

Connectivity, Resources and Governance in the Southwest Amazon: Can Communities Take Advantage of New Opportunities While Avoiding the Pitfalls?

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Connectivity reflects the extent to which a specific community is linked to its local and regional resources. It is through these linkages that we observe the flows of people, products, capital and information. Changes in connectivity, driven in our case by the paving of the Inter-Oceanic Highway that will ultimately link the Pacific with the Atlantic Ocean, affect local communities in a number of measurable ways. We focus on changes in communal resource governance, market chains for key resources, social networks, and adjustments in livelihood strategies.

Household-level structured interviews and participatory focus groups are investigating resource use and governance, livelihood strategies and responses to road improvement in over twenty communities in Peru (Madre de Dios) and Bolivia (Pando). Community-level surveys in over 80 communities have already been completed in the region. We regard governance as the structure and process of decision making with respect to resource allocation and use. This work is complemented by remote sensing analyses and botanical transects.

This poster presents initial findings which address, but do not fully answer, the fundamental questions of our research: How and why does the increased connectivity change the daily movement of community members through their own community and across areas beyond that community? How and why does increased connectivity impact livelihood strategies, market interactions, social networks of community members, and governance of community resources? What factors contribute to communities taking advantage of market opportunities while avoiding their pitfalls?

This research is funded in part by NSF, WFT IGERT and TCD programs.

Keywords: Connectivity, MAP Region, Resource Use, Resilience, Rural Communities, Livelihood Strategies, Tenure

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