

THE SIXAOLA RIVER BASIN: A PERIPHERAL YET GLOBAL HOTSPOT FOR BIODIVERSITY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

Monthly Water Map
n°6

GENEVA
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The Sixaola river, serving as a border between the Republics of Costa Rica and Panama, is a cultural and biodiversity hotspot. However, despite its social and environmental richness, the basin is a peripheral and marginal region, a result of its remoteness from the capital cities and decades of limited public investment.

The Binational Commission for the Sixaola River Basin, created in 2009 in the framework of the 1992 bilateral Agreement on Cooperation for Border Development, has attempted to address this neglect by promoting a space for participatory multi-sectoral management of the basin.

Despite its isthmian configuration – a bridge between two continents and two oceans – Central America is also marked by geographic fragmentation, with two central mountain ranges forming a “backbone” separating the region into two slopes: the Pacific and the Caribbean. While the highlights of the Pacific slopes have concentrated the political and economic power, the Caribbean slopes have served as a refuge for indigenous and Afro-Caribbean peoples and an economy primarily based on export-oriented monoculture. The Pacific-Caribbean dichotomy has been decisive in the development of Costa Rica and Panama, where the western provinces harbor the main urbanized areas and road network.

