

# The Mobilities of the Nicaraguan Miskito Community

The Various Reasons Behind Miskito Mobilities to Costa Rica

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# Abstract

The history of the Miskito community in Nicaragua is turbulent. The Miskito people, an indigenous group mainly located in Nicaragua, are facing challenges in the context of climate change and land expropriation. The increase in hurricanes has impacted their crops and homes, Miskito communities are also facing violence and intimidation from settlers. All of these circumstances have led to a trend of increasing migration to Costa Rica. The study aims to understand and describe the wide range of factors, actors, and power networks that influence the mobilities of Miskito communities. Also, it describes these mobilities as perceived by the community as well as by other actors. The research follows a qualitative approach and uses the lenses of political ecology, climate mobilities, and climate mobility regimes. The findings show that a combination of political tensions grounded in a history of violence and colonization, and increasing climate pressures create a cycle that increases the vulnerability of Miskito communities to displacement. Nevertheless, Miskito view their mobilities as temporary but necessary for their well-being, while policymakers in Costa Rica see the situation as a gateway for conversations about climate migration in the region.

# Resumen

La historia de la comunidad miskita en Nicaragua es turbulenta. El pueblo Miskito, un grupo indígena ubicado principalmente en Nicaragua, enfrenta desafíos debido al cambio climático y la expropiación de tierras. El aumento de huracanes ha impactado sus cultivos y viviendas, las comunidades miskitas también enfrentan violencia e intimidación por parte de los colonos. Todas estas circunstancias han llevado a una tendencia de aumento de la migración hacia Costa Rica. Así, el estudio tiene como objetivo comprender y describir la amplia gama de factores, actores y redes de poder que influyen en las movilidades de las comunidades miskitas. Asimismo, describe la percepción de estas movilidades tanto por parte de la comunidad como de otros actores. La investigación sigue un enfoque cualitativo y usa los lentes de la ecología política, las movilidades climáticas y los regímenes de movilidad climática. Los hallazgos muestran que una combinación de tensiones políticas basadas en una historia de violencia y colonización, y las crecientes presiones climáticas crean un ciclo que aumenta la vulnerabilidad de las comunidades miskitas al desplazamiento. Sin embargo, los miskitos ven sus movilidades como temporales pero necesarias para su bienestar; mientras que los formuladores de políticas en Costa Rica ven la situación como una puerta de entrada para las conversaciones sobre la migración climática en la región.

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# Glossary

## Abbreviations

CEJIL: Center for Justice and International Law

FSLN: Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional

IACHR: Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

NCCAR: North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region

NOAA: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

OCHA: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

PCRA: Peaceful Cohabitation Regime Agreement

SCCAR: South Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region

SIFAIS: Sistema Integral de Formación Artística para Inclusión Social

UNPFII: United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

## Translations

Colonos: settlers

Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional: Sandinista National Liberation Front

Mama Tara: Big Mom in Miskito

Navidad Roja: Red Christmas

Observatorio Pro Transparencia y Anticorrupción: Pro Transparency and Anti-Corruption  
Observatory

Sistema Integral de Formación Artística para Inclusión Social: Integral System of Artistic  
Training for Social Inclusion

# I. Introduction

## Problem Statement

Over the past few years, a new community has been growing just South of Costa Rica's capital city in Alajuelita. This is a community of Miskito people that have migrated from the North Caribbean region of Nicaragua. Alajuelita is just one example of the places where Miskito have settled within Costa Rica after following a long route leaving their homes behind (Estrada Tellez, 2022). The Miskito are a big indigenous group located mainly in the North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region of Nicaragua (NCCAR). This group extends also to Honduras which is North of Nicaragua and in smaller numbers to the South Caribbean Region of Nicaragua; their main subsistence activities are fishing and agriculture (Minority Rights Group International, n.d.).

The Miskito people are amongst those most affected by climate change as their region of origin in Nicaragua is where hurricanes and tropical storms first make contact with land (Estrada Tellez, 2002). Recently, the increase in the occurrence of hurricanes has put stress on the Miskito region and affects the ways in which they support themselves. The flooding caused by large storms kills the crops which Miskito communities grow for their families and to sell for a profit (Funes, 2022). Moreover, the two consecutive hurricanes that happened in 2020 destroyed not only the crops but also the houses of a great number of Miskito families (Funes, 2022). It is in that context that the trend of increasing migration of Miskito families to Costa Rica has magnified talks, or started a conversation, of introducing a climate change refugee status for them in Costa Rica (Estrada Tellez, 2022).

Nevertheless, the issues faced by Miskito communities are not only tied to climate change. Given that the Miskito live in natural resources' rich lands, they are target of land expropriation by government and international companies for mining and/or logging (Radwin, 2021). Miskito people refer to the international companies attempting to take their lands as "colonos" (settlers), and the increase of colonos in Miskito lands is also increasing violence which ranges from intimidation practices, such as pressing baseless criminal charges against community leaders, to kidnappings of indigenous people (The Oakland Institute, 2020).

Safety from climate change-related extreme weather events and from colonos are some reasons why Miskito might choose to migrate. In the past, Miskito would migrate to Honduras because it is closer and because the presence of Miskito in the country makes integration less complicated (Olivares, 2022). However, in recent years there has been an increase in the number of Miskito that choose to migrate to Costa Rica instead given that hurricanes and issues with settlers also affect Miskito territories in Honduras (Weiss, 2022). Due to this recent influx after the hurricanes, in Costa Rica this trajectory is being

predominantly framed by media and policymakers as an influx of climate refugees. The climate refugee conversation in Costa Rica along with the increase of Miskito people moving to this country, create an opportunity to look into the ways in which this movement is portrayed as well as how the community themselves view their mobilities.

## Research Questions

The movement of the Miskito people to Costa Rica is not a new occurrence but has become more common over the years. While there are different issues affecting Miskito people, there is a focus in Costa Rica by media and policymakers, on how climate change is making the communities vulnerable and overall unlivable (CRHoy, 2020). In other instances, largely by the media, this movement was mostly described as being a consequence of political instability (Cáceres, n.d.); specifically, due to land expropriation in the context of mining and logging by international companies.

This makes it of interest to study the different political, social, and environmental reasons behind the mobilities. This means studying the reasons the Miskito community puts forward for their movement and how these relate to why and to what effect certain reasons for migration are being put forward above other actors. In order to explore this, the thesis utilizes the political ecology and climate mobilities theories. By using a case study approach, the research shows an in-depth discussion of the reasons behind the mobilities of Miskito to Costa Rica, as well as the reasons for certain representations of the mobilities.

The main research question is as follows:

- Why, by whom, and with what effect, is the migration of Miskito people from Nicaragua to Costa Rica presented as one predominantly resulting from climate change, and how does this relate to the more political and economic reasons of their migration?

In order to answer the main question, four empirical sub-questions were developed:

- Who presents the Miskito migration in predominantly climate change terms and what are their reasons for doing so?
- How do Miskito migrants in Costa Rica perceive their mobilities and does it differ from the climate change frames?
- What are the political, social, economic, and environmental reasons for Miskito mobilities to Costa Rica?
- What are the consequences of the use of the climate change frame for the Miskito community?



## Report Outline

The next of this thesis report consists of eight more chapters. Chapter 2 goes into detail regarding the different theories and concepts which are utilized to analyze the findings, making use of existing literature. Next, the methods (Chapter 3) used to complete this research are described; specifically, the research paradigm, and the different methods of data collection practiced are described. The findings are presented in Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7, describing some of the history of Miskito mobilities, the relationship of the communities with Colonos, their experiences with the hurricanes, and their lives in Costa Rica accordingly. Then, the discussion (Chapter 8) compares this research's findings to the theory. Lastly, the conclusion or a summary of the findings, limitations, and implications is presented (Chapter 9).

## II. Environment, Movement & Power

This chapter outlines the main framework of theories and concepts that are used in the research are introduced. First, I describe the concept of political ecology as an encompassing theory to discuss environmental conflict and land degradation and marginalization, and migration mobilities. Following this, I describe climate mobilities as a way to understand the different movements in a climate change context that make up the Miskito mobilities. Then, I describe mobilities regimes and apply this to the political discussions on climate change in order to define climate mobility regimes to understand the key factors that influence climate mobilities.

### Political Ecology

Political ecology is a field of study that focuses on the interactions and connections between political, social, economic, and environmental systems. Primarily, it is concerned with how these different systems along with power structures are linked and the influences they have over each other (Robbins, 2012). Through political ecology, a certain situation is analyzed by looking at the power dynamics between actors such as governments, corporations, and local communities. Moreover, it examines the institutions that control the situation, such as land rights and environmental regulations (Rocheleau, 2008). The progress of this subject field can be traced back to the 1970's when academics started to challenge the conventional approach to looking into environmental issues and identified the significance of also exploring the social and political dimensions of said issues (Robbins, 2012). While the mainstream approach, as described by Bryant and Bailey (1997) aimed to provide a direct solution to environmental issues and often focuses on technological solutions and regulations while leaving the deeper economic and political causes of the environmental issues to the side, political ecology scholars presented the idea of instead addressing the concealed but fundamental social, political, and economical causes to environmental issues (Bryant & Bailey, 1997). For instance, in a circumstance of land expropriation, political ecology would look at the different actors involved, the power they hold, the social inequalities in place, as well as the disruption to the ecosystems and whether these affect the local communities.

This approach builds on other fields of study such as political economy and poststructuralism, asking questions regarding power structures, and how this affects the way the resources are used and by who (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2019). Political ecology is a broad and inclusive field in the sense that it does not only rely on academic resources but also on the knowledge and experiences of actors involved in a certain issue. For instance, analyzing deforestation through a political ecologies' lens, one would not only look at academic literature but also talk to local communities, environmental organizations, and other

stakeholders to get their insights and perspectives to enrich the research (Blaikie & Brookfield, 1987). As a result, political ecology is able to explain the relationship between society and the natural environment going beyond a single all-encompassing truth. In other words, looking at the different perspectives and experiences of various actors, political ecology achieves a nuanced understanding of environmental issues. Matters such as land expropriation are thus understood by political ecology as part of a convoluted system of political economy issues, colonialist ideas, and power networks (Bridge et al., 2015).

Given that this discipline is rather broad, it is subject to various interpretations among scholars. Blaikie's work (2006), for example, focuses on integrating social and natural perspectives and acknowledging that both are interconnected. In doing so, his work on resource management heavily focuses on colonialism and post-colonialism and how these deep-rooted structures affect the way people live and use their lands (Blaikie, 2006). Similarly, Peet and Watts (1996) acknowledge the broad nature of the political ecology theory and generally describe it as a meeting point between social science, ecology, and political economy. Nevertheless, they argue that this presents room for incoherence for political ecology as a theory. Blaikie and Brookfield (1987) work on making the theory more concrete by mentioning the importance of asking questions regarding the access and control over resources and complementary ideas of the social emergence of degradation. Adding onto this, Moore (1996) argues that in political ecology, environmental issues cannot be understood without taking into consideration local power structures as well as local and global economic systems. This view of political ecology rejects neo-Malthusian accounts for environmental issues and fully delves into political and social factors in order to describe struggles over natural resources. Moore also takes from Marxian political economy stating that current resource struggles are also to be explained through historical factors that shape the relation between the environment and the actors that make use of it.

With regards to inequality, and building up from Moore's approach, Walker (2005) recognizes that environmental degradation often affects marginalized people disproportionately. This approach focuses on identifying dominant power structures, and the struggles for environmental justice of the marginalized. Walker (2005) then brings up the idea that political ecology and environmental justice are and should be integrated. Environmental injustice stems from unequal power relations that then lead to a disproportionate effect of environmental hazards on marginalized communities (Bullard, 1990; Pellow & Park, 2002; Schlosberg, 2007). Thus, recognizing and protecting the rights of marginalized, local, and indigenous communities affected by unequal shares of power is then vital to have a healthy environment (Brosius et al., 2005; Schlosberg, 2007). Following this, the struggles of indigenous communities are one of the main subtopics studied by political ecology due to the close relation these have with environmental injustices and marginalization as a result of

power dynamics deeply rooted in histories of colonialism (Bryant & Bailey, 1997; Escobar, 1998). Political ecology, therefore, understands the environmental struggles, marginalization, and displacements of indigenous communities as embedded in complex political and social systems and a network of actors that hold varying levels of power.

In this thesis I follow this frame of reference given that the aim is to describe the different views of Miskito mobilities to Costa Rica and how the community perceives their mobilities. Robbins (2012) identifies five different theses that represent the main themes in political ecology; the five theses are degradation and marginalization, conservation and control, environmental conflict and exclusion, environmental subjects and identity, political objects, and actors. I focus on both the degradation and marginalization thesis and the environmental conflict and exclusion thesis to analyze land expropriations and displacement. First, Robbins argues that environmental degradation is not really a result of a tragedy of the commons type situation between marginalized communities. Instead, it is a result of different interventions by the state and other external actors to achieve economic growth through the overexploitation of natural resources. Similarly, the environmental conflict and exclusion theory states that “increasing scarcities produced through resource enclosure or expropriation by state authorities, private firms, or social elites accelerate conflict between groups” (Robbins, 2012, 22). Accordingly, narrowing down to both of these theses, it is within reach to analyze and understand the roots of environmental degradation and conflict happening in the Miskito territory and their links to the political and social context.

Moreover, given that mobilities is the main theme of the thesis, it is vital to understand mobilities and migration through political ecology. First, a political ecology of migration heavily focuses on how the political economy of a certain place, as well as the access to natural resources influence the migratory movements (Radel et al., 2018). In addition, Hammer (2004) states that political factors are significant and should be taken into consideration in both economically and ecologically motivated migration. On a broader view, a political ecology of mobilities discusses the different ways in which movements are shaped by larger social, economic, and political forces, such as capitalism, neoliberalism, and environmental degradation (Wiegel, 2023). Wiegel (2023) argues that bringing together political ecology and environmental mobilities helps bring focus to power structures that influence not only the level of vulnerability people have to the effects of climate change but also the different options they have for dealing with the effects. In order to gain a deeper understanding of what these mobilities entail and the different systems and actor networks that influence the movements, I follow the climate mobilities and climate mobilities regime perspective within the broad theory of political ecology, as discussed in the following subchapters. Together, these fields offer a complementary and comprehensive understanding of the complex relationships and

exchanges between environment, social and political structures, and networks of actors with varying levels of power.

## Climate Mobilities

In order to reach an understanding of climate mobilities, it is first important to understand mobilities and the mobilities paradigm, though explained here only briefly. With an increase of diverse movements in the world (Sheller & Urry 2006; Boas et al., 2018), comes a need to analyze and understand these everyday movements or mobilities. Research that is done through the mobilities lens understands an event or circumstance in the context of the movements that make it up (Sheller & Urry, 2006). This approach then is concerned with patterns, timing, relations, but most importantly, it “emphasizes that all places are tied into at least thin networks of connections that stretch beyond each such place and mean that nowhere can be “island” (Sheller & Urry, 2006, 209). Another key aspect of a mobilities perspective is the recognition of different forms of mobilities i.e., people, ideas, technologies, knowledge, etc. Understanding that the social world exists within constant movements complements the principles of political ecology as it counters the idea that the world and specific issues or cases can be understood as static.

Thus, applying the concept of mobilities to an environment context, we consider the movements not only of humans but also materials and information, and the environmental elements that actively intersect with them (Boas et al., 2018). As stated by Baldwin et al. (2019, 290), mobilities, specifically human mobilities, themselves should be understood as “mediated, experienced, and conceptualized” through the environment or nature. In other words, Baldwin et al. (2019) views human mobilities as happening within an environmental context and are also intervened by the environment and nature. Environmental mobilities as proposed by Boas et al. (2018) can refer to different instances in which environmental aspects and mobilities connect, it can be how mobilities impact the environment, movements of harmful materials, or mobilities that are shaped (in part) by environmental factors, which is the case for this research.

Boas et al. (2018) also highlight the importance of analyzing environmental mobilities not only by the movements themselves but also by the social aspects that take part in shaping these mobilities and in how they are seen. Similarly, through this mobilities lens, it is possible to focus on different movements and lack of movement and the different power relations that shape them; therefore, when discussing mobilities, specifically human mobilities, it is essential to consider their relationality and differentiability (Wiegel et al., 2019). The relationality refers to how mobilities and immobilities must be analyzed together as they are interconnected (Wiegel et al., 2019). For instance, as Wiegel et al. (2019) illustrate, when people move across

long distances, they often stop to rest and have moments of relative immobility. Moreover, the differentiability refers to the unequal abilities or ambitions for mobility be it for personal or systemic factors (Wiegel et al., 2019). This can be observed when, for example, an extreme weather event affects an area, and some people can evacuate and some cannot due to lack of access to a safe evacuation route or poor evacuation system.

These elements aid in a better understanding of environmental mobilities given that they reveal the power relations and personal factors that come in decision making for people faced with climate change pressures (Wiegel et al., 2019, 7). In the context of Miskito mobilities, the climate mobilities approach allows us to examine the movements of people partly shaped by climate pressures and the power relations that shape them and influence the way the mobilities are seen. I follow the climate mobilities lens in this thesis to describe and understand the various complex movements that occur to and from Miskito communities and affect their vulnerability to climate hazards and their own mobility or immobility decisions.

## Climate Mobilities Regime

This research aims to determine not only the reasons behind certain framings of the mobilities of the Nicaraguan Miskito community to Costa Rica by different actors, but also examining the strategy behind different frames of the issue. To accomplish this, this research is situated within the concepts of mobilities regimes and climate mobilities regimes that call attention to the power structures and actor networks that interlink with mobilities (Paprocki, 2018; Schiller & Salazar, 2013). Taking from the concept of adaptation regimes by Paprocki (2018), regimes are configurations of power that exercise control over a certain policy domain in the field of climate change adaptation. Mobilities regimes, then, are networks of political, social, and economic relations made by a group of interconnected actors that ultimately shape the way mobilities are managed (Schiller & Salazar, 2013). Furthermore, building upon Schapendonk's (2018) concept of the migration industry, we can further develop an idea of how mobility regimes operate given that it showcases the idea of various forces influencing movement in the context of migration. Schapendonk (2018) describes a migration industry which refers to migration facilitation, control, and rescue and the different links between these elements that not only make migration itself possible but also influence this migration. As stated by Schapendonk, viewing migration as an industry of convoluted connections is necessary to understand fluctuating migrant trajectories. For example, as Schapendonk (2018) shows in his work on the African-European migration industry, he discusses a social network in the migration industry made up of migrants, the state, facilitators, and controllers and how their interactions and negotiations are vital in producing migrant mobilities or immobilities. For

instance, how a migrant interacts with migratory authorities and how this might affect their ability to stay or not in a certain place.

In the context of this study, being both about mobility and climate change dynamics, I concentrate on the concept of climate mobilities regimes. This concept examines how migration and of climate change, and their intersections, are being governed, steered, and framed by different networks of actors in power (Boas et al. 2022). Even with climate pressures shaping mobilities, these mobilities still take place within a regime that regulates who and what moves, and how and when these movements occur (Boas et al. 2022). Therefore, the people affected by climate related issues are not only agents with decision making power but also subjects to the regime that shapes the mobilities (Farbotko, 2022). Moreover, these regimes that influence climate mobilities are also tied to colonialist structures. Bordner et al. (2020) establish that patterns of resource exploitation and unequal power dynamics are deeply rooted in colonialism and in a post-colonial context still have an effect on how indigenous communities deal with climate stresses.

The mobilities of the Miskito population, like other mobilities, are also shaped by regimes. For instance, the case described in this thesis involves a community migrating from one country to another; therefore, people carrying out these movement have to deal with borders and migration laws. In this type of mobilities, policymakers and governments, thus, have a lot of power and heavily regulate the movements given that people who decide to migrate need to follow the policies and laws that are in place to do so. In other words, the migration policies in Costa Rica act as regimes to climate mobilities of Miskito population given that they determine whether they can stay and work in the country. Similarly, by applying pressure on communities, whether it be through violence or other measures, actors seek to regulate mobilities and influence the decision-making process of individuals. For example, the actions of colonos towards Miskito communities, as well as their presence in Miskito spaces are also regimes to the climate mobilities of the Miskito community.

The climate mobilities regime, in this study, aids in understanding which actors and how they regulate the Miskito mobilities. In sum, political ecology, along with climate mobilities and climate mobilities regimes integrate into a framework that helps understand the complex relationship between social, political, economic, and environmental systems that drive and shape human mobility in the context of climate change and in a world in motion. This framework not only recognizes the role of power structures, institutions, and actors in shaping mobility patterns and experiences, but also considers the environmental and climate-related factors that influence people to move. Moreover, it acknowledges the significance of recognizing and addressing the different inequalities and injustices that generally come in hand with displacement and migration, particularly for marginalized and vulnerable communities. By merging political ecology, climate mobilities and climate mobility regimes,

this framework offers a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the complex interactions between human mobility and environmental change.



### III. Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology that was used to carry out this thesis. First, I discuss the reasoning behind a case study approach, as well as go into detail regarding the location and time in which this case takes place. Then, I describe the different ways in which data was collected.

#### Case Study

This research takes a qualitative approach. Specifically, as mentioned before, a case study research design is used given that this allows for an in-depth exploration of the above research questions (Kumar, 2011). By using a case study, I am able to focus on acquiring an in-depth and synthesized understanding of a real-life complex situation. The case study allows for a detailed look into the different small often failed to notice aspects of a situation, including the points of view and actions of different actors involved. Therefore, we get a comprehensive idea of the case and are able to achieve a nuanced analysis. Nevertheless, it is vital to acknowledge that given that this is an exhaustive analysis of a singular case, the findings of this research are difficult to generalize. The single case study of the Miskito mobility from Nicaragua to Costa Rica was selected after desk research on different mobility cases in Latin America.

#### Location

This study was carried out mainly in Costa Rica, but the indigenous community that is the subject of the research is primarily located in the North Caribbean coast of Nicaragua. The Miskito communities in Nicaragua are in orange zones, meaning not safe, according to the travel information by the Government of the Netherlands(n.d.). Therefore, after careful consideration I decided that for this study I would not visit the Miskito communities in Nicaragua to avoid unnecessary risks. As aforementioned, this case was selected after carefully investigating different situations in Latin America that related to mobility theories. The broader area of Latin America was chosen because Spanish is my first language and thus communication with potential research participants would not be an issue. After reading about the exponential movement of the Miskito population towards Costa Rica, this case was selected. Given that I am from Nicaragua, lived in Costa Rica for some time, know the language and the area, this case was the best choice in terms of feasibility.

The Miskito community is the biggest indigenous group in Nicaragua with a population of approximately 123,000 as of 2016 (Williamson et al., 2016). It is mostly located in the North

Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (NCCAR) of Nicaragua with some communities situated in the South Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (SCCAR) (Figure 1).

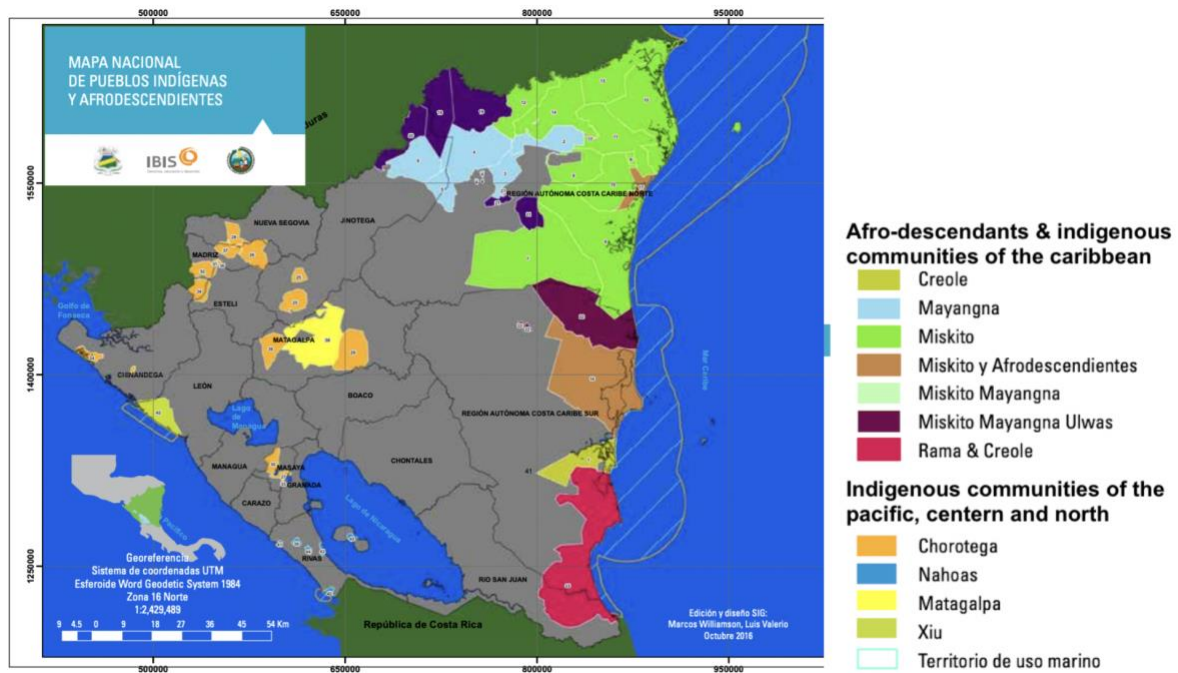


Figure 1: Map of Nicaragua’s indigenous and afro-descendant communities (Williamson et al., 2016).

The Atlantic coast of the country is vulnerable to storms and hurricanes but is also the region with the greatest natural value in the country, being made up of 22 protected areas (Williamson et al., 2016) (Figure 2).

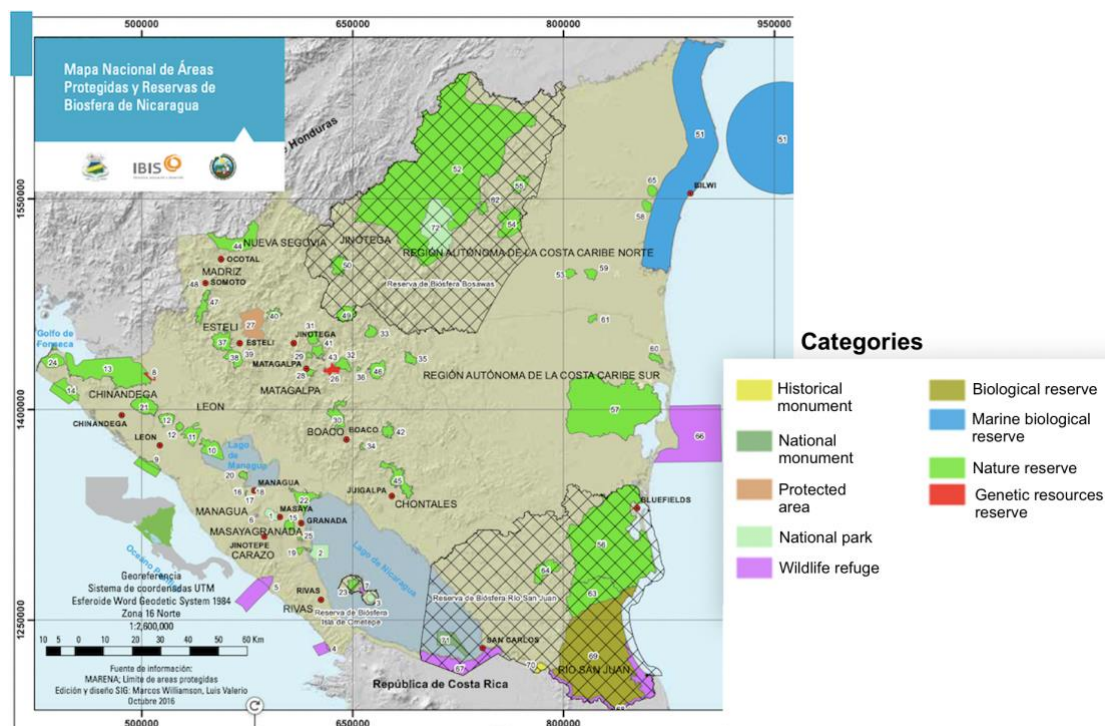


Figure 2: Map of Nicaragua’s protected areas and biological reserves (Williamson et al., 2016).

In Costa Rica, the location for this study is the capital, San Jose, which is where many Miskito people have moved to live in many different small communities. The majority of the interviews were held in the city of San Jose and not specifically in the areas where Miskito are living given that most of these areas are difficult to access by car or public transportation. Some of the neighborhoods where Miskito live in Costa Rica are Alajuelita, La Carpio, and Pavas, which are all known to be precarious areas on the outskirts of the capital city of San Jose.

## Time

The research was realized in Costa Rica between the 10th of November 2022 and the 10th of January 2023. Two years after the 2 consecutive hurricanes that affected the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua. Therefore, it is possible to look into many different points of action after the tragedy that had an impact on the mobilities of the Miskito. Moreover, since these movements to Costa Rica are increasingly common after the hurricane, the two years allow for a view into how this community has settled in a different country and what were the processes to get there.

## Data Collection

As mentioned before, the data produced in this research is qualitative data. Qualitative data collection is fitting for this research given that the purpose of this research is to examine the research question in depth, and because the nature of the research is more explorative (Mohajan, 2018). It is not so vital for this research to understand the situation through numerical values, as it is to grasp the different circumstances and settings that make up this complex case of Miskito mobilities. Especially given that the research partly centers around experiences of people, it is ideal to describe, and meaningfully explain said experiences. Even though the findings in the end are not measurable, the qualitative data provides a substantial description of a complicated case (Sofaer, 1999).

## Literature Study

For this study, different types of secondary and primary data were reviewed. There was not only an academic literature review of relevant subjects, but there was also a review of policy documents, media reports, and government documents. The literature review was mostly carried out to gather data on available literature regarding climate human mobility, climate refugee status, the history of Miskito mobilities, land expropriation and overall relationship between the Nicaragua government and the Miskito population, as well as data on migration of Nicaraguan Miskito to Costa Rica. Also, the literature review was useful in establishing a background for the research. To carry out the literature review terms such as “Miskito

mobilities,” “Nicaragua land expropriation,” “climate refugee”, among others on different search engines such as Google Scholar and Scopus were used. Moreover, relevant news articles on Latin American news websites as well as news networks from Nicaragua and Costa Rica were searched and used for different areas of this report. Furthermore, the findings from the literature review aided in the creation of the interview guide, as well as the analysis of the empirical results.

## Interviews

Another form of data collection that was utilized in order to answer the research questions was semi-structured interviews. This type of interview is fitting for this research given that it consists of a predetermined set of themes with flexibility regarding specific questions, which allows for the interview to steer away from the guide to further delve into the interviewee’s thoughts on the overall topics at hand (Mohajan, 2018). Thus, the semi structured interviews provide additional data necessary to develop answers to the research questions.

All interviews were held in San Jose, Costa Rica, and the language they were carried out in was Spanish. All of the indigenous people interviewed spoke Spanish, and when they expressed something in the Miskito language, they immediately provided a translation. The interviews loosely followed the interview guide that was created beforehand (Annex I) based around different categories to cover each research question. All questions in the guide were asked in each interview but sometimes follow up questions were made based on the participant’s answers. The length of the interviews was on average about 30 minutes; however, there were some shorter and longer interviews depending on how in depth the participants answered some questions and follow up questions. During the interview notes were taken of important information that was useful to make follow up questions; additionally, all interviews were recorded.

Those interviewed include two people from the media, one political scientist, and three people from Miskito communities. The people from the media were both from the independent news medium *Confidencial*. The political scientist works with the NGO *Puntos de Encuentro*, which works with marginalized communities in Central America. The Miskito people interviewed were approached through the *Puntos de Encuentro* NGO. While the first two actors mentioned can provide insight into the ways the mobilities of the Miskito are presented and the effects this has on the community, the inclusion of Miskito people in interviews is important given that it gives us their perspective on the situation. The interviews with Miskito people produced important knowledge that comes from personal experiences that thus helps understand how the community itself perceives their mobilities. Actors were approached through emails and phone calls in order to set up interviews. In total, I carried out 2 interviews with journalists and political scientists, and 3 informal conversations with Miskito people living

in Costa Rica. It was difficult to get interviews for a variety of reasons; first, I had no academic contacts in Costa Rica that could give or offer help in getting the contact information for important actors. Second, most organizations that I approached directed me to their websites or to reports and declined my request for interviews. Finally, given that I was in Costa Rica to carry out these interviews in November, December, and January, some government officials were usually out of office for holidays.

### Informal Conversations

In addition to semi-structured interviews, data was collected through informal conversations with Miskito people. Informal conversations differ from interviews in that there is less of a power dynamic, and in that it feels less artificial for the participant (Swain & King, 2022). The type of informal conversation that was carried out was participatory in nature, meaning that I was part of the conversation and not only acting as an observer (Swain & King, 2022).

Often used for producing data for ethnographic studies, informal conversations can also be beneficial for social qualitative research given that the conversations generally bring about authentic data with minimized performativity for every person involved, making communication flow more easily (Swain & Spire, 2020). At the time of the conversation with Miskito people, an informal conversation felt most adequate given that they were just sharing their experiences as they have lived them. Because we were discussing traumatic situations, a set of written questions did not feel appropriate at the time. I explained the general idea behind my research and then each person started telling their stories. I was able to talk with Miskito people in Costa Rica given that one of the journalists that I had previously interview was hosting a workshop with Miskito migrants, and she invited me to join and talk to them after the workshop ended. It was only older Miskito people that have already been public about their situations that wanted to share their experiences. Because of time constraints, I could only speak with 3 Miskito migrants after explaining my research to the group.

### Consent and Data Management

Before each interview, the participants were given consent forms, as stated in the Environmental Policy group guidelines, which were read and signed before asking any interview questions. With Miskito participants, consent was given verbally given that these were not regular interviews and instead were informal conversations. In the case of the informal conversations, participants were not given consent forms, but they gave verbal consent to be recorded and were aware that the conversations would be used for the research. All interviews and conversations were recorded. During the research, the data that was produced was stored in a Microsoft OneDrive folder. After the research is completed, the data including the interview transcripts, audio files, and consent forms will not be made public,

instead, it will be submitted to be archived with the ENP secretariat for 10 years in a secured data file. This data file will be handled confidentially and will be accessible only to the chair and data manager of ENP.

## IV. History of Miskito Mobilities

In this chapter, I describe the previous instances of Miskito mobilities and how these relate to the framework of political ecology and climate mobilities. I first discuss the emergence of the Miskito indigenous communities and how the communities have been intertwined with colonialism since the beginnings (Offen, 1999). Moreover, I discuss how the current trend of Miskito mobilities is not the first one and go into detail on the causes for previous large-scale movements of the community and how these relate and add up to the present-day ongoing mobilities.

This chapter provides necessary historical background for following chapters that describe the roots and characteristics of the Miskito mobilities as they are currently progressing given that they have deep roots in colonialism, political conflict, and land injustice (Offen, 1999; Dennis, 1993; Koper, 2021). The information for this chapter was mainly obtained from pre-existing academic literature and supported with information provided by some interviewees.

### Historical-Geographical Background

The Miskito population is one of the largest indigenous communities in Central America. The Miskito community is located in the area called La Mosquitia, which represents a meeting place between the South American and Mesoamerican indigenous groups. The Miskito community was originally made up of four semi-autonomous districts that developed simultaneously with the British superintendency around 1600's (Garcia, 2002). The Miskito was a kingdom, the first king was crowned by a British governor; thus, the Miskito were vassals to the king of England. The relationship was primarily for military and commercial purposes (Offen, 1999).

The Spanish tried to make their way into Miskito territory however this stopped when Miskito King George II unified the Miskito territories and expelled any pro-Spanish officials and Spanish missionaries from the region (Offen, 1999). Even though Spain had no real control over the region, they claimed the region as theirs until the 1820's when Central America became independent. For a period of time, the Miskito were independent from both Spain and Britain; after this a long dispute over territories began in America, with many different countries trying to claim rights to the Mosquitia land (Offen, 2002). Then, in 1844 the British protectorate over the Miskito coast was reestablished and they supported the Miskito in fighting off attempts from Nicaragua, Honduras, and Granada to take over their lands (Offen, 2002). After this reestablishment, more European settlers began arriving to Miskito lands as well as Christian missionaries of the Moravian church.

Given that the United States also had interests over the region for commercial purposes, in 1850 a treaty was signed in which both the US and Britain agreed to not colonize Central America (Olien, 1987). However, this was followed by a decade of tension between the two powers because the British did not want to leave the Miskito coast. As a way to decrease these tensions but still have some hold over the Miskito coast, the British decided to make deals with Nicaragua and Honduras. Nicaragua and Britain signed the Wyke-Zeledon treaty in 1860 which stated that the Miskito nation and territory, which is about half of the Nicaraguan territory today, would now be under Nicaraguan suzerainty making the ruler of the Miskito no longer a king but still keeping their right to self-govern (Olien, 1987).

The British then helped the Miskito draft a constitution which stated that English speaking landowners would be in charge of the local government (Offen, 2002). Nicaragua argued that this meant that the Miskito coast would be ruled by foreigners and not actually natives; thus, Nicaragua fought for greater power over the Miskito land and people. The tensions were settled by Austria and the resolution stated that Nicaragua had a rightful claim to the Mosquitia region, and the Miskito population, which is a minority in Nicaragua, was free to choose how to organize their government (Olien, 1983).

Even though the Austrian resolution worked for some time, Nicaragua went through a revolution in 1893 and the country's new government led by Jose Santos Zelaya was determined to rule the Miskito region (Olien, 1983). Therefore, Nicaraguan forces advanced into Miskito territory and managed to gain power over the region. The region was annexed to Nicaragua and the government of Zelaya started building schools to teach natives Spanish and Catholic colleges to counter Moravian church influence. Most importantly, the government of Zelaya started selling concessions to exploit the resources in the region (Olien, 1983).

## Navidad Roja

Even though the Atlantic regions were annexed by Zelaya around the 1900s, following governments did not make an effort to truly integrate the region; therefore, when there was a military struggle between the Somoza dictatorship and the FSLN (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional) in the 1980s, the Atlantic coast saw this conflict as something very foreign (Dennis, 1993). Following the success of the revolution by the FSLN, this government decided to integrate the Atlantic Coast region starting with the creation of a new local government led by Miskito who had ties with the FSLN. Nevertheless, the creation of this new group did not help in decreasing the tensions that were arising from the FSLN attempts of integration mainly because these integration attempts were rooted in racism and ignorance from FSLN officials (Cayetano Jarquin, 2017). The integration was more of an internal colonization that wanted to unify the country by means of erasing the Indigenous cultures and



heritage. Thus, in general, the Atlantic Coast is where there was most resistance to the revolutionary government, which led to arrests of Indigenous leaders and subsequently to protests and armed conflict.

After some time of tension between the Sandinista government and the indigenous communities of the Atlantic Coast, in December 1981 the FSLN government carried out an operation now known as Navidad Roja or Red Christmas in English (Dennis, 1993). This was an operation carried out by the Sandinista army to displace more than 8,000 indigenous people from their communities to prevent them from providing support to Contras, or the counter-revolution (IACHR, n.d.). The government states that this was a humanitarian resettlement, however, many massacres took place during the Navidad Roja operation (Jarquin, 2016). There are instances of the Sandinista military making Miskito people dig their own graves before shooting them (Csicsery, 1985). During one of the interviews held with a Miskito woman, she briefly recounts her experience living through the Red Christmas, she states:

*“Mama Tara (herself) is a survivor of Red Christmas because at that time I worked in Río Coco in the Laimusta community. There I was a teacher, I was young, I was in the ranks of those who they were going to kill. Someone went to save me and took me out of there.”<sup>1</sup>*

## Nicaraguan Miskitos Fleeing to Honduras and their Return

The total number of Miskito casualties from the Navidad Roja is unknown. Nevertheless, this is the first account of a wide scale displacement of Miskito communities. Not only did the government force thousands of Miskito to leave their lands and move into camps, but also a big number of the Miskito that managed to survive this tragedy and escape the government chose to temporarily leave their lands to regain some sense of safety (Dennis, 1993). A lot of Nicaragua Miskito then moved to Honduras where there is also a Miskito community given that they speak the same language and insertion would be relatively smooth (IACHR, n.d.).

The Miskito people that made it to Honduras as refugees were located in Miskito communities in Honduras by the UNHCR (United Nations Refugee Agency). It is also vital to point out that Nicaraguan Miskito had moved to Honduras even before the Navidad Roja and they started training grounds to fight the Sandinista government. When Nicaraguan Miskito started moving to Honduran territory, the Honduran Miskitos already had issues of their own with their government (IACHR, n.d.). Thus, with the end of the conflict the training grounds were disassembled and the Nicaraguan Miskitos went back to their lands.

In 1986, after years of conflict and the Miskito supporting the Contras in the fight against the Sandinistas, the Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional government passed a

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Miskito community member. December 9, 2022. San Jose, Costa Rica.

constitutional amendment that grants autonomy to the Atlantic region creating the North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (NCCAR) and the South Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (SCCAR), as well as acknowledging the ethnic diversity within the country. Thus, around the 90's many of the people that had left for Honduras, decided to go back to their lands in Nicaragua given that as many indigenous communities, the Miskito have strong ties to their lands. Nevertheless, even though the conflict was officially over, the violence against the indigenous communities still followed as recounted by one of the interviewees, who is an older member of the Miskito community:

*“In the 80's there was a huge displacement towards Honduras, Costa Rica. After the return in 1990, when the people returned to their lands, to their homes, the massacre continued in the communities.”<sup>2</sup>*

It is also important to note that the constant threats to their safety are not the only reasons some miskito decided to migrate. For them and for many people in the country, the chance of a better life was a driver for migration around this time given that the country was at war. It was not rare for one person in the family to leave the country in order to get a job and be able to send money back to their families and then return when the situation improved. The Miskito people have a long history that has been shaped by a variety of factors including colonialism and forced migration. Through this examination of the history of Miskito and colonizer relations, it is possible to better understand the complex processes of colonialism and its ongoing impacts on the Miskito indigenous community. Moving forward, it is important to recognize the rich history of colonialism Miskito mobilities to understand the present situation.

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with Miskito community member. December 9, 2022. San Jose, Costa Rica.

## V. Colonos and Land Expropriation

As mentioned before, the Miskito people have been facing land expropriation and displacement by outsiders for years. In recent times, the land concessions given by the government to international companies for extractivist activities have increased (The Oakland Institute, 2020). Thus, Miskito communities face many hardships that stem from these land disputes. In this chapter, I aim to provide a background for the land rights of the Miskito community in Nicaragua, as well as describe the relationship between this indigenous community and the government in order to better understand the political, economic, and social factors that affect their mobilities. I first discuss the rights of the Indigenous communities in Nicaragua, as well as the rights to ancestral territories, then I describe the current clashes between the Miskito communities and the Nicaraguan government, including land expropriation issues and issues of land use by indigenous communities.

### Rights to Ancestral Territories

One of the main struggles for indigenous people across the world is the rights to their lands (Shrinkhal, 2021). This is also the case for the Miskito communities. Given that the Miskito are located in a very natural resource rich area of the country, the use and ownership of these territories have long been a topic of discourse. As stated by the UNPFII (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues), indigenous people have connections to the lands that they live on not only in the spiritual sense, but also culturally, socially, and economically (UNPFII, n.d.). The Miskito territory is partly located in the Bosawas reserve which is the biggest rainforest in Central America and there are many ways in which this land contributes to the environment in the country and in the region. This land is also of great importance for the Miskito community given that they get their livelihood from it and also just for general subsistence. The Miskito community, as highlighted by Alejandra Quintanilla, a journalist that has closely worked with the community, and by members of the community themselves, has a strong tie to their lands:

*“For the Miskito communities, their land is their life. If you take away their land, you take away their life.”<sup>3</sup>*

*“...with a lot of feeling and pain, many Miskito indigenous families have left their land that we never thought to leave...”<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Alejandra Quintanilla. January 21, 2023. Online.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Miskito community member. December 9, 2022. San Jose, Costa Rica.

*“We are living on our own land historically, the oldest people in the entire American continent are the Miskito people after the Aztec, after the Maya, after other ancient peoples.”<sup>5</sup>*

Given that this land is so rich, it is also wanted by many different actors to exploit for economic reasons. The lands of the Miskito are protected by Law 445 - “LAW ON THE REGIME OF COMMUNAL PROPERTY OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND ETHNIC COMMUNITIES OF THE AUTONOMOUS REGIONS OF THE ATLANTIC COAST OF NICARAGUA AND THE BOCAY, COCO, INDIO AND MAIZ RIVERS” which states that the lands are inalienable, non-seizable, and imprescriptible. Moreover, Art. 181 of the constitution of Nicaragua states that “the concessions and contracts for the rational exploitation of natural resources granted by the State in the autonomous regions of the Atlantic Coast must have the approval of the corresponding Autonomous Regional Council”. Therefore, according to both the constitution and Nicaraguan law, these lands belong to the Miskito. However, the current president introduced a program called Peaceful Cohabitation Regime Agreement (PCRA) which allows settlers to live in Miskito lands and take advantage of the resources. The PCRA is part of a bigger program called “Integrated Climate Action to reduce deforestation and strengthen resilience in the Bosawas and Río San Juan Biosphere Reserves” and specifically promotes the idea cohabitation between indigenous people and settlers (Gonzalez & Fruhling, 2013). Indigenous people fear this program means the legitimization and normalization of the dispossession of indigenous lands; therefore, the Council of Elders of Mosquitia have stated that they do not consent or agree to this plan proposed by the government (Gonzalez, 2022). Thus, this program should not be able to be carried out as it was not approved by regional authorities like the constitution states it should be (Romero, 2016).

In sum, the recognition and protection of indigenous peoples’ rights to their lands is vital for the physical and cultural survival of these communities; not only because they live from their lands but also because they have a connection to it as the Miskito people described in conversations. Additionally, the protection of these rights is a key element for the conservation of the environment and biodiversity (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007). Nevertheless, the land rights of the Miskito community have not been respected by the government as it is apparent with the introduction of the PCRA.

## Miskito and the Nicaraguan Government

Even though there are laws that protect the land of indigenous communities in Nicaragua, instances of land expropriation have significantly increased in recent years (The Oakland Institute, 2020). Extractive activities such as logging and mining, and the clearing of land for

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with Miskito community member. December 9, 2022. San Jose, Costa Rica.

agribusiness have become the main drivers of land grabs in different areas across the country (Chavkin et al., 2021). A recent statement by the government reveals that the amount of land available for mining concessions alone exceeds 7 million hectares (The Oakland Institute, 2020). The rise in land expropriation does not only translate into environmental degradation. It also means an increase in violence against indigenous communities. The violence ranges from intimidation practices like pressing baseless criminal charges against community leaders to killings of indigenous people (The Oakland Institute, 2020; Chavkin et al., 2021). Given that the current government of Nicaragua is the same government that carried out the violent events of the Red Christmas, there are underlying tensions between the Miskito population and the government. The different circumstances that had once made the Miskito leave their lands, began to aggravate when the current government came to power (Delgado, 2022).

There are a variety of characteristics in a nation or region that facilitate the process of land expropriation and Nicaragua has many of these features. First, it is vital to understand that the country has been following neoliberalist ideas for decades. Since the 90s, after the revolution, the governments were in need of a change to attempt to recover the nation's economy from such a devastating period. As a result, they decided to implement neoliberalist policies by privatizing state-owned corporations and deregulating and liberalizing the economy (Osorio & Rodriguez-Ramirez, 2020). Although the current government started with strong Marxist ideologies, they soon began partaking in the same capitalist neoliberal activities that they so heavily criticized. Currently, the basis of Nicaragua's economy is of extractive nature mainly for the purpose of raw material exportation generally carried out by foreign companies; therefore, market liberalization is currently shaping the regular mode of operations for economic development in the country (Sanchez, 2000).

Additionally, Nicaragua has been in a sociopolitical crisis since 2018 as a result of many injustices by the government including large-scale mining and logging concessions that benefit only a small group of people in the country as well as international corporations (Osorio & Rodriguez-Ramirez, 2020). This crisis has brought to the surface several issues with the government which can all relate to the government's abuse of its power in order to grow its capital (Osorio Mercado & Rodríguez-Ramírez, 2020). Different groups of the population came together to denounce the injustices that the government carried out against them (Monte & Gomez, 2020). One of these groups was the Miskito people. Aside from denouncing the environmental injustices they suffered and the disputes over their lands, the Miskito denounced being neglected by the government (Kelly, 2007). Everyone that joined the protests and publicly went against the Sandinista government was then a target of political persecution (Osorio Mercado & Rodríguez-Ramírez, 2020). Given that there was already violence against the Miskito before the political uprising in 2018, this just intensified after and Miskito people were arrested, killed, or disappeared in the hands of police ("Indígenas

detenidos,” 2022). One of the Miskito interviewed recounts her experience being threatened and persecuted by Nicaraguan police:

*“Up to 80-90 men with 6 patrols have besieged me in my house. And I said, “who is accusing me?” “The Government of Nicaragua” “and why are they doing this to me? The children are scared, if they are going to take me, take me...” They entered with a black bag with gloves to put drugs into the house.”<sup>6</sup>*

According to the Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL, 2019), the land conflict has led to over 3 thousand displaced Miskito people, and 32 Miskito have been killed. Therefore, after the events of 2018, a lot of Miskito people, especially leaders of the movement against the Sandinista FSLN government chose to leave the country for their own safety and to avoid persecution by the state, which is the case for some of the Miskito people interviewed:

*“...those men (colonos) advance with weapons, where do we go? we had to leave and come here.”<sup>7</sup>*

The International Federation for Human Rights (2021) has stated that land expropriation in Nicaragua is “facilitated and permitted” by authorities from the government. In other words, these land expropriations are, in theory, illegal; however, the densely corrupt state deliberately allows foreign corporations to take the lands from indigenous communities in the name of economic growth (The Oakland Institute, 2020). Moreover, the country as a whole does not experience any benefit from these interactions given that there are persistent inequalities that favor just a small sector of the population (Chavkin et al., 2021).

This social, political, and economic background creates the ideal combination of factors that allow foreign companies to come into the lands of indigenous communities and deplete the natural resources with no regard for the lives and livelihoods of these populations (CEJIL, 2019). Nonetheless, when not even the nation’s own government has respect for the natural environment or the citizens living in it, it is no surprise that the companies they choose to work with have the same values or lack thereof. Land expropriation from Miskito communities in Nicaragua can thus be understood as made possible and promoted by the state in acts that can be categorized as a colonization of indigenous lands, as stated by the president of a human rights group, Lottie Cunningham (Delgado, 2022). This process of colonization encouraged by the state, leads to environmental degradation and conflict, given that it not only means increased deforestation but also the displacement of communities. Once

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with Miskito community member. December 9, 2022. San Jose, Costa Rica.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Miskito community member. December 9, 2022. San Jose, Costa Rica.

lands are illegally acquitted, the people that live in those areas start experiencing issues related to resource use and eventually become victims of violence carried out either by the state or the foreign companies.

Another issue that stems from this conflict is the access to job opportunities. There are not many jobs available in the Miskito region; usually, Miskito people have informal jobs such as working with crops or fishing (IOM, 2021). In bigger cities near Miskito communities there are some jobs available in the public sector (IOM, 2021). Nevertheless, since the political crisis started in 2018, there were countless instances of people losing their jobs in the public sector for not openly supporting the government (Grant, 2018; Confidential, 2021). One Miskito interviewee shares the experience of not being able to find a job in his region given that the jobs in the public sector are usually given to supporters of the government:

*“...to get a job you have to be a member of their political party, you have to be a servant of the government. So, for the Miskito people there is no possibility of getting a job because all the Miskitos are not Sandinistas, we are not Sandinistas.”<sup>8</sup>*

## A Vulnerable but Enduring Community

Practically since its beginnings, the Miskito community of Nicaragua has experienced instances of colonization and power imbalances. As mentioned in the results, many different people sought after control of the Miskito region not only for their rich natural resources but for their convenient location for trade and commercial purposes (Offen, 1999; Offen, 2002). Miskito’s lengthy history of their struggle for autonomy and control over both their lands and resources in them can be understood through the lens of political ecology by emphasizing the links of all social, economic, and ecological systems at hand. These processes of colonization by the British, other European powers, US, and then the eventual dispute over control for the land between the British and the government of Nicaragua planted a seed of colonialist, imperialist, and extractive structures that contribute to the current land struggles affecting Miskito communities (Offen, 1999; Olien, 1987). In a way, the colonialist structures that start taking place around this time, are part of the current post-colonial regime that is shaping Miskito mobilities. From the British superintendency, there was a power imbalance negatively affecting the Miskito communities (Olien, 1987). While the end of the British rule over the region and the takeover by Nicaragua seemed like a step in the right direction for the Miskito communities, this was not the case given that extractivist, capitalist ideas were already in the cards for the region. An important moment for understanding the political ecologies of the current Miskito struggles is when the government of Zelaya takes control of the region and

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with Miskito community member. December 9, 2022. San Jose, Costa Rica.

states their intentions for developing it and starts selling concessions to exploit its resources (Olien, 1983). This is a big step given that it marks the moment when power over resource use in the Mosquitia region starts going from the Miskito to the Nicaraguan government. It also serves as an example of the way in which struggles over land and resources are generally interconnected with political power and control. I argue that this marginalization of the Miskito community by the Nicaragua government is fundamentally a result of the colonization of these lands which pictured them as solely a territory with resources to be exploited.

Even though the government of Zelaya did not really go through with their intentions of heavy development and control over the Mosquitia region, the 1980's revolution of Nicaragua came to change this. The FSLN government saw potential in the Mosquitia region due to their rich natural resources and great location for commercial activities (Cayetano Jarquin, 2017). Thus, the attempts to integrate the Miskito communities with the rest of the country began. With this, it is important to understand that many social factors were making this inclusion unfair for the Miskito population. The local government started by the FSLN was made up of Sandinista officials who controlled the region, and social development such as education was rooted in racism and a disregard for the Miskito culture.

In describing this time for the Miskito communities, I now build on Moore (1996) who highlights the importance of not only local power structures but also the economic system to understand resource use disputes. The Sandinista government was motivated by ideas of economic development when dealing with the Mosquitia region, leaving aside the social and cultural needs of the population (Dennis, 1993). This eventually led to tensions which came to an all-time high during the Red Christmas suffered by the Miskito. This instance cements the distrust that the Miskito people were starting to have against the Sandinista government. Additionally, it represents the first case of Miskito mobilities as a result of forced resettlement by the Nicaraguan government out of their lands (Dennis, 1993). In this case, the Nicaraguan government is a regime that fully controlled the mobilities of the Miskito population. Nevertheless, some Miskito that managed to escape the forced resettlement still took part in mobilities as a way to find safer lands. Therefore, in a way, even though it was by their own will, the Nicaraguan government was heavily influencing their decisions to move (Jarquin, 2016).

These mobilities were temporary and Miskito chose to go back to their lands when the active conflict was over around 1990's (Arellano, 2022). This represents the strong ties that Miskito have with their lands. Even after such traumatic events, and with no guarantee of absolute safety, Miskito still went back to their lands in Nicaragua. Even though, as mentioned before, there are now several laws that should protect Miskito rights to their lands, nowadays, colonization of Miskito territories is still taking place by who Miskito people call colonos with support from the Nicaraguan government (The Oakland Institute, 2020). The land concessions



that started in the Zelaya government are still being given to international corporations to this day for extractive activities such as mining, logging, and cattle farming. The increase of these activities by colonos affects the access to resources of the Miskito population and it also increases the violence that the Miskito people are suffering. Moreover, it is vital to point out that the Nicaraguan government justifies these concessions by arguing that they are doing so in order to repair the already existing environmental degradation in the region, which has been in the past attributed to activities by the Miskito community (Gonzalez & Fruhling, 2013).

To add more nuance to an already complex situation, all of this is happening in the context of a political crisis in which the government has been accused of corruption by many different groups of people, one of them being the Miskito communities of the Atlantic of Nicaragua (Osorio & Rodriguez-Ramirez, 2020). Thus, once again we see the patterns of power structure, control over resources, political issues, and economic systems leading to the degradation of the resources that legally belong to the Miskito communities. It is also possible to understand the struggles of the Miskito communities in Nicaragua in terms of the different movements that make it up. For instance, there are human mobilities of colonos into the lands of Miskito, while there is an outwards movement of resources that are taken from their lands. This constant violence and threats endured by Miskito communities in Nicaragua have made them very distrustful of the Nicaraguan government as they feel as though they are living in a perpetual Red Christmas. Therefore, issues of safety are a big factor that influence Miskito mobilities. Similarly, the fact that they are not fully in control of the way the resources in their lands are used, they report having issues carrying out activities for their livelihoods. For instance, water pollution caused by mining activities affects one of their main sources of food and income which is finishing. Likewise, the expropriation of their lands and the pollution of the soil affects their other form of livelihood which is growing crops (The Oakland Institute, 2020).

From the colonial era to the present day, Miskito communities have struggled to assert their autonomy and have a good quality of life having poor relations with the government and falling victim to extractivist projects in their lands. In this chapter, I provided background to the relationship between the Miskito people and the Nicaraguan government, highlighting the ongoing land and economic struggles. These are just some of the factors that affect the mobilities of the Miskito community in terms of politics, economic conditions, and socially. In the following chapter, I turn the focus to another challenge faced by Miskito communities: the frequent and devastating hurricanes that ravage the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua.

## VI. Hurricanes in the Atlantic

Aside from the difficult relationship with the government, the Miskito communities are often affected by hurricanes. Due to the geographical location of Miskito communities in the Atlantic coast, they are the first region in the country to be hit by hurricanes that form in the Atlantic Ocean. Hurricanes were at least originally natural occurrences and there is even a hurricane season, so hurricanes are also expected; however, in the context of global warming the severity and how often they occur has increased over the years (Wuebbles et al., 2017). Usually, the forests stop the winds or make them less harsh, however due to the deforestation, the communities that live in the Atlantic of Nicaragua are more vulnerable to the hurricanes. With the increased intensity of the hurricanes, houses are destroyed, crops die due to the floods, the mud that remains makes it impossible to plant new crops for a long time, and fishing is not possible until the waters clear up (Estrada Tellez, 2022). All of this makes it difficult to recover after a hurricane. In this chapter I provide information on how hurricanes affect the Miskito community and address research questions relating to the climate change as a reason for Miskito mobilities. I first generally discuss the increased frequency and intensity of hurricanes, then I detail the two consecutive hurricanes that happened in 2020 and their impacts on the Miskito community, and finally I describe the aftermath of Eta and Iota on Miskito communities.

The 2022 IPCC report suggests with high confidence that the frequency and intensity of extreme events such as hurricanes is increasing as a result of climate change (IPCC, 2022). Additionally, the report states that the rise of sea level due to warming temperatures could lead to more serious floodings in cases of hurricanes (IPCC, 2022). Moreover, as stated by Wuebbles et al. (2017), climate change is altering the hazard levels of hurricanes given that the ocean and air temperatures are rising. The study suggests they are becoming more hazardous because higher temperatures lead to more condensation, more intensity, and less speed as they reach land. Kang and Elsner (2015), argue that while it is not evident whether there will be an increase in the frequency of hurricanes in the future, they state that the intensity and severity certainly will continue to increase. Another study, on the other hand, carried out by Knutson et al. (2010) found that a model for hurricane prediction shows an increase in the frequency of higher category hurricanes (category 4 and 5) in the Atlantic in the following years. A very apparent example of this increased intensity and frequency is the hurricane season in the Atlantic in the year 2020. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA, 2020) recorded 30 named storms in 2020, out of which 13 developed into hurricanes, and 6 of them were major hurricanes. They state that the previous record was of 28 storms in 2005.

## Eta & Iota

The hurricane season of 2020 in Nicaragua was record breaking. Towards the end of the season two hurricanes, Eta, and Iota, only 13 days apart, made landfall in the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua, where the Miskito communities are located.



Figure 3: Trajectories of hurricanes Eta and Iota. (Shultz et al. 2021).

Hurricane Eta first made landfall in Nicaragua on November 3 of 2020 with a category 4 rating and winds of 140mph (NHC, 2020a). Before the hurricane hit, the president of Nicaragua advised those in the Atlantic Coast to evacuate the region; additionally, the government sent food and supplies to the region in preparation (Brackett, 2020). Moreover, it was reported that over 10 thousand people were relocated temporarily to prevent casualties while the hurricane passed (Shultz et al., 2021). The hurricane caused substantial floodings in the region, landslides, damages to infrastructure such as roof, roads, and bridges damages, as well as power outages (CBS News, 2020; Schultz et al., 2021). A landslide triggered by the heavy rainfalls of Eta led to the death of two people in Nicaragua (Redmas, 2020).

Less than 2 weeks later, on November 16 of 2020, a second and more intense hurricane made landfall in Nicaragua. Hurricane Iota was also a category 4 but with winds of 155mph (NHC, 2020b). Given that Eta had recently passed, the soil was still saturated with water, which meant that Iota caused even more landslides and floods. This second consecutive hurricane caused even worse infrastructure damages with some people losing their entire homes, and more than 200 schools were damaged or completely destroyed (UNICEF, 2021). The impact of these two hurricanes in Nicaragua was significant. The total number of casualties reported by the Nicaraguan government was 28 deaths and 29 missing (Shultz et al., 2021). The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

(OCHA, 2020) estimates that over 40 thousand homes were either damaged or lost in Nicaragua after the passage of both hurricanes causing high levels of displacement.

## Getting Back on their Feet

The Miskito community was severely affected by hurricanes Eta and Iota. The hurricanes not only caused damages to infrastructure leaving people without homes, but also disrupted the activities that sustain Miskito communities, namely fishing and agriculture. The heavy rains and floods saturated the soil, flooding existing crops and making it impossible to plant new ones until the water drained. As a result, Miskito communities were suffering from water and food shortages given that they usually eat what they grow. It took 6 months for the land to set after the floodings; thus, it was 6 months without being able to grow food (Estrada Tellez, 2022). Furthermore, the water that Miskito communities usually get from wells got contaminated and they report drinking water from the ocean (Estrada Tellez, 2022). Aside from water and food shortages, the Miskito communities had to deal with health issues stemming from contaminated waters.

The government soon mentioned plans of restoring the affected infrastructures and providing support to be able to start growing food as soon as possible (EI 19 Digital, 2020). A study by the Observatorio Pro Transparencia y Anticorrupción (Observatory for Transparency and Anti-corruption, 2022), concluded that over 500 million dollars in donations and loans were given to the Nicaraguan government to provide aid to affected communities and the most noticeable use of these funds was to give away zinc sheets, kitchens, and food baskets all with the government logo. This circumstance becomes more dire then for Miskito communities given that the little material aid that was provided, remained in hands of supporters of the government in the region (Estrada Tellez, 2022). In terms of infrastructure, little to no work was done by the government. As one of the interviewees, a journalist that has worked closely with the community, points out:

*“The issue of hurricanes ... If you look closely, it is linked to the neglect of the state. Because it would be very different if the state had the will to rebuild, or to help them rebuild, or to relocate them after the hurricane. But that does not happen...”<sup>9</sup>*

Miskito leaders state that most of the help they received was from non-governmental organizations (Estrada Tellez, 2022). For instance, UNICEF provided humanitarian aid in the region, mainly providing water, food, education, and shelter (News UN, 2021). Despite these efforts, the recovery process was very slow, and many of the Miskito still have not fully

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with Alejandra Quintanilla. January 21, 2023. Online.

recovered from the hurricanes (Padilla, 2023). Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic also made the recovery process more difficult, as it has further limited access to resources and support.

Due to the heavy impact of the hurricanes and the lack of support received by Miskito communities, many of the Miskito left their lands to find jobs elsewhere and send money back to their families and be able to rebuild and recover (Estrada Tellez, 2022). While some went to nearby communities, others chose to leave the country and go to Costa Rica. Journalist Alejandra Quintanilla in an interview stated that while some Miskito stayed in Nicaragua in spite of pressures from colonos or the government to move, the hurricanes left them no other choice:

*“...many who were already living through the repression of the settlers, still continued there, despite the repression they decided to stay and tried to move to other communities to try to flee from that repression. But as a result of the hurricanes, the other alternatives they had were gone, they had to go now, they completely lost everything.”<sup>10</sup>*

In this chapter I described the impact of hurricanes on the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua and how the process of recovery from these events has been slow and arduous for the Miskito people. Hurricanes so severe and constant, pose a serious threat to the livelihoods of Miskito communities. The issue with the hurricanes connects with factors mentioned in previous chapters and all together add to the decision-making process of Miskito people with their mobilities. In the following chapter, I start to bring attention to the present migratory movements of the Miskito community to Costa Rica.

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with Alejandra Quintanilla. January 21, 2023. Online.

## VII. Miskito in Costa Rica

As mentioned in previous chapters, a variety of social, economic, political, and environmental factors have influenced the decision of many Miskito to leave Nicaragua. While this is not a new migration trajectory, the current socio-political situation, the increase in attacks from colonos, and the 2020 hurricanes all contributed to even more Miskito people leaving the country. Even though it is true that in the past when Miskito chose to migrate, they usually went to Honduras due to the presence of a Miskito community there, the current tensions over land in Honduras have made it a less viable or safe option (Arellano, 2022). Another destination that many Miskito and other Nicaraguan citizens chose is the United States (US) (Melesio, 2005). Nevertheless, this is a very expensive, long, and dangerous journey that generally requires people to pay large sums of money to a “coyote” with no guarantee of safely making it into the US (Expediente Publico, 2022). Additionally, new laws implemented in the US make it more difficult for these people to be able to legally stay in the country (Jimenez, 2023). As a result, the south neighboring country, Costa Rica, has become the place where most Miskito that chose to leave Nicaragua go to.

Given that the ethnicities of people going through migratory processes in Costa Rica is not recorded, it is challenging to know the exact numbers of Miskito people that are living there. A previous academic study on the Miskito population in Costa Rica was able to identify 115 Miskito households and 350 people in total (Villalobos, 2017). A more recent census concluded that there currently are more than 600 Miskito people, and the number consistently grows (Estrada Tellez, 2022). Moreover, in 2021 alone, the General Directorate of Migration in Costa Rica reported that more than 200 Miskito people inquired about immigration processes (Estrada Tellez, 2022). The Miskito community is very united, a strong network of Miskito people is slowly being formed across different neighborhoods near Costa Rica's capital (Villalobos, 2017). This makes it easier for other Miskito to migrate given that often they have open doors in every already settled Miskito household, and the Miskito language is usually spoken in these communities (Padilla, 2023).

In this chapter I describe the laws and processes that are involved in the Miskito mobilities to Costa Rica, as well as laws that are not yet in place but have been proposed by policymakers in Costa Rica to approach the increased migration of Miskito to the country in order to answer the sub research question on the consequences of the climate change frame on the Miskito community. Also, I draw from stories told during the informal conversations with the Miskito people in Costa Rica to describe their living conditions and thoughts about staying in Costa Rica.

## Laws for Migration in Costa Rica

When moving to Costa Rica, indigenous Miskito have to go through a long migration process. What most people do, due to convenience and given their circumstances, is apply for a refugee status. Most people do this because it is the quickest way to get a permit to work and also because they meet the definition (Hernandez, 2023). To be able to apply for a refugee status, the person has to meet certain characteristics; they have to have a well-founded fear, they have to have suffered persecution, and the persecution has to be for race, religion, nationality, gender, belonging to a group, or for political opinions (Hernandez, 2023). Costa Rica's definition of refugee adheres to the way the word is described in the Geneva Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees which centers around protecting people from political or other forms of persecution (Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1967). After the application is submitted, people have to wait up to three months to get a call to attend an interview and determine whether their application was accepted or not. In December 2022 changes were made to the migration laws; most importantly, people now do not get an immediate work permit when applying for a refugee status and they cannot leave the country while they are going through the process of requesting asylum (Hernandez, 2023). One of the interviewees, someone who has applied and has experienced the process firsthand, mentions that this process leaves people in a limbo given that the wait for the call is long and people are not able to legally work during this time:

*“They come to ask for political asylum and because of this work permit issue, as I told you, it is the only solution or form that migration presents to them in order to be able to insert themselves. What a lie that the president says that after 3 months they were giving you the work permit. You come and at about 6 months they are giving you the appointment so that you can go and apply for refuge. So those 6 months you come, and you are alone with a piece of paper that tells you a file number and the day you have that appointment. You don't have the card. So, what does a person do in 6 months without a job? Who's going to give them a job with a piece of paper?”<sup>11</sup>*

Another notable change in the application process is that now the appointments cannot be made over the phone or through the website, people have to go to the Unidad de Refugio to start their applications. Moreover, each day there is a limited number of people that can apply for asylum at the Unidad de Refugio in Costa Rica. Given that many people, not only Miskito but other Nicaraguans, and from other countries are seeking refuge in Costa Rica, people spend days and nights in line (Regidor & Padilla, 2023). Nonetheless, for now, applying

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with Katherine Estrada. December 7, 2022. San Jose, Costa Rica.

for a refugee status remains the only option for Miskito migrants in Costa Rica to eventually obtain a work permit.

Even though now the refugee status includes only people dealing with issues related to race, religion, nationality, gender, belonging to a group, or political opinions, there have been talks in Costa Rica to add climate change as an option to the General Migration Law. In December 2021 a proposal was presented in the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica to be able to give refugee status to people displaced due to events caused by climate change (Estrada Tellez, 2022). The proponent of this law is representative Enrique Sanchez, who argues that the aim of proposing this law is to start a conversation about climate change migration and the effects it has on the region (Padilla, 2023). Representative Enrique Sanchez introduced a law proposal titled “Recognition of refuge due to climate migration addition of a new section to article 106 of the general law on migration and aliens,” which proposes a new subsection in the refuge law of Costa Rica (Padilla, 2023). This new subsection in the refuge law in Costa Rica would mean that Miskito could declare climate change in their refuge application; however, the rest of the process would be the same (Sanchez Carballo, 2021). Nevertheless, it would provide Miskito that have not suffered political persecution but that have suffered from the hurricanes, an opportunity to apply for refuge in Costa Rica. Political scientist Alejandra Padilla, on an interview stated that the proposal represents hope for Miskito communities, and describes a conversation she had with its proponent:

*“Enrique Sánchez, who is a Costa Rican representative who had made a proposal told me that perhaps the refugee category is not optimal for them, perhaps a temporary protected status, he told me. But the important thing is that they be recognized so that they can have certain facilities here while their problem on the land is over.”<sup>12</sup>*

Furthermore, the process in itself is difficult and long, but for Miskito there are additional barriers. The main one being the language; a lot of Miskito do not speak Spanish and migration officers do not offer translators to aid in the process. Most of the time, Miskito have to go out and do things in pairs or groups because only few of them speak Spanish and can act as translators. The language barrier not only affects Miskito when applying for refugee, it has an effect on their daily lives. In the following chapter, I discuss the living conditions of Miskito in Costa Rica, the challenges they encounter, as well as personal experiences of some of the interviewees.

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with Alejandra Quintanilla. January 21, 2023. Online.



## Living Conditions of Miskito in Costa Rica

Once in Costa Rica, Miskito people must quickly adjust to a new life and in doing so, encounter a variety of challenges. The experience of different Miskito getting into Costa Rica often follows a pattern. People try to save up as much money as they can working in different cities in Nicaragua, then make irregular entry to Costa Rica, and are welcomed by other Miskitos offering places to stay and support (Padilla, 2023). The Miskito in Costa Rica have settled in different neighborhoods around the capital city of San Jose (Estrada Tellez, 2022). There are Miskito living in La Carpio, Pavas, and Alajuelita which are all low-income neighborhoods.

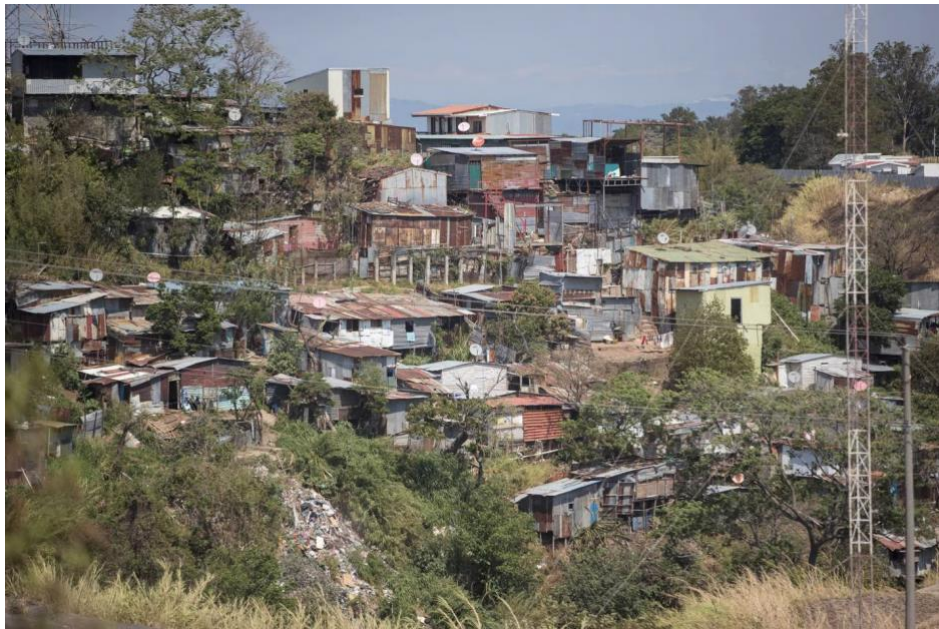


Figure 4: La Carpio neighborhood in Costa Rica (Cordero, 2018).

La Carpio, for instance, is a neighborhood with high levels of crime and where the houses are made from wood and zinc sheets (Recio, 2018). A report by the Sistema Integral de Formación Artística para Inclusión Social (SIFAIS, 2018), states that there is an average of 5 people per house in La Carpio with an average collective income per household of 200 thousand colones, which is around 300 euros. Additionally, the report concluded that the majority of residents in this neighborhood have experienced violations to their personal safety. Another issue in these neighborhoods is the access to water. Miskito, along with the other residents, have to go to nearby pipes around 3 times a week to get water for drinking, cooking, and washing (Estrada Tellez, 2022). An interviewee describes this experience after visiting the area and talking with the residents:

*“So how do they live? from survival. The settlement that I found is a very precarious settlement where the water does not reach. They must go down to a place to get water. They tell me that they are used to this dynamic because water does not reach their*

*communities either, but (in their communities) they are surrounded by water, they have access to it. Here there is no water even for washing.”<sup>13</sup>*

Aside from this, Miskito in Costa Rica usually rent the houses they live on; it is a big change to go from owning land and living from this land to having to pay a monthly rent and having to buy all of the food that they consume. Miskito leaders mentioned during informal conversations that even though the zones where they are living in Costa Rica are not safe, they have no better alternative because these are the places that they can afford:

*“In our houses we eat green bananas cooked with beans, and bitter coffee.”<sup>14</sup>*

As mentioned before, they are in a gray area for some months until their applications for refugee status go through. In the first few months living in Costa Rica Miskito are not able to work or access any public services such as health care. Nonetheless, even when they get their refugee applicant card, which also serves as a work permit, getting a job is difficult. Miskito usually only find very low salary temporary jobs given that the Covid-19 pandemic created extra barriers for everyone to re-insert themselves in the labor force (Estrada Tellez, 2022). Furthermore, Costa Rica is an expensive country to live in; San Jose especially, is among the topmost expensive cities to live in in Central America (Forbes, 2022). It is vital to remember that one of the reasons Miskito travels to Costa Rica is to be able to send money back to their families that are still living in Miskito communities in Nicaragua. Therefore, aside from paying for rent, food, transportation, and other necessities, Miskito still put away a part of their salaries to send back to Nicaragua. Some of the jobs that Miskito have in Costa Rica are cleaning houses, working on farms, and working on construction sites (Padilla, 2023). One Miskito elder leader mentioned during a conversation that she had just gotten off work at a coffee plantation, where she works to be able to support her children and grandchildren. Another Miskito leader said the following in response to this:

*“There is no source of work as our dear Mama Tara said, there is no source of work. Being a leader, she has to go cut coffee. That is a mockery for the Miskito people.”<sup>15</sup>*

On top of this, Miskito in Costa Rica have even a harder time being able to find work than other migrants given that many Miskito do not speak Spanish fluently. Language, then, is one of the main limitations that this community has to overcome when adapting to their lives

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with Katherine Estrada. December 7, 2022. San Jose, Costa Rica.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Miskito community member. December 9, 2022. San Jose, Costa Rica.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Miskito community member. December 9, 2022. San Jose, Costa Rica.

in a different country. When looking for jobs Miskito that do not speak Spanish go out with someone else that does speak the language to have them translate for them. Thus, the type of jobs that Miskito who do not speak Spanish can get is limited.

Another issue that was raised during conversations with Miskito is the fact that NGOs in Costa Rica provide little to no support to them. The UNHCR states that their work in Costa Rica with Nicaraguan and Venezuelan asylum seekers focuses on “safeguarding the basic rights of refugees and asylum-seekers through protection assistance, border monitoring, provision of basic needs to the most vulnerable and activities that promote peaceful coexistence and local integration” (UNHCR, n.d.). However, Miskito interviewees stated that they have not been supported by this or other NGOs in the time they have lived in Costa Rica:

*“I entered in December 2021; we are already going to have December 2022 one year. UNHCR and other organizations here have not helped us.”<sup>16</sup>*

Overall, Miskito have difficult living conditions in Costa Rica, they encounter barriers that other asylum-seekers do not have to experience, and they do not get support from the government or NGOs. During the conversations held, most Miskito at some point mention their hopes to go back to their lands and their families, they do not see this move to Costa Rica as a permanent one:

*“...you talk to them, and they all tell you, I haven't found anyone who tells you "I want to stay here." Everyone says, "I can't wait to return to my lands," "I can't wait to recover my lands" that's what everyone tells you. They want to return ... they tell you that it was very hard to have to come for them because they didn't want to.”<sup>17</sup>*

## Perceptions of Miskito Mobilities

Miskito see their mobilities as temporary, and as a result of the violence and injustice that they suffer in their communities in Nicaragua. During interviews most Miskito state that they want to go back to their lands. They say that they remain hopeful for their return to their lands and for the general future of their communities. Nevertheless, many of the Miskito interviewed cannot truly go back with the current Sandinista government still in power because they have active threats against them. Going back, for them, would mean immediate arrest or a continuation of the violence and instilling of fear in their own homes. In addition, the different perceptions of Miskito mobilities by various actors also act as regimes that regulate their

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<sup>16</sup> Interview with Miskito community member. December 9, 2022. San Jose, Costa Rica.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Alejandra Quintanilla. January 21, 2023. Online.

mobilities. For instance, the way the media portrays the mobilities can have an effect on their lives in Costa Rica not only because media coverage can get the attention of policymakers, but also because different portrayals can influence Costa Ricans to think differently of Miskito migrants. As mentioned in the interviews with journalists, there is what they are referring to as a “migratory collapse” in Costa Rica; thus, there is a general concern felt by the society. One of the journalists stated that framing the mobilities of Miskito as one related to climate change in the media would attract the attention of the international community to provide support. Another journalist highlighted the importance of not only showing the reasons behind the Miskito mobilities to Costa Rica but also showcasing the living conditions they experience in their new homes. She states that this would show that Miskito do not go to Costa Rica because they want to be there, and it would shed light on the complexity of the issue as a whole. Additionally, in relation to the climate refugee discourse in Costa Rica, Miskito interviewees state that they only want to receive support from government and NGOs for their inclusion to the country. It is important to note, however, that when the focus on the causes for the migratory movements of the Miskito population turns to climate change, other contributing factors are not addressed. For instance, stating that climate change is the reason for the migration leaves aside the economic, social, and political factors that contributed to the decision to move in the first place. Therefore, better ways to help the Miskito population might be excluded or not even brought up by policymakers if the roots of the mobilities are not properly understood. Nevertheless, Miskito people in Costa Rica mentioned that they do not have preference over how the Costa Rican government views their migration as long as they can be living and working legally in the country as quickly as possible. Similarly, one journalist that works closely with Miskito migrants points out, the reasons behind migratory movements are not important when trying to survive in a new environment:

*“The thing is that once they are here, I think that these reasons, once they migrate, these reasons go into the background because they come to look for how to survive even as a refugee.”<sup>18</sup>*

On the other hand, perceptions of the Miskito mobilities by policymakers in Costa Rica do often relate to a climate change frame. Given that migration to Costa Rica is exponentially increasing not only from Miskito people but from other Nicaraguans, Venezuelans, and other countries, there are constant changes made to migratory law in order to deal with this. A chancellor in Costa Rica’s General Assembly stated that migratory movements are becoming a problem in the country given that due to the large number of asylum seekers the country is

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Katherine Estrada. December 7, 2022. San Jose, Costa Rica.

less able to give these people the support they deserve (News UN, 2022). Furthermore, this chancellor mentions that they are in serious need of support from the international community to deal with the issue of increased migration not only caused by conflict and poverty, but also by climate change (News UN, 2022). Some of the changes that have already been implemented are described in previous chapters and negatively impact the process for legally staying in the country as a refugee. Also, as mentioned before there is currently no law for climate induced migration in Costa Rica. Nevertheless, some policymakers have observed the migratory movements of the Miskito people after the 2020 hurricanes and have used this as a way to introduce conversations about climate migration and what this entails for the country. They did so by proposing a law to include the category of climate as one of the reasons for seeking refuge. This law proposal uses the definition of environmental refugee presented during the Nairobi World Conference by the United Nations in 1985 and states that this be included as a valid reason to ask for refuge (“Reconocimiento Del Refugio A Causa De Migraciones Climáticas Adición De Un Nuevo Inciso Del Artículo 106 De La Ley General De Migración Y Extranjería,” 2021) The proponent of the law explains that he does not know if this is the right direction to take for people going to Costa Rica due to climate pressures, but he believes that it is a good start to a discussion on what he believes will be an issue in the near future in the region. In an interview it was mentioned that another possible idea for people that migrate due to climate pressures, is a temporary protected status that recognizes people as refugees and can work and have access to public institutions while the issues on their lands improve.

All of this shows that there is a multiplex relationship between legal frameworks, social dynamics, and the actual lived experiences of the Miskito migrant community in Costa Rica. Costa Rica has implemented migration policies aimed at protecting the rights of migrants and there are discussions to further these policies, including climate change as a reason for refuge. However, the reality for Miskito individuals and families that currently reside in Costa Rica shows that the aspirations of the Costa Rican government often fall short given that as some Miskito expressed during interviews, they do not have the support they expected. Moreover, these ambitions for expanding the refuge law might not have the desired impact on the Miskito community as it may take away from the complexity of their mobilities.

## VIII. Discussion

In this chapter, I discuss the main findings of this thesis that were presented in previous chapters. I discuss the results of the present study by making use of arguments based on political ecology, climate mobilities and climate mobilities regimes. First, I describe the different factors, power relations, and material and human movements that affect the Miskito communities in Nicaragua comparing it to the literature. Then I deepen the findings by making connections to similar studies.

### Relational Cycle Between Past Injustices and Current Vulnerabilities

As mentioned in previous chapters, there are both historical and contemporary struggles faced by the Miskito community in Nicaragua. There is a heavy influence of colonization and power imbalances in shaping the Miskito's experiences and mobilities. There are structures of exploitation of resources established by various colonizing powers, and these have impacts on current land struggles affecting Miskito communities. Similarly, the consequences of the prioritization of economic development by the Sandinista government which later led to tensions are still affecting the community (Cayetano Jarquin, 2017). Moreover, contemporary challenges, including the ongoing colonization by colonos and the Nicaraguan government, result in resource access issues and increased violence against the Miskito people. All of these situations perfectly illustrate the two theses mentioned on the theoretical framework of this study. First, the environmental degradation and marginalization thesis is clearly described in the case of the Miskito community because even though the government has attempted to blame degradation on indigenous communities, the community is not the main perpetrator of the environmental deterioration. There are studies that show that the environmental degradation of Miskito lands and the marginalization of the communities is tied to the land expropriations and extractive activities by colonos (The Oakland Institute, 2020; Chavkin et al., 2021). Robbins (2012) makes a connection between resource expropriation and conflict which is exemplified in the case of the Miskito community. Second, the environmental conflict and exclusion thesis shows that the violent attacks suffered by Miskito communities and the general tensions in the region are a result of the increased lack of access to resources that they experience due to the government's and colonos' efforts to develop economically. Instances of land expropriation and extractivist activities carried out in the Miskito land affect the quality of living of the community and ultimately create tensions and conflict as the community attempts to defend their rights (The Oakland Institute, 2020). During conversations with Miskito people, they mentioned their discontent with the government due to their role in

resource exploitation carried out by colonos. Issues over land and resource use, then can be seen as a pivotal factor influencing climate mobilities of the Miskito.

On top of their struggles with land rights, their geographical location makes them vulnerable to hurricanes that are increasing in intensity and frequency. Vulnerability, as aforementioned, becomes a key concept when discussing the climate mobilities of the Miskito population. Climate pressures, as a result, are also understood to be a factor affecting climate mobilities of the Miskito population. Climate pressures are not an isolated component. Instead, these relate to the previously mentioned political and social issues of the community. In other words, it is not only the fact that hurricanes are increasing in intensity and frequency that influences Miskito mobilities, but also that there is a lack of support from the government to overcome or bounce back from these extreme weather events. Additionally, the little help the government does provide is politically motivated in efforts to increase the support of communities in the Atlantic coast for the FSLN government. As a result, many Miskito report not seeing any benefits of the support from the government, as it all goes to people that are publicly pro government.

After looking at the existing literature and having conversations with professionals and Miskito migrants in Costa Rica, I have identified a cycle of reciprocal cause and effect between the increase of Miskito's vulnerability to colonos and the increase of Miskito's vulnerability to hurricanes. These two items both intensify and aggravate each other in a relationship that can be best described as a vicious circle. The advance of the colonos leads to deforestation and to a decrease in the living conditions and economic activities of the Miskito, which all makes the Miskito a more vulnerable population to the effects of extreme weather events. In turn, the constant and intense hurricanes, storms, and floods leave Miskito communities less able to protect themselves from colonos. Moreover, the sometimes-necessary relocation of Miskitos to prevent casualties from these extreme weather events, opens a window for colonos to take more lands from Miskito given that they are not there to do anything about it. In this case, we can understand the advance of colonos into Miskito territories, resulting in deforestation and detrimental impacts on both living conditions and economic activities through the lens of political ecology and climate mobility regimes. First, in line with political ecology arguments (Bridge et al., 2015; Moore, 1996; Robbins, 2012), the colonization of Miskito by external actors is driven by severe power imbalances, political decisions, and economic interests of the Nicaraguan government and international corporations that prioritize development over the well-being of the community (The Oakland Institute, 2020; Estrada Tellez, 2022). This exemplifies the complex connections between social, economic, and environmental systems in the context of resource exploitation and conflicts. Furthermore, the Miskito people's vulnerability to hurricanes is increased due to deforestation and the overall degradation of the environment caused by colonos which along with the Nicaraguan government represent a

regime that ultimately shapes their mobilities through practices and power dynamics (Farbotko, 2022). In effect, the activities of colonos contribute to environmental degradation, which in turn heightens the vulnerability of the Miskito community to hurricanes. Understanding this cycle within the framework of political ecology and climate mobility regimes aids in understanding the underlying factors that shape the experiences and vulnerabilities of Miskito communities in Nicaragua. The figure below aids in the visualization of the feedback loop between two main factors of Miskito mobilities.

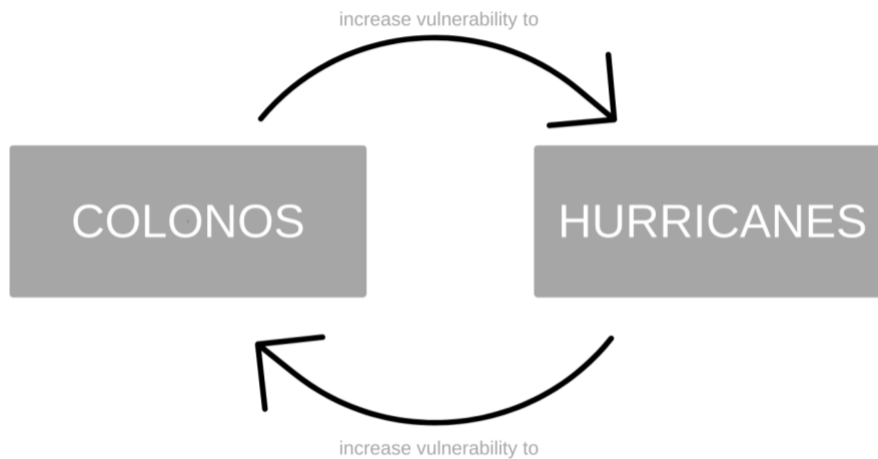


Figure 5: Reciprocal relationship increasing vulnerability of Miskito communities.

Consequently, the history of colonization, the issues of land and resource use, the socio-political situation, the broader economic system, and the climate pressure are identified as some of the factors that influence the climate mobilities of Miskito communities. Nevertheless, just as described by mobilities theory, the case cannot be described as a simple cause and effect. Miskito people are caught in this reciprocal cycle, which is unlike dominant discussions on climate migration which describe it as a linear relationship leaving aside the historical struggles of a community and the effects this has on their present struggles. Further, the Nicaraguan government and colonos are actors within Nicaragua that hold power over these communities and thus influence their mobilities. In addition, instances of political persecution aggravate the factors previously mentioned by adding a strong feeling of danger even in their own homes. Thus, many Miskito seek refuge in Costa Rica.

While this study does identify climate pressures as a contributing factor to Miskito mobilities to Costa Rica, this needs to be recognized within a certain context. It is true that after the two consecutive hurricanes of 2020 there was an increase in the number of Miskito people that left for Costa Rica (Estrada Tellez, 2022); however, by this time Miskito people had been experiencing violence and land issues for years. Also, one of the main reasons for going to Costa Rica is to find a job and be able to send money back to their families. This is



necessary for them due to a variety of reasons. Not only to be able to fix or build their houses back up from the hurricanes, but also because there is a lack of jobs available for them due to the several reasons mentioned before. In the context of Miskito in Costa Rica, new mobilities enter the equation. Given that they go to Costa Rica to work, there are labor mobilities taking place, and monetary mobilities when they send money back to their families in Miskito communities in Nicaragua. There is also a mobility of the Miskito culture, in a way, because they create close knit communities in Costa Rica in which they continue to speak their language and support each other through the difficult adaptation to a new land. Additionally, the laws for migration in Costa Rica act as a regulating regime for Miskito mobilities given that they directly have an effect on whether an individual can stay or not in the country. Moreover, the laws regulate the labor of Miskito in Costa Rica given that there is a lengthy process to acquire a work permit and be able to legally work.

The climate mobilities of Miskito then, need to be understood as much more than hurricanes leading to migration. There is, in reality, a whole complex network of interconnected actors, regimes, movements, power structures, social, political, and economical factors that influence the movements of the Miskito community in both Nicaragua and Costa Rica. All of this makes the Miskito population both actors and subjects to their own mobilities. As Schapendonk (2017) describes, migratory movements cannot be explained only through migrant agency as a self-ruling power. Instead, Schapendonk (2017) suggests that along with migrant agency, there are other actors, institutions, and practices that play a role in migrant trajectories. This can also be supported by the fact that their living conditions in Costa Rica are far from ideal, yet they still decide to go there. As described by Miskito themselves, their mobilities to Costa Rica seems more like a necessity than a choice.

## **Miskito Mobilities in the Bigger Picture: summarizing thesis' contributions**

The results of this study build on existing evidence of a complex and deep set of factors, structures, and actors coming into place in instances of climate mobilities instead of this being a straightforward relationship between climate change related events and human migration. The findings from this case of Miskito mobilities support the broad theories mentioned in the theoretical framework given that they reflect some of the processes that these theories describe. For instance, as political ecology suggests, the case of Miskito shows that deep set patterns of colonization have facilitated and paved the way for current extractivist and post-colonial activities in the region (Bridge et al., 2015; Blaikie, 2006). Furthermore, political ecology theses of degradation and marginalization and the environmental conflict and exclusion which describe how actions by the state and other external actors to achieve

economic growth through the overexploitation of natural resources lead to degradation, and how resource expropriation lead to conflict are both evidently displayed among the Miskito communities (Robbins, 2012). Moreover, this thesis shows, as described through political ecology, the effects of power imbalance in creating and aggravating environmental issues (Moore, 1996; Walker, 2005; Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2019). There is a clear difference of power held by Miskito people, colonos, and the Nicaraguan government that allow for more and more advances into Miskito territories by colonos and eventually lead to displacement. This shows that actors with greater power in a certain situation then have increased influence on the course of events.

Another implication of this study is the idea of analyzing a case of mobilities through a broader lens like political ecology. Doing so aids in a comprehensive understanding of not only the material and human movements involved in Miskito mobilities, but also a look into the many economic, political, and social drivers of these movements and how different actors influence the situation. The idea that marginalized communities are disproportionately affected by environmental issues proposed by Walker (2005), is also supported by this thesis when we identify the Miskito indigenous community as a marginalized group by the Nicaraguan government. Given that the degradation of Miskito territories is done by hand of colonos with support from the government, the findings of this study are in line with the work of Brosius et al. (2005) and Schlosberg (2007) that recognize the relationship between the protection of the rights of marginalized groups and a healthy environment. In addition, this research falls in line with Moore's (1996) suggestions of the importance of understanding local and global economic systems to get a nuanced view of environmental issues stemming from struggles over resource use.

Furthermore, this thesis supports theories of climate mobilities and climate mobilities regimes as it mirrors the mechanisms that they describe. The findings suggest that there are various movements and regimes that relate to the mobilities of the Miskito community and that the relationship is not as straightforward as hurricanes causing the migration of Miskito people to Costa Rica. Like Schapendonk (2018) suggests, understanding migration as an industry of complex relationships is vital to recognizing fluctuating migrant trajectories. Just as stated climate mobility regimes, the migration of Miskito communities is highly relevant because migration as a movement is pivotal to the situation. Overall, this thesis supports the idea proposed by Farbotko (2022) that decisions related to mobility are subject not only to climate pressures but also to different regimes and actors exercising power over the situation.

Another implication of this study is the potential to shed light on the experiences and struggles of indigenous communities in the region. By describing and analyzing the social, economic, and political factors that influence Miskito mobilities, the thesis can contribute to a greater understanding of the ways in which indigenous peoples navigate their environments

and the several regimes that regulate their mobilities. The thesis provides a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of Miskito migrants, including the challenges they face in adjusting to a new country and the strategies they use to adapt. By identifying these challenges and opportunities, this study can inform more effective policies and programs that support indigenous rights. Finally, the thesis can also contribute to academic discussions around indigenous mobilities and environmental justice. By situating the case of Miskito mobilities within broader theoretical frameworks, such as political ecology, environmental justice, and climate mobilities, the thesis can offer insights into the complex intersections between human mobility, social inequality, and ecological systems.

## IX. Conclusion and research recommendations

The history of the Miskito community in Nicaragua has been marked by turbulence, as they face an array of challenges in the context of climate change and land expropriation. With an increase in the frequency and intensity of hurricanes, Miskito communities suffered significant impacts on their quality of life. Furthermore, they deal with violence and intimidation from settlers, further aggravating their vulnerability. As a result, there has been an increase on the migration of the Miskito people to Costa Rica. This thesis aimed to comprehensively understand and describe the intricate web of factors, actors, and power networks that influence the mobilities of Miskito communities. It explored not only how these mobilities are perceived by the Miskito community but also how they are perceived by other actors involved. By utilizing the lenses of political ecology, climate mobilities, and climate mobility regimes, this study described the dynamics of political tensions, historical violence, colonization, and escalating climate pressures that contribute to the vulnerability of Miskito communities and their mobilities. In this chapter, I answer the main research question of this thesis by first providing answers to the sub research questions, and end by describing the limitations and implications of it for further research.

### Miskito Mobilities: how they are presented, perceived, and how it affects the community

In order to answer the main research question presented in this study, I will first answer each sub research question:

*Who presents the Miskito migration in predominantly climate change terms and what are their reasons for doing so?*

First, the results of the study show that different actors present the Miskito migration in different ways. Policymakers in Costa Rica predominantly view Miskito migration as being caused by climate change. Moreover, media outlets have also presented this migration as one that has increased in recent years because of extreme weather events caused by climate change. Policymakers in Costa Rica who perceive the Miskito migration in predominantly climate change terms have done as a way to start addressing the possibility of introducing a climate change refugee law in the country. This would be a new way to deal with the rapidly increasing number of asylum seekers the country has experienced in recent years, not only from the Miskito population but from other countries in the region. As mentioned before, politicians in the country have voiced their concerns for the increased migration linking it not only to conflict but also to climate change as they ask for support from the international community. On the

other hand, interviews with journalists showed that they do see the bigger picture behind the migratory movements of the Miskito population, but different angles of their coverage depend on what they think will gain more attention from the general population. For instance, after the two consecutive hurricanes that affected the Miskito population and the climate refugee law was proposed, there were news articles discussing this migration as resulting mainly from climate change. Nevertheless, there was still an understanding in these articles that more aspects were involved in these people's decision to move. It was also mentioned by the journalists that they feel it is important to not only cover the causes for the migratory movements of the Miskito population but also their lives and challenges in a different setting from what they are used to.

*How do Miskito migrants in Costa Rica perceive their mobilities and does it differ from the climate change frames?*

Second, the research suggests that Miskito migrants perceive their mobilities as caused by many different factors but mainly stemming from their complex relationship with the government. This is not to say that they only migrate because of the threats and violence they suffer from colonos and the government. During interviews Miskito migrants in Costa Rica also mentioned that moving to Costa Rica helped them financially given that they are unable to find work in Nicaragua. Moreover, they state that their lands and rivers are polluted and do not provide them enough food and financial gains to survive. Nevertheless, they link this lack of jobs, pollution, and overall decrease of environmental health to the government and the different extractivist activities they carry out along with colonos. Similarly, when they mentioned hurricanes and climate change, they very clearly state that this is a result of the unsustainable practices of extracting resources carried out by colonos and the government. Then, the perceptions of Miskito on their own mobilities differ from the climate change frame in that they center more on how the government and colonos led to these catastrophes. Moreover, it is important to point out that all Miskito interviewed see their mobilities as temporary and have hope of soon returning to their lands.

*What are the political, social, economic, and environmental reasons for Miskito mobilities to Costa Rica?*

To answer the third sub research question, I have focused on the long history that the Miskito community have with colonization and unfair power structures. The Miskito mobilities to Costa Rica can be explained through various political, social, economic, and environmental reasons. The community's history of British and Spanish colonization made the community vulnerable to similar issues in the future. When the Sandinista government came to power in Nicaragua, they first tried to take the land from the Miskito which led to conflict and a growing sense of

distrust from the community towards the government. Nowadays, the community suffers from threats and violent attacks from colonos and government officials. Which then, as aforementioned, also affects their quality of life in economic and social terms. Miskito people often need to migrate in order to work and be able to send money back to their families given that if they stay, they are not able to support themselves. Furthermore, the degradation of their environment and the increase in the quantity and intensity of hurricanes also puts pressure on the community and adds to the varied reasons behind their need to move.

*What are the consequences of the use of the climate change frame for the Miskito community?* Finally, answering the fourth sub research question, the climate change frame does not really have significant consequences on the Miskito community in Costa Rica. Aside from the possibility of a climate change refugee status introduction in the country, there is not really a direct effect of this frame on the quality of lives of the Miskito people in Costa Rica. However, this frame might distract from the more complex situation that is the mobility of the Miskito community. Further, as pointed out by journalists and political scientists interviewed, the causes of the mobilities are not important once they are in Costa Rica given that they quickly start to focus on adapting and finding a job. One journalist points out that a climate change frame might attract attention from the international community which could translate into support for the Miskito community, but this is not the reality at the moment. Moreover, the introduction of climate change as an option when asking for refugee would make it easier for Miskito to seek refuge in Costa Rica if they were directly affected by hurricanes. However, the community places more importance on the support or lack thereof that they hear is available to them from several NGOs in Costa Rica. To sum up, the way the mobilities of the Miskito community are framed does not currently show an impact on their quality of life once in Costa Rica.

Looking at all these results, we can reach an answer to the main research question “Why, by whom, and with what effect, is the migration of Miskito people from Nicaragua to Costa Rica presented as one predominantly resulting from climate change, and how does this relate to the more political and economic reasons of their migration?”. The migration of Miskito people from Nicaragua to Costa Rica is presented as one predominantly resulting from climate change by policymakers from Costa Rica and by some media outlets. While policymakers within the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica do it as a way to develop a discourse on the effects of climate migration in the country and how to deal with them given that they see this as a growing issue specially since Costa Rica already has a high influx of migrants (News UN, 2022), media outlets do so as a way to describe the depths of the Miskito struggle going past their tensions with the Nicaraguan government. As mentioned by one of the journalists in an

interview, media will report on whatever will get more attention and clicks from the public. Nevertheless, the journalists interviewed also recognized that they aim to provide a full analysis of the migration situation which is why the climate related reasons are also discussed. These perceptions, as mentioned in the previous sub-chapter, are interconnected with the more political, economic, and social reasons of their migration but they are too superficial and broad to be accurate. This is because, as mentioned in previous chapters, the colonial history of the Miskito communities in Nicaragua plays a big role in their current situation. The historical injustices are often overlooked when they are actually a significant and noteworthy factor influencing the cycle of vulnerability affecting the Miskito community. This cycle of vulnerability, a key finding of this thesis, refers to the fact that the activities of colonos in Miskito territory contribute to environmental degradation, which then increases the vulnerability of the Miskito community to hurricanes. This cycle also contests dominant discussions of climate migration which describe it as a linear relation. Moreover, the Miskito themselves do identify the hurricanes and the general environmental degradation of their lands as contributing factors to their mobilities. Nevertheless, they also heavily mention the tensions with the government, the advancement of colonos, and the political persecution that they are victims of as primary factors. Additionally, during the conversations, Miskito mentioned their history of colonization and how they have had these struggles for a long time, and they continue in the present.

## Limitations

The findings of this thesis have to be understood within the context of certain limitations. As mentioned in the methodology section, carrying out interviews and informal conversations to gather data was an ideal approach to answer the research questions. Nevertheless, it is vital to acknowledge the reliability issues that might stem from using this methodological approach. First, the data coming from interviews is based on the personal recollections of individuals and reflects their personal truth regarding the subject at hand. To counter this, the result section of the thesis is based not only on the responses given by interviewees but also backed by pre-existing literature and news reportings of the different topics discussed.

Moreover, taking the informal conversation approach when interviewing Miskito migrants meant that I had less control of the topics discussed as I would have had if they had been semi-structured interviews. Therefore, it is fair to say that the informal conversation approach could have led to a less wide reach of data gathered. Taking all of this into consideration, however, the qualitative approach making use of interviews, informal conversations, and existing literature on the subject did provide a comprehensive understanding of not only the factors affecting Miskito mobilities but also the perceptions of said mobilities. Another limitation related to the methodology was the sampling size. Finding

Miskito migrants in Costa Rica that spoke Spanish and were willing to share their experiences was a difficult task. Miskito are often afraid to talk about their experiences given that they do not want to be persecuted by the government for it. Contacting Miskito organizations in Costa Rica led to no interviews. In the end, most of the Miskito with whom I had conversations were resistance leaders that had already been public about their struggles.

Furthermore, there might be limitations related to the applicability of the findings in this thesis given that there are a number of specific circumstances that come together in this case of Miskito mobilities. Their history of colonization, geographical location, current socio-political situation in the country all contribute to making this a complex but specific issue. Nevertheless, findings might be applicable to understand the mobilities of other indigenous communities suffering displacement due to a convoluted mix of factors and power structures.

## Implications and Recommendations

This research adds to existing literature by identifying and describing the different factors and actors that shape and regulate the climate mobilities of the Nicaraguan Miskito population to Costa Rica, as well as the perception of these mobilities by different actors. In doing so, this research can serve as a starting point for further research about Miskito mobilities or the mobilities of other indigenous communities in relation to climate struggles. Recommendations for further research include the addition of experiences of Miskito that stayed in their communities, looking into the different places where Miskito move to, a longer-term study on the mobility patterns of Miskito in Costa Rica, and research on the impact of the climate refugee law in Costa Rica if this is passed.

Due to safety concerns, I was not able to go to Miskito communities in Nicaragua to conduct interviews. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to conduct research that includes the experiences and opinions of those Miskito that stay in their lands, exploring the immobilities of these communities. Moreover, even though Costa Rica is the place that has seen the most noticeable increase of Miskito migrants, as mentioned in previous chapters of this thesis, there are other countries and cities within Nicaragua where Miskito move to. A more encompassing study looking into the different destinations of Miskito and the factors that influence the choosing of these destinations might be an idea for future research. Furthermore, given that this was a relatively short-term study looking into Miskito mobilities in Costa Rica, it would be interesting to see the patterns of these mobilities in a longitudinal study. Most Miskito expressed their desires to go back; thus, further research on the duration of their stay in Costa Rica and the events that influence their decisions to go back would add value to this study. Lastly, given that at the time this study was conducted, the law for climate refugee status is



just a proposal, questions regarding the effects of this law on the Miskito community could be included in future research if the law is approved.

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# Annexes

## Interview Guide

The interviews began with a short introduction of both myself and the research that I am conducting. The prior informed consent forms were then given to the interviewee to sign or to verbally agree to in case of an online interview. I then start with the interview questions. Below is the interview guide in which different questions are divided among the main themes. The guide served as a basis for the interview, but from the respondents' answers other questions could be asked.

Theme 1: Background of interviewee

- name, origin, occupation, relation to the topic of Miskito mobilities

Theme 2: Perception of Miskito mobilities

- What do you perceive are the reasons for the movements of Miskito people from Nicaragua to Costa Rica?
- To what extent can climate change be presented as a driver of migration?

Theme 3: Media related

- What do you think is the effect of certain representations of the Miskito migration to Costa Rica in the media?
- Do you think there is a misrepresentation of the reasons for the movements of the Miskito people by the media?
- Do you think that there are some reasons that are represented more than others for these mobilities and why it happens?

At the end of the interview, I ask interviewees if there is anything else they would like to add or if they have any questions regarding the interview or the research in general.

## Interviewees

Below is a table with the different interviewees that contributed to the thesis. I first indicate what actor category each interviewee was, then I state whether it was an interview or an informal conversation. Moreover, I provide the location and date of each interview and identify if the interview was recorded or not.

Actor	Conversation	Location	Recording	Date
Journalist – Confidencial/Puntos de Encuentro NGO	Interview	San Jose, Costa Rica	Recorded	07/12/2022
Journalist/Political Scientist – Confidencial/Puntos de Encuentro NGO	Interview	Online	Recorded	21/01/2023
Miskito leader	Informal Conversation	San Jose, Costa Rica	Recorded	09/12/2022
Miskito elder	Informal Conversation	San Jose, Costa Rica	Recorded	09/12/2022
Miskito elder/Prime Minister of Mosquitia	Informal Conversation	San Jose, Costa Rica	Recorded	09/12/2022

Table 1: Interviewees