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Fighting climate change through “patrimonialization” : Study cases of the Dominican Republic and Costa Rica

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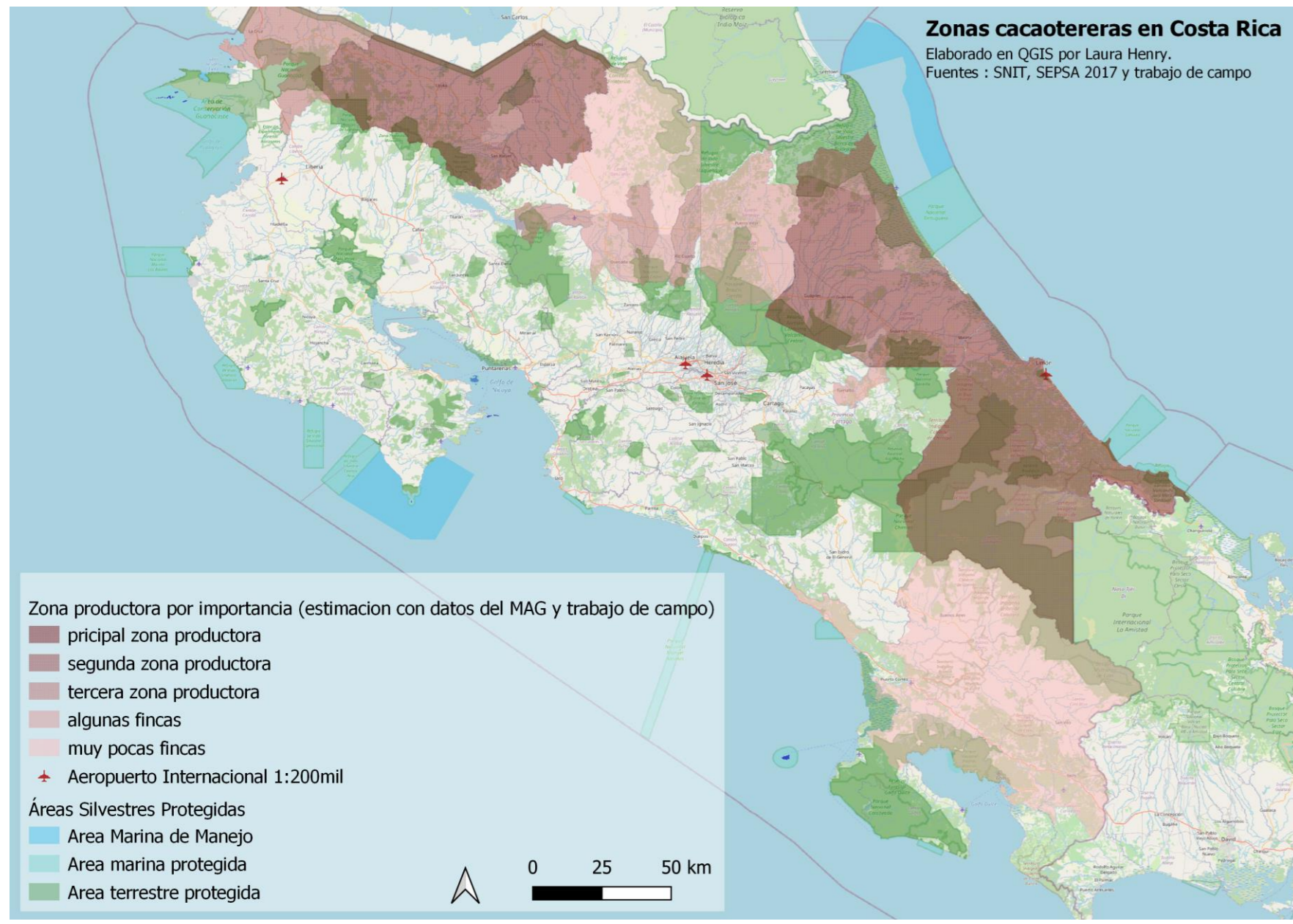
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Fighting climate change through “patrimonialization” :

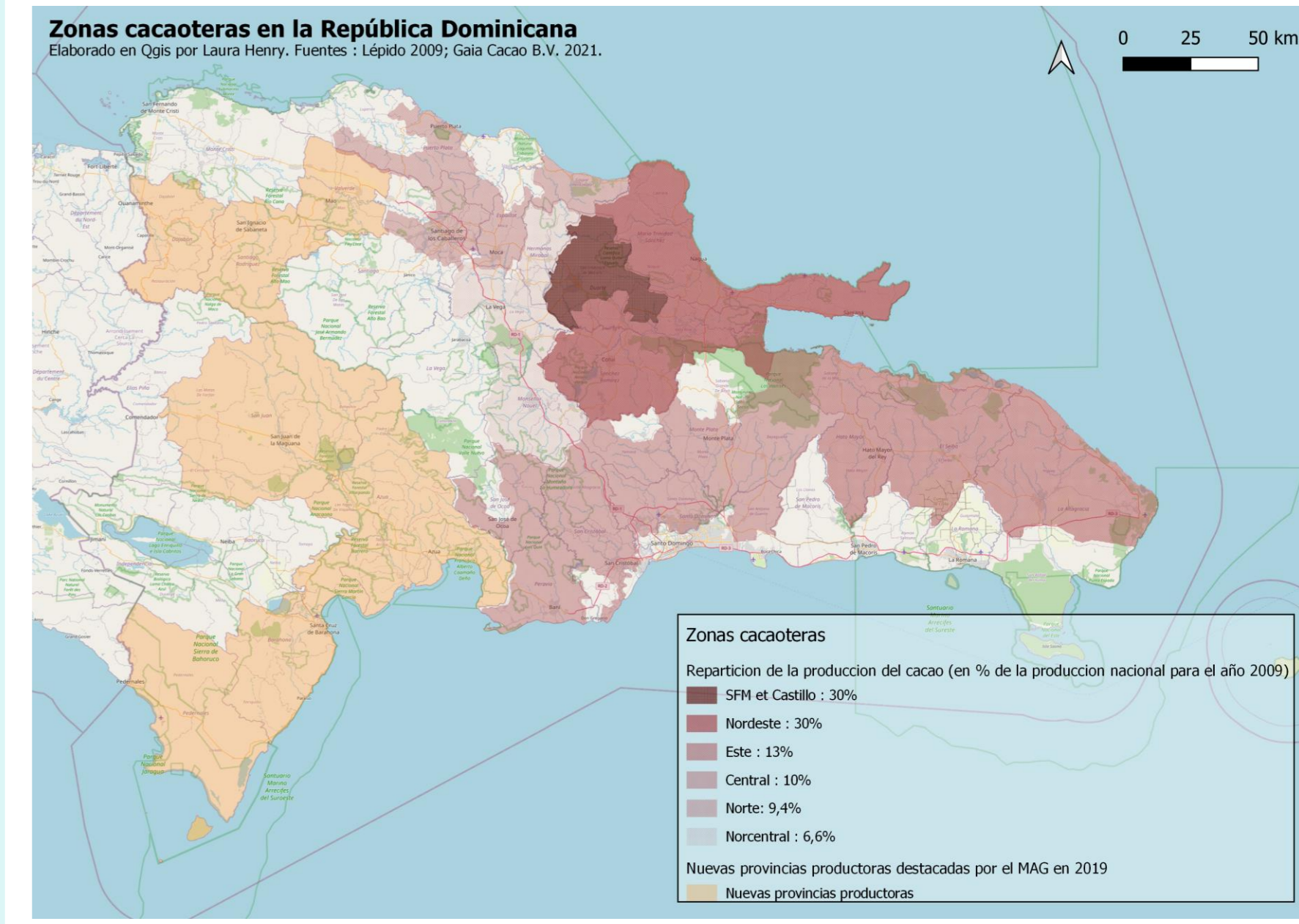
Study cases of the Dominican Republic and Costa Rica



I. Background

Even after the damages caused by *monilia* in the 1980's, production in Costa Rica remains a 100 % Fine or Flavor Cocoa. Both countries are often used as successful examples of sustainable quality cocoa in different ways, Costa Rica being the country where the renowned Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE) is located, and the Dominican Republic having experienced a great paradigmatic shift regarding its production, placing it now as a premier organic cocoa exporter in the world, with 40 % of its production classified as Fine and Flavour Cocoa when it was known in the 1980's as a bulk and cheap cocoa producer. Many interventions, originating from international organizations, from state administrations and from the private sector take place in the cocoa sector. The Dominican Republic is the tenth largest producer of cocoa beans in the world (77 681 tonnes in 2020) and the tenth largest exporter. With more than 80,000 tons of beans produced in 2018, the cocoa sector supports 40,000 producers and indirectly involves approximately 350,000 people (Data collected in interviews with the Department of Cocoa of Ministerio de Agricultura in 2015). In addition, the Dominican Republic is a world leader in organic cocoa and is a perfect example of how a sector has improved thanks to its patrimonialization.

Costa Rica's production is considerably lower: about 1% of the Dominican Republic's production, 800 tonnes in 2020 for CR compared to 77 000 tonnes of grains in the DR. However, the sector is an integral component of the agricultural policies implemented by the Costa Rican Ministry of Agriculture. They highlight the practice of ecotourism, the heritage nature of this crop, as well as environmentally friendly agroforestry farming systems.

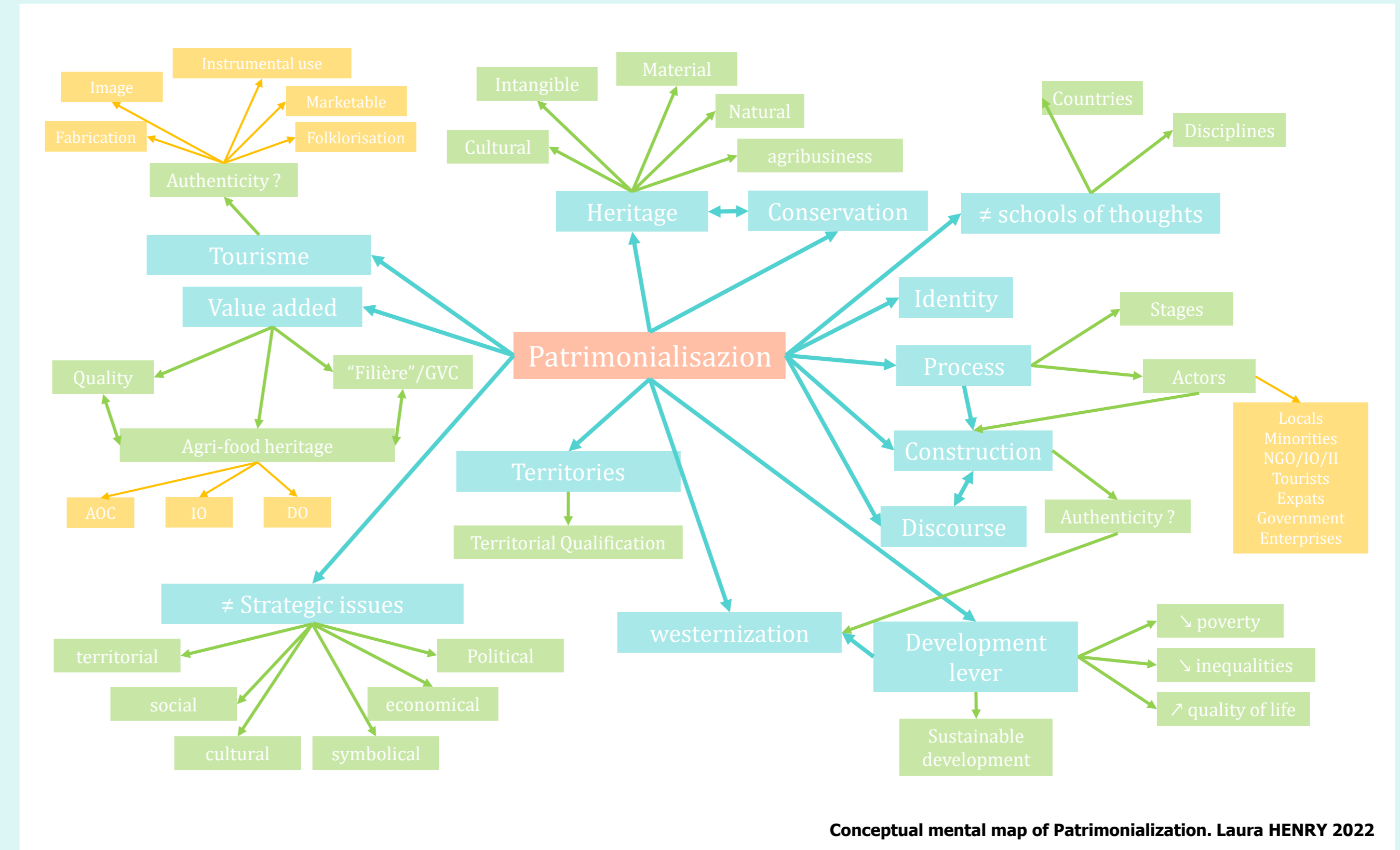
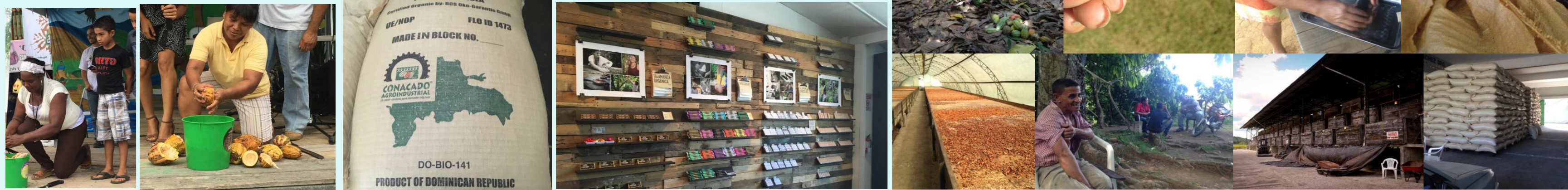


II. Methods

This analysis is built on the results of Laura Henry's Ph. D. research, who has 10 years of experience in the cocoa sector. It is based on fieldwork carried out in 2011, 2015 and 2018 in the Dominican Republic and 2018-2019 in Costa Rica, using an inductive methodology. Mobilizing tools from two educational backgrounds (Engineer in agro-development at ISTOM and Ph. D. candidate in economic geography at Sorbonne Nouvelle), such as tools from comparative agriculture, agrarian diagnosis and territorial diagnosis as well as bibliographic and cartographic research, data are collected from interviews (around 100 interviews), several case studies, participatory observation and landscape observation. Cocoa is also approached from global value chain and political ecology theories in order to investigate the value chain of the cocoa sector in both countries, the interactions between the economic actors, and to analyze the projects that have been carried out, the discourses that are used regarding sustainability and climate change, and finally the national governance in both countries.

III. Objective

To analyse other ways than technical and agronomical to improve farmer's incomes and living conditions in an climate changing world through two study cases : the Dominican Republic and Costa Rica.



IV. Results

Costa Rica's commercial cocoa production was consolidated in the 1910s, when the US transnational United Fruit Company (UFCO) began to plant cocoa as a strategy to compensate for the losses caused by fusarium in banana plantations (Acuña Sossa 2007). UFCO established cocoa plantations on the fringes of their banana plantations and built cocoa dryers along the railway line they built between the canton of Talamanca and Changuinola in Panama (Quesada 1987). Between 1917 and 1929, the area under cocoa cultivation grew from 7730 ha to 26 023 ha in different parts of the province of Limón (Viales Hurtado 1998). The UFCO motivated small and medium producers to grow cocoa to supply its logistic chain, and investors also acquired land for speculative purposes (Quesada Camacho 1987). But after a decade and a half of expansion, the area contracted due to the combined effect of the 1929 crisis and the reduction of the international price due to the overproduction of cocoa in Brazil and the British and French colonies in West Africa (Leiter and Harding 2004). Soon, UFCO stopped producing cocoa in Costa Rica, but continued to market it.

Although the UFCO stops producing cocoa, small and medium-sized producers continue to produce steadily into the 1970s. However, the arrival of monilia (Moniliophthora roeri) in the 1980s, a fungal pest of the cocoa pods, reduced the country's production. Between 1978 and 1982, 80% of production and 93% of exports were lost, making it the most devastating disease for cocoa. This has led to the abandonment of cocoa plantations or their conversion to banana (or plantain) cultivation by producers as a mean of survival. In this context, the Costa Rican state is implementing agricultural policies to revive the cocoa sector.

In fact, the pre-moniliasis period corresponds to a period focused on increasing production, while the post-moniliasis period favored the development of disease resistance techniques, as well as the improvement of quality to reinforce the competitiveness of a scarce but recognized product on the markets. It was the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Centre (CATIE) which, through its cocoa breeding program, made it possible to create new varieties that were more resistant to disease and of good quality.

After the devastation caused by moniliasis, Costa Rican cocoa production was almost unanimously abandoned. Cocoa revival started gradually in the 2000s. The government did not become involved in the sector until 2002, with the intention of reactivating the cocoa sector through the National Program, but this did not become a reality until 2006. With the signing of the International Cocoa Agreement in 2011, the Costa Rican government affirmed its interest in the sector. The private sector organized itself with the creation of the Cocoa Chamber, established in 2010. In 2011, Costa Rica signed the International Cocoa Agreement to strengthen the national cocoa sector and support its development. This agreement demonstrates the willingness of the States to invest in and develop the sector in order to enter international trade. The sector is thus an integral part of the agricultural policies implemented by the Costa Rican Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock.

Agricultural policy on cocoa emphasizes the practice of ecotourism, the heritage nature of this crop and environmentally friendly agroforestry farming systems. In public policies, the reactivation of cocoa cultivation is presented as an alternative to the banana and pineapple monocultures that are very present in Costa Rica, thus reducing the risks of flooding and the economic vulnerability associated with monoculture.



In the Dominican Republic, until the late 1980s, Dominican cocoa had a reputation of low-quality cocoa on the international market, despite its considerable potential, because its production was not standardized, and fermentation was non-existent. Unfermented Dominican cocoa is called Sanchez type cocoa and has a harder butter and is therefore of medium quality and was the only type of cocoa produced. In the 1980s, in order to improve the quality of cocoa and its international reputation, President Guzmán supported the creation of organizations of small producers, who were concerned with increasing their profits by improving the quality of cocoa, which would allow it to be marketed at higher prices. These associations came together in a national confederation, CONACADO, created in 1985, in conjunction with a program of the State Secretariat of Agriculture financed by the German cooperation agency GIZ entitled "Improvement of cocoa processing", with the advice of an expert from the French Centre for International Cooperation in Agronomy Research for Development (Cirad), Gilles Roche. This program focused on improving the quality of cocoa by establishing a fermentation process specific to the Dominican territory and organizing producers to sell cocoa directly at the international level, as well as homogenizing production and complying with ISO standards. In other words, it sought to create added value, minimize intermediaries for better remuneration of producers and thus try to change the power relations in the chain and mitigate inequalities.

In addition to the promotion of fermentation, CONACADO, always thinking about improving its quality, and thus its added value, became interested in organic and fair trade certifications and managed to position itself as the first organic producer in the world. The large exporting companies, which until then had had an oligopoly since the beginning of the 20th century, had to adapt to this new competitor and also enter the niche market of fine and flavor cocoa and organic cocoa, changing their ways of buying cocoa, working with producers' associations and increasing purchase prices. The Dominican cocoa chain was thus transformed, so that in 10 years, the Dominican Republic has established itself as a producer of high quality cocoa on the international market thanks to specific plants, fertile soil, a favorable climate and a technical route that requires few or no inputs or chemicals. Dominican cocoa is recognized for its specific fermentation process that endows it with unique organoleptic qualities. A real paradigm shift has taken place in which Dominican cocoa has been able to improve its quality by positioning 60% of its production now as fine and flavor cocoa, boosting its image through a reconfiguration of its sector and the construction of a "country brand"; it has become an essential producer. La Hispanola's cocoa is linked to its origin, the Dominican territory. We can therefore speak of a territorial anchoring of the product, which is shown by the patrimonialization of the sector, which has become a lever for development and also for the reduction of inequalities.

V. Contributions

- In both countries, production is mainly carried out on small family farms, although the identity dimension is more pronounced in Costa Rica, as a large proportion of producers are indigenous and Afro-descendants
- Sometimes, projects are disconnected from farmers' economic and social realities
- Cocoa has been a crop subject to a constant flow of social, environmental, and economic initiatives that have transformed ways of life and agricultural practices
- Cocoa is a fascinating crop that reveals the "colonial" status of a globalized product of great international importance, through the circulation of knowledge, this circulation highlighting relations of power and forms of control.
- The way of fighting climate change is also through sector recognition and not only through technical improvements, as fine and flavour cocoa, organic and even more specialized : patrimonialized cocoa
- Cocoa sectors in both countries are trying to establish themselves in niche markets such as fine cocoa and/or organic cocoa. The sector's development strategy is based on positioning the country as a producer of quality cocoa, a strategy shared by public and private actors. In a context of low production volume, the marketing and valorization strategy is based on quality, playing with different factors, mainly environmental, social and organoleptic
- Diversification through tourism is also a way to find new resources. Tourism also makes it possible to reveal and enhance the place of women within the cocoa sectors of both countries by giving them a central role in the management of the touristic offer and by making it possible to pay for work that tends to be invisible.

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