

## Conservation coalitions of the future: from landscape approaches to a pro-indigenous environmental state

Discussions around land use, climate change, and local development have emphasized the apparent failure of different sectors - such as environment, forestry, agriculture, and mining – to “coordinate.” I begin by presenting a recent paper written with several co-authors that takes this argument to task. Using data from interviews with over 500 government, NGO, indigenous, and local actors with a stake in 31 sites of land use change – including sites where forest conversion is present, and sites where conservation initiatives are in place – in Peru, Indonesia, and Mexico, we critically assess the notion that inter-sectoral coordination is itself an underlying problem.

We find that while inter-sectoral coordination is commonly flagged by respondents at multiple levels as an issue, in fact, it is not *coordination* but rather effective *contestation* among actors that determines outcomes. Coordination is in fact present in many cases, but can lead to any number of outcomes. We argue that framing the problem as lack of “coordination” between sectors is problematic because it obfuscates genuine conflicts of interest, wrongly implying that diverse stakeholders ultimately seek the same goals. Framing the discussion around low-emissions development options in terms of the feasibility of *contestation* better reflects the realities of land use politics, and recognizes the political nature of solutions to land use problems.

If conservation does not automatically improve through better coordination between local and national government offices, nor between agricultural and environmental agencies, what are the most useful pathways towards strong constituencies for conservation? Here, I pivot to describe an emerging research initiative, and present preliminary findings on how indigenous organizing has secured stronger land rights and other resources to implement indigenous priorities in the Peruvian Amazon. I argue that indigenous communities have partnered strategically with different organizations to advance their objectives, and have been well-served in rejecting partnerships with actors who do not share their long term vision. Drawing from recent action research experiences in Peru, I argue that viable coalitions for both community empowerment and conservation likely include the state’s social welfare apparatus, the Ministry of Culture, indigenous organizations, environmental NGOs, and protected area agencies. These coalitions notably do not tend to include private firms interested in resource extraction, extractivist ministries, and agricultural agencies in the government focused narrowly on intensifying production.