

# Review of: "Ecosystem Services Inequality Driven by Agroextractivism in Salamina, Colombia: A Critical Institutional Analysis"

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This article presents a governance analysis of ecosystem services (ES) in Salamina, Colombia. It draws on a number of theoretical frameworks and attempts to synthesise them. It provides a comprehensive institutional analysis, and in my view, presents a valuable analysis that makes a good contribution to understanding how institutions around ES recreate inequities. It is generally well-written and well-structured, but I think it could improve the link between some of the theoretical aspects and the case study analysis. At times, I struggled to follow the overall analysis in the context of the theoretical concepts presented at the start.

I have a few suggestions on how the manuscript could be improved that the author could reflect on.

1. Definition of ecosystem services: the author uses Fisher's definition, which they give as "ES are the components of ecosystems that contribute to human well-being, either actively or passively". Fisher et al. use the term "aspects," rather than "components," whereas *component* is used by [Boyd and Banzhaf, 2007](#) to describe structure. If the authors are going to adapt Fisher et al.'s definition, they probably need to explain the change for clarity. Furthermore, the cascade diagram used later separates ecosystem services and ecosystem benefits. The authors might need to explain how benefits should be differentiated from "components of ecosystems that contribute to human well-being". I think there can be a difference, but I suggest it should be briefly highlighted, especially since this is where the split is between different types of institutions.

2. The author presents a framework adapted from Primmer et al. (2015) and Duraiappah et al. (2014). I think the framework needs a little further clarity, bearing in mind the later focus of the discussion. The framework argues for four dimensions of governance, and the authors present a brief summary of each of these in the case study area. The CIAD is then used to examine 'bridging institutions' between the allocative and distributive institutions. There is an unexplained implication that allocative institutions cover the first steps of the cascade and distributive institutions cover the remaining steps. It is these Bridging Institutions that are returned to in 'Final Thoughts', with the four other dimensions acting more (to my reading) as an analytical framework to break down and explain the governance in the case study.

I suggest the author describe and explain allocative and distributive institutions, as these seem key to some of the arguments presented. It is not clear to me how the distinction works within the cascade and relates to the 4 dimensions of governance. I suggest the author provide some explanation of this, given how important it is within the Final Thoughts.

4. Methods. As other commenters have noted, I would like to see some description of the methods, or at least a reference to the study this is taken from. The author describes this as a “meta-reflection”. I confess I had to look this up, as I was not familiar with it. I would like to see a reference to this method or a short explanation of what makes this a meta-reflection, rather than a reflection. To me, it feels like a fairly conventional analytical study of institutions (not a criticism - I think it is a well-done institutional analysis).

3. Conclusions need to be clearer and stronger. The first part, identifying the main issues and the role institutions play in encouraging agro-extractivism, is good. However, the solutions part is weaker. The new rules are quite general and generic and really just re-state Ostrom and Therborn, rather than adding anything very new. They are not incorrect, but the interesting question is ‘how’ these rules could be created.

Similarly, the author states that: “My argument is that at this locally specific level, where dilemmas regarding ES access arise, a more nuanced understanding of the fuzzy nature of ES and their delocalized benefits is required.” This feels like a fairly generic conclusion and that the “fuzzy nature of ES” is fairly vague? I would argue that we know that ES benefits and the costs of maintaining them fall to different stakeholders at different scales and, while this is important, this is not a key novel finding. There has been a focus on landscape and regional approaches for a long time, in part to address this issue. For me, the key (or more interesting) argument is this: “Here, bridging institutions could play a crucial role in alleviating ES-related inequalities.” However, there are limited details presented.

How to address these inequities is the key challenge, and the analysis here goes some way to identifying the causes of this and the limitations of current institutions. If bridging institutions are key, what is about them that is important? Does “the development of new rules and norms” then discussed apply only to bridging institutions? Or more widely? I think a little expansion on this part of the solution, with less focus on the generic rules, would strengthen the paper.

4. The link between the different sections and analyses could be made clearer. There is the analysis of the 4 dimensions of governance; the CIAD analysis (which is possibly only applied to bridging institutions, although I am not clear on that), and then Final Thoughts. I think the paper would benefit from a Discussion-type section that explains how these link together. Or possibly the paper only needs the CIAD analysis and that the 4 dimensions analysis, while clearly an important background, is not needed in this paper? I'm not sure.

It is possible that a clearer explanation of the theoretical framework and the methods will resolve this issue.

5. I note that there are several references missing from the reference list, including Boyd and Banzhaf (2007), Fisher et al. (2009). I have not checked them all.

Overall, I think there is a lot of good work in the paper. However, I did not always understand how it all fit together to provide the conclusions at the end. Some attention to this would really help communicate the good analysis done.

As a suggestion (and only a suggestion): I wonder if the combination of so many theoretical frameworks means the main argument and findings get a bit lost. The author could reflect on whether it is all needed, or if some are part of the analytical, rather than theoretical, framework. I acknowledge the difference is not always clear, however. Alternatively, some greater detail on the theoretical framework and some summary before the Final Thoughts might do the same job.

