

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

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Review article A Suarez 2023: Ecosystem Services Inequality Driven by Agroextractivism in Salamina, Colombia: A Critical Institutional Analysis.

1. Introduction

This review starts with elements of the article that make it an interesting document from the point of view of the reviewer (part 2). Afterwards suggestions and ideas are shared for potential improvements (part 3). Finally editing suggestions are provided (part 4).

1. What I like in this article

The topic of the article is very relevant. The avocado Hass fruits is the fastest growing fruit in the world in terms of economic value, with consequences for landscapes and value chains in various countries in Latin America like Mexico, Colombia, Chili and Peru. Describing which unintended outcomes result from this rapid extension and how institutions and mechanism should react is important to document.

1. Suggestions and ideas for improvement

Below some suggestions and ideas are given that the author could consider. He is of course free to only use those that he finds useful.

The **title** is quite long with various conceptual terms like ES, agroextractivism and critical institutional analysis. Suggestion to make it a subtitle and have a short more communicative title, for instance "Avocados create unexpected problems"

The author sometimes uses the "I" style, for instance in the abstract (second line). A more neutral style would be "this article". For instance: "I offer insights ..." à This article offers insights...

Abstract:

"The findings reveal Has both deliberate and unintended outcomes." Reflection: all change trajectories have deliberate goals/outcomes/objectives at the start and during implementation unplanned outcomes emerge. These can be either positive (for some or all actors) or negative (for some or all actors). So, a suggestion to rephrase for instance into ...

the article reveals unintended outcomes, with either positive or negative impact for specific actors.

“... increasing consumer demand for healthier food options.” à healthier and **cheap** food options

Last line abstract “... for ensuring access to them.” à for ensuring equitable ES access.

Introduction:

The introduction reads as a summary of the methodological approach. It could present more the structure of the article.

The article would benefit from a figure/map with positioning of Salamina in Colombia (for instance at 2.1 or at 3.1.1.)

In the introduction and also other parts of the article the focus is on social and environmental issues (for instance line 6 intro). For a complete picture also the economic element would be interesting to include in the analysis and reflection. One element can be reference to the fast global growth of this commodity: <https://research.rabobank.com/far/en/sectors/fresh-produce/world-avocado-map-2023-global-growth-far-from-over.html>

First part “I claim...” à This article illustrates that In fact, this seems more like a conclusion, not a statement for an introduction.

Second part introduction: “This step serves as an entry point for a general understanding...” à This framework serves as an entry point for an understanding

Last line introduction: the term “peasant” is used. This term often has negative connotations, for instance peasant as a rather ignorant and not active rural actor. More neutral terms are “farmers” or “agricultural producers”.

Sometimes the term “traditional” is being used, like “traditional agricultural landscapes”. There is a risk that this reifies that these systems are static and not innovative, whereas in reality they always change over time. See also below at some other parts of the article.

2. Ecosystems Services and Governance

Start: Researchers widely use ... à Researchers often use ...

Suggestions to add examples of ES, to make it easy for readers to understand ES. For instance at the top of page 3 .. components of ecosystems (like) that contribute to human well-being.... They are given in 3.2.3 first phrase; suggestion to mention them earlier to help the reader understand what type of ES services are meant.

Figure 1: on the left the ecosystem structure is driven by scientific-technical governance. I would argue that often it is also (co?) driven by indigenous knowledge and culture of populations that have lived for generations in the landscape. That would fit well with the last type of governance: adaptive collaborative governance. Likewise in 3.2.2 again often terms like “traditional” and “peasant” are used. There is a risk that these terms reify the thinking of “the old system” that has to give way to the “modern avocado system”, whereas the argument of the article is that in indigenous practices a lot of sustainable agricultural practices are encoded, including sustainable use of ES.

1. **Title: *Political economy*** This text at 3.1.1 seems rather a description of current developments in the Colombian avocado sector

3.2.2 The title is: **Domain description**: which domain is described in this part? The two paragraphs are rather statements on the current risks observed by the author. Domain usually refers to some type of region, or general area of social structure (health, education, agriculture,...). Please check if title is appropriate.

3.1.4 Discourses

I miss here one narrative: the economic perspective. The article would become consistent and transparent if also economic rationale like job employment and income of laborers is included in the analysis of discourses. Likewise, in 3.1.5 Rules & Norms the article gives perspectives on social and ecological interest. Surely there are also some economic rules and norms at play, having an effect on the social and ecological part.

Second part of 3.1.5: firms are addressed at the global level (avocado multinationals). What about small and medium enterprises, in other words local businesses in the avocado value chain? Do they play a role? I miss them in Table 1 “participants”

Same par. On page 10: « Formal rules do not present strategies to confront structural constraints....” This is a bold statement. I would expect that in the Colombian constitution laws exist that protect people, biodiversity, landscapes, etc. at least to some degree.

3.2.1: the field description lacks the economic component.

Third block “.. venturing into new areas for **resource exploitation**.” I think they are interested in new **areas for production, with easy access to resources**.

Top page 16: Corporate growers wield more influence, ... This seems like a statement. Can it be substantiated and explained why they wield more influence? Likewise at the start of the next paragraph: “Hidden informationoften remains concealed” Is there some evidence or illustration for this statement?

Last phrase page 18 “...challenges posed by agrarian change and its far-reaching effects on ES.” They (the institutions and mechanisms) might have accommodated other types of agrarian changes in the past. This article refers to a specific type of agrarian change, so suggestion to specify: “... challenges posed by the **current large scale avocado expansion** and its far-reaching effects on ES.”

1. Editing suggestions

The text would benefit for a check by a native English speaker.

The term “agroextractivism” is not explained (first used at the end of phrase 1 introduction). It can be explained for instance at the start of Ch. 3, just after the first sentence.

2. Ecosystems Services and Governance

Start: Researchers widely use ... à Researchers often use ...

Sometimes “the” can be taken out, for instance first line abstract “... the critical institutional analysis.”

P. 5, Ch 3 below, third line: should Figure 1 not be Figure 2?

p. 7, second block “Over the past five years...” Can some quantitative data be added here on avocado volumes and prices?

Top text page 6: .. the workings of broader power structures... And 5th line ...placement of differentiated powers. Are more easy terms possible? Or take out “broader” and “differentiated”.

End of intro text Ch 3, just before 3.1: ... the process produces intended or unintended consequences... I think they always produce intended AND unintended consequences.

End of that sentence: “.... They are the medium and outcome of human agency.” Can this maybe be explained in two sentences?

First line next block “The expansion ...” : take out “harvested areas”

Appendix 1: what is the unit in the third column? Hectares? Farmers?

3.1.2

Abbreviation EOT and PDM mean....

First block: suggestion to add examples of “transitory crops”.

Second block: necessitates à requires

Third block ... as evidenced by à illustrated. Later ...disrupted access to resources... suggestions to add examples (like....)

3.1.3 second block. Coffee decrease is expressed in hectares and livestock decrease in % (in same sentence).

Suggestion to use one same unit (either hectares or %).

Last sentence just above 3.1.4: maybe change ...has encompassed regions” into “...concerned regions”

3.1.4 last block: what is “certification fetishism” and “commodity fetishism”? There is a risk here that the position of the author is seen as biased. Suggestion to use more neutral words. Maybe bias?

Top page 11 (just before 3.2): here the term “agent” is used. At the start the term “stakeholder” was used. In 3.2.3 another term is used: “participants”. Maybe check which term would be appropriate and use only one term. Maybe “actor”?

Title 3.2: **Social situation**. It seems to me that “Description of the current situation” is more clear. The first part 3.2.1 for instance is a field description.

And why a subtitle in 3.2 “focus of interest to institutional analysis” ? Suggestion to take that out of the title par. 3.2

Page 12 middle ... thanks to the availability of pastureland and regional policies. → ... and conducive regional policies.

Page 13 just above 3.2.3: heightened food production → increased food production

Title Table 1: 1) check correct use of “participants” (maybe actors is more appropriate as some do not participate really); and 2) reconsider another term to replace “social situation”. Maybe the title of this table can be “Characteristics of main actors in Salamina.

Table p. 14: the first actor “peasants” are characterized as “small scale, less than 5 hectares”. But another characteristic can be that they are present in large numbers. Making them an important actor. Last column “Practices”: Their activities are presented as “extractive practices”. Why? Some farming practices like rotation and interaction livestock-agriculture maintain/restore soil fertility. And retain water.

Table 2: suggestion to change title last column “Mechanism activated” → Mechanism

3.3 heightened production → increased production

Top of page 17 “.. the provision of ecosystem services (ES) ..” → the provision of ES

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