



# MUSIC AS DISCOURSE TO INFORM RURAL POLICY:

*A Case Study of the Mayangna Artistic Initiatives in  
Nicaragua*

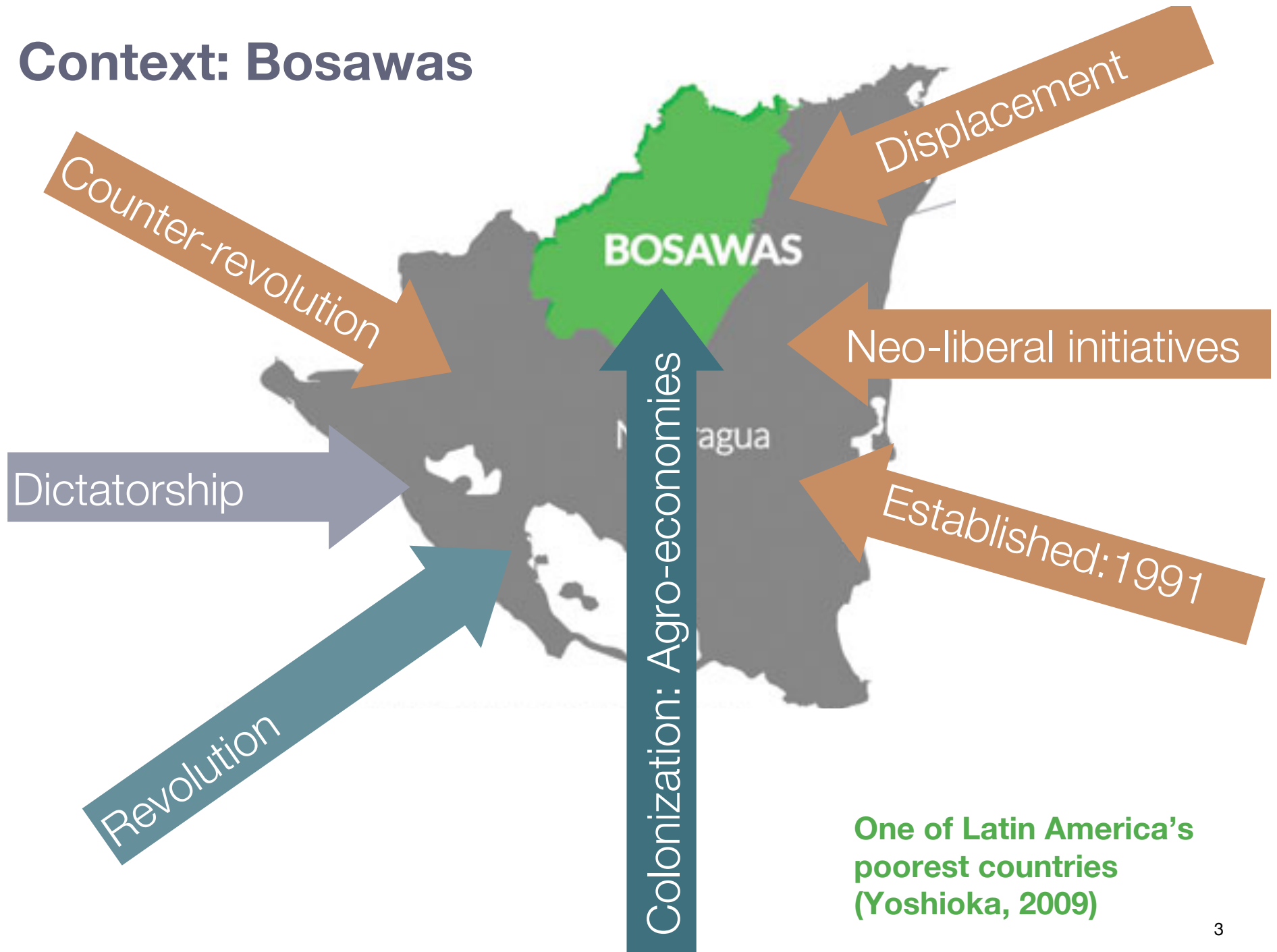


## INTRODUCTION – POINTS OF DEPARTURE

.....

- On-going conflicts: Land, water, natural resources, sacred lands.
- Activists' responses
- Conflicting worldviews
- An in-depth case study (discourse analysis)
  - Bosawas and the Mayangna (Nicaragua)
- Reflections for rural policy

## Context: Bosawas





## RESEARCH: QUESTIONS, OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

---

- What is the relationship between musical expression during the Unidos por Bosawas Festival and the process of policy creation and enforcement?
- What is being articulated through musical discourse?
- Who is doing the articulation?
- How can the initiatives surrounding this issue be optimized so as to ensure alternative voices fully participate in the elaboration of discourse and bring about lasting change for the Mayangna communities?

## RESEARCH: QUESTIONS, OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

---

- To understand how music performance is used to both perpetuate excluding discourses and counteract this exclusion.
- To identify the discourses and values that are articulated, ask how the discourses are different and how can they inform one another?
  - Understand historical context
  - Understand creative and performative processes
- Stakeholders:
  - Policy makers.
  - Indigenous musicians and community leaders
  - Non-indigenous musicians and activists.
  - Engaged public
  - University students, NGOs

# EPISTEMOLOGY – METHODS



Image: [www.hoy.com.ni](http://www.hoy.com.ni)

- .....
- Social constructivist approach
- Complex social systems
- Indigenous epistemologies
  - Non-linear
  - Performance: experiential “knowledge transfer”
- Sequential method of inquiry
  - Archival data
  - Interviews
  - Systems map

## KNOWLEDGE GAP

---

- Music:
  - A catalyst for social change (Eyerman & Jamison; 1998)
  - A vehicle for personal communication (Baker & Krout; 2011)
  - A tool for education (Christianakis; 2011)
- Performance as discourse seen from a multi angle perspective and considered as collective discourse / embodiment of collective values.
- Music can embody the alternative values and knowledge systems of groups who lie on the fringes of society, particularly, indigenous groups who seek to defend their protected or sacred lands.

# SOME KEY CONCEPTS

---

## Discourse

The focus is not on language as an abstract entity but as a system for interaction: “Analysis of discourse becomes, then, analysis of what people do.” (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 4)

Language as a way of doing things.  
Action.

Justice is not static, nor does it exist  
outside of human construction.  
(Capeheart & Milovanovic, 2007, p. 200)

## Performance -

Practices which stand out from other practices around them so as to draw attention to themselves (Taylor, 2003)

Vital acts of transfer -Embodied epistemologies

*“Every performance enacts a theory, and every theory performs in the public sphere” (Taylor, p. 27)*

*“They promise to take our lands and they took them. How did they accomplish this? Simply by declaration.” (Akwesasne Notes, 2005, p. 14)*



# CONFLICT OF WORLDVIEWS

---

Modernization approach:

- Uneven process in Central America
- Seeds of violence.

Relationship  
Nature/ Humanity  
Conceptualization  
of time and  
history

**Buen Vivir**

**Development**

Relational  
ontology

Dualities

Cyclical

Linear history

# Concluding Thoughts

- New perspectives on development
- Music performance as a participatory process of discourse creation/utterance
- Re-articulation of identity, sustainable principles
- Citizen engagement

*If we truly love our children, we have to recover this vast indigenous knowledge, our only legacy, the only thing that is left for us after more than five hundred years of colonization. I want people to understand that what is at stake here is much more important than any economy*

— Ernesto Matute, Nicaraguan Musician and Activist  
in *El Canto de Bosawas*