

Abstract

INGO Engagement with Indigenous Social Movements in the Peruvian Amazon

Investigators

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Aims and objectives of the research

The project will study the collaboration between a local indigenous social movement in the Camisea region of the Peruvian Amazon and international NGOs (INGOs) that aim to uphold indigenous rights and preserve biodiversity. Gas extraction by a consortium of multinational energy corporations went into operation in the region in August 2004, after a decade of opposition from INGOs and a more ambiguous response from local indigenous groups.

Key research questions and methods

How does engagement with international non-governmental actors impact upon indigenous social movements in terms of their mission, activities, membership and self-presentation?

In what ways has consensus over priorities and goals been negotiated since engagement between INGOs and the indigenous social movement was initiated?

The study aims to examine whether indigenous peoples' aims have been co-opted by INGOs in the struggle to achieve common ground for collaboration, or if conservationist actors have had to concede space to the demands of well-organised indigenous peoples using powerful rhetoric regarding their rights to land, development and the use of resources.

Work on the research project will begin with a historical review of the development of social movements in Camisea and an examination of contemporary interaction between social movements and international NGOs. Fieldwork research will generate a case study focusing on one indigenous social movement in Camisea and its relationships with INGO actors.

The fieldwork will be undertaken in two stages, one year apart, to gain insight into how social movements adapt their activities and demands to changing realities and how changes in external circumstances affect their relationships with international actors. Methods will include literature review, organisational assessments, semi-structured and open interviews and focus group discussions.

Relation to the programme

The research study will generate empirical knowledge about two different types of non-governmental actors, INGOs and social movements and their interaction across

the North-South divide. The project will involve empirical research into the way a social movement defines its objectives and manages its accountability to international partners and local actors. It will also address the impact of partnership with international actors on its activities, goals and values.

Relevance of the research to user groups

Academic – the case study will act as a base for broader research into the relationships between INGOs and social movements and contribute to a specific body of theory, currently lacking in the literature.

Non-academic – this research will generate lessons and recommendations for improved collaboration between different actors in the non-governmental and environmental sectors.

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