

TCD Practitioner Report: Being different. Social capital and Community Capacity Building for Forest Conservation in Caquetá (Colombia), under a post-conflict scenario.

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Summary

Being different is a recognition of the knowledge, abilities, and work that communities in two municipalities in Caquetá (Colombia) have done with the help of Fondo Acción. The research aims to advance the thinking about how communities in the region manage their natural resources in a post-conflict scenario. During a long period, Colombia was threatened by the illegal and violent actions of the FARC guerrilla, right-wing paramilitaries, and other criminal groups. After a peace agreement signed in 2016, the government and FARC agreed to stop confrontation and look for alternative options to bring sustainable peace to the country. In the municipalities of Solano and Cartagena del Chairá (Caquetá, Colombia) the agreement changed the set of rules and power balances that the armed conflict had shaped. For the first time, communities had to define what peace means in the territory, and how a new set of institutions would influence the relationship between themselves and the forest.

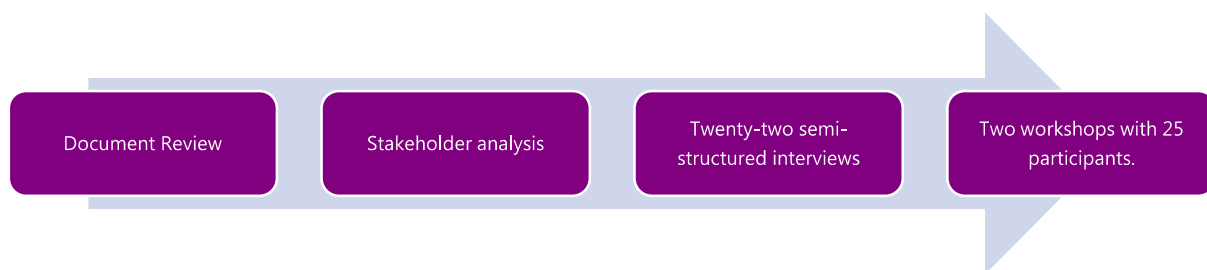
Paisajes Conectados (Connected Landscapes), a program implemented by Fondo Acción, has worked in the region for four years to reduce Amazon deforestation. The program has a Governance and Community Capacity Building Strategy that relies on the idea that communities need to strengthen certain capacities (i.e., leadership, participation) to manage their natural resources sustainably. My Field Practicum intended to evaluate how the training that the communities have received from the program has helped them to strengthen their social capital and community capacity. These two factors were integrated into the field practicum to understand the relationship between the context, the program, and the outcomes that it has achieved. In other words, the report views the communities as a system, and the external and internal conditions affect how the parts interact and produce different results. After completing the assessment, the research revealed that the program has helped the communities to strengthen their bonding or internal social capital, but there is still an opportunity to improve the bridging capital and synergies with outside actors and among the stakeholders. Caquetá communities are strong in leadership and resource mobilization. However, they lack a critical approach regarding opportunities to receive funds and establish relationships with others. Therefore, in managing the forest under a post-conflict scenario, communities need to recognize that assuming a leading and autonomous role is a long-term process and that their lack of experience is due to historical precedents. They need time, experience and knowledge to exercise the power to make decisions about how to manage their natural resources sustainably. It would be counter-productive to ask them to take the leading role without the necessary preparation. Also, the local and national government should listen to the shared-alternative vision of the future that farmers have built to ensure an efficient transition from war to peace.

General objective: To determine how the local Governance and Community Capacity Building Strategy (GCCBS), implemented by Paisajes Conectados program, has strengthened communities' social capital and community capacity domains.

Specific objectives:

1. Identify strengths and weaknesses of the community capacity building strategy.
2. Identify what domains of community capacity building have materialized in the areas where the program works.
3. Ascertain what skills/ mechanisms empower communities to discuss and agree upon guidelines for the management of natural resources.

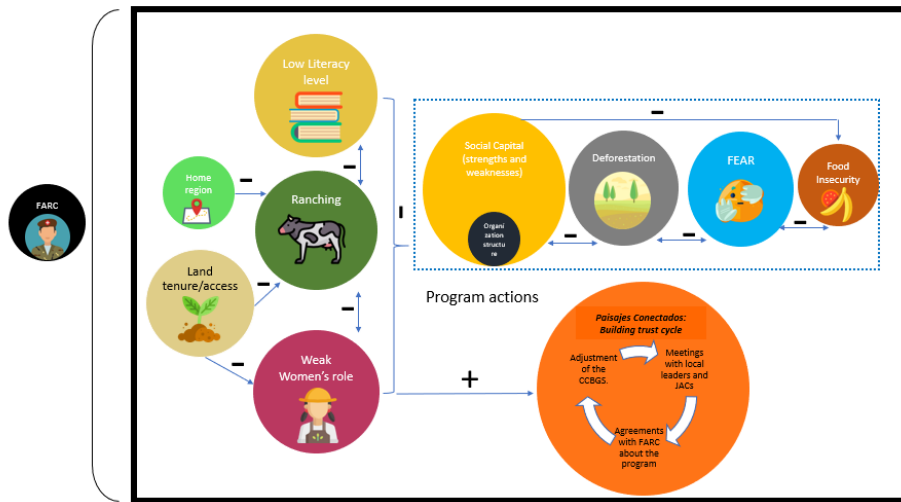
Methods:



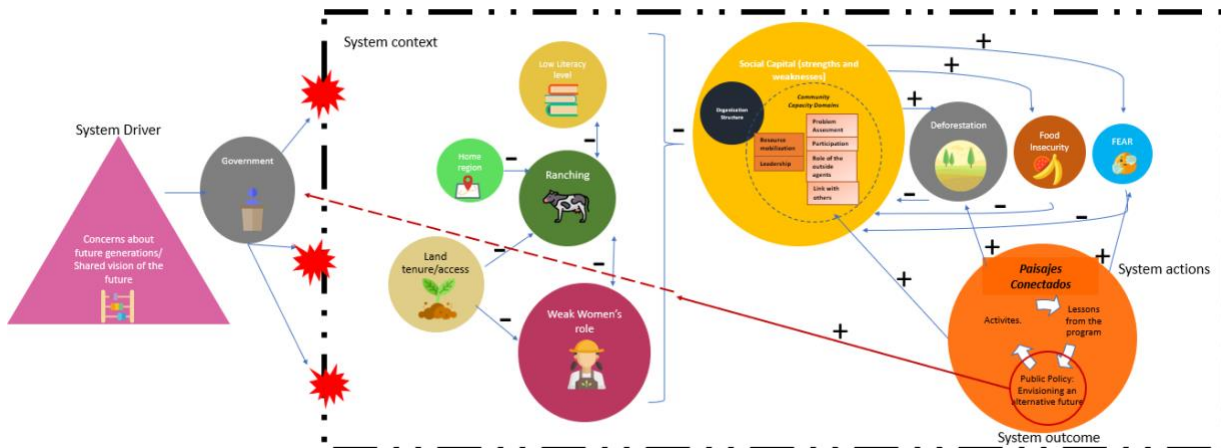
Results:

1. Social Capital. (Before and After on the diagrams (See below)).
 - Bounding and Adaptation.
 - The program facilitates the relationship between the local government and the communities.
 - Paisajes Conectados has taken advantage of the lessons of implementing the program to tailor the governance and CCB strategy to the local context and demands.
2. Knowledge.
 - Public policy agreements are scaled from the local level to the regional government to create synergies from this stage that could support the efforts of the communities and the program.
3. New Leaders:
 - Paisajes Conectados has helped communities to overcome the stigma of war (terrorist) and low literacy levels through education and leadership training.

Before (2013-2015)



After (2015-2017)



4. Lower deforestation rates in program areas are related to a transformation in the leadership system.

5. Governance at the most local level (family/farm) and the shared future vision of a different Caquetá allowed Fondo Acción to implement conservation strategies.

6. Community Capacity Building

- Participation, leadership, and resource mobilization (time, work force, commitments with the program) are strong attributes of both communities.
- Their weakest dimensions are the ability to work with others (external and internal actors) and the capacity to formulate questions ('asking why').

Going back to Colombia to deliver the results to the communities and receive feedback

Thanks to the support of the TCD, I went to Colombia from March 16 to March 25 of 2018, to return the results of the research to the communities in Caquetá. I conducted a workshop with 80% of the people who participated last year in the interviews or workshops. Furthermore, participants had the chance to discuss the outcomes, they provided feedback and talked about how to take advantage of the research to improve their community capacity domains. It was interesting that most of the discussion focused on women's role in their villages, how other women and men perceive women's role in the region.

Appendices

The following pictures were taken during the workshop conducted in Solano, Caquetá.



Figure 1. Me arriving to a village (Potrerros) in Solano, Caquetá.



Figure 2. During the workshop with the community in Solano (Caquetá).



Figure 3. Group photo after the workshop in Solano (Caquetá).