



Governance and Infrastructure in the Amazon – GIA Project

Research on the effectiveness of social-environmental
strategies for infrastructure governance: a comparative
analysis of case studies across Amazonian countries
(Colombia, Bolivia, Peru and Brazil)

Analytical framework

(Final draft)

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Objectives

This research will comparatively analyze specific cases of infrastructure projects across four Amazonian countries (Colombia, Bolivia, Brazil and Peru) to assess the effectiveness of social-environmental strategies implemented by social-environmental actors to promote infrastructure governance. A special focus will be given to the role of the historical context and power relations among actors and to strategies that involve actors' coalitions/networks and political mobilization and negotiation. Synergies among strategies will also receive special attention.

Questions

1. What strategies (especially alliances and political mobilization and negotiation) did socioenvironmental actors implemented, with what purpose, and how did they implement them?
 - What was the position and goals of social-environmental actors regarding the infrastructure project? What did they expect to achieve with their strategies?
 - How did social-environmental actors exert power to implement different strategies?
 - Which forms of power were most and least useful to implement strategies and, that way, influence decision-making?
 - How implementing certain strategies contributed to the implementation of others?
2. To what extent did the implemented social-environmental strategies helped social-environmental actors achieve their desired goals, and how?
 - How the outcomes and effectiveness of certain strategies contributed to the outcomes and effectiveness of others? How the “most used” strategies are related to or synergistic with the “highly effective” actions? 1
 - How do different outcomes have an effect on each other?

¹ The Preliminary Assessment of the Effectiveness of Conservation Strategies to Address Infrastructure Governance in the Amazon (Perz et al. 2020) found that certain strategies are regularly utilized and that other strategies are perceived as highly effective.

3. How did exogenous factors – context and power relations (especially political and economic) – shape the goals, implementation, and effectiveness of strategies by socioenvironmental actors?
 - How did exogenous factors shape the position and goals of socioenvironmental actors regarding the infrastructure project?
 - What exogenous factors made implementation and effectiveness of socioenvironmental strategies easier, and how?
 - What exogenous factors made implementation and effectiveness of socioenvironmental strategies more difficult, and how?

Analytical framework

The infrastructure sector has been a very controversial matter when seen from an environmental and social point of view. As the aim of this research is to systematically assess the strategies utilized by social-environmental actors, I draw on diverse concepts, approaches and frameworks. I consider both the political ecology framework (which calls for structural changes that challenge the business-as-usual development model and underlying power asymmetries towards alternative and sustainable livelihoods) and the ecological modernization perspective (which calls for measures that improve or solve the problems of the business-usual economic model, *internalizing externalities* towards the mitigation of negative social and environmental impacts of projects). That way, this research can have a constructive but critical view on utilized infrastructure governance strategies.

Actors

Adapting the definition provided by Sarmiento Barletti & Larson (2019), I understand “actors” or “stakeholders” from a governance perspective. I consider actors as groups and/or individuals that have a stake, interest in and/or right to the forest and rivers/watersheds and/or that can be affected negatively or positively by the infrastructure project. On one hand, I call social-environmental actors to those that are primarily interested in environmental goals, human-rights, territorial rights, and/or cultural defense. Their priority is to stop the infrastructure project, mitigate its (negative) social and environmental impacts and/or promote a participative and fair decision-making process. On the other hand, infrastructure-oriented actors are those

that are primarily interested in promoting infrastructure and development, and aim to the construction and operation of the project.

These two groups are not completely separated. This research acknowledges the existence of a spectrum (greys) between both groups, as well as the possibility of one single individual or group showing characteristics of both groups, either simultaneously or in different moments in history. Also, both groups may or may not be willing to negotiate, collaborate or coordinate between them.

Strategies

This research considers strategies as actions and decisions undertaken by actors to reach their desired goals, in the context of an infrastructure project. Strategies are decided and implemented by actors, who exert different forms of power when doing so.

Following GIA's Conservation Measures Partnership (CMPs)², this research distinguishes diverse types of social-environmental strategies, categorized in two main groups: organizational strategies and instrumental strategies.

Organizational strategies are those that actors apply to strengthen their agency, secure resources, and empower themselves as groups or organizations. These are considered as 'enabling conditions' and include the following:

- Education and training (coded as 'CMP 9')
- Institutional development (coded as 'CMP 10'), which includes promoting actors' networks and coalitions.
- Research, assessments, and monitoring (coded as 'CMP 8')

Instrumental strategies are those that, using the power and resources gained through organizational strategies, actors apply to influence decision-making around an infrastructure project.

- Territorial protection and management

² These were explained in the Preliminary Assessment of the Effectiveness of Conservation Strategies to Address Infrastructure Governance in the Amazon (Perz et al. 2020).

- Land water management (coded as ‘CMP 1’)
- Species management (coded as ‘CMP 2’)
- Strategies oriented to improving livelihoods and economics (coded as ‘CMP 5’), which involves payments for environmental services (PES) projects, REDD+ projects and other market-based schemes.
- Designing and planning conservation areas and indigenous territories (coded as ‘CMP 6’), which includes creating new conservation areas, recognizing indigenous and communal lands, expanding existing protected areas, and implementing territorial planning processes.
- Political mobilization and negotiation
 - Awareness raising (coded as ‘CMP 3’), which refers to the organization of communication strategies, social movements, and protests (online and/or in-street)
 - Law enforcement and prosecution (coded as ‘CMP 4’), which entails properly enforcing both national and international law/norms that protect the environment and local populations.
 - Promotion of (new or innovative) legal/policy frameworks (coded as ‘CMP 7’), which can occur through direct engagement of socioenvironmental actors with government agencies or through multi-stakeholder forums.

These different groups and types of strategies are not mutually exclusive but interrelated. They are also subject to changes through time – specially taking on account that they can be applied during one or more of the phases of the infrastructure project. For the purposes of this research, we take networks and coalitions (CMP 10) and political mobilization and negotiation (CMP 3,4,7) as starting point, but considering that other types of strategies can be recognized as relevant during data collection. Also, the analysis takes on account the findings of the Preliminary Assessment of the Effectiveness of Conservation Strategies to Address Infrastructure Governance in the Amazon (Perz et al. 2020). Such assessment recognizes political mobilization and negotiation (communication and movements, law enforcement and legal/policy approaches) as highly effective strategies, while it identifies research and monitoring and education and training as frequently used strategies. Moreover, even though this research focuses on the strategies applied by social-environmental actors, this research acknowledges the possibility of infrastructure actors making use of the same type of tools.

Contextual factors

Taking on account the literature review developed for this research, this research considers the context as the (historical) geographical, political, institutional, social, cultural, economic and other types of systems that govern infrastructure projects, the environment, local populations and governance. These factors are historical (have evolved and continue evolving over time), dynamic, interrelated and can act as facilitators or impediments of social-environmental actors' strategies. For the purposes of this project, two contextual factors that we consider key—politics and economics—will be the point of departure. At the same time, I recognize that other factors may come up during data collection.

Some contextual factors recognized by the literature – and that can come up during data collection – are the following:

- International agreements and norms regarding infrastructure (IIRSA, binational dams, etc.)
- International norms regarding the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities.
- National and subnational laws/framework/policies around infrastructure
- Constitutional and (national or subnational) legal frameworks for recognizing indigenous rights and environmental protection
- Distribution of legal powers among different sectors and levels of government (e.g. are legal powers disputed or overlapping? Which governmental authorities have the last word in decision-making processes concerning infrastructure projects, environment and indigenous and local communities?)
- Political leaning of government, across levels and sectors.
- Armed conflicts / war / political violence.
- Illicit crops / coca economy / drug trafficking
- Migration patterns (e.g. from the Andes or gold miners)
- Markets (prices, goods, demand, supply), land use patterns and economic activities (agriculture, farming, monoculture plantations, mining, industry, etc.).
- Characteristics of local populations (e.g. whether they are native communities, peasant communities or private landholders, and how heterogeneous or homogeneous are local populations)

- Type of tenure rights in the area of study (protected area, indigenous or communal land, private land, public land, etc.)
- State of / vulnerability of natural resources and ecosystems.

Power

In this research, we define power from an infrastructure governance perspective. Power is, then, the ability of actors to effectively apply strategies to influence decision-making processes and outcomes concerning an infrastructure project, ultimately advancing their desired goals, under particular circumstances/contextual factors. For social-environmental actors, power is the ability to effectively apply social-environmental strategies in order to stop or pause an infrastructure project, mitigate its negative impacts, promote a participative and fair decision-making process and/or achieve other desired goals. Power also means, thus, the ability of social-environmental actors to counterbalance the strategies applied by pro-infrastructure actors who have competing interests/goals. Following Gonzales Tovar (2020), by integrating ideas from diverse thinkers (White et al. 2015; VeneKlasen and Miller 2007; Sadan 1997; Domhoff 2005; Lukes 2005; Partzsch 2016; Chambers 2006; Brockhaus et al. 2013; Brockhaus et al. 2014; Rowlands 1997), I recognize that, under business-as-usual practices (BAU), political and economic elites use their power to dominate, coerce and oppress groups that have been historically marginalized under the currently dominant development model, in order to influence infrastructure-related decision-making processes and, that way, favor their goals and interests. At the same time, I acknowledge the possibility that, in some cases and under certain circumstances, different actors (i.e. not just elites) can have agency and a stake to influence decision-making. Furthermore, if historically marginalized actors form alliances with powerful actors who have similar goals, then power is not necessarily a zero-sum game (having power does not always mean taking it from someone else).

As analysis focuses on decision-making processes around infrastructure projects, this research looks at *how* power is exerted in such processes. This includes the *overt face* of power (who is included in decision making), the *covert face* of power (how are actors included in decision making; if they are actively participating and influencing the process) and the *invisible face* of

power (whether certain actors are influencing peoples' minds, convincing them about what is good or bad for them, or what is good or bad to do).

To exert power over decisions being made about infrastructure projects and reach their desired goals, actors make use of different sources of power that they have available in the historical context where they operate. Therefore, this research refers to the existence of contextual or underlying power relations and sources. Depending on the context of each case, different actors have access to one or more power sources. Contextual power sources can include (but are not limited to): ideological authority, knowledge/skills, economic resources, information resources, social connections/networks (collective power), legal/political authority, physical authority (physical violence or threats of physical violence), ontological authority and symbolic authority. These different sources of power are interrelated and dynamic. For the purposes of this research, political, economic and collective power will be the point of departure. At the same time, I recognize that other power sources may come up during data collection.

The ways how actors use different power sources to exert power in decision-making processes to pursue their interests regarding a certain infrastructure project, shape and are shaped by the broader context and contextual power relations and asymmetries.

Effectiveness

There is an inherent complexity behind the notion of "effectiveness." For the purposes of this study, effectiveness is simply approached as the ability of actors (particularly, socioenvironmental actors) to achieve their desired outcomes through certain strategies. We consider that goals and positions emerge and evolve in light of contextual factors, which are marked by structural power inequities and marginalization of local populations. That said, this study approaches the notion of '*effectiveness*' following an environmental justice and rights approach. '*Effectiveness*' might or might not mean stopping an infrastructure project, as well as it might or might not mean all actors reaching agreement in such a way that the infrastructure project is done '*sustainably*.' We argue that socioenvironmental strategies are '*effective*' in promoting '*good governance*' when the autonomy of indigenous populations (who can be directly affected by the given infrastructure project and whose special rights are recognized by

international law) is not only *considered* but actually *respected*, whether that means going forward with a certain project or not.

Moreover, socioenvironmental actors comprise diverse groups and types of actors, who apply strategies to achieve several goals (e.g. environmental, social, economic), which can be compatible or incompatible, depending on the specific case. This goes in line with the 3-fold agenda that Little (2013) describes in the context of facing large-scale projects in the Amazon: an environmental agenda, which is most often led by international environmentalist groups, an agenda of collective and territorial rights, led by indigenous and local communities, and a labor agenda, led by unions. As stated above, and considering the context of infrastructure projects in the Amazon region, we see socioenvironmental strategies as '*effective*' in addressing infrastructure governance when the goals of indigenous and local communities are met.

Furthermore, this research acknowledges the possibility of achieving unexpected and indirect results, which are outcomes or consequences that had not necessarily been considered as part of the established goals. These can include positive outcomes (e.g. social learning or empowerment of historically marginalized populations) or negative outcomes (e.g. exacerbation of conflicts and power asymmetries).

Lessons and adaptation

Taking on account principles from the adaptative governance literature, this research acknowledges that actors might renew, adapt, adjust or change their goals, their relations/interactions with other actors and/or their strategies. They might do so according to the (expected, unexpected or indirect) results and outcomes they obtained from their implemented strategies through time, and the lessons they learned throughout the process. This is part of a continuous (ongoing) learning process.

All the concepts explained above are represented, all together in the following figure. On the left side, the contextual factors and power relations (which are interrelated) are represented. These directly shape how effective are social-environmental strategies in a given case. Context, then, shapes actors' goals regarding the infrastructure project, their (organizational and

instrumental) strategies (exercise of power) and the effectiveness and outcomes of such strategies. Social-environmental actors and their strategies (in green) interact with each other (e.g. actors' networks and synergies among strategies), as well as with infrastructure-oriented actors and their strategies (in orange). The outcomes of social-environmental strategies are represented on the right side of the diagram. There are effects and lessons learned from the implementation, results and effectiveness/outcomes of organizational and instrumental strategies applied by social-environmental actors, which are represented in the bottom of the graph.

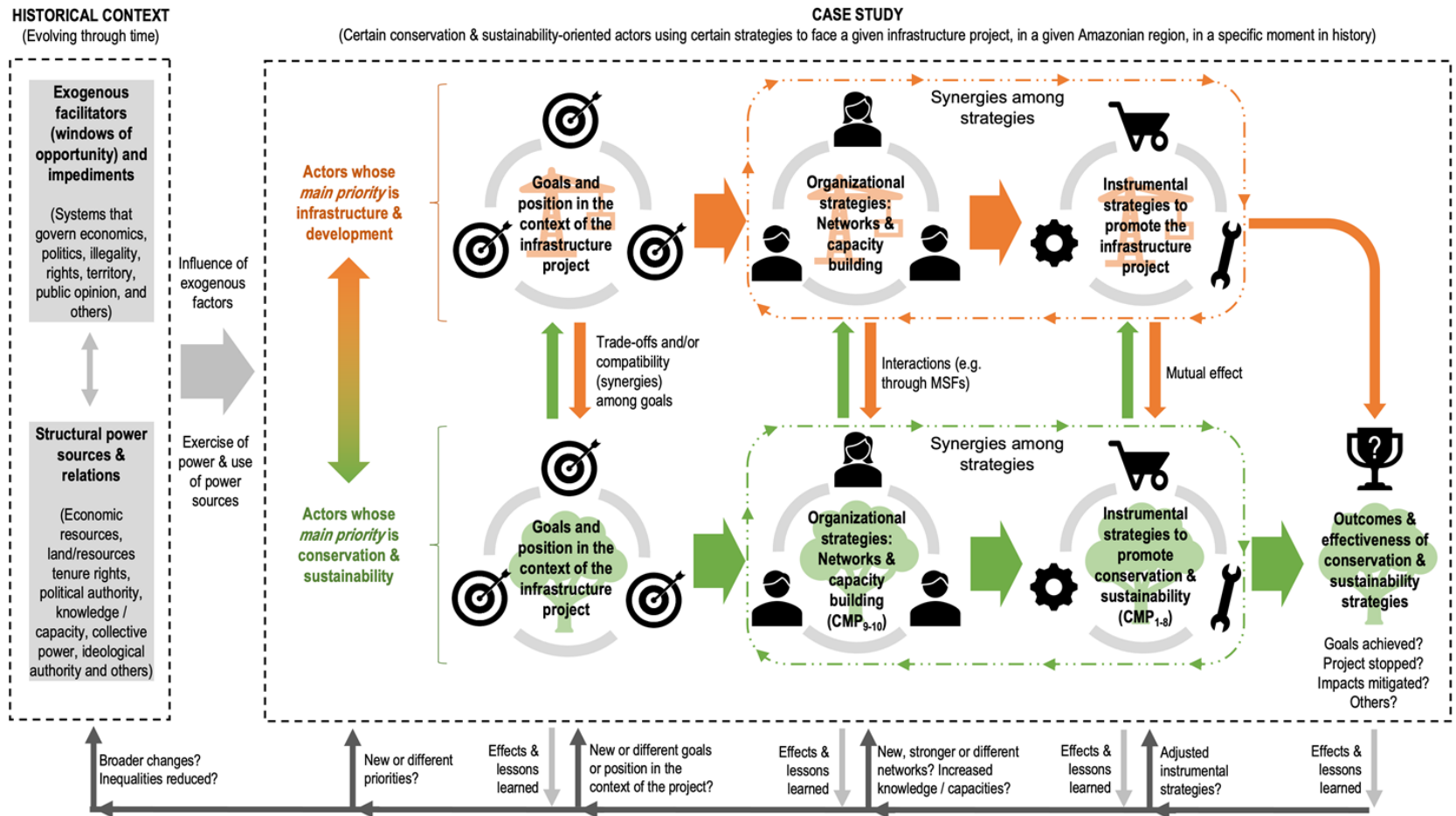


Figure 1. Analytical framework (simplified version)