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## **Why REDD+?**

# **A Study of the Continued Support for REDD+**

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The Department of International Environment and Development Studies, Noragric, is the international gateway for the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU). Established in 1986, Noragric's contribution to international development lies in the interface between research, education (Bachelor, Master and PhD programmes) and assignments.

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**Declaration**

I, (name), declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature.....

Date.....14.09.2020.....

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Any errors are mine alone.

## Abstract

Well into its second decade REDD+ is still struggling to achieve what it set out to do. The envisioned win-win scenario was believed to be a cost-effective measure, where the protection of forests would be made more profitable than deforestation, by paying the owners and users of the forests for the carbon stored within the trees. However, REDD+ has proven to be neither cheap, quick or simple. Some of the criticism has been that it does not have a sound economic system in place, it fails in addressing the major drivers of deforestation, and its results are delayed and uncertain. Furthermore, studies have found that in certain areas REDD+ has led to green grabs, increased inequality and exclusions. Despite widespread criticism abroad, there has been little controversy on REDD+ within Norway, its largest contributor - fueling the program with 3 billion NOK annually. From the onset on, there has been political agreement on continuing the support, even through a shift in government from a red-green coalition to a blue-blue conservative government. This thesis investigates Norwegian politicians' perceptions of REDD+ and how these have developed throughout a decade of experiences with the program. It argues that the malleable, flexible structure of REDD+ has served in favour of the program, and allowed divergent motivations and ideologies to co-exist despite its obvious challenges. Furthermore, this thesis argues that a general lack of interest for acquiring new knowledge on REDD+ over the last decade – intentionally or not – may have led to a lack of debate on whether REDD+ is purposeful at this time in history. This *could* come at high costs.

Keywords: *climate change, REDD+, NICFI, cosmopolitanism, communitarianism, conservation, Norway*

## List of acronyms and abbreviations

IPCC - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

UNFCCC - United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

REDD+ - Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries

NICFI - Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative

OAG - The Office of the Auditor General

RFN - Rainforest Foundation Norway

FEN - Friends of the Earth Norway

PES - Payment for Environmental Services

RBP – Results based payment

NORAD - Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation

GHG - Green House Gas

COP - Conference of the Parties

NDC – Nationally Determined Contributions

CDR - Carbon Dioxide Removal

BECCS - Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage

AFOLU - Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use

MRV - Monitoring, Reporting and Verification

GPG - Good Practice Guidelines

INDC – Intended National Determined Contribution

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of October 2019, thousands of Norwegians gathered around in Norwegian big cities and yelled with their loudest voice in a symbolic gesture showing their concerns for the climate. Meanwhile thousands of students skipped school, like so many other Fridays, in a strike for climate, demanding more from the political leaders of the world, in the prevention of the climate crisis. All over the planet, people are now increasingly - and to very different degrees - affected by climate change. More frequent heat waves, increasingly intense precipitation globally as well as increased risk of drought are some of the impacts highlighted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). (IPCC, 2018b, p. 177). Currently, this panel estimates that human activities have caused about 1.0 °C of global warming above pre-industrial levels, and if the increase continues as today, global warming will most likely reach 1.5 °C somewhere between 2030 and 2052. This will come with a high cost for our planet (IPCC, 2018a, p. 6). We have been aware of climate change for many decades, but new knowledge is continuously produced in this arena. We now know that the situation is serious, and the outcomes may be disastrous (IPCC, 2018).

Meanwhile, oil is still the biggest energy source in the world, followed by coal and gas. Norway is the 15<sup>th</sup> biggest oil producer globally, producing 1,7 million barrels a day. The Scandinavian country has made its wealth on oil, and still produces a substantial amount. The export value of Norwegian petroleum amounted to more than 400 billion NOK in 2019. (Norsk petroleum, 2020a). While the oil production has decreased since the top year of 2001, the gas production increased, which means that the total amount of petroleum products is almost at the same level in 2020 as in 2001, obviously with some variations (Norsk petroleum, 2020b). Furthermore, there is little doubt that Norway is far from best in class in relation to its carbon footprint. The country comes in at 158<sup>th</sup> place of 164 countries in the sustainable development index. To illustrate what this means, Norway's material footprint was 37,71 tons CO<sub>2</sub> per capita

in 2015, while Indonesia's material footprint was 6 tons CO<sub>2</sub> per capita, and Congo's 2.21 tons CO<sub>2</sub>, in comparison (Sustainable development Index, 2020). However, while this is the trend nationally, Norway has been a key player on the international climate arena throughout the last decade and more. It was the Norwegian prime minister at the time Jens Stoltenberg who first announced that Norway would grant 3 billion NOK annually for the protection of rainforests at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Bali 2007 (Hermansen et al., 2017, p. 64). This would be channeled from the aid budget through Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI), which for years to come would be the main funder for the global program Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries (REDD+). The idea was to make the protection of forests more profitable than deforestation, by paying the owners and users of the forests for the carbon stored within the trees. It was envisioned as a win-win scenario, where rich countries could fulfill their climate commitments by buying cheap mitigation elsewhere, poor countries and farmers could fully be compensated - earning money on leaving their trees standing, and the planet would benefit from the emission reductions by the avoided deforestation (Angelsen, 2019, p. 20). The announcement and the program generated widespread enthusiasm and excitement, as it was seen as a way to cost-effectively "build a 'wooden bridge' towards a carbon-neutral economy by making live trees worth more than dead ones" (Angelsen et al., 2018b).

However, well into its second decade, the idea of REDD+ has not lived up to its goals. There have been some positive outcomes, but the program has also received widespread criticism. It turned out that paying developing countries to keep their forests has been neither cheap, quick nor simple (Angelsen, 2019, p. 21). REDD+ has been accused of leading to green grabs (Leach & Scoones, 2015, p. 68), increasing inequalities (Howson, 2018, p. 142; Howson & Kindon, 2015, p. 97), and of being the latest of numerous conservation fads (Redford, Padoch and Sunderland, 2013, p. 437). While the winds of critique have ravaged the program internationally, these winds have never reached Norway. At home, NICFI, the world's largest contributor to REDD+', has been little controversial, and sparked little public debate throughout the years since it originated (Hermansen et al., 2017, p. 8, 12).

This thesis investigates the perceptions on REDD+ among Norwegian politicians and whether these have changed after a decade of experiences. Further, it explains how divergent motivations – situated in very different core values – have been able to coexist within the politically flexible structure of REDD+. The malleable structure of the program has made it possible to justify support for the program regardless of what motivations that directs the policies. Moreover, the thesis argues that a general lack in interest for acquiring knowledge on REDD+ over the last decade – intentionally or not – may have led to a lack of debate on whether REDD+ is purposeful at this time in history. This *could* come at high costs.

## 1.1. Objective

Norway is the biggest donor to REDD+ internationally, accounting for over half of the direct finances of REDD+, I.e. for activities explicitly labelled as REDD+ (Angelsen, 2019, p. 23; Angelsen et al., 2018, p.31). This, as a result of the financing mechanisms for REDD+, which has not worked out as one initially had expected. The global carbon market has not materialized as imagined, and the Norwegian contributions have still not triggered nearly enough support from other countries (Angelsen, 2019, p. 21). This means that the Norwegian politicians' perception on REDD+ is crucial if the worldwide program is to have a future. While most political parties in Norway have stated that they are in favor of continued support for NICFI in some few sentences in their political programs, little research is available on Norwegian politicians' perceptions on the program after ten years of experience. REDD+ has been the target of considerable critique, for lack of financing mechanisms, adverse social consequences, vulnerability to political change and the overall effect of the program in broad terms, to mention some. But even after heavy winds of critique in the international academic environment, Norwegian politicians seem to stay strong in their belief that REDD+ is a right tool for tackling climate changes. The massive funding of REDD+ has even survived the transition from a red-green alliance in government, to the conservative parties. And all this while most other developed countries are declining to participate. While it has been produced a substantial amount of research on the numerous projects around the world, on impacts for the climate, the

environment and people, this thesis will turn the focus around, in order to fill a gap that so far has not been less researched. Namely, to the biggest donor country of REDD+. The thesis will seek an understanding of Norwegian politicians' perceptions of REDD+ *today*, and whether their opinions have changed over the last ten years of experiences with the program. The Norwegian funding was decided very fast and has remained stable well into its second decade. Thus, the thesis will investigate what motivations lie behind this, in light of constantly changing surroundings. Increasingly so in the midst of a global pandemic, where resources are becoming scarce, and where the economic priorities will be tougher than for decades.

## 1.2 Research questions

1. To what extent are Norwegian politicians aware of and affected by the research, evaluations and assessments on REDD+ that has been made over the last decade?
2. NICFI and the funding of REDD+ was a massive program decided over a historically short period of time. What is the motivation behind the Norwegian funding of REDD+?
3. To what extent has the political support for REDD+ survived the major shift from a red-green coalition to the sitting conservative Norwegian government?

## 1.3 Operationalization

The thesis aims at developing an understanding of the perceptions of REDD+ on the Norwegian parliament, and the two organizations that first initiated the commitment. Further, it investigates how these perceptions are formed and to what degree affected by international research and evaluations from the last decade. To start with, I investigated the substantial amount of literature on REDD+, forming an overview of the debates that has been prevailing internationally, particularly in academia. Next, I conducted interviews with one representative politician or advisor from each political party in the Norwegian parliament, as well as one from each of the two organizations Rainforest Foundation Norway (RFN) and Friends of the Earth

Norway (FEN) which proposed the program. Eventually, I interviewed one of the leading researchers in this field Arild Angelsen – professor at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences. This process made it possible to answer the first and second research questions.

Moreover, the information gathered in the interviews was thereafter used in an analysis to identify different motivations that may serve as the backdrop for a decision to continue the commitment. By applying the framework of normative International Relations (IR) theory, and the different moral starting points represented in the cosmopolitan and communitarian camps, the thesis further explores why the commitment has had such a strong position politically in Norway, despite changes of government from a red green-coalition to a blue-blue coalition. The analysis illustrates how it can be viewed as a beneficial policy strategy to support REDD+, regardless of ideological backgrounds of political parties. This answers research question 3.

Finally, the thesis argues that one should follow closer the dynamics and the relationships that are interconnected in these processes, as well as the interests and willingness to acquire new available knowledge. The findings indicate that politicians are not highly updated on research, or on new knowledge related to REDD+.

## 1.4 Outline

Six chapters comprise the thesis. The second chapter investigates the background on REDD+ from its early beginning throughout a decade of experiences up until today. First, it focuses on REDD+ seen with Norwegian eyes, from the very beginning when two NGOs used an opportunity and fitted the international idea of REDD+ into a one-page letter, leading to a big international program set out in real life on a big scale very fast. Next, the focus is on REDD+ internationally, its goals, achievements and challenges, and the responses of the project's worldwide. This part aims at illustrating the debates and why REDD+ has been so controversial outside of Norway. In chapter three, I explain and clarify choices made in relation to methodology and why I chose to do qualitative research. The chapter on methodology also provides a discussion of ethical considerations made along the way. Chapter 4 dives into the theoretical framework, in order to give a good backdrop for the analysis in the following chapter.

Thus, chapter five includes both the findings as well as the analysis. The research questions all have one section each and are answered chronologically. The conclusion follows in chapter six where I also do a humble attempt at providing some concluding thoughts. As a backdrop for this, I will make use of these last months of diving into the world of REDD+ and the challenges politicians today face – as waves of climate change are closing in on us.

## Chapter 2: Background: A fading fairytale?

### 2.1 Do climate winds reach politicians?

It may seem like the raging winds of climate change have not yet reached the homes of the world leaders. Although the Paris Agreement has a promising ambition, keeping the global temperature below 1,5 °C of pre industrial temperature, current practices are not reflecting this. If we keep up our current actions, global warming will most likely reach 1.5 °C between 2030 and 2052 (IPCC, 2018a, p. 6). Further, the target of the countries as reflected in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) “put the world on track to a temperature increase of 3.0-3.2 °C by 2100 (Angelsen et al. 2018, p. 1-3). This could turn out to be disastrous. Our youngest generation may have to adapt to a dramatically different reality, as rising temperatures, more frequent and stronger hurricanes, floods, wildfires and climate-sensitive infectious diseases will change our economic, social and political landscape forever, if we cannot halt the current development (IPCC 2018, p. 220, 240, 242, 254; Angelsen et al. 2018, p. 1-2). The solution to how we can avoid a scenario like this is as clear as it is difficult to realize. First, we can no longer depend on fossil fuels. Second, emissions from agriculture and deforestation will have to be massively reduced, while at the same time, massive amounts of carbon must be removed from the atmosphere (Angelsen et al. 2018, p. 3). However, as argued above, the leaders of the world have not been able to come near an agreement securing the realization of these measures. Instead, we are steering towards a catastrophic scenario, passing our problem over to the next generations. While acknowledging the fact that when they get access to the steering wheel, the

problems will have grown substantially, and a solution - if still within reach - will be even more difficult to achieve. Thus, the sooner we are able to at least identify a solution, the better.

IPCC (2018) identifies some alternative routes, for achieving “the net emissions reductions that would be required to follow a pathway that limits global warming to 1.5 °C with no or limited overshoot” (IPCC, 2018, p. 16). But first, it is necessary to gain an understanding of the problem, in order to conceive within kind of frames, we are now working. The possible consequences are sketched up above, but what are we actually working to achieve or rather maybe avoid? If we are to limit global warming, we have to stay within the carbon budget, which means that we have to limit “the total cumulative global anthropogenic emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> since the preindustrial period” (IPCC, 2018, p. 14). Emissions since then and up until the end of 2017, “are estimated to have reduced the total carbon budget for 1,5 °C by 2200 ± 320 GtCO<sub>2</sub>” (IPCC, 2018, p. 14). Further, what is now left in the carbon budget, is being depleted by the ongoing emissions of 42 ± 3 GtCO<sub>2</sub>. This means that depending on how you measure the global temperature, we are left with a remaining carbon budget of merely “580 GtCO<sub>2</sub> for a 50% probability of limiting warming to 1.5°C, and 420 GtCO<sub>2</sub> for a 66% probability” (IPCC, 2018, p. 14), when using global mean surface air temperature (IPCC, 2018, p. 14). In short, these numbers tell us that we do not have much room within the carbon budget before we reach 1,5 °C unless we adopt some (effective and efficient) mitigation strategies.

IPCC identifies four different models, in which all use varying amounts of Carbon Dioxide Removal (CDR), as well as the relative contributions of Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS), and removals in the Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) sector (IPCC, 2018, p. 16). The latter is where REDD+ related projects would fit under. While all scenarios/models rely on mechanisms such as REDD+, in terms of capturing carbon and storing it in forests, it is the first model that relies exclusively on this, while ruling out BECCS. However, this model relies mostly on a downsized energy system, where e.g. primary energy from coal would need to drop 97 % in 2050 relative to 2010-levels. Additionally, primary energy from oil would have to drop 87 percent by 2050 relative to 2010, while primary energy from nuclear would have to increase with 150 percent by 2050 relative to 2010. Thus, this model has some challenges when it comes to achieving its goals, particularly in today's political climate

where several leaders of oil rich countries are nowhere near downscaling their fossil fuel sector (Norsk petroleum, 2020). It is not within the scope of this thesis to investigate these models in detail, but I will briefly address the model on the other side of the scale as well, to illustrate the spectrum of solutions envisioned by the IPCC (2018). The fourth model, on the other hand, is a “resource- and energy-intensive scenario in which economic growth and globalization lead to widespread adoption of greenhouse-gas-intensive lifestyles” (IPCC, 2018, p. 16). Here, as opposed to the first model, BECCS play a vital role, “as emission reductions are mainly achieved through technological means” (IPCC, 2018, p. 16). While this scenario might not be as politically problematic as the first model, it demands enormous geographical spaces in order to weigh up for its rather heavy resource and energy use. This is not politically uncontroversial, as this land must be acquired in one way or another. This discussion is illustrative of the frames that we now have to operate within, and some of the major challenges those frames impose on policy makers and researchers looking for solutions. What is worth noting, is that in particular the first model, but also the others, will rely on storing carbon in forests, and thus depend on a mechanism that can ensure this. This holds true even if the reduction of fossil fuels is done to the extent that model one requires. As explained above, we have only a limited amount left on the carbon budget. However, solutions like these, also have to take into consideration the feasibility. Zeng et al. (2020) argues that solutions that include reforestation, that is tree planting on deforested or degraded land, in practice “necessitates broadening the focus beyond the bio-physical to include financial, land use and operational constraints that can limit the potential application of reforestation as a climate solution” (Zeng et al., 2020, p. 842). The authors explain:

“so-called ‘degraded land’ (often identified through satellite-based remote sensing) may in fact contain low densities of smallholder agricultural operations whose removal can compromise the livelihoods, food security and land rights of local communities and land users. Additionally, the long-term security of carbon stocks within reforested land may require constant site maintenance and protection as well as some degree of ecological resilience against anthropogenic and natural threats including illegal logging, tree diebacks and forest fires” (Zeng et al., 2020, p. 842).



Thus, by exploring the impacts such constraints can have, Zeng et al. (2020) finds that while “121 million ha of land in Southeast Asia are biophysically suitable, the reforestation of which would contribute to climate mitigation at a rate of  $3.43 \pm 1.29 \text{PgCO}_2 \text{e yr}^{-1}$  through 2030” (Zeng et al., 2020, p. 842), only a small fraction of this mitigation potential may actually be achievable (0.3–18%), when taking “on-the-ground financial, land use and operational constraints into account” (Zeng et al., 2020, p. 842). Moreover, according to the 2018 IPCC-report, evidence indicate “that future mitigation efforts that would be required to reach stringent climate targets” (IPCC, 2018, p. 462) associated with CDR may impose constraints upon poor and vulnerable communities, “with disproportionate negative impacts upon rural poor and indigenous population” (IPCC, 2018, p. 462). This may be the case because such mitigation efforts may bring about “increased food prices and competition for arable land, land appropriation and dispossession” (IPCC, 2018, p. 462).

Thus, the reality is highly complex and difficult to navigate within. We have little time to achieve big, difficult things. If we are to solve the crisis we are now amid, we must work hard, constructively, but also critically. To quote Arild Angelsen, who has worked with REDD+ related issues since its beginning: “climate change is serious, we have to make sure that what we do, work” (Global Landscapes Forum, 2018, 07:38).

## 2.2 From a one-page letter to worldwide climate-commitment

Norway is the biggest contributor to REDD+ globally. From 2008 to 2019, 27,9 billion NOK was allocated to the program, mainly channeled through bilateral and multilateral partners, but also to civil society organizations (Norad, 2020; Riksrevisjonen, 2018, p. 1). Norway is today responsible for 55 percent of the direct international REDD+ finance, i. e. for activities explicitly labelled as REDD+ (Angelsen, 2019, p. 23; Angelsen et al., 2018, p. 31). On the other hand, Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI), which aims at supporting efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries (REDD+)” (Regjeringen.no, 2015) is Norway's largest international climate initiative, with Norway pledging to donate up to 3 billion NOK a year (Government of Norway, 2020;

Regjeringen, 2015; Riksrevisjonen, 2018, p. 7). Through NICFI, Norway has contributed to the negotiations in the UNFCCC towards establishing a framework for REDD+, and supported efforts to facilitate and implement REDD+ in forest rich developing countries. In addition to gaining experience from these efforts, the funding is meant to contribute to achieving *quick and early emission reductions* (Riksrevisjonen, 2018, p. 10-11) The NICFI funding is financed through the aid budget, and its main objective "is that reduced and reversed loss of tropical forests contributes to a stable climate, protects biodiversity and enhances sustainable development" (Government, 2020).

After some few sporadic debates internationally, this massive worldwide program was interestingly established in just a few months, as the NICFI funding was announced by the Norwegian prime minister Jens Stoltenberg during the COP 13 in Bali in 2007 (Hermansen, 2015, p. 939). This is particularly interesting, considering the weight of Norway's financial contribution and its importance for the existence of the REDD+ program as a whole. Along these lines, it is worth taking some time entering the backstage of NICFI, exploring the process of how it came to be. I wish to start by drawing a brief map of the political climate at the time. The awareness around rainforests- and climate issues grew gradually and climbed high on the agenda internationally during the 2000s. While the initial seeds of REDD+ can be traced all the way back to 1997 and The Kyoto Protocol (Holloway & Giandomenico, 2009, p. 4), "The idea of a "compensated reduction of deforestation" (Hermansen, 2015, p. 942), was introduced and officially discussed at the COP 11 in Montreal, 2005. In October the following year, the Stern report was launched, calling for strong action and urgent global response to the serious threat posed by climate change (Stern, 2007). The report emphasized the importance of reducing deforestation and showed how loss of natural forests amounted to more emissions yearly than the transport sector. It stressed the potential for cost-effective mitigation in this area: "Curbing deforestation is a highly cost-effective way to reduce emissions; large scale international pilot programs to explore the best ways to do this could get underway very quickly" (Stern, 2007). This is illustrative of the optimism around initiatives in this area. The fourth report from the IPCC issued in 2007, stated that "deforestation and forest degradation were responsible for 17 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions" (Riksrevisjonen, 2018, p. 48). Thus, "initiatives to

reduce greenhouse gas emissions from forests were considered to be cost-effective and fast-acting compared with climate initiatives in other sectors” (Riksrevisjonen, 2018, p. 48), which would for years to come prove one of the most central arguments for keeping the REDD+ program going. This international context provides an image of how far one had come in the process of developing the ideas forming the basis of the REDD+ program on a global scale.

In September 2007 the chair of Friends of the Earth Norway Lars Haltbrekken and Lars Løvold, the general manager of Rainforest Foundation Norway wrote a two-page letter to the Norwegian Prime Minister at the time, Jens Stoltenberg, and other relevant ministers in his government. Hermansen sums up their message: “The letter reasons that climate action is urgent, tropical deforestation and degradation are important drivers for increasing global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and so preventing tropical deforestation is an important and cheap mitigation option” (Hermansen, 2015, p. 938). Furthermore, these two NGO managers worked to attract attention to their respective issues, namely the rainforest and the climate. In an interview with Erlend Hermansen related to his study on the subject, Haltbrekken said “we worked hard to raise the climate issue, for instance working through the media to shape public opinion” (Hermansen, 2015, p. 942). Further, Hermansen concludes that “these combined efforts contributed to creating a national mood that put pressure on Norwegian politicians to act” (Hermansen, p. 943, 2015). In addition to this, Lars and Lars used a lot of time and resources to push for their case politically, stretching from meetings with political parties and ministers, to getting one of the architects behind the idea of compensating for reducing deforestation, Márcio Santilli, to come help lobbying in Oslo (Hermansen, p. 939, 2015). Meanwhile, there were political struggles within the red-green coalition government during the spring of 2007, as they were negotiating their white paper on climate policies. While the Socialist Left party (*Sosialistisk Venstreparti*) argued for a more ambitious paper, the Labour party (*Arbeiderpartiet*) hit the brakes. When the paper was presented in June the same year, it was criticized for being unambitious by the opposition (Hermansen, p. 393, 2015). In a more ambitious counter proposal from the opposition consisting of the Conservative Party (*Høyre*), the Christian Democrats (*Kristelig Folkeparti*), and the Social Liberal Party (*Venstre*), the idea of a large-scale rainforest conservation initiative was mentioned (Hermansen, p. 940, 2015). Hermansen describes the following process:

“Negotiations began between government and opposition, but soon evolved into a political battle over climate policy integrity; the sitting red–green coalition would not be less ambitious than the more conservative opposition. The rainforest proposal was among the hottest topics in the discussion due to its perfect fit with the general Norwegian climate policy line of large-scale cost-efficient cuts abroad”  
(Hermansen, p. 940, 2015).

On the 13th of December 2007, merely over two months after receiving the letter from Haltbrekken and Løvold, Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg surprised almost everyone, announcing NICFI at the UN climate summit in Bali (Hermansen, p. 939, 2015). In the following January, an ambitious agreement (*Klimaforliket*) was accepted by all parties in parliament except from the Progress party (*Fremskrittspartiet*), with NICFI as one of the most important elements in it (Hermansen, p. 940, 2025). It was decided that Norway would grant 3 billion NOK annually. In the following climate settlement in 2012, the Norwegian parliament decided that this amount could be increased if other countries did the same. Later, it has been decided that NICFI will be continued up until 2030 (Riksrevisjonen, 2018, p. 49).

As argued by Erlend Hermansen, it is baffling how little attention the swift and rapid emergence of NICFI has had, especially considering “the magnitude of the Norwegian initiative in the context of REDD+ globally” (Hermansen, 2015, p. 934-935), but also the magnitude of the initiative seen from the Norwegian side. Further, there may be many reasons for *why* NICFI came into being, and most likely it is the sum of all these factors and more that made this historical initiative a reality in such a short period of time. Either way, it is noteworthy in the quest of an answer to “*why REDD+*”. Hermansen notes that “there are clear indications that both the opposition and the government have claimed responsibility for starting the rainforest initiative (Hermansen, p. 940, 2015), which indicates the prestige that rests in this initiative, and given Norway's position the last decade, the whole of REDD+. These hidden structures that made NICFI - the world's largest REDD+ donor - possible, should also be kept in mind when considering whether the ideas that seemed good then, are still as promising today. Furthermore, the prestige invested then may still be worth some today.

## 2.3 The birth of a common platform for the climate

The REDD+ idea was initially “envisioned as a mechanism whereby developed (Annex 1) countries would incentivize and compensate developing (non-Annex 1) countries for verified/certified emission reductions. This results-based payment mechanism could be mirrored within countries to ensure that forest owners and users are incentivized and compensated for the carbon sequestered and stored in their forests. Other policies, such as the effective enforcement of protected forest areas, were also assumed to play a role in national and local implementation” (Angelsen et al. 2016, p. 3). This would be financed primarily from carbon markets (Angelsen et al., 2016, p. 2), and the idea was, as touched upon, met with excitement and optimism globally, as one hoped that this would “build a ‘wooden bridge’ towards a carbon-neutral economy by making live trees worth more than dead ones” (Angelsen et al., 2018, p. 3). At this point, one thought that deforestation and forest degradation accounted for 17 percent of the GHG emissions globally, but this has later been adjusted to 11 percent (Riksrevisjonen, 2018, p. 48).

A number of elements and assumptions have been adjusted since the program was first agreed upon in 2007. First, the carbon market has not materialized as imagined, leading to bilateral and multilateral development aid budgets today being the main source of funding (Angelsen et al., 2018, p. 5 and Angelsen et al. 2016, p. 2). Second, REDD+ have evolved from its initial “carbon focus to become multi-objective, with livelihoods/poverty, biodiversity, adaptation, indigenous rights and good governance added as relevant objectives” (Angelsen et al. 2016, p 2). And last, but not least, the focus has shifted from Payment for Environmental Services (PES) to a broader set of domestic policies related to forest conservation. This change has been necessary as it has proven tremendously difficult to make and implement a system designed to reward individuals or groups directly for their effort to reduce emissions (Angelsen et al., 2016, p. 4). The idea of results-based payment has been viewed as one of the most important concepts in REDD+, and still is to this day. The structure is divided into three different phases, where the first is focusing on (1) readiness and capacity building, the second on (2) policy reforms and national REDD+ strategies, and the third on (3) payments based on verified/certified emission reductions (Angelsen et al., 2016, p. 5).

Because of the many adjustments made along the way, Angelsen et al. (2016, p. 4), argue that REDD+ today should be understood rather “as a hybrid set of policies, programs and projects at all scales that aims to reduce emissions and increase removals (sequester carbon) from forests in developing countries” (Angelsen et al., 2016, p. 4). Furthermore, seven safeguards that must be complied with have been articulated:

“(i) complement national forest programs and international conventions and agreements; (ii) maintain transparent governance; (iii) respect knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and local communities; (iv) obtain effective participation in REDD+ design and implementation; (v) promote forest conservation and other environmental and social co-benefits; (vi) address risks of reversals; and (vii) reduce leakage” (Sassi et al., 2014; REDD+ web platform, 2020).

As of 2018, more than “50 countries have initiated REDD+ strategies, subnational governments have experimented with jurisdictional REDD+ programs, and more than 350 REDD+ projects have been implemented across the tropics” (Angelsen et al., 2018, p. 6). Thus, there are many experiences out there, to provide an impression of how REDD+ has materialized on the ground. By investigating the main outcomes and challenges currently hindering REDD+ from achieving its goals may shed some light on the current state of affairs within the world of REDD+.

## 2.4 REDD+: A social and environmental climate key?

### 2.4.1 Mixed results

The results have gradually over the years shown that the idea behind REDD+ was more difficult to realize than many expected. Over ten years after its birth, substantial impacts in terms of reduced forest loss have not been possible to document, and while there are some positive results, it is still not enough to halt deforestation globally (Angelsen et al. 2016, p. 718; Angelsen, 2019, p. 20). According to the latest assessment of the world’s forests from FAO, the forest cover globally is *decreasing*. However, the rate of loss has slowed. The report estimates a

forest loss of 420 million ha worldwide through deforestation since 1990 but highlights that the rate of forest loss has declined. From 2015 to 2020 “the annual rate of deforestation was estimated at 10 million ha, down from 12 million ha in 2010–2015” (FAO, 2020, XII). Further, Africa had the highest annual rate of net forest loss between 2010 and 2020, at 3.9 million ha, followed by South America, at 2.6 million ha. (FAO, 2020, XII). Furthermore, “the total carbon stock in forests decreased from 668 gigatons in 1990 to 662 gigatons in 2020; carbon density increased slightly over the same period, from 159 tons to 163 tons per ha” (FAO, 2020, p. XV). While it is positive to see that the rate of forest loss is declining, the message from FAO is not all bright. Deforestation continues to be a severe problem and halting it a giant challenge. Forest areas globally are still shrinking by an average of 4.7 million ha per year (FAO, 2020, p. 125). The report concludes that if we continue as today, “achieving the SDG 15 target of halting deforestation will take another 25 years” (FAO, 2020, p. 125). These numbers and trends illustrate well the current situation in relation to where we are today, well into the second decade with REDD+.

The literature suggests that there are both strengths and weaknesses tied to REDD+. As suggested by CIFOR: “there are now equal measures of hope and discouragement concerning its capacity to fulfill its multiple goals” (Sassi et al., 2014). On a positive note, the authors argue that initiatives up until now have served as a catalyst for more research and capacity building for MRV, that REDD+ has strengthened the efforts to clarify forest tenure, as well as encouraging “the development of national regulations on the rights to and distribution of carbon revenues” (Sassi et al., 2014). Additionally, initiatives have led to public dialogue about low-carbon development pathways, as well as drawing attention to the diverse tropical forest ecosystems where the initiatives are located (Sassi et al., 2014). One of the main targets for NICFI from the onset, was to incorporate REDD+ into a climate agreement, an aim that has succeeded: REDD+ is a part of the Paris Agreement (Angelsen, 2019, p. 21). Further, REDD+ has contributed substantially in raising awareness on forests in the international climate agenda. Furthermore, The program has been a valuable contribution to developing national policies in this area in developing countries. While the results of the national policy reforms and individual projects

vary, Angelsen (2019) argues that overall, this has led to moderate, but positive effects in relation to conservation (Angelsen, 2019, p. 26).

Despite these positive outcomes, Angelsen et al. (2018) argue in their book “transforming REDD+: Lessons and directions” that “broad consensus is that - in practice - REDD+ has not met the world’s high expectations” (Angelsen et al, 2018, p. 3). The book sets out to evaluate the program over a decade after its launch, and the following quote is from their summary of its achievements thus far:

“Forest loss is high and, at continental level, on the rise. Results-based payments was not quick and easy to implement, and REDD+ never received the funding it needed. In spite of this, a modified REDD+ has, albeit modestly, catalyzed other approaches to protecting and restoring tropical forests, and has improved forest governance in many developing countries. Likewise, REDD+ has provided a platform for indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups to voice their concerns and ideas, and gain more visibility on the domestic and global stage” (Angelsen et al, 2018, p. 3).

Similarly, Maria Brockhaus, a professor at University of Helsinki who has worked with REDD+ related issues for many years, was asked in 2017 to name the main benefits of REDD+. Her answer was the development of forest monitoring capacity, and as a result of this, the reduced risk for e.g. civil society organizations who no longer must monitor and report physically from the forest. She highlights that this makes it easier to hold politicians and leaders accountable for the promises they are making (Devschooluea, 2017, 4:40). However, Brockhaus adds that REDD+ has not yet delivered on actual avoided carbon emissions as a result of tackled deforestation and forest degradation (Devschooluea, 2017, 7:08).

The following section will dive into the literature on REDD+ that has been produced over the last decade. Due to the fact that there has been so little controversy on REDD+ in Norway, the following section will review the big controversies that have been tied to REDD+ in academic circles. The examples to follow are only a small part of a multitude of articles and research results that have been produced from all over the world. The research focuses on different aspects, from investigating results related to actual emission cuts to social benefits or costs, or impact of biodiversity, from different projects. The results vary, and a big challenge in



one project may be very different from one in another project, e.g. in a different biome or with different social challenges. The Office of the Auditor General of Norway (OAG) investigated the results of REDD+ 2017-2018, and whether Norway has succeeded in its “effort to establish an effective instrument for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries” (Riksrevisjonen, 2018, p. 51). As this report is written for Norwegian politicians, which also are the persons of interest in this thesis, the literature review will include highlights from this. Finally, the challenges facing REDD+ today are closely related and tied together. The effort below to divide these into categories are done for reasons of clarity, hence the issues will overlap to some extent.

### 2.4.2 Uncertainties

The Office of the Auditor General concludes in its report, that “the results of REDD+ to date are delayed and uncertain” (Riksrevisjonen, 2018, p. 9). This is related to three issues linked to the core of the REDD+ idea, impeding the evaluations of its outcome, namely *leakage*, *permanence* and *attribution*.

First, *leakage* is a challenge that arises especially as a result of the scale of REDD+. Leakage occurs when economic destructive activities are moved to other locations because of a local REDD+ project (Bayrak & Marafa, 2016, p. 2), e.i. that logging is moved to a forest not included in a REDD+ program. It is related to scale, because a national REDD+ program may be seen to limit the risk of this happening within the country, as opposed to several individual REDD+ projects (Bayrak & Marafa, 2016, p. 2). This aspect is raised in OAG-report, seeing carbon leakage as a major risk, as the implementation of REDD+ till now has proven to be weak at a national level and in the important tropical forest countries (Riksrevisjonen, 2018, p. 10). An example of real risk of leakage can be found in Brazil, according to the OAG-report, where the Brazilian part of the Amazon is receiving payment for emission reductions, while one lacks good measurements - if measurements at all – of many of the remaining forests in the country (Riksrevisjonen, 2018, p. 11). This leads, in the OAGs opinion, to an overall “considerable

uncertainty over the climatic impact of REDD+ and Norway's contribution (Riksrevisjonen, 2018, p 11).

The second challenge is related to the *permanence* of the results achieved by REDD+, as the carbon is (always) only *temporarily* stored in the trees. "There is no guarantee that this stored carbon will not be emitted in the future because of economic destructive activities or natural hazards" (Bayrak & Marafa, 2016, p. 2). This is related to political changes, both in the recipient and donor countries. First, as the program today is mainly dependent on funding from donor countries, it is also highly dependent on political stability within the donor countries. Political changes here, may lead to cuts in the funding. Second, political changes in the recipient countries may pose just as big a risk to the permanence of the results. This is illustrated by the situation in Brazil, where after the sitting president Jair Bolsonaro took office, deforestation in the Amazon has shot up, and continued on a steady growing course ever since. Bolsonaro and "his government has weakened enforcement of environmental laws, by cutting funding and personnel at key government agencies" (Londoño & Casado, 2019). Meanwhile, fighting illegal activities like mining, logging and ranching has not been a priority, leading the deforestation in the Brazilian rainforest to an increase of 25 percent for the first six months of 2020, compared to the same period last year (NTB, 2020; Londoño & Casado, 2019). Thus, if not sufficiently institutionalized, state REDD+ laws and local governance for green development may easily be reversed or affected negatively due to changes in political leadership (Sassi et al., 2014). Moreover, a thought experiment may also shed light upon this issue: If we look a hundred years back in time, a lot has happened that could not have been foreseen (including two world wars). If we do the same exercise a hundred years forward in time, a lot may similarly happen that could potentially undermine these current efforts. This is not to say that it is a waste of time, merely an illustration of the problems tied to the temporality of it.

Finally, the uncertainties related to *attribution/additionality* is linked to what REDD+ should be *credited* for, referring "to the risk that reduced carbon emissions would have occurred anyway even without REDD+ payments" (Bayrak & Marafa, 2016, p. 2). The OAG-report raises this issue in relation to how Brazil already in 2008 had reached a significant reduction in deforestation, *before* Norway started its REDD+ partnership. In the following years deforestation

stabilized during the partnership, but it has been difficult to further decrease the deforestation. Exactly how much of Brazil's decrease in deforestation which can be attributed to REDD+, is thus both difficult if not impossible to say for certain. Another example where these issues are raised, is explained by Lund et al. (2017) in investigating REDD+ and another previous forest-policy model in Tanzania. When there have been projects working in some of the same ways as before in a certain area, it is often difficult to distinguish the impacts of REDD+ versus prior activities and initiatives, as became apparent in Tanzania (Lund et al., 2017, p. 132).

### 2.4.3 Tenure

Issues related to tenure have proven to be one of the main challenges in relations to the REDD+ idea. In Sassi et al.'s evaluation of 23 REDD+ sites, tenure was identified by the proponents as the paramount challenge in setting up the projects (Sassi et al., 2014). Furthermore, the challenges identified in relation to tenure are diverse. To start with, "the core idea of REDD+ is to motivate stakeholders to protect forests through the provision of conditional, performance-based rewards" (Sassi et al., 2014), thus, it is obviously of vital importance for REDD+ to identify the appropriate right-holders of the land. Sassi et al. (2014) explains how old systems and structures makes this crucial:

"It is a characteristic feature of most forests in developing countries that tenure is contested and therefore insecure. This outcome results from state appropriation of rights to forests long ago, as well as a long legacy of powerful actors exploiting forestlands and resources at the expense of their inhabitants" (Sassi et al., 2014).

This system of previously unequal land distribution has in some projects ended up being reinforced within new REDD+ projects. A study from Kenya, documents how a prominent REDD+ project ended up *reinforcing* inequalities, as "the distributive policy of the project maps onto the existing unequal land distribution" within the country (Chomba, Kariuki, Lund & Sinclair, 2015, p. 202). This happened despite a project design emphasizing equity concerns and focus on benefit distribution. The authors explain how "developments in land tenure since

pre-colonial times had involved processes of dispossession and elite capture, enabled by colonial and post-colonial land policies that left the majority of local people with little or no land entitlement. As the distributive policy of the project maps onto the existing unequal land distribution, it reinforces inequality” (Chomba et al., 2015, p. 202). Other studies tell similar stories. Melissa Leach and Ian Scoones (2015) explain how current carbon projects in Africa enters as the newest contribution in places with long histories of external interventions for the sake of the environment and development, by providing examples from Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Zimbabwe (Leach & Scoones, 2015 p. 3, 28). Further, they emphasize that these interventions are “taking place in forest landscapes with particular histories, embedded dynamic ecologies, social and property relations, livelihood practices, knowledge and understanding, and above all, politics” (Leach & Scoones, 2015 p. 3).

Moreover, Tor A. Benjaminsen and Hanne Svarstad (2018) show how a REDD+ project has led to what they argue is climate colonialism in the Kondoa district in Tanzania. They show how Norway uses its financial muscles to introduce climate change mitigation measures in poor countries, leaving the costs of these to the local people (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2018, p. 26). The project in Kondoa inherited a measure from colonial times called ‘fortress conservation’ which means that an area is closed off from local usage, imposing and enforcing strict conservation practices. In Tanzania, it led to fines and even imprisonment for the locals entering the forests (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2018, p. 33). As a compensation for the loss of resources from the forest, a selection of local farmers were trained in conservation agriculture (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2018, p. 34), but for many reasons, such as too little training and resources to succeed, this was not nearly enough to compensate the locals’ loss of the resources that the forest had provided them with before it was closed off (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2018, p. 37). This study provides an example of how tenure is complex and how old structures survive when tenure is unclear and lacking formal rights to the real users of the forests. It also shows how REDD+ has led to harm, which will be further expanded upon below (section 2.4.4). Moreover, Sassi et al. (2014) argue that addressing issues concerning land tenure, also is important due to the fact that tenure arrangements up until today have tended to favor actors

whose interests do not align with conservation nor climate change concerns, but rather the opposite:

“Tenure arrangements in many countries reflect a long legacy of providing privileged access to forestland and resources to powerful actors such as logging, agro-industrial, livestock and mining companies, and of fulfilling state imperatives for economic and infrastructural development” (Sassi et al., 2014).

Somewhat related to tenure, is the evidence suggesting that when external actors enter countries in the name of conservation, local farmers respond with acts of resistance, serving to undermine the conservation efforts. Cavanagh and Benjaminsen (2015) calls this resistance to conservation in the developing world “guerrilla agriculture, or the illicit cultivation of food within spaces zoned exclusively for the preservation of nonhuman life” (Cavanagh and Benjaminsen, 2015, p. 275). This is found in multiple studies on conservation, e.g. in Benjaminsen and Svarstad’s (2018) case in Tanzania, where the forest was used for livelihood means after it was closed off. Howson finds the same in Indonesia, as one of his participants explained: “We have always argued that the reserve has been established without discussion with us. (...) Now what can I do? I have nothing. They can fine me if they like, but I can’t pay. I will continue to use the forest like I always have” (Howson, 2018, p. 143). Additionally, setting fire to the conserved forests has also been documented as acts of resistance to conservation, which undoubtedly undermine the climate effects of the projects, as well as biodiversity considerations (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2017, p. 157).

#### 2.4.4 Social outcomes

Closely related to tenure is the social outcomes of the program, and a great deal of the literature on REDD+ concerns such issues. CIFOR argues that as of 2018, “recent ex-post studies of REDD+ interventions on the ground highlight small or mixed well-being results” (Duchelle et al., 2018, p. 137). The safeguards have become a very central and important aspect of REDD+, and “are intended to help ensure that REDD+ is not implemented at *the expense* of other

considerations, such as biodiversity and the eradication of poverty” (Riksrevisjonen, 2018, p.12). One of the main aspects highlighted within the safeguards are the “effective participation of relevant stakeholders, in particular indigenous peoples and local communities” (REDD+ web platform, 2020) and the free, prior, informed consent (FPIC). There are some positive examples of this happening, e.g. in REDD+ projects in Indonesia and Brazil, studies show how local engagement in activities related to the project, increased social learning and the trust among the villagers (Duchelle et al., 2018, p. 140). However, Duchelle et al. (2018) concludes that local participation remains limited and uneven, despite efforts of the opposite. (Duchelle et al., 2018, p. 137). Numerous studies have found “limited awareness of local REDD+ projects among affected communities” (Duchelle et al., 2018, p. 140). Bayrak & Marafa (2016) convey concerns that indigenous people and communities’ rights are not recognized by countries, and that the safeguards end up being hollow words as opposed to actual policy (Bayrak & Marafa, 2016, p. 7). They show how communities affected by REDD+ projects in Tanzania and Papua New-Guinea received little information, and how villagers in projects in Cameroon had awareness of the project, but did not know what carbon is or what it can generate, a situation that may “increase uncertainty, distrust, discouragement, and inefficiency of REDD+ in the long term” (Bayrak & Marafa, 2016, p. 7).

The fifth safeguard highlights the importance of the actions being "consistent with the conservation of natural forests and biological diversity”, while also calling for the enhancement of “other social and environmental benefits, taking into account the need for sustainable livelihoods of indigenous peoples and local communities and their interdependence on forests in most countries" (REDD+ web platform, 2020). However, the reality provides examples of the opposite happening. In their study from 2015, Peter Howson and Sara Kindon explain how the benefit-sharing framework of REDD+ led to uneven distribution in Sungai Lamandau in Indonesia (Howson & Kindon, 2015, p. 97). Their findings show that uneven distribution occurred because “local actors’ ability to benefit from the project was dependent on social relationships, REDD+ knowledge and access to local markets and capital” (Hovsen & Kindon, 2015, p. 97), as formal tenure and a ‘carbon rights’ regime was absent. The authors predict a growth in commodification of forests for carbon markets in the future, but critically argue:

“the figurative and literal distances between these commodities, as they are stored on computer servers and the remote ecosystems that created them, will continue to mask the complexities of human–forest relationships in Indonesia’s rural areas. The types of benefits available across these distances will continue to be transformed, often becoming as elusive as the virtuous ideas of equity that accompany them” (Hovsen & Kindon, 2015, p. 107).

Similarly, Krause, Collen and Nicholas (2013), identify big gaps between ambitions in the frameworks and practice on the ground, in their study on indigenous communities of the Ecuadorian Amazon. They find that despite the ambitious framework in REDD+ including the core safeguards invented to ensure social benefits, a majority (57%) of the recipients in the study answered that their family had not received any of these benefits (Krause et al., 2013).

Sassi et al. argue that “the primary value of forests for many smallholders globally is in the form of land for agricultural expansion, despite the important direct contribution of forests to livelihoods” (Sassi et al., 2014). Thus, it is access to forests and restrictions of these, that poses the main challenge in relation to the safeguards ensuring positive social outcomes of REDD+, “by either failing to protect (no-harm principle) or enhance livelihoods, or failing to do so in an equitable manner” (Sassi et al., 2014). There are many examples that show how restrictions on the use of forests have had negative effects for local people, which will be illustrated below. First, it is relevant to investigate in short Sassi et al.’s argument that “it has been widely accepted that REDD+ must minimize social risks (‘do no harm’) and promote social co-benefits (‘do good’) where possible in order to be effective and equitable” (Sassi, 2014). In order to make sense of this notion, it is useful to decide on what is seen as ‘doing harm’. Thus, for the purpose of this thesis, the notion of ‘doing no harm’, will be operated as to mean that REDD+ initiatives should avoid having ‘negative consequences for people's livelihoods and wellbeing’. Following this definition of harm, numerous articles and studies show that *REDD+ has led to harm*. This happens in multiple ways, in projects and initiatives from all over the world. Numerous studies show how carbon forestry schemes have interrupted and limited local resource use. Further, experiences show how they “entrench existing local inequalities, or destabilize local economies, while promised local incentives commonly fail to materialize in any significant way” (Carton et

al., 2020, p. 11), To mention some consequences of REDD+, research has found violent evictions in Indonesia (Howson, 2018), evictions and increasing inequalities in Kenya, (Chomba et al., 2016), exclusion and loss of access to livelihood means in Tanzania (Svarstad & Benjaminsen, 2017; Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2018), as well as coercive displacements (Lund et al., 2017, p. 132), and exclusions and evictions in Uganda (Leech & Scoones, 2015, p. 52). Peter Howson (2018) explains how REDD+ itself can lead to *violence and environmentally destructive behavior*, as “the logic of REDD+ constructs people living in and around project sites as environmentally destructive and therefore in need of incentivization to do otherwise” (Howson, 2018, p. 136). He does this, by using the concept of ‘slippery violence’, in which he understands to mean “violence as encompassing all processes that assault basic human freedoms and individual and/or collective survival” (Howson, 2018, p. 145). And slippery violence occurs, according to Howson, because within REDD+ logic:

“Local people are compensated for the ‘opportunity costs’ of not degrading forests. Within this frame ‘locals’—suffering from the malaise of dispossession—are Othered as illegal loggers, poachers, greedy miners or arsonists. In reality, REDD+ often facilitates the continuation of violence, legitimizing an image of small-holders, rather than large international corporations, as the cause of forest degradation in Indonesia” (Howson, 2018, p. 136).

In his study on the REDD+ forests of Central Kalimantan in Indonesia, he shows how women are discriminated against within the projects, as “property and access to land would stay under the men’s control” (Howson, 2018, p. 142) leaving the women as so-called supportive workers (Howson, 2018, p. 142). Further, he explains how “violent strategies of land acquisition and enclosure for conservation” (Howson, 2018, p. 142) were used, such as forced evictions by forest police. These limitations of entry “inevitably led to violence inflicted on Sungai Lamandau’s forests perpetrated by those excluded—those who relied on the forest to make ends meet” (Howson, 2018, p. 142-143). The case in Indonesia is far from the only one documenting negative outcomes for women in REDD+ projects. In their study on 62 villages in 16 REDD+ initiatives, Larson et al. (2018) finds that living within a REDD+ project site was significantly associated with a decline in women’s wellbeing. They argue that “REDD+ initiatives appear to



be repeating past mistakes, with insufficient attention to gender equality and safeguarding women's rights" (Larson et al, 2018, p. 86).

Furthermore, investigating carbon forestry projects in Africa, Melissa Leach and Ian Scoones argue that "carbon forestry projects will inevitably fail due to their inbuilt contradictions. Attempts at appropriating value from carbon that is already owned and used by others is bound to be resisted" (Leach & Scoones, 2015, p. 68). Moreover, they argue that these projects in reality are 'green grabs', as "carbon is appropriated notionally for environmental ends, but in practice to meet commercial imperatives" (Leach & Scoones, 2015, p. 68). They suggest, from their review on multiple projects in Africa, that this "alienates land and resources, reduces access and results in inequalities within and between groups" (Leach & Scoones, 2015, p. 68). Similarly, to Howson's findings, they suggest that the frustration resulting from "the disconnects between project promises and livelihood impacts, as well as local experiences of resource appropriation, can lead to deep local resentment" (Leach & Scoones, 2015, p. 65), which may again lead to environmentally destructive outcomes. The authors explain how local communities traditionally have lived within the framework of, and adapted to, the ecologies of their forests. Further, they explain how this no longer is possible, as these are closed off in different ways. (Leach & Scoones, 2015, p. 27). Leach and Scoones concludes:

"While few deny the imperative of addressing climate change, the offset market approach through carbon forestry projects in remote rural locations in Africa is so prone to failure through leakage, lack of permanence, project failure and resistance by unruly ecologies and people, that justifications that the global public goods of carbon emission reductions should override local costs to livelihoods look extremely shaky" (Leach & Scoones, 2015, p. 69).

#### 2.4.5 MRV-systems

A fundamental part of the success of REDD+ is the technical capacities for MRV systems. These are vital in making it possible to assess the avoided deforestation and GHG emissions (Hein et al., 2018, p. 8). As noted above, MRV systems are one of the areas where REDD+ have created real positive change thus far. As suggested by Sassi et al., many REDD+

countries have developed from having large gaps in their capacity for carbon monitoring, to obtaining concrete plans for improvement of this as part of its readiness activities (Sassi et al., 2014). This is relevant if we are to “make sure what we do, work” (Global Landscapes Forum, 2018) as expressed by Angelsen. However, MRV still faces some obstacles, one of them related to scale. To start with, it is the IPCC Good Practice Guidelines (GPGs) that defines the objectives and rules for carbon monitoring in REDD+. These are “developed for generating *national* GHG inventories” (Sassi et al., 2014). However, for projects at the *subnational* level, the guidelines for certifiers may prove more relevant. This creates problems as reporting to different frameworks, may lead to different results, creating issues such as “omissions, leakage, double counting and overlapping monitoring efforts” (Sassi et al., 2014). Another concern is the *capacity* related to MRV. While methods for measuring and evaluating the impacts of forest clearing in large areas are available, deforestation in smaller areas related to subsistence agriculture is far more challenging. These “processes and their specific drivers are more difficult to detect through remote sensing and suffer from lack of reference levels” (Sassi et al., 2014).

The OAG concludes rather broadly that the “monitoring of the implementation and results of REDD+ is unsatisfactory” (Riksrevisjonen, 2018, p. 11). First, the information about whether the *safeguards* are fulfilled, have proven difficult to gather, both because of the routines within the Norwegian ministry, but also because of deficient reporting from the partner countries (Riksrevisjonen, 2018, p. 12). Second, the OAG concludes that the MRV systems are still not satisfactory. This is important if we are to be sure that the money is spent on actual climate effective projects. At the same time, the report acknowledges that the establishment of a good system will cost, both financially and professionally, and that this will take time (Riksrevisjonen, 2018, p. 13). Similarly, Hein et al. (2018, p. 8) also express criticism regarding the progress of MRV given the other challenges REDD+ faces, which are co-dependent on each other: “Given the importance of precise monitoring and verification systems to assess forest stocks and flows, this technical side of REDD implementation would require much firmer commitments – and sound funding – from participating countries (Hein et al., 2018, p. 8). However, securing the necessary finance to solve this task has been even greater a challenge.

## 2.4.6 Financing

A challenge faced by REDD+ today, is its financing mechanisms, or rather the lack of such. As suggested by Pascual et al. (2013) the success of REDD+ will depend on: “the scale and reliability of its financing, the mechanism’s ability to financially compete with alternate land uses, and the fair and wide distribution of financial benefits” (cited in Sassi et al., 2014). But there are some serious bumps on the road to achieving this.

To start with, the big notion on cost-effectiveness has not been as resilient as many envisioned. This was one of Stoltenberg’s biggest arguments for the funding in the first place back in 2007, as conveyed in his speech in Bali, introducing NICFI as the Norwegian REDD+ commitment:

“Through effective measures against deforestation we can achieve large cuts in greenhouse gas emissions – quickly and at low cost. The technology is well known and has been available for thousands of years. Everybody knows how not to cut down a tree” (Cited in Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2018).

However, research and experience has shown that it may not be as cost effective as one initially thought. Rather, REDD+ and has proven much more time consuming and costlier to realize than what is commonly recognized (Lund et al., 2017, p. 124; Carton et al., 2020, p. 10).

Furthermore, the international funding for REDD+ and the large pledges following from Stoltenberg’s announcement in Bali 2007, did not last long. Since 2010 the flow of funds has gradually dwindled down (Sassi, 2014). While “donor funding was initially intended to support the start-up of REDD+ and to be quickly supplanted by carbon markets” (Sassi et al. 2014), the establishment of carbon markets - planned to be the main source of funding for the program - has not been sufficiently realized. REDD+ today, is still heavily dependent on funding from development aid budgets (Angelsen et al, 2018, p. 5). So far, “no financing mechanism has been developed under the UNFCCC” (Hein et al., 2018, p. 8). Thus, at present, “most REDD programs and pilot initiatives are therefore financed by multilateral and bilateral donors, and to a smaller extent through voluntary carbon markets” (Hein et al., 2018, p. 8). The sustainability of this arrangement is at best questionable in reference to both *permanence* and *scale*, as “donor funding is notoriously unstable and also raises concerns about REDD+ competing with other

development needs” (Sassi et al., 2014). Additionally, there are currently few developing countries participating on the donor side. Between 2008 and 2015, estimates from data on public funding sources, showed that “87 % of direct REDD+ funding of official development assistance (ODA) for activities explicitly labelled as REDD+ was committed by Norway, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia” (Angelsen et al., 2018, p. 31).

REDD+ is constantly up against the alternative uses of the forests. Referring to a fall in the price of carbon credits from REDD+ in 2013, Sassi et al. concludes that generating offsets are “less competitive relative to clearing forest for commodity production. Thus, both the total demand and the per-unit value of carbon in voluntary markets remain insufficient to compete with the opportunity costs of clearing forest” (Sassi, 2014). And despite the substantial amounts of money shipped out of the few but invested donor countries, it is too little to change the basic incentives for farmers and enterprises using the forest. The Stern (2006) report estimated that 10-15 billion USD yearly would be needed to compensate for the costs of halving tropical deforestation. The current support makes up about 10-20 % of this, a big part not being results based payment. In comparison, while such numbers are to some degree uncertain, about 40 billion USD are yearly paid out in direct and indirect subsidies for the big deforestation products in Indonesia and Brazil, palm oil, timber, soy and beef (Angelsen, 2019, p. 27). Thus, many argue that unless we tackle the drivers of deforestation, such as the above, REDD+ won’t take us very far. Carton et al. similarly argue that because the funding often is not enough to cover the opportunity costs, more profitable forms of making use of the land – which are often the primary drivers of deforestation – end up coexisting with REDD+ schemes (Carton et al. 2020, p. 10). Further, Carton et al. are skeptical that voluntary mechanisms are facing a bright future, as we are still lacking strong climate policies. They argue “in the absence of strong regulation, there is no ‘business-case’ for taking co<sub>2</sub> out of the atmosphere and permanently sequestering it in trees and soils” (Carton et al, 2020, p. 10).

The above discussion illustrates the difficult questions embedded in the core of the REDD+ idea, that remains to be solved. Seen from Norway’s point of view, the OAG concludes “that there are no predictable and adequate transfers to REDD+ globally and that Norway’s contribution represents a greater proportion than anticipated compared with the financing

contributed by other donors. A fundamental prerequisite for Norway's contribution to REDD+ is therefore not being fulfilled" (Riksrevisjonen, 2018, p. 14).

Another aspect related to the finances of REDD+ is that, because of delays in projects within the partners countries due to for example lacking approval from local or central authorities, substantial amounts of money are now stuck in accounts, waiting to be spent on what it was funded into (Riksrevisjonen, 2018, p. 9). In fact, the unspent Norwegian support alone amounted to about 10,5 billion NOK as of 2016. This is related to the three phases in the design of REDD+, money is not granted before the satisfactory institutions and capacities are in place, and can ensure transparency and accountability (Angelsen, 2018, p. 209). This structure obviously sweetens the deal for donor countries, as they are ensured only paying for verified results. In fact, this perceived low risk for donors "was a key factor in the successful establishment of NICFI" (Angelsen et al, 2018, p. 44). However, unused climate funding stuck in bank accounts is problematic for multiple reasons, maybe the most central formulated in the OAG-report, highlighting that this happens "in a situation where there is an urgent need to boost climate financing and step up efforts to combat deforestation" (Riksrevisjonen, 2018, p. 9).

#### 2.4.7 REDD+ in a power vacuum?

The critical literature also emphasizes how REDD+ (and similar programs) have developed within a political landscape. This part of the literature aims at revealing how REDD+ exists in a landscape of different powerful actors, with different agendas. Lund et al., (2017) argues that the reason REDD+ gained so much attention, excitement and resources in the first place, was because its proponents were successful in marketing the program as a win-win solution, to climate change mitigation: Low-cost, rapid, and with both ecological and socio-economic benefits included in the package (Lund et al., 2017, p. 124). The above sections have shown how REDD+ was seen as a cost-effective solution, receiving widespread excitement globally. Carton et al. argues that this "promise of cost-effective carbon sequestration is part of a wider belief in 'win-win' climate solutions where projects can be implemented cheaply while also delivering a range of other sustainable development goals" (Carton et al., 2020, p. 11). The

critical literature, however, points out how this is simplistic portraits of reality, which overstates the benefits, as well as neglects trade-offs and barriers (Carton et al., 2020, p. 11). Bram Büsher argues that the act of ‘selling success’ is central within conservation and development programs. In his study on conservation in South Africa he shows how success becomes capital through time and space, as he finds that “solutions, ideas, projects and people must actively be *constructed as valuable* to get donors and policy makers to buy (into) them” (Büsher, 2014, p. 79). This, he argues, is especially relevant when dealing with complex and contradictory empirical realities (Büsher, 2014, p. 81). In short, he documents how consultant in the projects - with obvious interests invested in its success, “was used to create and stimulate goodwill, legitimacy and interest from particular epistemic communities, namely those involved in the academic and policy worlds around (neoliberal) conservation/development” (Büsher, 2014, p. 86). While the consultants invested in the two projects Büsher investigated, *marketed* the knowledge construct as successful (aiming at selling both the idea/project and themselves), the influential actors in the agencies and institutions took this message at face value. Not only was the success story bought by the funding agencies, but also appeared in the peer reviewed literature, despite what Büsher document was wrong, as the project in reality was not (nearly) as successful as the ‘story’ claimed (Büsher, 2014, p. 87).

Several studies suggest how the win-win discourse on REDD+ has been dominant, how it in the first place led to excitement, but also how it has been maintained as experiences has been gained, even if these projects were closer to lose-lose scenarios. The case from Kondoa In Tanzania provides a good case in order to explore how these win-win discourses are kept up despite evidence of the opposite, and what power structures that underpin this discourse. In short, as was expanded upon in section 2.4.3, Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2018, p. 27, 37) could not find in their study in Kondoa, that the promises of REDD+ was realized. Rather, they found a project that increased poverty, with little effect for the climate. However, contrary to this and to the locals’ experiences, the Norwegian embassy and the NGO involved described the project as a *big success*, with substantial increase in harvesting thanks to introduction of new farming technology. When presented with this, the authors investigated, but were never able to find documentation for these claims. Despite this, the authors show how Norway continuously

portrayed the project as a success, as in a brochure about aid to Tanzania bearing the title “«increasing food production to reduce emissions»” (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2018, p. 34; Svarstad & Benjaminsen, 2017). This dynamic, where Norway aims at achieving publicity and recognition for its climate change mitigation and successful aid efforts in the Global South on the one hand, while on the other hand, local farmers in Tanzania are stripped of some of their livelihood sources, are categorized by the authors as what David Harvey conceptualized as ‘accumulation by dispossession’ (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2018, p. 27). Further, it shows how a win-win narrative was upheld contrary to real effects. The drivers here, as in the overall win-win narrative on REDD+, entails that actors in the Global North should pay for mitigation efforts in forests in the Global South, because this is perceived as cost-effective measures to mitigate climate change. Additionally, biodiversity is preserved, and local communities attended to. Moreover, Benjaminsen & Svarstad (2017) finds that the main actors conveying the win-win scenario related to REDD+, is the ones with central positions in the finance of the program, such as the government in Norway and some other countries, international organizations, NGOs and governments in the recipient countries. Similarly to Büsher, Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2017) argues that the motivations for upholding such a win-win narrative, may be for an organization to strengthen its possibility for more funding in the future, or for individuals wish to secure further career options, by having success stories on their resumé (Benjaminsen and Svarstad, 2017, p. 161). Within the aid sector, successful presentations of projects are important to not delay payments, delays which may be negative for future careers. Furthermore, as the discussion about tenure illustrated, there are often *some* local actors that gain on the project (even if the majority does not), and thus will be interested in portraying it as a success (Benjaminsen and Svarstad, 2017, p. 161). Finally, in the Kondoa case, the success narrative was able to continue because of little independent research. Consultants evaluating programs had too little time to uncover all the consequences of the project, and while there were some funds granted for researchers in the Kondoa-project, these were not even close to enough to support the necessary time-consuming research. Benjaminsen & Svarstad argues that this research ended up being more of a legitimization of REDD+, as they could show that resources on research was spent, even if this

was not enough to do thorough research on the ground (Benjaminsen and Svarstad, 2017, p. 161-162).

Moreover, the win-win discourse has been present in politics from the 1990s in Norway, when the oil industry started arguing for *global solutions* – instead of cutting at home, you could pay others to do it. To start with, economic advisors in the Ministry of Finance played central roles in developing climate policies that did not intervene with Norway's long-term interests – continued oil revenues (Benjaminsen and Svarstad, 2017, p. 161-162). Ever since then, climate efforts abroad have been Norway's most central approach to appearing as a green country, without changing its oil policies. Further the white papers on climate policies (*Klimaforlikene*) from 2008 and 2012 are both heavily loaded with notions that Norwegian mitigation can be done abroad. And while the white papers also specify numerous measures to reduce emissions at home, cuts in oil- and gas production is not even an issue (Benjaminsen and Svarstad, 2017, p. 175). This section shows how REDD+ is entrenched in politics, and how win-win discourses are upheld by numerous actors, without necessarily having climate mitigation as their main motivation. Benjaminsen & Svarstad (2017) makes an interesting comparison, as they illustrate how Donald Trump has drawn the US out of the Paris agreement, primarily to secure the country's fossil fuel sector. In contrast, they argue, Norway has been more sophisticated, going the extra mile to promote a win-win discourse on cost-effectiveness, in order to keep its petroleum industry going. But similar for both countries, it is all about political prioritizations to secure your country's fossil industries (Benjaminsen and Svarstad, 2017, p. 175).

Lund et al. (2017) finds the same dynamics at play in their study from Tanzania, where they illustrate how the success in two projects was *constructed*. The authors of this study argue in favor of a re-conceptualizing of REDD+, as representing a discursive commodity: “REDD + represents a promise of change that is carefully *managed* to ensure a balance between discursive change and continuity in practice that allow certain actors within the development and conservation industry to tap into financial resources” (Lund et al., 2017, p. 126; 133). Moreover, in a study on REDD+ and similar, but older conservation efforts in Argentina, Cecilia G. Salinas (2017) illustrates how REDD+ is marketed as creating a green future, protecting both forests and futures (2017, p. 11-13). In the study, she argues these ‘promises’ are highly political. She



explains how she sees REDD+ as re-evaluating forests to carbon storage, and by doing this, reproduces the old capitalist market logic that has created climate change in the first place. As it is these powers that first created the problem, she argues, these same powers cannot also be the solution. Today, she argues, the market is seen as the way to *regulate* environmental destruction, while it is just this logic that has *caused* the destruction (Salinas, 2017, p. 109-110). She suggests that the current economic system generates short term economic growth and green trends in win-win narratives that are not based in experiences from the people it affects, suppressing previous experiences with conservation (Salinas, 2017, p. 110-111). Similarly to the above discussion of a win-win discourse, she argues that while forest dependent people are portrayed as important and with valuable knowledge, experience shows that this ends up being just empty words in public documents and reports, made to attract more funding (Salinas, 2017, p. 111). In yet another study, Asiyanabi & Lund (2020) notes how “Global REDD+ proponents based at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), finance institutions, think tanks, and development aid agencies across 'the global North' continue to celebrate 'results', 'progress', and 'success' of REDD+” (Asiyanabi & Lund, 2020, p. 380), despite all the challenges that have been documented in the literature on the program.

#### 2.4.8 What history have thought us

Finally, a lot of the critical literature on REDD+ focuses on how REDD+ has not been born out of a thorough evaluation of history, but rather as a result of turning a blind eye to previous experiences. Carton et al. (2020) argue that within the negative emissions literature, there has been remarkably little efforts put into learning from real experiences with carbon removal. Instead, this literature has been “forward-looking and hypothetical, defined by the outcomes of scenario analyses” (Carton et al., 2020, p. 2). This, Carton et al. argue, is not sustainable, as we do not have years to waste “rediscovering what we already know about the obstacles and limits to carbon removal” (Carton et al., 2020, p. 13). Some key insights from history, developed by Carton et al. (2020) may help shed light on current practices. First, they argue, we must achieve a recognition that the concept of negative emission is political, both

today, but also an understanding of its politicized history. This is a continuation of the above discussion, but with an aim to read the politics also in historic terms. As touched upon by Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2017 in the previous section, the authors similarly suggests that negative emission mechanisms may serve to “mask the lack of effective mitigation action or contribute to legitimate the status-quo through fossil fuel lock-in (...) or delay of necessary emission reductions” (Carton et al., 2020, p. 6). A dive into history, offers a context within which to place this notion. In the Kyoto protocol, for example, the countries most hostile to climate policies, were also the ones most in favor of carbon sinks (Carton et al., 2020, p. 6). Further, in his study on 26 industrialized countries from 2007-2014, Røttereng (2018) finds that it is mainly big, affluent petroleum-producing countries that have been most active as proponents of REDD+ (Røttereng, 2018, p. 52). Carton et al. (2020) argues that economic framing, such as the cost-effectiveness argument, have also "advanced a view of the world as constituted by rational, self-interested individuals and nations rather than a world in which structural inequalities and exploitation constitute blocks on global solidarity and cooperative climate governance” (Carton et al., 2020, p. 7). Thus, the global knowledge on carbon removal becomes a simplification, which ends up reducing the biodiverse and sociocultural rich landscapes into mere carbon sinks. Thus, “in practical terms, a global perspective on carbon removal easily lends itself to broad-brushed, blueprint accounts and ultimately policies that fail to sufficiently take contextual dynamics into account. This can lead to an underestimation of complicating factors and barriers, and therefore an exaggeration of carbon removal potential” (Carton et al., 2020, p. 7). Second, an acknowledgement of “what kind of ‘work’ promises of negative emissions actually perform, and for whom” (Carton et al., 2020, p. 13), is vital for future efforts. Herein lies the notion of exploring the motives and interests that drive the efforts, to establish what outcomes are likely in environmental and socioeconomic terms. Carton et al. (2020) expands:

“The risk that negative emissions will in some way help or shore up the socioeconomic status-quo, or indeed undermine ambitious climate action, is in this sense not a hypothetical one, but a historical observation of how carbon removal has been, and continues to be framed and utilized by policy makers and corporations invested in status quo” (Carton et al., 2020, p. 14).

Third, they highlight a part of the literature that suggests that REDD+ is one in a series of conservation fads, and that this should be acknowledged and inspire circumspection (Carton et al., 2020, p. 14). Redford, Padoch and Sunderland (2013) argues that REDD+ is one of at least 10 conservation fads since the late 1970, following a definition that a fad is “an intense and widely shared enthusiasm for something, especially one that is short lived and likely to fade away once the perception of novelty has gone” (Redford, Padoch and Sunderland, 2013, p. 437). They are also in the business of urging new practitioners in the field to learn from previous experiences, rather than what they experience as happening now, merely a repackaging of old approaches into new, close to identical conservation projects. This is what they argue has been done repeatedly, and what has caused so many conservation efforts to end up as fads. Further, they explain how these new reframing of old ideas often are driven by “institutions’ need to secure donations” (Redford et al., 2013, p. 437). Lund et al., 2017 similarly argues that REDD+ is a fad, but that the notion of a ‘fad’ is too innocent, as it does not encompass practices of ‘selling success’. Thus, they argue that future efforts should critically investigate the processes and patterns of practices, when “new” conservation approaches gain momentum (Lund et al., 2017, p. 133). Finally, Carton et al. argue that the dismissal and refusal to engage in history lessons on conservation, leading to continued efforts along the same roads as before (though with new names, following from Redford et al. (2013)’s argument), “are likely to further entrench local and global inequalities and reproduce current patterns of uneven development” (Carton et al., 2013, p. 14). Moreover, they argue, if lessons from REDD+ are not taken seriously, it is the people of the Global South that will bear the costs of this (Carton et al., 2013, p. 14).

#### 2.4.9 Time consuming and complex challenges

Finally, REDD+ has had some positive effects and consequences, but also some negative ones. It is challenging that it is so difficult to determine exactly what is due to REDD+, and/or how stable the positive consequences are. The past sections show that the real and necessary reductions in emissions have not yet materialized. In addition, it has proved difficult to fulfill the safeguard mechanisms, with several examples of local people suffering as a result of REDD+

projects. Furthermore, it is not as cost-effective as expected. While the idea of “REDD+ as a cost-efficient win-win instrument to reduce net carbon emissions while contributing to biodiversity conservation and rural development” (Hein, Guarin, Frommé & Pauw, 2018, p. 9) is not as strong as it was, Hein et al. argue that “the idea that forest management can be changed more quickly than phasing out of fossil fuels is still widespread” (Hein et al., 2018, p. 9). And the expectations to what can be achieved is, despite the challenges, still high. 56 countries included REDD+ as a climate change mitigation instrument in their Intended National Determined Contributions (INDCs) submitted as part of the Paris Agreement (Hein et al., 2018, p. 7-10). However, the INDCs do not address the challenges properly, such as plans regarding the financing, the drivers of deforestation, or details on implementation, e.g. MRV (Hein et al., 2018, p. 10). With reference to the discussion above on the room we are now forced to operate within (section 2.1), it is interesting to see how Hein et al. explains the difficult reality we are amid:

“Avoiding tropical deforestation is a crucial part of achieving global climate change mitigation targets, and REDD+ —despite all its short- comings—is the only existing mechanism legitimized and recognized by all members of the UNFCCC. So far REDD+ has been able to keep its momentum, but—if the INDCs are any guidance—for most countries the path to implementation is still long. Until the question how to finance REDD+ and how to deal with the drivers of deforestation such as oil palm, soy and cattle ranching are resolved, REDD+ is unlikely to move quickly from paper to implementation on a larger scale” (Hein et al. 2018, p. 10).

Furthermore, Sunderlin et al. (2015), show limited excitement for the progression of REDD, in their article on polycentric governance. As polycentric governance often has been seen to “encourage experimentation across different levels and units of government” (Sunderlin et al., 2015, p. 3) this form of governance is viewed as positive regarding climate change mitigation. However, after conducting research on 23 subnational REDD+ initiatives, investigating whether polycentric governance in reality can serve as an alternative to centralized international climate change governance, the authors confidently conclude the answer is no (Sunderlin et al., 2015, p. 3). They argue in favor of a *binding* international agreement to mitigate climate change, which

they imagine can mobilize a large fund, within the timescale needed. Failing that, they argue, “it is difficult to see how REDD+ as originally envisioned will move forward” (Sunderlin et al., 2018, p. 12). Finally, it is also timely to address here, that the above discussion has shown that there are many considerations to be included. The global Forest Coalition (2020), an international coalition of NGOs and Indigenous Peoples’ Organizations were crystal clear in their latest review of the international program, claiming that “climate finance must be invested in climate change mitigation projects that are effective, efficient and equitable, yet the past 15 years have shown that REDD+ is none of these things” (Global Forest Coalition, 2020). While this briefing has not been peer reviewed by a relevant journal, it is relevant addressing how the voices from the forests argue after over a decade of experiences. The following quote expresses this:

“For many communities, particularly Indigenous communities, it is difficult to match their traditional beliefs with a climate mitigation scheme that puts a financial value on the sacredness of the key components of life in a forest ecosystem: Air, water, soil and biodiversity, and then reduces them to one simple measure: The carbon contained in trees. This financialization and commodification of life, governed by people in offices and traded on international market, clearly clashes with the cultural values and traditional wisdom of forest peoples” (Global Forest Coalition, 2020, p. 8).

Finally, the literature in general, related to the financing of REDD+ as illustrated in section 2.4.6, are focused on the need for *more* government support as well as the *intervention* of sound “global-scale mechanisms that provide offsetting opportunities for polluters” (Carton et al. 2020, p. 11). However, seeing how previous experiences calls for more careful designs and social and environmental safeguards, Carton et al. argues “that providing flexibility for polluters, institutionalizing cost-minimization and relying on corporate goodwill are an unlikely recipe for achieving the rapid and far-reaching transitions that will be necessary to mitigate climate change” (Carson et al., 2020, p. 11).

Norwegian politicians, who are the biggest donors globally for this program, have been quite consistent in their support for the program. Concurrently, up until now, REDD+ is to a large degree dependent on the Norwegian money if it is to survive, let alone succeed, considering

the total amount of REDD+ that is payed from Norway. Despite this, little research has been done to find out where Norwegian politicians in parliament position themselves now, with information such as the above available. Is it still as uncontroversial within the Norwegian parliament to support the funding, after the critique from international research and the OAG? What are the political discussions on the program like in the Norwegian parliament, how nuanced are the opinions, and what motivations lie behind their decisions regarding it? Is this program as controversial in the Norwegian parliament as it is in the academic circles abroad? What are the politician's arguments for continued support? In the following sections, the thesis will seek to find an answer to these questions, look into the future of international climate policies, and fill the research gap on what lies behind the decisions taken on part of the largest donor of the big international idea of REDD+, today.

## Chapter 3: Research methodology

### 3.1 Qualitative research design

The qualitative research design was chosen for this study because of its aim to investigate *understandings* and *perceptions* among the Norwegian politicians. These politicians, that have the power to decide whether to fuel REDD+ with money and resources, come from different parts of Norway, they represent different parties, with different priorities, and sometimes different moral starting points. One could assume that the politics they form is a result of how they see and read the world. While a quantitative study could have reached far more politicians in the Norwegian parliament, it might not have been possible to provide an *understanding* of why they position themselves as they do. As suggested by Berg & Lune, “qualitative techniques allow researchers to share in the *understandings* and *perceptions* of others and to explore how people structure and give meaning to their daily life” (Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 8). The overarching aim of the study is to gain an understanding of why Norwegian politicians decide as they do on

the continued support for REDD+, and to explore their perceptions of this program. A qualitative research design served as the best look in order to achieve this.

### 3.2 Data collection

The main data in this study is interviews with representatives from each party in the Norwegian parliament, as well as two interviews with the environmental organizations that first suggested the funding for what became REDD+, back in 2007. Two parties could not do an interview, which resulted in one of them, the Progress Party, answering my questions via email, and the other one, The Red Party, giving a very short comment over the phone. This may be seen as a weakness. However, the reason that the Red Party did not want to answer was an interesting finding (see section 5.1), and thus, was a valuable contribution in itself. The aim of the data collection was to get the best possible answers to the research questions, on the informant's views and perceptions on REDD+. As most parties have included a sentence or two in the programs stating whether they wish to continue the support or not, it was a target for this study to go behind these sentences and understand why, and how they reached these conclusions. And obviously also whether this has changed in light of new knowledge, such as research, or new changes in our world, such as more visible climate changes, or the global pandemic that we now are facing. In order to understand how they think and prioritize, there were multiple alternatives in terms of data collection methods that could be used. Several considerations led to the *semi structured interview*, as it opens for more of a dialogue on the relevant issues, for example by being able to vary the sequence of questions, and ask follow up questions when the participant provides interesting and relevant answers that could inform the research question with further explanation (Bryman, 2016, p. 201). At multiple times, this led to interesting questions and points of views that were not included in the interview guide. Additionally, interviewing politicians requires a certain vigilance, as many are trained in answering in ways that are not really answering the question. Being able to follow up, for example to ask about inconsistencies in the replies, made the answers more to the point on several occasions (Bryman, 2016, p. 473). While this at times made the interviews go in slightly different directions, which again made the search for patterns in the analysis partly challenging, it also gave a good picture on what

priorities and which aspects of REDD+ that were most important to the participant and his/hers political party/organization.

The idea of an objective researcher, or rather the lack of such, also deserves some attention. As Bryman (2016) argues, one might expect that researchers in social sciences are free of values and thus, objective in their research. However, a view like this is increasingly less common (Bryman, 2016, p. 34). Sandra Harding's (1995) 'strong objectivity' program has been applied throughout the research process. It separates itself from the ideal of 'neutrality', in which Harding sees a neither helpful nor necessary, but also as standing in the way of maximizing objectivity (Harding, 1995, p. 331). Her aim is to "provide a kind of method for maximizing our ability to block 'might makes right' in the sciences" (Harding, 1995, p. 334). She explains how "the neutrality ideal functions more through what its normalizing procedures and concepts implicitly prioritize, than through explicit directives" (Harding, 1995, p. 337). This concept of hard objectivity is developed in an effort to enable scientific escape from the containment by the interests and values of powerful social tendencies such as the "prevailing rules of scientific institutions and their intellectual traditions" (Harding, 1995, p. 337). Thus, striving for complete neutrality in the work with this thesis has not been a goal, neither a possibility. As a human being, student, mother, I carry different roles which has provided me with a set of experiences, which again to varying degrees has formed me and my understanding and perceptions of society. The interest in the issues that this thesis evolves around are a result of this. Additionally, I am Norwegian - a citizen of the country of interest in this study. As Harding argues, cultural assumptions shape the research project, but during the process the different aspects are "adjusted to each other such that a certain element of objectivity is produced without the promise of total neutrality" (Harding, 1995, p. 338). Thus, the fact that we are all part of communities – big and small, are facts one cannot come around. However, strong objectivity involves recognizing this. "All human thought can be only partial; it is always limited by the fact of having only a particular historical location" (Harding, 1995, p. 341). The mere acknowledgement of these facts has led to reflections throughout the process on what social relations the frameworks is formed from, and further what shapes them. Notably, this study's starting point is somewhat colored by a wish to understand why REDD+ had received so little controversy within Norway, as opposed to



outside of its borders. Herein lies already a suggestion of a critical notion of REDD+. But Harding provides two helpful insights. First, it is often the dominant ideology that restricts what one sees and shapes consciousness'. Men, like women, have learned to see sexual harassment as violations of women's civil right, and not a matter of 'boys will be boys'. Thus, it is helpful, to achieve strong objectivity, to start thinking from the different groups, such as those constituted by gender, class, sexuality, etc. Not from their point of view, but from where they are positioned within social relations, shaped by history, policies and practices formulated far from your own starting point (Harding, 1995, p. 343-344). Furthermore, "institutionalized power imbalances give starting off from the lives of those who least benefit from such imbalances a critical edge for generating theoretically and empirically more accurate and comprehensive accounts" (Harding, 1995, p. 344). When investigating the perceptions on the program, there has been an aim to understand how Norwegian politicians think and where they come from, while also striving for an understanding of the locals affected by the program. While acknowledging my cultural and ethnic background, I have strived to start my thought from the different groups. Further, I have followed Harding's suggestions for "maximizing a strong objectivity that can function more effectively for knowledge projects faced with the problem of sciences that have been constituted by the values and interests of the most powerful social groups" (Harding, 1995, p. 346). While an ideal of neutrality is utopian, constant effort has been put into achieving strong objectivity.

During the interviews, I had prepared to not indicate agreement nor disagreement. This was an easy task, as the purpose of them was to understand where the participants were coming from. However, I was aware that, as argued by Bryman, the participant may try to get the interviewees response to his or her views (Bryman, 2016, p. 472), which happened on a couple of occasions. One participant, discontent with her own answer as she felt she knew too little on the issue, asked if I might have a better answer than her. In such situations, it was an advantage having prepared not to indicate any subjective opinions on the subject. Additionally, the data also includes an interview with one of the main researchers in Norway on REDD+, Arild Angelsen. He was interviewed after all the other data was collected, in order to ask him about some questions that were relevant after the interviews with the politicians and the organizations. This

was done in order to get his opinions on some of the findings, and his thoughts around some of the aspects that came up during the interviews.

The interview guide was made on the basis of literature on REDD+ and NICFI, in particular the literature relevant for the Norwegian politicians and organizations. The first five questions were formulated openly, to understand their perceptions on REDD+ and to form a picture of what kind of knowledge they based their opinions on. The following question (Q: 6) provided an example of changed knowledge from 2007 until today. This was included to illustrate how things have changed, to trigger the participants to expand on this issue. This proved interesting, as the politician's reactions differed a great deal. Questions 7, 8 and 9 asked about the motivations behind the Norwegian support for the program, to address research question 2. Question 10 addresses the research that documents negative social consequences for the local people affected by REDD+. This question was constructed to be quite broad and in part vague intentionally, to get the participants to elaborate on good and bad social consequences, but often led to very straight forward answers, and thus not very interesting findings. However, it is difficult to see how it could have been formulated differently, as the extent of time and space for this thesis do not allow for going into all the specific countries and local projects on a scale that would be able to say something general, and not just fragmented on the social workings of REDD+. Questions 14-16 address the critique conveyed in the report from The Office of the Auditor General, as this is maybe the one evaluation one can *expect* that the politicians had read. This proved to be right and gave some interesting answers. Questions 17 and 18 are quite critical and may be experienced as loaded. However, they address the main challenges and critiques of REDD+, namely the continued global deforestation and the lack of finances for and interest in REDD+. These were important to include in order to answer the research questions and make sense of Norwegian politician's evaluations and the background for their opinions on continued support. Question 18 had some built-in difficulties, which were clear from the onset, but got even clearer in the data collection process. It illustrates well the difficulty of covering a huge, complex international climate commitment and over a decade of experiences within a time span of 30 – 120-minute interviews. The question was made this way to address the paradox that while REDD+ still is relatively short on finance, the money that do exist are not spent on actual

emissions, but on systems that we do not know if ever will give us actual emission cuts. However, the result was a rather complex question, partly leading, and with the difficult term “MRV systems”, which stands in stark contrast to some of the principles of qualitative interviewing (Bryman, 2016, p. 476). Nonetheless, despite some initial confusion, the question did result in some interesting answers, thanks to the semi structured interview method.

The interviews lasted from 35 minutes to two hours, depending on the participant’s time, level of knowledge and interest in the issue. The plan was initially to meet the participant’s, but because of the pandemic, all the interviews were conducted with Skype or Zoom. It was challenging getting some of the politicians to find time for the interview, but because many during the first weeks of the pandemic had gotten used to communicating with Skype/Zoom, this may have made a difference in getting close to all parties to participate. For example, after back and forth for days, the Labour party suddenly texted saying that a very knowledgeable politician on the subject, could do the interview in one hour. This would have been challenging, were it not for the digital communication form. In order to get the right person, the press offices were helpful in establishing contact.

Achieving *rapport* with the participants were important, as it was beneficial for the study to get them to explain the moods within their party related to the continued support for REDD+, as well as to get them reflecting on currents and prevailing motivations for the support in the political community in Norway. What are the internal discussions like, and what aspects are controversial, if any? The experience was that rapport was achieved gradually during most interviews, as they gradually understood that this was a conversation to understand their perceptions, rather than a mere critical interview. One of the politicians ended the interview saying he thought it was interesting and helpful for his own thoughts around the funding, as the questions had forced him to think about issues he had not thought about for a long time. Notwithstanding, as Bryman argues, the balance of rapport is a delicate act, as too much friendliness may result in answers aimed at pleasing the interviewer (Bryman, p. 206). However, as these are top politicians or advisors to top politicians, being very used to interviews, the impression is that we were far from achieving too much rapport.

### 3.3 Data analysis

All the politicians and the representatives for the two organizations signed an information letter (see appendix), confirming their participation in the study. This participation letter was first approved, along with the rest of the project by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD). The interviews were recorded on a recorder and transcribed manually in an online password protected folder provided by the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU). Once they were transcribed, all the interviews were reviewed again with audio, to make sure no mistakes were made.

While reviewing in order to secure the correct transcription, some initial thoughts were formed, as some issues and ideas stood out. At this point, it was necessary simply to look for “similarities and dissimilarities – patterns – in the data” (Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 155), in order to “extract core themes that could be distinguished both between and within transcripts” (Bryman, 2016, p. 11). Further, as suggested by Berg & Lune (2012, p. 155), the major topics that were initially the main focus were put into an index sheet and color coded as different categories, in addition to some other categories that were identified in the data in the first search for patterns. This systematic indexing process was a demanding and time consuming task. The color categories were first quite few, focusing on simple arguments based on whether the party or organization was in favor of a continued support, the reasons for, and what they based their main knowledge on, and perceptions on the program's developments. As the process went on, more color codes were added, in order to compare similar arguments between the participants. Finally, when all the color codes were finalized, all the interviews were reviewed again, to secure that all were coded correctly. The index sheet was now a good source for information on the data, in particular for providing a “means for counting certain types of responses in order to suggest magnitudes in response sets or for beginning content analysis of various specific themes” (Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 156). After completing this stage, these categories were again coded into two major code categories (Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 155) differing between responses that corresponded with cosmopolitan ideas, communitarian ideas, or not relevant for this categorization. For example, where the category highlights altruistic reasons as motives for

supporting REDD+, it was color coded as cosmopolitan, while a category that highlights ideas on how Norway may achieve better circumstances with a continued support, were color coded as a communitarian. After this, the interviews were re-read to secure that the arguments did in fact fit these new umbrella color codes.

### 3.4 Ethical considerations and theory

The participants in the thesis are anonymous. This was not the plan originally, and was thus not promised to the participants. However, the choice was made during the writing process, as the harm-to-participants principle became increasingly relevant and an issue difficult to avoid addressing. As argued by Bryman, BSA Statement of Ethical Practice cautions “researchers to anticipate, and to guard against, consequences for research participants which can be predicted to be harmful” (Bryman, 2016, p. 127), and that one should strive to minimize disturbance to the participants (Bryman, 2016, p. 127). Further, it is not an easy task to here determine exactly what could lead to harming the participants, nor if it was likely at all. These are all grown up and well-established politicians, used to participating in the public sphere, used to argue for their opinions, and even more often have their opinions questioned. However, this is not an argument in favor of not pursuing protection from harm to the participants (Bryman, 2016, p. 127). As it was necessary to put some of the responses from the interviews in connection with relevant literature, in order to make sense of the notions, and because this thesis is critical in nature, the choice to anonymize was done to exclude possibilities of negative consequences for the participants. Before the decision on anonymity was decided upon, considerations like these restricted (to some degree, conscious or not) what quotes that could be used. Additionally and importantly, exactly which politician, advisor or employee that said what is not relevant for the thesis. The aim here, is rather to understand movements and currents related to this big climate commitment, within the political community in Norway, in which the participants shared their views on. Furthermore, *who* read or meant what related to REDD+ is neither relevant, rather the bigger picture related to what knowledge forms the politicians’ perception and choices, which

provides just as good a picture as if the participants were identified. Where it is relevant, the party of the respondent is obviously included.

The results of the study proved to be more nuanced than what the political programs could tell. However, after the data collection and analysis, it was clear that many politicians and political parties still argued in favor of a continued support for REDD+. Usually, politicians become politicians because they want to make good politics, in order to improve and better our conditions and surroundings. Thus, there are good reasons to believe that all the politicians have good ethical and moral backgrounds for their choices. The process of analyzing what moral choices lie behind the decision to keep funding the arguably controversial REDD+, could prove challenging ethically, without a good framework to operate within. Two camps within normative IR theory were helpful to sort and understand, namely *communitarianism* and *cosmopolitanism*. The balance between the importance of not framing the opinions of the different politicians within a context they do not feel at home within, while also working to sort out the differences and similarities in their arguments, have been maybe the most challenging task in the process of writing the thesis. One highly important note here, which cannot be emphasized enough, is that many of the politicians did not necessarily argue in a communitarian or cosmopolitan fashion themselves, but rather aired their thoughts and reflections on what values may lie behind different decisions. For example, when asked to reflect on what he saw as motivations on Norway's central role in working on REDD+, the politician from the Socialist Left party answered "It may be, that there are divergent motivations (...), some actors' motivation may be that this will create a more flattering picture of Norway, given our big oil production. But my motivation, and our motivation participating in this, is that it is an effective measure in our fight against climate change". Thus, this answer indicates that there may be both communitarian values (in this example, improving Norway's status in the international arena, and even that it may help legitimize the oil production) as well as cosmopolitan values (Norway contributes more to tackle our common climate changes). Concurrently, themes that resonate with communitarian ideas, and are thus coded as such, may not necessarily be that politician's own conviction or arguments, but also his or her thoughts and reflections on what may be underlying values in the political climate in Norway today. Further, using the framework provided by

normative IR theory and cosmopolitanism and communitarianism, allowed for a system of comparison of ideas and reflections on the underlying motivations, while at the same time avoiding any moral judgement of these motivations. The strength of this framework is amongst others, that it can contribute to making clearer an understanding of what *values* that have made possible REDD+'s survival through multiple governments, in particular the transition from a red-green coalition to a blue-blue conservative coalition, and the divergent political ideologies this transition involves.

Further, I argue that the relevance of using a normative IR framework when investigating international relations is growing for several reasons. First and foremost, the interconnectedness following from globalization paves the way for a wide variety of consequences that one community (or more) can impose on another (or several), whether intentionally or not (Shapcott, 2017, p. 206). Further, globalization has opened for a better understanding of other communities. Now, information about e.g. suffering in countries far away is more easily available, leading to increased awareness, and importance to address these kinds of ethical dilemmas (Shapcott, 2017, p. 206). And while we, as one humanity, now are facing the tremendous challenges posed by climate change, with the myriad of ethical considerations that brings to the table, several national states are choosing populist leaders, promoting protectionism and closed borders as their main priorities on the policy agenda. While climate change *demand*s global solutions and cooperation, these politician's message is often far closer to the communitarian camp, than the cosmopolitan. This illustrates how analyzing these issues and the arguments and policy choices done within a normative framework and the two camps may help sort out and increase understanding in general on issues that emerges in the nexus of globalization and climate change.

# Chapter 4: Theoretical framework: The cosmopolitan and communitarian ideas

## 4.1 Normative theory

According to the UNFCCC “the largest share of historical and current global emissions of greenhouse gases has originated in developed countries” (UNFCCC, 2012). However, it is the poorest developing countries that feel the consequences of climate change hardest, while also being the ones in poorest shape when it comes to adapting to these (Laksa, 2014, p. 372). Thus, the debate on solutions to climate change contains clear ethical aspects. It is argued that “wealthier countries, from this perspective, have a duty to compensate the least well off for their pollution in order to help them adapt to climate change” (Laksa, 2014, p. 372). This notion is reflected in the statement about “common but differentiated responsibilities” in the UNFCCC from 2012:

“the global nature of climate change calls for the widest possible cooperation by all countries and their participation in an effective and appropriate international response, in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities and their social and economic conditions”  
(UNFCCC, 2012).

This was inherited and included also in the Paris Agreement, where “in light of different national circumstances” (Paris Agreement, 2017) was added. Another ethical aspect is the responsibility for our next generations and the focus on a systematic change in our values and way of life (Laksa, 2014, p. 372). Another difficult ethical consideration, is raised in the connection between economic growth and the production of greenhouse gas emissions (GHGE). Reduction in GHGE for poorer countries “entails immediate costs and implies a restriction on the prospects for economic growth in those countries that need it the most” (Shapcott, 2017 p. 209). This stands in sharp contrast to developed countries’ situation according to Richard Shapcott. He argues that



while mitigation measures in developed countries, will affect merely “non-necessary aspects of their quality of life” (Shapcott, 2017, p. 209), the reduction of emission in poor states “will more likely affect the basic necessities of life and survival” (Shapcott, 2017, p. 209).

Climate justice addresses issues such as the ones discussed here. The definitions of climate justice varies, which is illustrating of the many approaches to ‘justice’, but also the complexity of climate change (Schlosberg & Collins, 2014, p. 359). Schlosberg & Collins (2014) highlights three perspectives on climate justice, which will briefly be mentioned here to provide an impression of the issues relevant to this concept. First, *academic theories of climate justice*, address for example historical responsibility approach, which refers to the polluter pays principle and the “climate debt of the developed countries” (Schlosberg & Collins, 2014, p. 635), as well as the development rights approach. This states that before having any mitigation responsibility, all countries should be able to develop out of poverty. Both the above approaches are reflected in the ‘common but differentiated responsibilities’. Finally, the human rights approach is also central within academic theories, starting with the notion that climate justice has to strive for achieving the basic human rights that we have all agreed upon, as climate change violates exactly the “human rights of life, health and subsistence” (Schlosberg & Collins, 2014, p. 365). Further, the elite NGOs address many of the same issues, including the development rights approach, a “north/south approach, a human rights approach, and a commitment to carbon markets” (Schlosberg & Collins, 2014, p. 366). Finally, the grassroot movement’s perspective on climate change, influenced by the environmental justice movement, started off with a focus “on *removing the causes* of climate change, as well as addressing the inequitable impacts of the oil industry at all stages (...). But it also addressed fostering a ‘just transition’ to a post-carbon economy and providing assistance to vulnerable communities” (Schlosberg & Collins, 2014, p. 366). Moreover, grassroot movements today have different, interrelated concerns, related to how the fossil fuel production impacts already vulnerable communities, how participation and procedural justice has to be a key in change, as well as “the basic functioning and provision of needs in vulnerable communities, including ecological communities”(Schlosberg & Collins, 2014, p. 368). Thus, drawing on the logic applied in this discussion, Norway, a nation with its wealth built on oil production, has a clear ethical responsibility to contribute substantially to

climate change-solutions both nationally and internationally. The report “Norway’s fair share of meeting the Paris agreement”, argues for example that while Norway’s population only makes up 0.07 % of the total global population, the country’s “fair share of the entire global mitigation effort is 0.65 %” (Kantha, Holz, & Athanasiou, 2018, p. 23).

Solutions to the climate crisis are thus packed with difficult moral and ethical considerations regarding what *should* be done, how the leaders of the world should and ought to prioritize their resources. Additionally, the time frame in which we are operating within makes the issue even more challenging. It is only a limited time, where one has the luxury of *choosing* what *ought* to be done. This time frame may also arguably be said to push countries gradually to prioritize adaptive measures as the climate winds reach our borders and houses, which may leave the mitigation measures a non-priority and unattended. Normative International Relations (IR) theory may be helpful in such regard, as it addresses issues like this; the moral aspects of inflect political issues in the international arena. Chris Brown explains that:

“by normative international relations theory is meant that body of work which addresses the moral dimension of international relations and the wider questions of meaning and interpretation generated by the discipline. At its most basic it addresses the ethical nature of the relations between communities/states”. (Brown, 1992, cited in Jackson & Sørensen, 2010, p. 291).

A big divide within normative thinking in International Relations is the one between cosmopolitanism and communitarianism. These two camps are multi-faceted, and there are multiple nuances within the two, but they illustrate well the fundamental divide in views. According to Brown, the opposition between cosmopolitans and communitarians have been present ever since the beginning of political thought (Brown, 2011, p. 153-154). To highlight the main divide, he refers to thinkers such as Kant and Hegel, which offers some broad attitudes and moral categories which can be applied to contemporary issues. In short and very simplified, while Kant acknowledges the moral duties towards strangers, Hegel emphasizes our moral obligations towards our fellow citizens (Brown, 2011, p. 154-155). Similarly, Andrew Linklater frames this divide “as one of the oldest and most fundamental problems in international relations” (Linklater, 2002, p. 135). On one side, we live in communities where we are used to

considering our fellow citizens first, while we at the same time are aware of and to some degree carry with us, the principle that we are all equals, members of the same human race, where one human being “counts for one and only one” (Linklater, 2002, p. 135). He further asks the central question in this regard: “We therefore have to ask ourselves what is the relationship between the duties we have to co-nationals and the duties we have to the rest of the human race?” (Linklater, 2002, p. 135). While Brown see determining which of these doctrines has and ought to have priority as one of the main tasks of normative theory, many are content with the fact that the normative conflict between cosmopolitanism and communitarianism cannot be resolved, but “merely be *understood* and hopefully managed in an enlightened fashion” (Jackson & Sørensen, 2010, p. 292).

Mapping out the fundamental values that serve as a background in the politics on REDD+, and applying this to the ethical framework provided by normative IR theory may serve as a tool to improve *understanding* of why REDD+ has survived a decade of international criticism, changes in government, and lack of interest from other developed countries. However, it is important to note here, that the notions and motivations that serve as a backdrop for the support for REDD+ obviously cannot fully or perfectly fit into these two camps. There are many grey areas, and the nuances in this landscape are diverse and manifold. Thus, this analysis is carried out more in an effort to sort out and provide a framework for understanding some of the main notions that are raised in the interviews, and further sort out where in the political landscape these are positioned. This way, it may be possible to operationalize the findings in a discussion on how REDD+ has survived with little controversy, the major shift from a red-green coalition to a blue-blue, and further to operationalize these findings.

#### 4.1.1 Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitans main assumption rests on the notion that we are all human beings, and because of this fact, we all have some moral duties to all human beings of the world (Shapcott, 2017, p. 207). In other words, cosmopolitans “are concerned with the individual as ‘human’ and not just ‘citizen’, and with the global community of all humans and not just the many and various

particular political communities” (Morrice, 2000, p. 238). Further, this notion means that everyone has equal moral standing, regardless of race, gender, belief or other morally irrelevant features such as these (Shapcott, 2017, p. 207). Following from this, and importantly, Shapcott argues that:

“a cosmopolitan commitment means one’s national identity and well-being should not come at the expense of outsiders. Obligations to friends, neighbors, and fellow citizens must be balanced with obligations to strangers and to humanity” (Shapcott, 2017, p. 207).

While this notion of *one humanity* is somewhat common for cosmopolitans, this camp is manifold and diverse. While they may share some basic understanding and beliefs, the difference between cosmopolitans can be vast. One distinction can be made between moral cosmopolitanism, where the emphasis is on the individual, as opposed to institutional cosmopolitanism with its focus on “the rules that govern society” (Shapcott, 2017, p. 208). Another distinction is made between thick and thin cosmopolitans, where the former appeal for global egalitarianism, e.i. That political institutions should work to achieve total equality of both rights and goods in the global community (Shapcott, 2017, p. 209). Thin cosmopolitans on the other hand, are considerably more modest in their quest for equality, and argue rather for “at most only minimal duties not to harm, to aid in case of emergency, and to help uphold minimal human rights standards” (Shapcott, 2017, p. 209). This branch of cosmopolitan thinkers is not so far from their communitarian counterparts in certain issues (Shapcott, 2017, p. 209). For the clarity of this thesis, it will not be helpful to dive into all the nuances within these two normative camps in IR theory. In order to sort out and understand the underlying values that drive the politician's decisions on REDD+, I will for the sake of this thesis focus on arguments that are consistent with the core of the *cosmopolitan* ideas, which are often closer to thick cosmopolitanism.

Andrew Linklater argues in favor of a distinction that is helpful to address, for the sake of this analysis, as he draws the attention to the cosmopolitan duties. In general, a central distinction within cosmopolitanism is the division between positive and negative duties. The former is related to acting, “which may include duties to create a just social order, or duties of assistance” (Shapcott, 2017, p. 208). The latter is duties related to “stop or avoid doing something, usually

duties to avoid unnecessary harming others” (Shapcott, 2017, p. 208). This latter set of duties are challenging, because it is not as straightforward as it may seem. In an example where one state is inflicting harm on another, the case may be clearer (it should stop doing so), however, and more relevant for this thesis, what about when multiple states engage in harmful practice with diffuse consequences, such as the case in question, global warming (Shapcott, 2017, p. 208). Here, we arrive at Linklater’s suggestion, as he separates the cosmopolitan duties into three categories or relationships. Overall, his argument is that “a community that wants to make progress in a broadly cosmopolitan direction has to avoid inflicting harm on others and avoid being a beneficiary of the harm that befalls outsiders” (Linklater, 2002, p. 146). Further, he distinguished between, first, “bilateral relationships: What ‘we’ do to ‘them’ and vice versa. Second, third-party relationships: what they do to each other. Third, global relationships: what we all do to each other” (Shapcott, 2017, p. 208). The first and the third category is relevant to briefly address for the case in question. The first relates to refraining from causing unnecessary suffering in war for example, an issue Linklater argues we have made progress within. He illustrates this with examples such as the international law of war, or with “broader cultural shifts that challenge basic distinctions between the civilized self and the uncivilized other” (Linklater, 2002, p. 146). While these examples are different in character from the case in question in this thesis, I argue that this point is relevant also here. Following the cosmopolitan logic, one has to make sure that a program, even if designed to help others (and oneself) is not in any way also contributing to harming ‘them’. Even if the program is designed to promote good, one has to pay close attention so that it does not while doing good, also end up with ‘us’ hurting ‘them’. While the second relationship also can be argued as relevant, as there are examples where governments in the participant countries or other actors within the REDD+ realm have caused harm to communities in the same country, the third relationship is even more relevant, as it is more closely related to the climate issue. This last relationship “refers to practices or harms to which many communities contribute, often in different proportions, as in the case of global warming. “(...) States have a negative duty not to export harms to the world as a whole, and a positive duty to contribute to the resolution of issues arising from such harms” (Shapcott, 2017, p. 208). This can also be seen as relevant for the REDD+ program.

### 4.1.2 Communitarianism

When moving into the communitarian camp, the focus shifts from the individual as a human being towards the individual within a community (Morrice, 2000, p. 238). Communitarians focus on values and meanings *within* the community, rather than establishing “the validity of non-existent objective or neutral universal principles” (Morris, 200, 237). Morris explains this notion, so central for communitarians, in further detail:

“communitarians argue that individuals are constituted by the communities in which they live, and that the values which influence individuals’ behavior, together with the meanings by which they make sense of their lives, derive from their community. Communitarians argue that individuals are embedded in their communities, and are encumbered by community ties” (Morris, 2000, p. 235).

Further, this is elaborated upon by Alasdair MacIntyre (1981), as he argues that we all carry with us social identities, in being a mother, a daughter, an uncle, or a citizen of a certain city or nation. He argues that what is good for me, has to be for the person who inhabits these roles as well. As such, he continues, “I inherit from the past of my family, my city, my tribe, my nation, a variety of debts, inheritances, rightful expectations and obligations. These constitute the given way of my life, my moral starting point” (cited in Morris, 2000, 236).

Finally, and in summing up the theoretical background for the analysis, it is important to note that the case of working to halt climate change cannot be placed exclusively in neither the cosmopolitan nor the communitarian camp, as it is in the interest of everyone, both within and without your own community, to halt climate change. One can argue that a communitarian is just as eager to halt climate change in order to keep his community safe, as a cosmopolitan would be in his or her wish to keep all human beings safe. However, identifying the different motivations behind their efforts at halting climate change would open up for an understanding of their aims, and in turn it may uncover whether it is mainly communitarian or cosmopolitan ideals that form and drive his or her efforts. Further, because of the flexible political structure of REDD+, it may very well be that the motivations behind the political will to keep it going, rests in different goals, not just in terms of mitigation efforts. With a program invested in solving numerous

challenges, with different results coming out of it, the motivations driving it may also be manifold. Identifying these within a broader framework may after all increase our understanding on where in the political landscape of values, ideas and ideologies these motivations reside.

## Chapter 5: Findings and analysis: A cosmopolitan and communitarian dream

### *5.1: RQ 1: To what extent are Norwegian politicians aware of and affected by the research, evaluations and assessments on REDD+ that has been made over the last decade?*

The politicians were quite consistent in their responses regarding the research, evaluations and assessments of the REDD+ program. Everyone pointed to the report made by The Office of the Auditor General of Norway, a report which they in general view as an important evaluation. Similarly, a big majority of the participants highlighted the value of such an assessment, especially because of the size and character of this massive, international climate program. Moreover, many pointed out that the remarks in the report are serious and grave, and that these must be followed up thoroughly. However, all the participants were also somewhat consistent in their notion of this being a report that should work as a tool for the future *improvement* on REDD+. None of them considered the remarks and conclusions as *too* grave, and thus did not see it as any reason to end the funding, nor initiate a debate on such an outcome. As the politician from the Conservative Party said: “the OAG’s job is to draw attention to the critical aspects, and are not supposed to use a lot of time and effort applauding what works”, while also highlighting that it is important to take note of the remarks and address what does not work. Another politician from the Labour Party followed the same logic and highlighted what he experienced as an unavoidable presence of risk in projects like REDD+: “It isn’t possible to do projects like this where everything happens exactly as one had planned or which can withstand

the OAG-test. It is risky, and it is challenging questions to work with. In my opinion, the right choice is to take this risk, and continue to work on these incredible difficult issues". To start with, this notion, was shared by several participants: 'That it is risky, but we should keep on taking these risks', is ethically problematic, as it raises questions such as: Exactly what is put into this concept of 'risky' (that we can tolerate)? Whom it is risky for? What are the consequences of these risks? The literature review shows that REDD+ is risky for many reasons. Further, as the literature review has illustrated, the challenges raised in the OAG-report are big, systematic challenges that will take time to solve, if they can be solved at all. However, the politicians all have in common a notion that these challenges can be overcome with time and effort. None appeared unsure that the 'obstacles' that were addressed in the report, such as the lack of finance, time and results (for the climate or social) could not be worked through. However, when asked if it is possible to solve these challenges (including fulfilling the safeguards) within the timeframe given in the last IPCC reports, and still be able to cut/save as much emissions as needed in time, the general impression was more hesitant answers. Many conveyed uncertainty and concern on whether the program actually could deliver what it has set out to do in time and asserted that they think it is difficult. The majority of answers were different versions of a hesitant "difficult, but possible", while the advisor from the Christian Democrats, despite his strong hopes and beliefs, simply called it "mission impossible". Being one of the clearest voices, he followed up this comment with: "the short answer to this question is no". However, this participant, in company with the rest of the politicians except from the Progress Party, added a notion that this doesn't mean that we should give up. Some parties as well as the organizations, argued that the program should not be exclusively measured on its mitigation effort, but also other factors such as biodiversity or other safeguards, following from a logic that REDD+ achieves more than just mitigation.

Another argument, mainly from the Green Party, was that the results so far did not show that it leads to much harm, thus it is worth keeping it up: "We have seen (...) that it may not have as big an effect as one could hope for, but we have seen little experience from it inflicting harm" (p. 2). These findings raise two questions. First, it is worth noting that it is interesting to see how the critique from the OAG is partly dismissed because the OAG as an institution is there to



critique, not celebrate the good. It may give an impression that the critique is not that severe, because of the critical nature of the institution that brings it about. However, it does not give a sound reflection of the OAG's job, which is not necessarily to be critical, but rather to ensure that "the central governments resources and assets are used and managed according to sound financial principles and in compliance with parliamentary decisions" (Office of the Auditor General, 2020), with a vision to audit "to benefit the society of tomorrow" (Office of the Auditor General, 2020). Notably, all the participants highlighted that the critique was a good contribution to be worked further with. However, in light of the above discussion, it is timely to ask how serious they take the critique coming from the OAG, and why this has not caused for more debate politically. Second, the OAG's critique followed much of the same logic as the conclusions from several of CIFOR's evaluations, as well as numerous articles from research conducted all over the world; that REDD+ is facing formidable and complex challenges without no obvious single solutions (Sassi, 2014). However, neither the politicians nor the organizations mentioned any of these when asked to highlight some literature on REDD+ that in any way had affected their perceptions on REDD+ throughout the last decade. Further, except from some very few exceptions, none seemed very worried that these issues were something that could not be solved with time, (more) resources and effort.

In his much cited article on confirmation bias, Raymond Nickerson (1998) argues that this often is a process not of explicit or consciously one-sided case-building, rather as "unwitting selectivity in the acquisition and use of evidence" (Nickerson, 1998, p. 175). Moreover, he suggests that there is also extensive evidence to support "the view that once one has taken a position on an issue, one's primary purpose becomes that of defending or justifying that position" (Nickerson, 1998, p. 177). The discussion on the emergence of NICFI and the support for REDD+ in section 2.2 showed how there was almost competition between the parties to take the credit for this policy. Thus, put together with the fact that none of the participants had been affected by any research that they could mention in the interviews, despite this being Norway's biggest climate initiative, may raise questions as to whether mechanisms like these are at play. Nickerson suggests that confirmation bias can occur in the policy arena, as a process of justifying a policy that has been adopted and implemented:

“I suspect that this type of bias is especially prevalent in situations that are inherently complex and ambiguous, which many political situations are. In situations characterized by interactions among numerous variables and in which the cause-effect relationships are obscure, data tend to be open to many interpretations” (Nickerson, 1998, p. 191-192).

There is little doubt that REDD+ and climate change in general are both systems of numerous variables with a high degree of obscure cause-effect relationships. It is conspicuous that none of the politicians had any research to mention, that had affected their perceptions throughout the last decade. Especially so, considering the extent of research that has been done on REDD+, that “probably number in the thousands” (Lund et al., 2017, p.124).

Another argument, that may also be seen in light of this discussion, was mainly elaborated on by the Social Liberal Party, who has good experience with REDD+ from the political arena:

“To start something new within the timeframe we now have, and push through a completely new system in the UN, when REDD+ is already there, as part of the Paris agreement, when I know how hard it is to negotiate these kinds of agreements, you would use all the time to find the alternative. We have to use the alternative we already have, and develop this during the years we have. We have to. There is no alternative.” (P. 10).

Furthermore, this participant expressed here a notion conveyed to varying degrees by all the politicians as well as the organizations. In different manners, and this was maybe one of the clearest findings, the notion that there is no other alternative than to keep the REDD+ program going. Thus, they argued, we have to keep on doing REDD+. This logic is a bit curious, as there is obviously another alternative: To stop doing it. Thus, it is baffling that the general impression on the one hand was little engagement in the research generated throughout the previous decade, while on the other hand, so certain notions on it being the only possible (right) thing to do. This again, may raise the question on how unwittingly this seemingly lacking interest at keeping

updated on the program is. This notion will be further discussed in the theory-analysis in the following section.

In sum, none of the politicians nor the organizations mentioned any research or evaluations on REDD+ from the last decade that had affected their perceptions, other than the OAG-report. However, several mentioned RFN as their main source of information regarding REDD+-related knowledge. As the politician from the Socialist Left party said, “I have not followed this very detailed. I have to a large degree trusted RFN, an organization in which I experience as a very serious actor in the work on REDD+”. Also the Labour Party and the Red Party referred to RFN as a good source of knowledge on the program. Even FEN referred to RFN as their trusted source of information. When asked the same question, RFN answers that they have been affected by both research and evaluations throughout the decade, and mentions NMBU-professor Arild Angelsen, as an important source of information for them, to keep updated on the new knowledge. Further, they suggest that “the challenge is to plan for the way forward, and this answer can't be found in research. Research gives us a base which can be used to understand what has worked and what has not, to identify barriers. Then we can use this information as a backdrop to point to new directions for the program”. To start with, this stands in some degree in contrast to the discussion in the critical literature, which aim at urging scientists and policy makers to pay more attention to previous experiences, as they argue this is important to avoid even more conservation fads, and wasted years on repeating past mistakes. While RFN seems to be using available research in identifying the way forward, this does give an impression that it is not as much used to investigate whether REDD+ is right or not, but rather what can be done to improve it. Furthermore, and it is important to highlight here, that the intention or aim for this thesis in no way is to question the quality of the work done by anyone interviewed for the thesis, or other institutions working on these issues. This work is experienced as both sincere and enlightened. However, there are reasons to draw attention to the fact that the only ones mentioned in relation to knowledge on REDD+ by the participants - except from the OAG-report - are the main receivers of funding from NORAD: CIFOR and RFN (CIFOR, 2020; Regnskogfondet, 2020). This is important to address because it may influence what questions are asked when evaluating the Norwegian funding for REDD+. To start with, it is relevant to remark

here that RFN is an NGO, and not an independent research institute such as e.g. a university. As touched upon in the literature review, Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2017) argues that organizations may have an interest in establishing and maintaining a success narrative, because successful projects may lead to more financing of other projects in the future, which serves both the organization and the individual working in the project's future career (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2017, p. 161). RFN has played a central role as an important partner for NICFI ever since the beginning, "regarding policy design and portfolio development, both in Norway and abroad" (Hermansen et al., 2017, p. 9). Because of REDD+, RFN's budget were considerably increased, as well as their staffing. Moreover, RFN is the second largest beneficiary of NICFI funds (Hermansen et al., 2017, p. 9). In their study investigating NGO's role in NICFI, Hermansen et al. (2017), argues that "NGO/government relations in Norway constitute a rather special case – not least because NICFI originates with an NGO proposal, and (...) NICFI more generally has been very dependent on policy advice" (Hermansen et al., 2017, p. 19). They find that co-operation has been high, and confrontation in the form of public criticism has been relatively small, at least criticism directed at their funders (NICFI). However, they also find that NGOs have made use of their positions, and rather chosen private channels to express their criticism. Hermansen et al. (2017) explains:

"Evidence from Norway and Brazil suggests that instead of publicly criticizing a global initiative that they largely support and have huge stakes in – and thus put the initiative as a whole at risk – NGOs to a larger degree have used other more informal channels to voice points of disagreement" (Hermansen et al., 2017, p. 22).

Thus, they find that NGOs are aware of their operating space, and navigates within this - and knowingly trade public visibility for direct contact with policymakers, because this makes it easier to achieve "policy impact – the ultimate goal for most NGOs – which in this case has been substantial" (Hermansen et al., 2017, p. 22-23). Thus, RFN may serve as a good, informed and sincere source of information on REDD+ for policy makers. However, it is timely to ask if they should be so dominant as the findings here suggest? It is worth noting that RFN is an NGO with its own objectives and goals, not as detached from the program as e.g. a university may be. Hence, they may serve as an actor for information in addition to other work in the area, but it is curious to observe what may seem like a rather outstanding position currently.

CIFOR, a “scientific institution that conducts research on the most pressing challenges of forest and landscape management around the world”, is the main beneficiary of NICFI funds (Hermansen et al., 2017, p. 9). It is not unusual that social research is funded by government departments. However, when it is, it is also not unusual that the funder has some kind of interest in the outcomes of the research. Bryman argues that “the very fact that some research is funded, while other research is not, suggests that political issues may be involved” (Bryman, 2016, p. 141), and further suggest that it may be anticipated that organizations such as firms and government departments “will seek to invest in studies that will be useful to them and that will be supportive of their operations and worldviews” (Bryman, 2016, p. 141). Bryman further refers to R. Morgan (2000, cited in Bryman 2016, p.141-142) who point out that research funded by the Home Office in the UK often is quantitative, short-terminist, and uncritical. Uncritical, he argues, “in the sense that the research does not probe government policy but is concerned with the effectiveness of ways of implementing policy” (Bryman, 2016, p. 142). Arild Angelsen acknowledges this issue and explains that his roles as a NMBU and CIFOR scientist for over 20 years, and as a climate-concerned citizen and member of an environmental NGO, contains a dilemma. “This is something that I have thought about, whether it leads to me keeping quiet and avoiding being too loud in my professional critique” he explains. However, one thing is what the researchers say in public, another thing is what gains the attention as the media seeks conflicts. Angelsen also explains the mechanisms identified by Bryman as to how funded research can get politicized: “An example is when NORAD requests CIFOR and other recipients of REDD+ funding to provide success stories, clearly to be used for marketing and domestic political purposes. Success stories exist, but it does not provide a representative picture of reality. And are stories of failures equally welcome?”. Further, the same may be true for the funded organizations. Angelsen continues: “It is a dilemma for researchers, and even more so for NGOs”. While highlighting that this is not an unusual dilemma in the general political arena, he indicates that it may be even more of a dilemma in this case, given RFN’s dominating position and ownership of the initiative, being a major recipient of civil society funding and also being one of the two NGOs that first proposed the initiative.

Moreover, only a minority of the politicians said they felt updated on REDD+, and this was also the impression during the interviews. While some had extensive knowledge and conveyed both energy and drive in arguing in favor of the funding for REDD+, this was not the case for all. This is despite the fact that the politicians' interviewed had highly relevant backgrounds from relevant parts of the political arena. One of the interviewees put words to this notion, as he pointed to his belief that the knowledge on this issue is somehow varying because it is not a topic that is discussed at any length on a daily basis to say the least. Despite this, several of the participants displayed an interest in talking about REDD+, and discussing the program. One of them expressed that the questions had "forced" him/her to dig into hidden knowledge and address some aspects that had not been addressed for a long time.

While both the rainforest foundation and Friends of the Earth Norway seemed very updated and knowledgeable on the issue, Friends of the Earth highlighted multiple times in the process of arranging the interview that they did not work much on REDD+ projects anymore. Additionally, the general impression in the process of arranging all the interviews was that the knowledge about REDD+ was generally quite low. When asked if they support the REDD+ commitment, The Red Party answered that they have "the same critical position as The Rainforest Foundation" (RFN). When asked to expand, as RFN overall is positive to a continued support, the communication staff answered that he/she did not know anything about REDD+, and because they are such a small party, they have not yet positioned themselves politically on this issue, as it has not been up for debate since the Red Party entered the Norwegian parliament. The communication staff in the Red Party was far from the only one in the press offices that knew little or nothing about REDD+. On several occasions, it was necessary to explain what REDD+ is at the political parties' head offices. This point is highlighted here certainly not to expose or humiliate anyone. It is merely a finding worth mentioning as it arguably paints a picture of how little debate and how little controversy there has been around the substantial amounts of money that is regularly channeled into the REDD+ idea. Another example of this, is the discussion on whether REDD+ is a cost-effective measure or not. The results, as explained in section 2.4.6 has proven that REDD+ is not as cost-effective as one had hoped for. This was also confirmed by Angelsen during the interview for this thesis:

“It is neither cheap nor simple. It may be cheap to buy out poor farmers, because they are so poor that you don't need to compensate a lot to make them give up forest clearing. But the paradox with REDD+ is that it is not small farmers that matter the most; it is increasingly big corporations and large-scale farmers that are behind deforestation and forest degradation, and for one, that makes it more expensive as the opportunity cost of conservation, which is the value of agricultural production, is way higher. Secondly, it is against the intention of develop aid to use aid money to buy out billionaires and rich plantation owners in Brazil and Indonesia”

This illustrates the complexity of REDD+, which is not done justice in the cost-effective-argument. As the principle of cost-effectiveness relates to initiating projects in developing countries, it is also timely to revisit the discussion in section 2.4.7 on powerful win-win narratives. After finding that it is the local farmers that bear the costs of REDD+' forest conservation, Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2018) ask who REDD+ is cost-effective for. Despite available information on this, two politicians (from the Centre Party and The Conservative Party) used it as an argument for further support for REDD+, that it is a cost-effective measure. Moreover, Indonesia is highlighted by a big majority of the politicians as a success-story, and an example that REDD+ works. This may very well be the case for multiple local projects, but it is certainly not as straightforward as portrayed by many of the participants, as indicated in the literature review. The members of the energy and environmental committee went on a trip to Indonesia, and some referred to this when arguing in favor of a REDD+-success. However, one of the participants did suggest that the committee may have been shown a handful of good examples.

To sum up, the politicians and the organizations are to a certain degree aware of evaluations done the last decade, but they do not seem to follow these closely. Furthermore, none mentioned any specific research that had made any impact on perceptions on REDD+ throughout the years. The only research that was brought was by the Green Party who mentioned that he knew some of the research done by Tor Benjaminsen and Hanne Svarstad, but this had not changed his perception of the program as a whole. Overall the information and knowledge the

participants have acquired during the last decade, had not affected their opinions towards REDD+ in any transforming manner.

*5.2: RQ 2: NICFI and the funding of REDD+ was a massive program decided over a historically short period of time. What is the motivation behind the Norwegian funding of REDD+?*

### 5.2.1 Cosmopolitanism

All the participants argued in a cosmopolitan fashion on multiple aspects, in favor of a continued support for REDD+. The overall notion in this camp is the one that Norway's role in promoting and funding REDD+ over the years stems from a wish to do good on a global scale, and mitigate emissions based on different versions of altruistic motivations. For example, as the participant from the Centre Party put it: "I think this is an important effort, which contributes to the global society fulfilling the goals in the Paris agreement" . This notion was not surprisingly the biggest argument in favor of funding REDD+ with three billion NOK a year: To make an effort in mitigating carbon emissions, and saving the rainforests.

Within the umbrella of altruistic motivations for supporting the commitment, there are multiple aims that are suggested as serving good for humanity as a whole or other living species on a global scale. The latter was the most common motivation after mitigation-efforts, namely securing biodiversity and the survival of animals and other species on the planet. While biodiversity at present is included as one of the safeguards within REDD+, and is thus not mainly what the program is measured on, this was clearly an important motivation for many participants, and gave an impression that this has been increasingly so. The Green Party illustrated this early on when asked why they wish to continue the support:

"Because it is important. It is important to preserve biodiversity, and it is important to reduce emissions outside of Norway, in addition to within Norway. And in our opinion, Norway are able to help



others reduce emissions and preserve forests, in addition to doing it at home as well. And we have a responsibility”.

Further, the Green Party challenges the main focus on climate-measures and mitigation, as they highlight that there are many reasons to protect these forests. They argue this focus is unfortunate, and suggests expanding it to an international nature project. This aim or view is also discussed by both RFN and FEN. While not conveying any similar plan to shift or divide the focus between climate and nature, the politician from the Socialist Left party explained that biodiversity is also a central part of their argument in favor of supporting a continued commitment to REDD+, namely that in addition to being a mitigation measure, this is also good for biodiversity, as well as indigenous territories.

While not nearly as central a priority as the ones discussed above, this was by many identified as a motivation. Being able to help local communities in the recipient countries, building systems securing their rights, wellbeing, and reduce poverty in the areas where REDD+ is initiated, was highlighted by several participants. As the Labor Party explained “it is all interconnected, if you are to save the rainforest, you have to take care of the people who live in them”. While this was suggested as a motivation, several participants acknowledged that they may not know enough about the social consequences, in order to answer whether they overall were pleased with the social consequences of REDD+. Furthermore, some few acknowledged that they had some worries as to how well the social outcomes had been, like the participant from the Christian Democrats. While on the one hand, he admitted to not having a good overview, he also states that while he knew some positive results, he suspected they were not the majority of cases. This was a worry both for the participant and several in his party, in big part due to NICFI being funded from the aid budget. As he explained: “There is a frustration that these aid-finances are used on projects that are not very effective in lifting people out of poverty”, a notion that has been important and served for some discontent within the party since REDD+’ early days. The Social Liberal Party suggested that the attention on indigenous people and the local population within the forests has grown over the years. However, this participant also emphasizes how complicated the work of measuring the results of such work is, as you are working with something that initially was a negative trend with respect to for example indigenous rights.

Nonetheless, in the participants' opinion, REDD+ has contributed in giving indigenous people a stronger position in many countries, "there is no doubt about it" as he puts it. The Conservative Party follows the same logic in a discussion on the social consequences, noting that it is difficult to say if it necessarily is better now than before, but concludes in the same way: "I think at least, that if we had not done anything, it would have been worse". It may be relevant to remind the reader here, that for the purpose of this thesis, it was not possible to go into all the countries individually, let alone the projects, thus, these opinions are included in order to provide an understanding of the politician's impressions of the totality of REDD+, and how this shapes their decision process. Finally, several participants highlighted Indonesia as a success story, in regards to both climate and biodiversity, but also the social aspect. One participant said: "I saw it myself when we were in Indonesia, that it had led to social development in some of the local communities" (p. 5), while exemplifying it with poverty reduction and new ways of organizing the communities in, by e.g. getting a voluntary fire department.

Since all the participants highlighted cosmopolitan notions as motivations, it is timely to follow cosmopolitan ideas, and Linklater's three duties, that states: It is "something strange about a democracy that does not involve outsiders in national decisions that may harm them" (Linklater, 2002, p. 141). Cosmopolitans argue, according to Linklater, that outsiders should "have an absolute right to be consulted about decisions that may harm them" (Linklater, 2002, p.141), and that one that does not do this, "are more committed to nationalism than to democracy" (Linklater, 2002, p. 141). While the safeguards in REDD+ are supposed to secure the involvement of the local people, and in many of the projects, there are two questions that arise. First, to what extent are they involved? Do Norwegian voters have a bigger influence on their lives, when voting for a party in favor of continued support for REDD+, than the locals who live with the projects, have? While a clear answer to this is difficult, as so many answers related to REDD+ are, the literature review showed that there have been problems related to participation. Second, the literature review showed that harm does in fact befall to the local communities in numerous REDD+ projects.

Moreover, many politicians as well as the organizations argue in a cosmopolitan manner, with a striking resemblance to Linklater's reasoning on the duties of a cosmopolitan community.

Many were during the interviews suggesting that REDD+ is Norway's possibility, and a good way of contributing to halting climate change. Further, many saw this as a responsibility (or duty in Linklater's translation) as Norway has contributed more to causing the problem, than many of the ones that are now living with the consequences of it. For example, the participant from The Conservative Party argued:

“I think that Norway as a wealthy country, who doesn't experience the climate changes the same way other countries do, have to show that we want to contribute... We have earned our money through oil and gas, and because of this we are able to help internationally, the ones that do not have the same financial muscles”.

Implied in this, lies a sense of obligation to do good for individuals outside Norway. The resemblance to Linklater's logic on cosmopolitan duties and in particular the third relationship are hard to miss, whether intentional or not. Linklater argues that “a community that wants to make progress in a broadly cosmopolitan direction has to avoid inflicting harm on others and avoid being a beneficiary of the harm that befalls outsiders” (Linklater, 2002, p. 146). Thus, if you support REDD+ because of the logic above, is it not timely to also investigate the effort you are pursuing and not also inflicting harm on others? And further, secure that if harm occurs, you are not beneficiaries of this? I argue, issues such as these, should be addressed in more detail, by political communities supporting REDD+, if your motivation is to ‘drag the extra load’, for the ones who are not wealthy enough to participate economically as much. As the literature has shown that *harm does occur*, it could be argued within a normative framework, that these are issues politicians *should* be familiarized with when deciding on the continued support, in particular when using arguments as the above. Second, there is more to be said on the issue on who can be said to benefit from REDD+. Obviously, Norway and its citizens would benefit, just as anyone else on the planet, from a contribution to halt climate change. However, the literature has provided evidence that Norway is not doing what it could at home, in order to halt climate change. Further, as indicated in section 2.4.7 and 2.4.8, Norway may have, in fact, benefited from REDD+. Not from the harm in itself obviously, but the project that is inflicting the harm. Thus, while most politicians explain their support for REDD+ with reasons belonging to the

cosmopolitan camp, evidence indicates that there also are other motivations, complementing the mitigation-benefits.

### 5.2.2 Communitarianism

The politicians also identified communitarian values as influencing decisions to continue the support for REDD+. Motivations that are first and foremost seen as good for one's own community is read as a communitarian argument, as opposed to what is seen as good for humanity or others not within one's own community. Hein et al. (2018) argues that “for policy makers in the north, REDD+ is attractive because it transfers obligations to the global periphery and avoids hard emission cuts” (Hein, Guarin, Frommé & Pauw, 2018). Section 2.4.7 showed how Norway has since the 1990s been a proponent of mitigation efforts abroad, as opposed to at home. Furthermore, these dynamics are indicated in the rhetoric used by Norwegian officials up until today.

Hein et al. (2018) show how Norway with their results-based partnership “claims to have contributed to 20 million tons of emission reduction abroad (in 2016) which correspond to 40% of Norway's annual emissions” (Hein, Guarin, Frommé & Pauw, 2018). Without reporting it in the INDCs, it is interesting to note the rhetoric where REDD+ efforts are put up against national emissions. And the examples of this are manifold. Only some few weeks ago, the current minister of Environment and Climate Sveinung Rotevatn put up an argument following this logic, contrasting what is achieved with Norwegian money in Brazil up against with the in comparison seemingly just a small amount of emissions in Norway:

“We hear much disheartening news from Brazil. However, we should not forget that during the period of cooperation with Norway, they have cut emissions from deforestation equivalent to more than 70 years of Norwegian greenhouse gas emissions” (Norad, 2020).

The same logic is used in a press release from the Norwegian embassy in Jakarta, which early on highlights that Indonesia “has reduced emissions amounting to approximately 17 mill tons CO<sub>2</sub>” (Royal Norwegian Embassy in Jakarta, 2020), also adding: “This is equal to one third

of all annual emissions from Norway” (Royal Norwegian Embassy in Jakarta, 2020). Thus, a communitarian notion may be linked to the reasoning indicating that Norway’s focus on and effort in REDD+ may have led to continued oil production nationally, because it has transferred its obligations, namely to the rainforest-countries. Importantly, this was not a notion any politician or organization mentioned as part of their own motivation for supporting the program. However, it was suggested and aired as a possible consequence of the commitment, earlier on or at present time, and should therefore also be included as serving as a possible motive. Thus, this is read and interpreted as a communitarian motive for supporting REDD+, as it is in the interest of Norwegian citizens to continue to accumulate wealth and improve and secure the inhabitants’ wellbeing into the future. This notion was suggested among others by the participant from the Green Party, this way: “For some, it has been important to look like we are making a climate effort to shift the attention away from the lacking cuts we have had at home”. Angelsen (2019, p. 22) points to how little funding to research on NICFI may strengthen the impression of such a dynamic being at play. Norad, as he points out, has donated over 2,1 billion NOK to ‘civil society’, which include big international environmental organizations and think tanks, but to a modest degree research. He suggests that this may help build the hypothesis that NICFI is a political project for Norway, where Norwegian governments have been eager to show great efforts and result in their rainforest commitment, in order to divert attention away from lacking emissions at home (Angelsen, 2019, p. 22).

Another communitarian motive for continuing the support for REDD+, even if not as clear as the first one, is the assertion that it gives Norway a pivotal role on the international arena, especially in climate negotiations. This notion follows the logic that because the program has so close ties to Norway, as the initiator and the continued promoter of it through more than a decade, it has also led to Norway achieving a very central place in the international climate negotiations, especially related to rainforests. This point is read as a communitarian motive for continued support; however, it is necessary to expand on this. For it to be read as a communitarian value, the value of Norway gaining a spot in the international realm, must be seen to first and foremost benefit Norway. This leads to a discussion on what the *aim* of achieving such a role in the international arena is. Is it to be able to further promote and negotiate

climate related policies on a global scale? And if so, what is the motivation behind this? It is difficult to see past the fact that Norway's wealth stems from oil when considering these issues. One motivation may be a wish to be a big voice in order to promote green solutions worldwide. However, one might argue then, that if this was a central aim at the core of the Norwegian power centrum, there would also be greater political will to stop its current ongoing oil production. Seen this way, it is also timely to ask whether the motivation to have a pivotal role on the international climate stage, is a way for Norway to appear green and devoted to halting climate change, while at the same time continue its own accumulation of wealth with its continued policies in the oil industry, as expanded upon above. Thus, there are many indications that the wish to gain a central position on the international climate stage, may help serve Norway in many ways. It is not necessarily tied to only the climate either, a notion suggested by a couple of participants. Most clearly put by the Progress Party: "Norway wants a leading role in a field with big visibility globally, in order to build a profile internationally. Soft diplomacy, if you want" (p. 2). Either way, it is a motivation that says something about Norway gaining something from continuing its funding to REDD+, rather than a motivation that is built on a cosmopolitan notion to share wealth and give something to human beings outside of Norwegian borders.

The prestige tied to being a main actor behind REDD+ is a third communitarian notion and motivation behind Norway's commitment to REDD+. Only some few participants answered that they thought there was prestige invested in being a big actor behind REDD+. While some were very clear on this being a prestigious program to lead, others were more moderate or modest. The Rainforest Foundation explained: "There is prestige in this, and I think the prestige has grown, because Norway has been so alone in it (...). The fact that there have been so few actors involved, has led to Norway gaining the international position that we have today". Nonetheless, he highlights that Norway has, in his opinion, done what is possible to get more countries to join, and that the prestige in being alone, never has worked as to Norway seeking a continuation of this. This is further a general impression throughout the data, that all the participants convey a belief that Norway has worked hard to get more countries to join, also on the donor side. Further, RFN adds that the prestige may even be present at prime minister-level, suggesting that it was probably a proud moment for Jens Stoltenberg when he could represent

this worldwide, as it may be for Erna Solberg to go to Colombia to launch new rain forest initiatives. However, some participants also said that they believed that there may have been some prestige in REDD+ to start with, when Stoltenberg announced it in Bali and the following years, but that this had fallen some over the years, as REDD+ started meeting its challenges. This view corresponds at least to some degree with Hermansen's findings discussed in section 2.2, as both the opposition and the government claimed responsibility for starting the rainforest initiative (Hermansen, p. 940, 2015). This indicates at least that there was prestige initially, and also illustrates that the whole political spectrum has had some sense of ownership tied to REDD+. Revisiting Nickersons reasoning in section 5.1, a (claimed) 'ownership' to a policy like the one Hermansen suggests, does make way for the possibility of confirmation bias being at play. While it is not possible to establish here whether this is the case or not, it is interesting to raise the question. Because if this is the case, it would provide an explanation to why REDD+ has been so uncontroversial among Norwegian politicians. However, this notion needs to be further researched.

Finally, the argument "we have no other alternative" expressed by all the participants in the study, can be read into a communitarian framework, which demands some explanations. If there is evidence that the program has led to harm in more than a few exceptions, it is in broad terms difficult to reconcile within the cosmopolitan logic, as presented above. Further, the OAG concludes that "the initial investments may not have *any climatic impact* and that REDD+ is not leading to early emission reductions as anticipated" (Riksrevisjonen, 2018, p. 10). Thus, there are reasons to search for other answers to why it is still so non-controversial in Norway. The above analysis has shown that there exist notions that the Norwegian ownership to REDD+ has led the country to gain prestige and a pivotal position on the international area. Further, this may have contributed to giving Norway a green image, while also contributing to the climate problem, with maintained support (or understanding) for its national oil industry. The argument "we have no other alternative" thus seems to lie within the communitarian camp, as there is always an alternative to stop and look for other ways to achieve whatever your aim is, if your values are in conflict with your actions. There are many ways to Rome, just as there are many ways to mitigating climate change. REDD+ may turn out, in time, to be a good climate measure and tool

to halt mitigation globally, but at this point, it is just as good a measure for Norway, securing its national interests as well as its international. While not related to *climate policies*, it is tempting to revisit Chris Brown's argument on the ethics of the Scandinavian welfare states, which he understands as:

“based on a strong sense of community and, historically, they have been ‘good international citizens’, supporting the UN, aid-giving, and willing to provide peacekeepers and high-level UN bureaucrats, but they are not cosmopolitan in disposition. They maintain strict border controls and have resisted the more supranational elements of EU membership” (Brown, 2011, p. 157).

The quote provides an interesting observation in relation to this. Norway is also now more than willing to be ‘good international citizens’, by funding international agreements with substantial amounts of money, promoting cosmopolitan values in big international arenas such as the UN and climate negotiations. However, the country continues its national oil production, which will benefit (very close to) only the Norwegian people, while contributing to further damage to the world shared by all of humankind. It is tempting here to also revisit the logic (or lack of?), where Norway, with its material footprint reaching over 37 tons per capita, is paying for emission reductions in e.g. Indonesia, with 6 tons emission per capita. This is an oversimplification lacking context, as Indonesia has a large area of forests that should be kept intact. However, it is mentioned here, because it provides an image of how it is to some degree baffling that Norway is not focusing more on its national emission reductions, as opposed to the ones they do abroad. Moreover, this notion that stood out so clearly among politicians and organizations on REDD+ being our only alternative must also be seen up against the other factors that REDD+ affects. The literature review showed how communities in the Global South are faced with numerous consequences. Thus, Carton et al. (2020)’s suggestion that “the boundaries of what is acceptable in terms of social and environmental impacts look very different from the perspective of policy makers versus that of local communities and other actors” (Carton et al., (2020, p. 12) can be said to be strengthened in the findings here. While Norwegian politicians are arguing that we have no other alternative than REDD+ at the moment, thus “we have to keep working along the axis that we are” as one participant explained it, the consequences of this decision may be



impactful on human beings on the other side of the world. The notion to keep on trying if it fails, I argue, is colored by the distance between the places where the decision is taken and where it is acted out. The people inside are valued more than those outside. Read in connection to the discussions above (section 2.4.8) where REDD+ has been argued to be the latest of many fads, realized despite what previous experiences should have taught us, it may seem timely to revisit the argument that often, it is the Global South that bears the costs. As Carton et al. (2020) explains: “While consultants and many international partners can easily move on to other projects, host localities must deal with the fall-out of such failures. From an ethical point of view, this is deeply concerning” (Carton et al., 2020, p. 12). In addition to the material and visible negative consequences that have been shown throughout the thesis, it must be added that the psychological mechanisms at play in these projects may also be a burden for affected communities. Lund et al. (2017) notes, from their study in Tanzania, that “the rural communities that have been enrolled in this ‘economy of expectations’ through readiness activities and pilot projects have had their hopes thoroughly crushed” (Lund et al., 2017, p. 133). I argue that it is necessary to keep in mind that these projects involve people, who obviously have material needs in order to provide for themselves and their family, but these are also people with hope, aspirations and desires. Crushed hope is difficult to document. Finally, the notion that we have no other alternative suggests that there is in fact a lacking interest in exploring history, and opening up to completely new ways of tackling climate change. It is now important to push for just this, an understanding of what has been done before, and explore the lessons that can be learned from this. In contrast to continuing and repeating previous mistakes, ”in a moment in time when we cannot afford to waste financial resources on hot air” (Lund et al., 2017, p. 134).

### ***5.3: RQ 3: To what extent has the political support for REDD+ survived the major shift from a red-green coalition to the sitting conservative Norwegian government?***

The analysis above has shown that whether your political priorities lie within the communitarian camp, focusing on the wellbeing of your community, or if it rests with all the individuals making up humanity, supporting REDD+ is a good idea. All the participants, except from the Progress Party and The Red Party, highlight cosmopolitan thought and motivations in explaining their political will for continued support for REDD+. Mainly for reasons connected to the climate and biodiversity, but also other reasons such as reducing poverty, and strengthening the rights of indigenous people around the world. Because REDD+ is aiming at achieving so many good outcomes and has taken into consideration so many aspects that need to be improved, it has also become quite a flexible program politically. The general impression is that because REDD+ as a program is so flexible, it also provides politicians flexibility in terms of what aims they strive to achieve. This is obvious in regard to the aims as mentioned above – different parties will have different values that are the most important to them. Whether you value your own community the most, or if your values rests within the notion of all human beings are of equal importance, REDD+ can be justified – especially if you avoid a dive into the literature. However, this was also highlighted through other aspects, as when The Centre Party, whose main aim is to protect and ensure the wellbeing in local communities outside of the big cities in Norway, throughout the interview highlighted how REDD+ works in the *local* communities, with helping local farmers achieving better conditions. It became clear during the interview that this aspect of REDD+ obviously fits very well with their political priorities and values. Moreover, whether your priorities are biodiversity, the welfare of human beings on the global level, the wellbeing of your neighbors, local people and farmers, strengthen indigenous' rights, mitigate carbon emissions, or you aim to achieve mitigation cuts elsewhere while continuing the job to further secure the Norwegian community's wealth, REDD+'s flexible political structure builds a good case for continuing the support. While, as discussed above, the politicians

acknowledged the challenges REDD+ is facing today, they also highlighted positive notions - victories within NICFI and REDD+, as encouragement for further support. Several of the politicians emphasized the success of incorporating REDD+ into the Paris Agreement, and how it in general has raised attention globally to rainforests and nature-based solutions. Moreover, the MRV systems is identified as a positive outcome of REDD+, the last decades improvements in surveillance of the rainforests. Additionally, enthusiasm was tied to the political cooperation that has come out of NICFI and REDD+. The politician from the Social Liberal Party explained that because we have so many difficult tasks ahead of us, we need more cooperation, not less: “We have to cooperate on plastic in the oceans, on biodiversity and energy production, so that we can reduce emissions”. Further, he highlights that REDD+ is a door opener for wider cooperation over time, with countries on a path towards democracy, “also because it is important for the international liberal framework, in the UN, WTO - all the institutions we are so dependent on”, he explained.

Moreover, another reason for REDD+' survival skills, may be tied to a more tactical issue. Several parties argued that the funding for REDD+ is an easy climate measure for Norwegian politicians to agree upon, because it is a measure that may help the climate, while no-one in Norway is affected by the measures taken. As the Socialist Left politician argued: “This is a measure that has no consequences for Norwegians everyday life. It costs some money, but it doesn't limit your possibilities, e.g. driving your car. So, some might have thought that this is an easy measure that will cost us some money, but which does not make us unpopular” (p. 3). Further, it may be politically difficult and an unpopular decision to leave the project, as it up until now is portrayed as one of the absolute biggest climate measures Norway is invested in, on the international arena. For a party to explain to its voters that it wants to stop this funding, may be complicated and may cost political power. This notion was most clearly communicated by the Progress Party, in their answer to what they saw as the reason for the continued support from Norway: “prestige. If you stop a program of this magnitude, you are also saying that you failed”.

Today, the picture is still quite consistent in regards to support for REDD+ on the Norwegian parliament. The political parties are still somewhat congruent on their decision to continue the funding for REDD+. However, the future political climate on this issue may be

slightly less harmonic than it has been up until now. The findings show some uncertainties and moderations. All the parties in the Norwegian parliament except from the Progress Party want to keep the funding as it is or raise the amount. The Norwegian Green Party is best in class in this manner, and wants to increase the support with two billion NOK per year, with a goal of increasing it even further in the future. The Labour Party, the Green Party, the Centre Party, Social Liberal Party and the Socialist Left Party are all consistent in their decision that the only right action now is to keep the funding or increase it. Furthermore, the Conservative Party is also still in favor, and “has concluded that this is a good way to do international climate work”. On the other side is the Progress Party, which is just as clear in their decision that REDD+ is the wrong prioritization. They argue in favor of abolishing the program as a whole – a program they argue has failed. The Christian Democrats however, while still officially in favor of continued support, conveys more uncertainty on where the party will position itself in the future. During the interview the participant acknowledges that it has been a bumpy road, as well as far more time consuming than anticipated. However, the participant pushes for “patience in the impatience” to realize what is personally believed to be a good idea. Meanwhile, he explains that there are considerable critical voices within the party. He predicts a debate coming on the prioritization of the resources, maybe especially now amid and in the aftermaths of COVID 19. As already explained, The Red Party answered that they have not yet positioned themselves politically on this issue, as it has not been up for debate since the Red Party entered the Norwegian parliament. In sum, there is still agreement on the continued support for REDD+. However, there are some new currents underway, that may at least lead to a debate on the up until now politically uncontroversial Norwegian commitment. These currents may be strengthened by the ongoing global crisis due to the pandemic.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

The thesis has shown that there are both advantages and challenges with the REDD+ program. Many of these challenges are structural, and must be solved if REDD+ are to have a future. Furthermore, the program has led to harm to its participants in the local projects, and has not been successful enough in realizing the safeguards made to protect these people. Additionally, the thesis has elaborated on some of the major controversies within the literature, aiming to show how it is argued that REDD+ maps onto existing inequalities, only to strengthen these at some locations. It has also shown that REDD+ is politics, now and before, and how narratives on win-win outcomes have been shaped and kept intact despite evidence of the opposite, as a consequence of different actors' investment in the success of the different projects. Additionally, the thesis has illustrated how REDD+ struggles to overcome challenges such as sound financing mechanisms, and are failing to address the major drivers of deforestation, among them, the huge amount of subsidies that the forest industry is receiving. Finally, a general challenge is that there is much uncertainty tied to how certain we can be of the success of the program, related to leakage, permanence and additionality/attribution. Overall, the findings show that there is still agreement in the Norwegian parliament to keep up the funding of REDD+ internationally. Some are open to increasing the support for REDD+. However, and while proportionate small, there are some currents going in a different direction, challenging the up until now uncontroversial funding for REDD+.

The findings suggest there are divergent motivations behind the biggest funder of REDD+, and these motivations are serving as building blocks in a complex decision to continue the support for REDD+. Motivations span from a wish to mitigate climate change, ensuring biodiversity, reducing poverty, to Norway gaining a central, green position globally. With all its aims, hopes and aspirations, REDD+ ends up being a fuzzy, malleable mechanism, so politically flexible that it can be stretched and bended whatever way you like to justify your support, firmly based in your – or your political party's core values. This mechanism ensuring that motivations

and to some extent divergent core values can co-exist, may have contributed to making it an uncontroversial political priority for such a long time, despite what has been showed throughout the thesis in regards to problems, challenges, critique, and political changes from a red-green coalition to the conservative blue-blue. If it was only the climate measure and the mitigation effort this program resulted in, it may not have had such a harmonic political life, with so little controversy surrounding it within the country that are to some extent responsible for its international standing on the global climate arena.

While politicians and organizations take note of the critique expressed in the reports and evaluations of the program, they do not seem to be very affected by this. Furthermore, the politicians did not mention any *research* that has affected their view on the program during the last decade. This suggests a general lack of engagement with the literature on REDD+' workings over the last decade, in particular the knowledge from the critical part of the literature, within the political community. This may in itself also serve as a reason for why it has been able to survive the major political shift without further controversy - the thousands of research articles that have been conducted have not reached the ones taking the decisions. Moreover, the fact that all parties to some extent have political capital invested in REDD+, as all (except from The Red Party, The green party and The Progress Party) have claimed ownership to it, opens for questioning whether some dynamics may be at play in regards to the lacking pursuit of knowledge - deliberately or unwittingly.

A common notion among the politicians, was that there is no alternative to REDD+. This is somewhat worrisome, when seeing it in light of available information on REDD+ and other climate change mitigation options. On the one hand, it is very understandable seeing it in light of the carbon budget, and the four models from IPPC. Negative emissions have to be part of the solution, and the participants are right: We have no other solution to this that can be set out in real life tomorrow. However, this notion has to be put into a context. The question that emerges throughout this thesis is whether REDD+ is purposeful at this point. No clear answer will be provided here. But within the evaluation on the road to an answer, lies questions regarding the efficiency, the effectiveness and the consequences of the program. The thesis has illustrated that the efficiency is questionable well into the second decade of REDD+. The consequences for

some are good, for others adverse. But all this is difficult to say for certain, due to several reasons expanded upon in the thesis. So then, are what we know now good enough? Is REDD+ worth the risks this thesis has expanded upon? The politicians say ‘yes’. Because we have no other alternative ready. However, it is difficult to avoid asking to what extent norwegian politicians are aware of the risks they are willing to accept.

Furthermore, Carton et al. (2020) argues that there are many concrete proposals available, which can serve as tools for opening up imagination. These include the degrowth movement, policies such as fossil fuel bans, moratoria, and restrictions on consumption by global elites. These are only a few of a rich amount of ideas circulating out there (Carton et al., 2020, p. 15). However, as may be apparent to the observant reader, such policies may not be as little controversial within Norway’s borders, as has REDD+. It would come at high costs for Norwegian voters and decrease the prospects of future savings for Norway substantially, to mention some. This does not mean though, that they should not be considered and debated loudly. A last question I will add here, on the road to finding out whether REDD+ is purposeful now, is the power-aspect. Mechanisms such as REDD+ have been shown to enable mitigation in already rich developed countries, moving mitigation efforts to other places and people far away, with a notion that this is cheaper. This involves a risk that oil is produced, *because* the trees are left standing due to REDD+. Is this a purposeful arrangement? This thesis has shown that it is highly meaningful to learn and reflect more on the history, the results and experiences of REDD+, but also similar projects and programs that predate it. Carton et al. (2020) argues:

“A more inclusive and interdisciplinary conversation on negative emissions is necessary in order to maximize the diversity of perspectives and present a fuller range of possible climate solutions for public debate, also those that presently appear politically naïve or present a poor fit with dominant epistemological frameworks” (Carton et al., 2020, p. 15).

This is crucial if we are to get a full(er) understating on whether REDD+ is purposeful at this point. There is little use of having a substantial literature on negative emissions if these never reach the ones deciding the future of these projects. Further, for politicians to be able to decide on policies such as the above suggestions, there has to be some acceptance of this in the public.

Thus, a more inclusive conversation is highly important if we are to discover and implement the *right* policies in time.



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# Appendix

## List of interviewees

INT#01: Politician, Centre Party, conducted on Skype 10th june, 2020, Oslo

INT#02: Employee, The rainforest foundation, conducted on Skype 10th june, 2020, Oslo

INT#03: Politician, The Labour Party, conducted on Skype 11th june, 2020, Oslo

INT#04: Politician, The Conservative Party, conducted on Microsoft Teams 15th june, 2020, Oslo

INT#05: Employee, Friends of the Earth Norway, conducted on Skype 15th june, 2020, Oslo

INT#06: Political advisor, The Christian Democrats, conducted on Skype 18th june, 2020, Oslo

INT#07: Politician, Socialist left party, conducted on Zoom 19th june, 2020, Oslo

INT#08: Politician, The Green Party, 19th june, 2020, Oslo

INT#09: Politician, The Social Liberal Party, 23rd june, 2020, Oslo

INT#10: Two political advisors, The Progress Party, interview via email, 26th june, 2020, Oslo

INT#11: Arild Angelsen, NMBU professor, 6th juni, via Skype, 2020, Oslo

## Interview guide politicians

1.

NO: Hva mener ditt parti om norske myndigheters støtte til REDD+?

ENG: What is your party's position on the Norwegian government's funding of the REDD+ programme?

2.

NO: Hvilke tanker gjør du deg om utviklingen programmet har hatt over det siste tiåret?

ENG: What are your thoughts on the development of the programme over the last decade?

3.

NO: Har erfaringene og forskningen som er gjort rundt REDD+ i løpet av det siste tiåret på noen måte påvirket din oppfatning av programmet? I såfall, hvordan?

- Hvis ja, hvilken forskning?
- Hvis nei, hvorfor ikke?

ENG: Has experiences and research on the REDD+ Programme during the last ten years in any way affected your opinion towards it? And if so how?

- If yes, what research?
- If no, why?

4.

NO: Ønsker ditt parti å fortsette støtten til REDD+ fremover?

- Ønsker du å fortsette som i dag, øke eller minske bidraget?

ENG: Does your party wish to continue the support for REDD+?

- Do you want to continue with the same amount, increase or reduce it?

5.

NO: Ser du noen problemer med å fortsette støtten til REDD+?

ENG: Do you see any problems with continuing the support for REDD+?

6.

NO: Ved prosjektets oppstart trodde man at kutting av skog stod for rundt 20 prosent av utslippene globalt, men nå vet vi at dette tallet er redusert til nærmere 11 prosent. Utgjør ny kunnskap noen forskjell med tanke på ditt partis ønske om fortsatt støtte til REDD+? Hvis ikke, hvorfor?

ENG: It was early on thought that deforestation and forest degradation amounted to about 20 % of the total global emissions, but this has later been adjusted and reduced closer to 11 %. Does new knowledge like this make a difference on your opinion on whether to keep funding this programme? If not, why?

7.

NO: Hva er, etter din mening, motivasjonen bak Norges sentrale rolle i arbeidet med REDD+?

ENG: What is, in your opinion, the motivation behind Norway's central role in the REDD+ Programme?

8.

NO: Har Norge andre motiver enn altruistiske når de bruker så mye ressurser på REDD+?

ENG: Is there other motives behind Norway's engagement in this programme, than altruistic ones?

9.

NO: Er det prestisje rundt det å være en hovedaktør bak REDD+? Har dette isåfall endret seg med tiden?

ENG: Is there prestige in being one of the main actors behind REDD+? If so, has this in any way changed over the years?

10.

NO: Samlet sett - er du/ditt parti fornøyd med de sosiale konsekvensene REDD+ har hatt i de landene der REDD+ er iverksatt?

ENG: Altogether, are you/your party pleased with the social consequences REDD+ has had in the countries where it has been developed/implemented?

11.

NO: Risikerer vi, med fokuset på REDD+, at vi glemmer å lete etter andre mer effektive prosjekter for å kutte utslipp, som både sosialt og klimamessig kunne gitt bedre resultater?

ENG: Is there a risk that our focus on REDD+ over the years, has led our attention away from other solutions, which possibly could have had better social and environmental consequences?

12.

NO: Hva er grunnen til at ditt parti ønsker å fortsette støtten til REDD+?

ENG: Why do your party wish to continue the support for the REDD+ Programme?

13.

NO: Den norske krona er langt svakere nå enn tidligere, (særlig) som følge av Korona-utbruddet. Kan det bli aktuelt å øke den norske støtten, for å kunne oppnå de resultatene man har planlagt for?

Om ikke, frykter du at kronefallet kan svekke hele REDD+ programmet, tatt i betraktning hvor stor del av prosjektet som finansieres med norske midler?

ENG: The Norwegian currency is far weaker than in years, as a result of the Corona outbreak. Do you think it will be necessary to increase the Norwegian funding, in order to reach the goals that have been scheduled?

If not, and considering how much the REDD+ programme depends on the Norwegian funding, could this situation weaken the REDD+ programme as a whole?

14.

NO: Riksrevisjonens undersøkelse konkluderer blant annet med at resultatene fra REDD+ er forsinkede og usikre, at oppfølgingen av risiko for misligheter ikke er god nok, og at det er en "risiko for at Norge vil kunne betale for resultater som ikke

oppfyller sikringsmekanismene” (s.12, riksrevisjonens rapport) (blant annet fattigdomsbekjempelse, biodiversitet og urbefolkningers rettigheter) på grunn av dårlige eller manglende rutiner. Hva er dine tanker om funnene i Riksrevisjonens rapport?

ENG: The Office of the Auditor General’s investigation concludes, among other things, that the results from REDD+ is delayed and uncertain, that the follow-up of the risk of fraud is inadequate, and that there is a risk of Norway paying for results that do not fulfill the requirements of the REDD+ safeguards, (such as poverty alleviation, biodiversity and indigenous peoples’ rights) due to lack of good routines related to this. What are your thoughts on the findings in this report?

15.

NO: Riksrevisjonen påpeker i sin rapport at “norske myndigheter betaler for utslippsreduksjoner der varigheten av resultatene er usikker”, (s. 9, Riksrevisjonens rapport) at “klimaeffekten av de innledende investeringene kan utebli, og at REDD+ ikke gir tidlige utslippsreduksjoner som forutsatt” (Riksrevisjonens rapport, s. 10). Hvilker REDD+ på utdatert kunnskap?

ENG: The Office of the Auditor General notes in its report that “the Norwegian authorities are paying for emission reductions where the duration of the results is uncertain, (...) that the initial investments may not have any climatic impact and that REDD + is not leading to early emission reductions as anticipated”. Does REDD+ rest on outdated knowledge?

16.

NO: Hovedutfordringene som blir løftet fram i Riksrevisjonens rapport er store og vanskelige utfordringer, som det vil ta til å løse, - om de i det hele tatt kan løses. Med tidsrammen gitt i de siste rapportene fra IPCC, anser du det som mulig å løse alle disse utfordringene, og kutte utslippene tilstrekkelig i tide, samtidig som man oppfyller sikringsmekanismene i REDD+?

ENG: The key challenges highlighted by the The Office of the Auditor General are big and difficult issues that will take time to sort out, - if they can be solved at all.

With the time frame given in the last reports from IPCC, do you see it as possible to solve these issues and make the necessary emission reductions in time, while also fulfilling the obligations in the safeguards?

17.

NO: Den globale avskogingen ser ikke ut til å gå ned, men tvert imot øke flere steder, etter over ti år med REDD+. Anser du dette som et tegn på at REDD+ ikke vil virke som man hadde håpet på?

ENG: The deforestation world wide does not seem to decrease after ten years of REDD+, on the contrary, in many places it is still increasing. Do you see this as a sign REDD+ is not working as one had hoped?

18.

NO: REDD+ var basert på en idé om et stort karbonmarked som skulle betale for prosjektene. Dette har imidlertid, ikke materialisert seg slik man håpet. Som påpekt av Riksrevisjonen, har heller ikke det norske bidraget til REDD+ utløst nok finansiering fra andre givere (s. 2, Riksrevisjonens rapport). Mener du at Norge skal fortsette som i dag, med å bruke penger på utvikling av MRV-systemer og lignende tiltak, eller kan disse pengene bli bedre brukt på andre områder?

ENG: REDD+ was based on an idea of a large forest carbon market that would pay for the projects. This has however, not materialized. Further, as noted by The Office of the Auditor General, “Norway’s contributions to REDD+ have not triggered sufficient financing from other donors”. In your opinion, should Norway continue to use money developing MRV-systems and such, or could the money be better spent elsewhere?

19.

NO: Informasjonen ovenfor tatt i betraktning, hvorfor fortsetter Norge å promotere REDD+, etter din mening?

ENG: Considering the above, why is Norway still continuing its effort to promote REDD+ in your opinion?



20.

NO: Bør vi gjøre mer for å bevare skogen her på den nordlige halvkule i tillegg til/istedenfor å fokusere på regnskog i de tropiske landene?

ENG: Should there be done more to save the forests on the northern hemisphere in addition to/instead of focusing on the rainforests?

21.

NO: Anser du BECCS som en mulig løsning for å kunne nå 1.5-gradersmålet?

ENG: Do you see BECCS as a possible solution if we are to reach the 1.5 degrees goal?

## Interview guide organizations

1.

NO: Hva mener din organisasjon om norske myndigheters støtte til REDD+?

ENG: What is your organization's position on the Norwegian government's funding of the REDD+ programme?

2.

NO: Hvilke tanker gjør du deg om utviklingen REDD+ har hatt over det siste tiåret?

ENG: What do you think about the development of the programme over the last decade?

3.

NO: Har erfaringene og forskningen som er gjort rundt REDD+ i løpet av det siste tiåret på noen måte påvirket din oppfatning av programmet? I så fall, hvordan?

- Hvis ja, hvilken forskning?
- Hvis nei, hvorfor ikke?

ENG: Has experiences and research on the REDD+ Programme during the last ten years in any way affected your opinion towards it? If so, why?

- If yes, what research?
- If no, why?

4.

NO: Ønsker din organisasjon at Norge fortsetter støtten til REDD+ fremover?

- Ønsker du å fortsette som i dag, øke eller minske bidraget?

ENG: Does your organization want Norway to continue the support for the REDD+ Programme?

- Do you want to continue with the same amount, increase or reduce it?

5.

NO: Ser du noen problemer med å fortsette støtten til REDD+?

ENG: Do you see any problems with continuing the support for REDD+?

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# Information letter

## Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

### *En fremtid for REDD+?*

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å undersøke hvor partiene på Stortinget og ulike naturvernorganisasjoner står i forhold til fortsatt støtte til REDD+. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

#### **Formål**

Denne masterstudien vil finne ut av om det fortsatt er enighet mellom partiene på Stortinget om fortsatt støtte til REDD+, og i hvilken grad partiene og organisasjonene har tatt innover seg og blitt påvirket av evalueringer av programmet i løpet av de siste ti årene. Politikere fra alle partier vil bli intervjuet, samt representanter fra ulike naturvernorganisasjoner. Disse vil bli spurt tilsvarende spørsmål, om hvorvidt de ønsker at Norge skal fortsette sin rolle for å opprettholde REDD+, samt hvorvidt deres synspunkter har endret seg i løpet av det siste tiåret.

Opplysningene vil ikke bli brukt til andre formål enn denne masteroppgaven.

#### **Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?**

NMBU er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

#### **Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?**

En miljøpolitisk representant fra hvert parti på Stortinget og en representant fra de mest sentrale naturvernorganisasjonene får spørsmål om å delta i studien for å besvare problemstillingen.

#### **Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?**

Hvis du velger å delta i prosjektet, innebærer det at du svarer på spørsmål i et intervju gjennomført slik det er lettest for deg å gjennomføre. På grunn av Korona vil intervjuet i utgangspunktet bli gjennomført over Skype/Zoom eller lignende programmer. Det vil ta deg ca. 30-45 minutter. Spørreskjemaet inneholder spørsmål om hvor ditt parti/din organisasjon står i forhold til REDD+, i hvilken grad du og ditt parti/organisasjon forholder seg til informasjon som har kommet fram om REDD+ gjennom de siste ti årene, samt lignende spørsmål knyttet til politikerens/partiets/organisasjonens oppfatning av den norske støtten til REDD+. Det vil bli gjort lydopptak av intervjuet som så vil bli transkribert.

#### **Det er frivillig å delta**

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

#### **Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger**

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Kun student og veileder vil ha tilgang til dine opplysninger

Studien er ikke anonym, og deltakeren vil kunne gjenkjennes ved navn og stilling i masteroppgaven, om ikke annet er avtalt med deltakeren.

#### **Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?**

Når forskningsprosjektet er avsluttet vil lydopptakene av intervjuene bli slettet.

#### **Dine rettigheter**

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene,
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg, og
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

#### **Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?**

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra NMBU har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

#### **Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?**

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- NMBU ved Tor Benjaminsen ([t.a.benjaminsen@nmbu.no](mailto:t.a.benjaminsen@nmbu.no)) eller student Rikke Agerup ([riag@nmbu.no](mailto:riag@nmbu.no)). Vårt personvernombud: Hanne Pernille Gulbrandsen ([personvernombud@nmbu.no](mailto:personvernombud@nmbu.no)).

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til NSD sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS på e-post ([personverntjenester@nsd.no](mailto:personverntjenester@nsd.no)) eller på telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen



For A. Benjaminsen, Veileder



Rikke Agerup, student

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### **Samtykkeerklæring**

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet *En fremtid for REDD+?*, og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

- Å delta i intervju
- At opplysninger om meg publiseres slik at jeg kan gjenkjennes

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet



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(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)



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