5-1-2023

Importance, Interconnectedness, and Challenges: Co-management Mechanisms for Regional Conservation Areas in Loreto Peru

Sky Milstein

Importance, Interconnectedness, and Challenges

Co-management Mechanisms for Regional Conservation Areas in Loreto Peru

Written by Sky Milstein
Illustrated by Lily Falke

A bstract:
A team of researchers set out to investigate the mechanisms used by local communities to create and manage the Regional Conservation Areas (RCA) of Loreto. Loreto is a region of Peru that contains 47.4 percent of the Peruvian Amazon. There are four RCAs in Loreto: Tamshiyacu Tahuayo Communal Regional Conservation Area (ACR CTT), Ampiyacu Apayacu Regional Conservation Area (ACR AA), Alto Nanay - Pintuyacu - Chambira Regional Conservation Area (ACR ANPC), and Maijuna Kichwa Regional Conservation Area. These four RCAs use a participatory management process involving local communities called co-management. We interviewed four members of the Regional Government involved in RCA management. Using information from the interviews, we did a content analysis and systematized our data, creating a list of the mechanisms used in co-management RCAs. There were four formal and three informal mechanisms and one attribute described by the interviewees. The key mechanism in the co-management process was "Management Committee and Communal Assemblies" which is where the majority of the other mechanisms can take place. The involvement of various voices, including those of women, in co-management, was another key finding of the research. The political ecology narrative of access and control was found to be important to understanding the mechanisms used in co-management, which are incredibly intertwined and rely on each other to function. Increased funding

to Loreto's RCAs would enable them to operate more easily.

Mechanisms:
In this research, a mechanism is a tool used in managing RCAs that enables the function of the RCA. The mechanisms identified are as follows:

Formal mechanisms: Mechanisms mandated as part of the management process, stated in Regional or National regulations.

1. Management Committee and Communal Assemblies: Mechanism where regular meetings are held between community members and the Regional Government (sometimes with NGOs or additional stakeholders) to discuss the current status of their activity in the protected areas, to plans, and discuss needs.

2. Plans and Regulations: Mechanism where the Regional Government makes plans in collaboration with communities that set out plans for future use of activity in the RCA. This includes master plans, work plans, and management plans.

> **Master Plan:** A type of plan that is for the span of five years that sets the guidelines for all plans and activity in the RCA
>
> **Work Plan:** A type of plan that is for the span of one year that sets the guidelines for all plans and activity in the RCA
>
> **Tourism management Plan:** Mechanism that involves the management of visitation by tourists in the area of RCA by local communities.
>
> **Natural Resource Management Plan:** A type of plan

that is for the span of one year that gives guidelines for the use of a specific natural resource.

Economic Sustainability (State and private funding - NGOs).

State Funding: Mechanism that involves money from the regional government for the management of the RCA.

Private Funding: Funding given by non governmental organizations to groups and activities in the RCA particularly.

Strengthen Community Patrol System and Resource Management: Mechanism that involves projects and goods that increase and support the ability of the community to patrol and protect the RCA.

Registries, Reports, and Records: Mechanism where the local community fills out documents for the regional government to track resource use and report illegal activity in the RCA.

Surveillance and Patrol via the "Organización Local de Vigilancia" OLV: Mechanism that involves the protection via patrol of the RCA from groups attempting to do illegal activities (i.e. illegal mining).

Provision of Fuel and Meals: Type of Strengthening of Surveillance and patrolling capacity where meals and fuel are provided to community patrollers of the RCA by t he regional government and NGOs.

Provision of Training: Type of strengthening of surveillance and patrolling capacity where training is given to community members.

Provision of Other Supplies: Type of strengthening of surveillance and patrolling capacity where supplies other than meals and fuel (i.e. GPS) are provided to the community by the regional government and NGOs.

Informal mechanisms: Mechanisms not mandated as part of the management process.

Dialoguing: Mechanism where discussion is involved between different parties (communities, the government, NGOs, and other stakeholders). This discussion allows for knowledge sharing, the communication of needs, and conflict resolution.

Community Member in a Position of Power: Mechanism in which members of the community hold positions of power over the protected area. These are positions like executive and president of committees, the RCA itself, and other structures related to the RCA. Some of these positions are held by women.

Partnerships with other stakeholders: Mechanism where the regional government and the communities hold meetings to maintain good working relationships with groups other than communities and the government (i.e. police and NGOs).

Discussion:

This research found that both mechanisms – Formal and Informal – are fundamental for managing the RCAs in Loreto. Administrative spaces need to be complemented with activities or strategies that promote community participation for the process of co-management to succeed. The formal mechanisms ensure that management adheres to the objectives set out for the RCA. When these formal mechanisms are paired with informal mechanisms, they create co-management where community members feel their voices are truly heard. Co-management of Loreto's RCAs has been successful because of how both mechanisms complement each other.

Co-management in RCAs in Loreto is a participatory process centered around what could be called the most participatory mechanism "Management Committee and Communal Assemblies". Community members need spaces where they can communicate with Regional Government, receive training, share knowledge, express concerns, build relationships with other stakeholders, and discuss the functions and needs of the RCA; Committees and assemblies are this space. Due to the importance of this mechanism, I would recommend increasing the frequency of these meetings. This was a desire also expressed by members of the regional government, but they currently lack the funding to do so.

The mechanisms found in this study are interconnected, relying on the function of other mechanisms for their function. There is no mechanism in co-management of RCAs in Loreto that is not vital to the system. Mechanisms that encourage participation are needed for community members to want to be a part of co-management. Mechanisms that are more focused on the role of the government are crucial to the legal and economic needs of the RCA. In this system, community members and members of the Regional Government can often fulfill different roles that directly contribute to the RCA's success.

The role of women in RCAs in Loreto is critical due to their different perspectives. In co-management of Loreto's RCAs, they actively try to bring in as many voices from the community as possible. Women's voices are important because they hold different knowledge and needs than men due to their roles historically in the community and household. Without women's voices, this knowledge and these needs would not be considered when creating plans for the RCA, which could leave women disadvantaged and worsen the function of the RCA. When women are empowered to participate, more complete and effective management can take place.

The RCA's in Loreto have faced some challenges in its function. Some struggles have been more involved in formal processes, such as filling out forms and confronting illegal activity, which consistent training has been used to remedy. However, other challenges present more of a threat to the RCAs in Loreto. One of the struggles noted in interviews was the lack of funding that the RCAs receive from the Central Government, making them unable to provide many supplies or create many new projects. It is vital for the RCAs' to continue to function and adapt to receive larger budgets. These small budgets prevent action from the regional government and limit their ability to support communities in the RCA. Moving forward, I would recommend an increased budget for the management of RCAs so they can reach their full potential. This would allow for more innovation, projects, and supplies in the RCAs. Loreto due to its biodiversity, is a very important region not only for Peru, but for the World.

The analysis done in this study centers a regional government perspective due to time restraints that prevented us from reading all documents, meeting with community members, and visiting RCAs. Future studies could look more into these areas to further understand co-management in Loreto. ● ● ●