producers move from conventional systems to ecological agricultural systems. [...] And we close in the Sub – Secretariat with the direct markets that are the CLALCOS. What this Sub – Secretariat does is the linkage with markets.”*

The general logic is aligned with the market transition of the different modes of FF reviewed above, while the inclusion of “ecological systems” points out to a sustainable perspective mentioned in the Ministerial Agreement N° 093. Also, although the participant suggests that this process has to be adapted depending on the producer, and that market does not always respond to producer's needs, production and commercialisation still prevail in this and most participants' discourses.

The elements of the FF policy described by the public official (registration, productivity, and commercialisation) is addressed by three of the Directorates. The registration of FF farmers is conducted by the Directorate of Analysis and Intersectoral Articulation. This consist of a tool to gather the information that allows characterising the current conditions of family producers (e.g. households composition, type of production, productive activities, commercialisation types, income, etc.). Its importance, the official states, is that it allows the State to create differentiated policies and projects (e.g. special credits and tax reduction) to directly target and support this sub-sector and improve production conditions of family farmers.

The FF registry, moreover, is complemented with the FF Seal. In Ecuador, this consist of a social hallmark or label that inform consumers which products come directly from FF producers. Thus, after registration, farmers can access to this seal to improve the marketing of their products. According to the public officer, the FF registry and Seal are the continuity of practices that started in 2016 and that are rooted in Ecuador's commitment to FF policies in 2014. Additional to the Registry and the FF Seal, this Directorate is also in charge of the

Super Rural Women project that aims to make visible and boost the importance of the women role in the FF sector. This project, nonetheless, is new and has just started its activities.

The second element, productivity, is overseen by the Directorate of Agroecological and Sustainable Productive Development. The work of this office, as reported by an ex-official of the Directorate, focuses on assisting farmers to transit from conventional fincas (or farms) to sustainable ones. This agent explains that conventional agriculture implies imported seed, fertilisers, agrochemicals, and other elements that pollute the environment. In contrast, sustainable agriculture is environmentally friendly as it implies methods such as organic agriculture or agroecology (agricultural production systems that resembles an ecosystem).

Finally, the third element, commercialisation, is overseen by the Directorate of Management of Alternative Circuits. According to a public official from this Directorate, this office aims to create and boost commercialisation sites (or CIALCOS as defined above) for FF producers that are transiting or adopting sustainable production systems. Similar than the FF Register and Seal, the participants pointed out that CIALCOS has been in place since the creation of the Directorate, which happened before its incorporation to the Sub – Secretariat. Before this, however, this office used to depend on local governments having ecologically oriented projects that supported diversified production systems and FF farmers. However, with the incorporation of a Directorate that promotes the transition to sustainable production systems among FF producers, the official declares that it is easier to establish a database of farmers involved in this kind of production and to look commercialisation sites for them.

Moreover, the Directorate has established a typology of CIALCOS that are even georeferenced and showed their website. These are 1) Direct supply (to public institutions), 2) Agrotourism, 3) Baskets of Products (delivered to public workers), 4) Fairs, 5) HORECA (Hotels, Restaurants and Cafes), 6) Sale Points, 7) Farmer's stores, and 8) Sale at fam-gates.

Interesting enough, the activities described by public servants usually leave aside the interventions of the Directorate of Ancestral Knowledge. One of them mentions that this office is taking some time to consolidate 'where does it want to go', in what they want to work and what elements they could strengthen. According to a public officer of such Directorate, the work of this office aims to

*“strengthen activities related to the production, conservation and commercialisation of national agricultural heritage of traditional seeds and ancestral knowledge that is focused on a sustainable production” and in this way “revalue this type of ancestral knowledge”.*

The agent highlighted the policy problem behind this objective: traditional knowledge is not being used anymore, since it competes with new and cheaper high technology. To fulfil its objectives, the office is currently focusing on creating a baseline with information such as traditional agricultural knowledge and practices, type of productions, types of commercialisation, ways of preserving traditional seeds, etc. The officer mentions that the goal is to merge traditional knowledge with more modern agricultural techniques, but, as a new office, this has not started yet.

All the elements of the policy share a transversal and key implementation mechanism: a capacity building program for implementers, the so-called FF focal points. These technicians are trained and prepared to provide technical assistance to family farmers in all aspects of the policy, from registering family farming, assisting farmers in sustainable production, gathering information of ancestral knowledge and coordinating the participation of family farmers in commercialization sites to commercialization.

In sum, discourses of public officials and policy documents at the central level suggest that the FF policy has a market-based and sustainable approach. It aims to assist FF farmers to improve their production with sustainable techniques and to connect them with commercialization sites. It also includes cultural activities that are still consolidating its role in the Minister, as they are the newest activities incorporated in the Sub – Secretariat.

This initial policy goes through agents and sites in its way to its implementation in Waorani communities (Lendvai & Stubbs, 2007; Clarke, 2005). The FF focal points constitute the mediators (Lataour, 2005) that transform interventions in consideration of the ideological and material conditions that they face in the local context. Although this variation is perceived at the central level, which indicates a constant communication between different scales, local agents are the ones that better inform the nuances of this change and the ones that actually give the final shape of the interventions implemented in the Waorani context.

On the one hand, this alteration seems to be influenced by agents' considerations regarding the organizational and material conditions under which they implement the policy. First, these agents shape their interventions based on the amount and complexity of the work requested by upper levels' of government, which in turn is partially a product of the low funding of the Sub – Secretariat.

As mentioned by most participants, the Sub secretariat of FF at the central level establishes annual goals and indicators along with the “focal point” technicians of all provinces in a meeting once a year. For their part, these FF focal points operate at the local level to accomplish these goals by themselves and/or hand in hand with other local technicians of their District Directorate (the decentralized body of the MAG). Because the Sub-secretariat does not have any investment project, the public body has remained underfunded since its creation and usually does not possess its own technicians in the field. Instead, the FF “focal points” designated by the District Directorate to implement and oversee FF interventions are usually contracted under and paid by other projects of the MAG.

Thus, in the Orellana province, the focal point in charge of implementing the FF interventions was a technician initially assigned to and paid by the project called Agenda of Amazonian Productive Transformation (ATPA in Spanish). This project aims to “turn the agricultural production activities of the Amazon into sustainable agricultural production systems based on economic, social, environmental, and cultural perspectives, through the implementation of integrated planning of farms, and thus liberate grass areas intended to the diversification of crops and reforestation” (MAG, n.d. a).

Orellana's technician mentions that although the two initiatives (FF and ATPA) have similar activities, the participant feels to be continuously doing double work. For example, the technician has to fill two different formats, one from each initiative, with the same information. As the ATPA project is the ‘actual’ contractor, the agent turns this into the priority. In turn, the fulfilment of FF's activities is negatively affected or is subordinated to the ones of the ATPA project. The local technician explains:

*“As I mentioned, here in the [district] direction as a project [ATPA] we have indicators and goals. What we suggest to do is additional hiring to fulfil those functions and not to do double work. Because my project [ATPA], besides doing the project's activities, it also has to implement FF's activities. Thus, usually, there are not good results for the FF's Focal Points, because of the fulfilment of our goal as a project [ATPA], which is the one that pays us to execute and provide results.”*

In the Pastaza province, the technician that implement FF activities in the Waorani territory works for National Project of Participatory Technological Innovation and Agricultural Productivity (PITPPA in Spanish). According to the MAG, this project aims to

“promote the agricultural reactivation through optimization processes of technical assistance and extension programs, complementing this with the provision of innovative technology, infrastructure and high technological equipment in order to improve the traditional production capacity of small and medium agricultural producers, and tending to improve the life quality of the target population” (MAG, n.d. b).

In this case, the agent reveals that the FF activities end up being associated with the PITPPA project, which is the one that he belongs to. Thus, based on this association, the interventions he implements aim to articulate new technology with traditional knowledge to improve productivity.

The second material factor that agents face during the implementation of their work is the infrastructure limitations of the local context. The main example of this is the lack of communication routes that would allow connecting Waorani production with commercialization sites (CIALCOS).

The officer of CIALCOS at the central level mentioned a mixed experience with Waorani people and their connection with the market. The participant explained the emblematic experience of Waorani Women that have been able to commercialize coffee and cacao in local, national and international markets. At the same time, the agent stressed some Waorani communities that live too deep inside the forest and take too long to arrive at commercialization sites (e.g. local fairs). Thus, in these cases, it has been challenging to connect Waorani production to the market. The participant suggests that some producers from these communities try to commercialize their products anyway as this activity is part of their life dynamic. Because of that, he implies that a primary challenge for the Sub – Secretariat is to find ways to make “the commercialization of these producers more fruitful”.

When speaking with a local technician in the Pastaza province, he suggests that the second cases are in fact the rule, whereas the case of cacao and coffee women producers are an exception. The agent explains:

*“Actually, it is very little the commercialization work that has been done with them [...] Only processed cacao that, yes, we have commercialized with them in fairs, even we have taken them to different promotional fairs in the country. But [the commercialization of] primary production, no, because it means entering [to the jungle] at midday in a canoe and then travel between 3 to 4 hours by car to try to take out their products.”*

This participant also confirms that many Waorani producers actually want and ask to take their products out of their communities to commercialize them, but agents try to “make them understand” the situation. In the same way, the local technician from the Orellana province also mentioned this transportation problem. The participant reported that, due to this issue, Waorani do not cultivate in excess to commercialize because their products get bad after they manage to take them out of their communities. Then, for these agents, commercialization and connection to the market are not the primary intervention to be implemented with these communities.

On the other hand, agents also regularly take into account Waorani’s culture in the translation of FF interventions. First, a central officer pointed out how indigenous people in the Amazon have not fully embraced the FF Register and Seal. In the case of Waorani communities, it was mentioned that even the strongest commercial Waorani organization, the women producers of coffee and cacao, was basically not involved in these interventions.

The officer explains that whereas Coastal and Highlands producers have adopted the Seal as a kind of social recognition that convey quality, the amazon’s family farmers value other types of distinction or certifications. This participant mentions that usually in this region, the producers do not even feel identified with the term “Family Farming”, as they talk

more about their communal-based agriculture. Moreover, the officer mentions that they are more attracted to “sustainable” distinctions, which has led to some local governments to advance other Seal-based initiatives by themselves. This is consistent with the fact that the registry and the FF Seal never came out in the interviews with local technicians that work with Waorani communities

Amid this panorama, according to the agent, what the Central Government propose is not to continue advancing the FF Seal in this region. She mentions:

*“From the MAG, which is the governing body of the policy, it is being said, “Ok, continue working, because it is important to have these local recognitions of these territorial or cultural seals”. But what we are still asking for is that they can gather only one database, which in this case would be the registry tool.”*

Second, local technicians explain that the primary intervention with Waorani people is the technical assistance to improve production, but that their culture must be considered during this work. In this vein, the local agent in Pastaza manifests that his work with Waorani people has focused on training them through workshops that can include theory or just practice in issues such as plague management, cultivation, etc. Nevertheless, the technician mentions that, as these communities already have a different production system (“chakras”), they do not practice cultivation, which has made more difficult their progress. He states:

*“With them, it is a bit difficult to make permanent progress because the culture they have is yet little related to the production part. Even though they already have their own “chakra” systems as part of their culture, the progress is very little because actually they limit themselves to cultivate some bananas and cassava plants here and there, and they do not really do cultivation work. And this has hindered the progress.”*

Because of this, the work with these communities is focused more on strengthen their practices, but then trying to promote a diversified production to improve their diet and incorporate new technologies in their agricultural practices that would allow them to improve their economic development (an objective that might stem from the association of the agent to the PITPPA project).

The Orellana technician referred to this “issue” as well. According to this participant, a difficulty about working with Waorani people is that their communities already have their cultivation tradition based on collection and hunting. Besides, the participant stresses that this resistance to change is even more significant in communities with an old population, and thus here is where they have had their worse results.

Because of all this, this technician mentions, there is basically not example of sustainable agricultural work with Waorani communities, as they work only with small “chakras” mainly for self-subsistence purposes and using their own agricultural practices. If technicians eventually assist a Waorani community in agricultural production, the participant says that this implies a long-term work where their culture is respected, and the assistance focuses on strengthening their own way of production. The participant mentions:

*“The treat given to them is to strengthen [their crops] in a technical way, so they can have a good production, but as long as we respect and maintain their culture”.*

Orellana’s focal point mentioned that, because of the above, the work with these communities is focused on looking for their potentialities and give them incentives to work on these. In this way, it is avoided to promote activities that Waorani are not used to do and that they would eventually abandon. Thus, for instance, the technician mentions that one of the most important potentials of Waorani communities is art crafts and that working on

these would allow them to create another source of income and prevent to damage their culture.

All these factors that agents mediate are the base for the translation process in Waorani communities. These actors have to manage the tensions that arise when confronting the policy interventions against material and organizational conditions and local cultural meanings. Here, the main tension is between two discourses within the policy. At the central level, the productivity seemed complementary with the dialogue of different forms of knowledge. Even in the Directorate of Ancestral Knowledge, where such conflict is suspected, a mix between new and traditional technologies appears as a potential positive intervention. In the Waorani context, they show themselves more contradictories.

Here, the dialogue takes the form of how to shape and transform traditional Waorani practices to improve their efficiency and at the same time respect their culture. The local agents show more sensitivity to this tension, like when the Orellana agent makes an effort to maintain their agricultural culture and leans to assist in other activities (art crafts). In the end, however, Waorani's agricultural culture is perceived by both technicians as a "difficulty" or something that "hinder progress". Moreover, the goal to connect Waorani with the market and improve "their economy" remains either by improving their agricultural productivity through new technologies or by generating alternative income sources.

It is worth to note, moreover, how the activities of the Directorate of Ancestral Knowledge did not appear in agents' discourses. This is aligned with the discourses of MAG's public, who mentioned that this Directorate is still weak and in its way to consolidating its goals and interventions. Thus, it is not clear that the cultural respect that technicians show for the Waorani culture is an intervention of the policy or a personal value of the participants.

In addition, the tension is likely boosted by the fact that local technicians do not only have to accomplish FF goals but also, and probably primarily, the goals of their contractor projects. This leads to, first, a blurry differentiation of which activities correspond to which project and, second, the subordination of FF interventions to the agenda of other projects. Hence, for instance, the Pastaza agent mentioned the "inclusion of new technologies" as part of FF interventions (associated to the PITPPA project in that province), whereas this did not happen in the case of the Orellana agent.

Finally, as noticed above, while this tension occurs, the register and sustainability dimensions of the policy fade away before the cultural priorities of the local context. At the same time, the commercialization of Waorani production remains a puzzle for implementers. The local agents perceive a call to strengthen this intervention from indigenous people, but the lack of infrastructure hinders Waorani's connection with the market and the capacity of implementers to fulfil this perceived demand.

### **5.3 Waorani's Self – determination and the FF Policy Translated**

The current research recognises the complexity of trying to depict the aspirations of an indigenous nationality through online research methods. What is described in this section stems from conversations with Waorani leaders and local agents that have interacted continuously with Waorani communities across the Amazon territory. As valuable as their testimonies are, they imply only a partial grasp of the worldview of these people.

That being said, the present section presents, first, the analysis of the interviews with these participants to try to understand how Waorani would like to determine their agricultural "development". Secondly, it confronts this with the translated version of the FF policy and

analyses how this constitutes or not the enforcement of Waorani's right to self – determination.

The present analysis uses aspirations as a proxy of the self-determination right. Based on this, the interviews suggest that the agricultural aspirations of Waorani communities seem to revolve around subsistence cultivation that allows them to have nutritional food and to live the traditional life that their ancestor used to have. Besides, they seem to aspire to increase their agricultural income and productivity. Nevertheless, the interviews suggest that this second aspiration is related to a decrease in the productivity of their traditional agricultural practices and a change of their lifestyle provoked by the activities of the oil industry.

Thus, for instance, a Waorani leader from the Orellana province states that oil companies' contamination and activities have provoked a decline in the productivity of their croplands, as well as a reduction of forest animals that they used to hunt. Due to this, the leader declares, they are living in scarcity and thus have started to cultivate coffee and to work in art crafts to generate enough income to survive.

The Waorani leaders of the Pastaza province talked about this problem as well. These leaders highlighted the case of the Waorani communities that live next to the roads built by the oil industry. According to these interviewees, here is essential to implement agricultural interventions such as training and the provision of seeds because oil companies have affected the nutritional intake of these communities. One of the leaders explains:

*“The oil company gave cooked food to families, and for us, this was concerning, the issue of food. Before they consumed all healthy food and now, they will get sick eating food with chemicals. So, we have started giving [them] seeds of cassava, plantain, fruits (...)”*

The leader mentioned other cases as well in which communities received monthly supplies of food such as rice and sugar, which lead them also to change their alimentation habits and abandon their traditional agricultural practices. This participant highlighted the contraposition of what their ancestors used to eat, which made Waorani people to be historically known for being a nationality of big men and women VS what communities that live close to roads eat now, which have led this population to grow short and thin.

This tendency of oil companies to provide material goods to Waorani communities were highlighted by local agents too. In both provinces, the technicians took this affirmation a step further and pointed out that oil companies inure such communities to receive material goods without much effort. And then, when working with the MAG, these communities expected the same thing from this organisation. The agent from Orellana explains:

*“They are used to receiving because, as you might know, in the Orellana province there are a lot of oil companies and sometimes, because they [Waorani people] engage with companies or become part of it, there are some agreements between a community and the companies. And then they [the communities] tell the companies “you give me that, I will give you that” [...] Then they are used to receiving, and they were waiting to receive from us plants and agricultural inputs. Although we provided with tools, they expected to receive everything.”*

Similarly, the local technician of the Pastaza province points out that Waorani communities have asked the MAG for assistance in their agricultural production due to a decrease in the resources that they used to receive from Oil companies. This participant stated that the management of oil revenues have recently changed, and revenues that usually went directly to indigenous communities now go to the government. In this context, according to the official, Waorani communities perceived the need to find alternative productive activities to access to food and resources and sought to connect with public institutions like the MAG.



Despite this, the agricultural aspirations of these communities go beyond increasing productivity and income. Their emphasis is not placed on this, but on having enough crops to eat healthily and to live a traditional life like their ancestors. In this vein, the Waorani leader from Orellana mentions that, regardless if they earn money, they aspire to produce coffee and to implement pisciculture in their community because this would provide enough food.

In a similar way, the Waorani leaders from Pastaza highlight that they want to improve their agriculture for self – consumption, that the surplus would go to commercialization, but all that without forgetting their culture. One of these leaders further explains:

*“Without territory, we cannot live, we cannot cultivate, we cannot hunt, we cannot fish... so we have to take care of it without thinking in making business and money now, so then tomorrow there will be hunger for our children.”*

This participant made emphasis in its aspiration to provide children with a similar life-style they had in the past. This is, being able to hunt in the forest and to swim and fish in a clean river without being worried about oil-related contamination.

In a sense, the FF interventions translated by local agents are partially in consonance with Waorani aspiration. In fact, it could be said that the translated version is more coherent with the aspirations and perceived issues of these communities. For instance, while the local agent read the productivity issue of Waorani communities in light of the influence of the oil-related industrial activities, a perspective similar to Waorani leaders, an ex-official of the central level has a different point of view and take the extractive problem out of the equation.

According to this agent, the main issue revolves in the fact that they have grown in number and increased their food demand, and the FF interventions aim to prevent them from putting pressure in the ecosystem due to their recollection and hunting tradition. The participant explains:

*“[...] And if the population start growing and the food is not enough, and they do not have an agricultural tradition, a tradition that is still in transition, [...] And if they collect so much, but because of the big population the food is not enough, [then] as a State we have to respond.”*

In contrast, local agents, as frontline policy translators, seem more sensitive to the root causes of Waorani agricultural challenges. Thus, they are more capable of adapting the FF interventions to help these communities to bear the income and food deficit brought by the oil industry. They aim to improve Waorani production and at the same time, preserve their culture. In the process, the policy elements that do not play well with the culture are left aside (the FF Register and Seal).

On the other hand, as suggested by Lendvai & Stubbs (2007), analysing language reveal power relationships in the policy. In this case, policy mediators' discourses disclose the pervasive market logic behind the policy even after being translated by more sensitive local agents. These actors regard traditional indigenous practices as an obstacle to implement interventions and boost productivity. As such, they imply that the agricultural practices of indigenous people are inferior to the technics brought by State workers, revealing the unbalanced power relations between both actors. In the case of the Pastaza agent, this is reinforced by the “new technology” discourse of the PITPPA project, whose discourse merges with that of the FF policy right in the front line.

In this context, it should be noticed that it would take much more for the FF policy, or any other agricultural policy, to effectively promote the self – determination right of these Waorani communities. The lack of funding and the weak political status of FF interventions

make them lose strength from beginning to end. This is shown not only when they eventually blend with or are subordinated to the activities of other projects, but when Waorani leaders can not recognise the term Family Farming itself. However, most importantly, the aspiration of the leaders interviewed, their desire to go back to the traditional (agricultural) lifestyle of their ancestors, represents a challenge that the agricultural sector can only address in articulation with other sectors, especially the extractive one.

Finally, it is important to make a note on the self – determination right based on the case addressed here. In the present study, aspirations were used as a proxy to examine this right. As such, the concept is useful to analyse the fulfilment of the right in indigenous communities, in this case, the Waorani nationality.

Nonetheless, as seen in the introduction, the international and national definition of this right implicitly assume that, although determined by themselves, indigenous people aim at “development”. As noted by Viteri (2003, as cited by Keleman – Saxena et al., 2017), this implies a forward-thinking approach that seeks to fill “a lack” in the current situation. Yet, the interviews with indigenous leaders suggest that Waorani’s cosmovision might be more aligned to the notion of *Sumak Kawsay* (in Viteri’s connotation). Hence, although they have an expectation to mend a lack (e.g. food), their aspiration seems more consistent with the sense of not losing something good (the lifestyle of their ancestors harmonic with nature) rather than to the chase of something new.

In that sense, the (internal) self – determination right as defined by international law could be misleading in some cases. Its literal interpretation might not be equal to the respect of indigenous desires to live according to their own cosmovision because the right implies a development concept that might not be compatible with some indigenous notions such as *Sumak Kawsay*. If the spirit of the right was this, then it should be read as the indigenous right to live according to their traditional ontologies and cosmovisions.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusions and Recommendations

In the last decades, the Ecuadorian State has struggled to conciliate its extractivist and neoliberal development model with its iconic recognition of indigenous rights, including the right to self – determination. In 2017, the then-new government of Ecuador created the Sub – Secretariat of FF to address the demands from indigenous and peasant organizations amid a discourse of respect for the different nationalities in the country. This policy, however, came also with agricultural market-based objectives that resemble the problematic model that indigenous people have been facing. In this context, the present research analysed to what extent the translation of this policy in Waorani communities reflects their right to determine their “development”.

Using the translation framework, the analysis indicates that the FF policy brought by the Sub – Secretariat is not a new initiative of the Ecuadorian government. Instead, it is a recast of already existing interventions, and offices, that have their roots in FF policy ideas advocated by MERCOSUR and that landed and mutated in the Ecuadorian context.

According to the discourses of central level officials, the new public body and its FF policy aims, in short, to support the sustainable production and commercialization of FF production and the respect of traditional agricultural knowledge and practices. Based on this, this research examined the travel of the policy from the central level to the front line with Waorani communities. Local implementers were placed at the centre of this analysis as mediators of meanings and purposes of the policy. These agents put the policy through the material, organizational and cultural considerations of the local context and their work conditions. All this led them to implement an adjusted version of the policy actions. Local technicians negotiate in the field the overlap of responsibilities and the material limitations set by the central level, leave aside the interventions that do not fit the context (sustainability, FF register) and narrow the implementation of the policy to technical assistance in agricultural productivity that strengthen Waorani’s culture.

The eye on the market, however, is not completely abandoned by the translated policy and plays a central role in the discussion of the fulfilment of Waorani’s right to self – determination. While local technicians express their respect for the culture of this nationality, their traditional agricultural practices are regarded as an obstacle to increasing agricultural productivity effectively.

Meanwhile, the leaders of this nationality recognise their need for technical assistance in agricultural production, but not as a conventional development objective. Rather, the interviews with indigenous leaders suggest that this need is associated with the negative impact of the oil industry on the productivity of some Waorani’s lands and on the lifestyle of communities that are losing their agriculture tradition. Behind this, some aspirations might not fit with the development notion of the self – determination right, but that could be more aligned with the *sumak kawsay* indigenous vision.

The present research contributes to the analytical tradition of policy translation by unfolding the process of translation through an agent-based approach. It provides evidence of policies as a recast of claims and depicts how meanings and purposes can change when these are translated from the central level to practice. The FF policy in Ecuador represents an incremental change that might not consider enough the different contexts of sites where is sought to be implemented, and that in the Waorani context is adjusted by local agents. Additionally, the present study also set a debate on the appropriateness of the self – determination rights for some indigenous cultures such as the Waorani.

Based on this, a set of practical recommendations are provided. First, the tension of respect for the culture VS productivity must be addressed. Although productivity for commercial gains is a goal in many other FF contexts of the country, in those like the Waorani seems to be more an induced need. Here, a balance seems to be desired where the main aim is a traditional way of life. Because of this, the FF policy has to be prepared to explicitly support subsistence agriculture aspirations as such, without implying a forward objective of income generation or limiting it to subsistence levels. This should be addressed from the policy documents all the way to the training of local agents that deal with the issue in the front line.

Second, the work at the local level reflects how much the workload of local agents hampers the FF interventions. It is on the hands of the central level of government to set appropriate conditions in which these agents can fulfil their interventions. While the lack of budget is always an issue for policies, its repercussions, in this case, jeopardize not only the quality of the FF policy but also its complete implementation. Thus, to strengthen it, it is necessary to allocate enough budget to contract local technicians exclusively committed to FF interventions. In the current economic crisis, this could be regarded as an impossible task, but diverse programs of the MAG are still relatively well funded due to the support of international organizations, and perhaps this is also the way to go for the FF policy.

But in case the policy looks for public financing, a paradox must be noticed. Much of the Ecuadorian public funding depends on fossil fuels, which in turn seems to be the cause of some indigenous agricultural issues that the FF policy aims to address. As decision-makers will not risk the main income of the country, these issue turns into a wicked problem. As long as the Ecuadorian state does not diversify its income and reduce its oil activities, FF interventions, or any agricultural policy, that aim to support the food needs of indigenous people affected by the oil industry will only be mild solutions.

Further research is encouraged to deepen in the theoretical development of the translation framework. Centring the agents in the analysis fruitfully disclose issues and tensions in the policy implementation process. As shown in this paper, this can also reveal material obstacles that go beyond the individual interpretation of the policy. Thus, it is crucial also to explore the dialect between this framework with other theories that focus on the material dimension of policy implementations.

In the agricultural and indigenous rights field, more research is needed in the FF development of indigenous people in the Amazon. As shown in the literature, some nationalities are more connected to the market than others, while the present research suggests that this might lead to the abandon of indigenous practices. Future research has to deepen in the analysis of the relation between new agricultural technologies and logics and the preservation of traditional practices in the Amazon in order to understand to what extent the formers are induced need or/and a welcoming set of new “development” tools.

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