

TERRITORIAL FORESIGHT AND SOCIAL CONFLICTS: SUSTAINABLE PLANNING FOR TERRITORIES

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Abstract

Latin-American governments have privileged the extractive model as their principal economic activity towards development in coherence with the neoliberal economy policies that have been taking place in these countries in the last two decades. Yet, as natural resources are non-renewable and involve social and environmental affectation of territories, these interventions end up being a short-term and socially dangerous options because they cannot assure the equitable benefit from these activities to the population in extraction areas and the periphery. Thus, exacerbates the conditions for social conflict in the short term and an unsustainable development in the long term. One way that has proven to be efficient when solving social conflict is implementing Foresight into the territorial planning. The Foresight approach allows the policy makers to not only include relevant future features into the decision making processes but also, it allows them to include into the process of designing the future of a territory to its most important stake-holders. Therefore, the participative characteristics of Foresight in Planning helps the Governments to better integrate extractive activities and development for a territory reducing the potential elements for social conflict. This article explains how using Territorial Foresight is useful to reduce social conflicts in Latin America and how to better manage socio- environmental conflicts by long-term planning development.

Keywords: Foresight, social conflict, territorial development, socio-environmental conflict, extractive policies

Introduction

Social conflict in extractive areas: The costs of low participation

The utilization of natural resources in Latin America countries is not recent. It started in the colonial times (Kosiba & Hunter: 2017); however, is in the nineties that these activities have grown (Calderon: 2012) after the implementation of the neoliberal measures that come as an answer to the economy crisis that took place in these countries after the eighties. This decade was called the Lost Decade (Brieguer: 2002) (Ocampo, Stallings, Bustillo, et. Al.: 2014). The implementation of these measures had variant results into the Latin American population (Solimano & Soto, 2005): on the one hand, they spread the wealth of the countries, but, in the other hand, this spread was not equitable.

Inequality exacerbates the differences between the extractive areas and the cities around showing the lack of a vision in how the territory benefits from the activities that take place there. For example, in Peru, the mining areas (extractive areas) are impoverished while the people of the cities around have a better economic situation and quality of living (Loayza & Rigolini: 2016). Other problematic situation in Latin America regarding extractive activities are the ones related to the indigenous populations and the extractive activities. However the ratification of the 169° ILO Convention that regulates the Prior Consultation for indigenous communities, most of the countries have a poor enforcement of this rule while it does not assure its effectiveness to safeguard the well-being of the communities. Furthermore, in most of the cases, the indigenous populations are being displaced from their original territories due to the extractive activities. Thus, shows that social conflict, due to environmental causes, has also its origins in the lack of a multicultural, inclusive, perspective.

Often, Latin American leaders express their belief on the effectiveness of the extractive model as *the only alternative that generates development in the regions* and thus activities as agriculture are less effective than mining for the same end. However, case studies suggest the opposite. Some studies show that when well- implemented, integrating technology and ancestral knowledge, the agriculture is capable of generating powerful economic development for the populations involved in the activities reducing poverty and generating opportunities. Some of the cases reviewed are the agriculture in the Peruvian northern coast and in the northeaster and southeastern coast in Mexico (Villa Rodriguez & Bracamonte: 2013). Therefore, the solution resides in integrating rural populations (or the stake- holders) into the development process.

Social participation and the model for development

The neoliberal measures that Latin American Governments implemented after the so called *Lost Decade*, in the eighties, were structural (Zetterlmeyer: 2006). They seek, first and foremost, to achieve: worldwide trade openness, financial market modernization, government efficiency, education policy improvement, public services development and infrastructure and governance improvement (understood as the group of laws that assure the absence of corruption and the prevalence of the state of law). In relation to this regional goals, some investigations show that the mentioned measures achieved the growth of Latin American countries' GNP but it was not effective in enhance good governance. In contrast, the governance index in the region, dropped, alarming the governments about the cost of the neoliberal measures being applied (Loayza, et. Al.: 2004).

According to Brieger (2002), the principal factors in this result were the persistent of some characteristics in the Latin American Government's:

1. The structural reforms that were implemented do not include the development of the human resources, the institutions nor the productive infrastructure of the public sector in the medium term.
2. Inequality and civil exclusion prevailed in the region.
3. Social disparities among the regions of Latin America continues to grow. Three of the bigger urban centers in the region concentrates 25% of the GNP of it all. Thus creates big

challenges to implement and enforce social justice, economy efficiency and equal life quality.

From these three characteristics, it is possible to identify five factors that exacerbates the conditions for social conflicts in the region: i) inequality and social exclusion, ii) concentration of wealth, iii) income asymmetries, iv) low social mobility and v) divergence in the territorial development. Additionally, the citizen's perception that the States of the region remain inactive when having to solve social problems and generate welfare, build the scenario for citizens to express their discomfort.

In Latin America, one of the biggest gaps in terms of good government is the lack of mechanisms for citizen engagement into the decisions of how the future should be for the territory they inhabit. Thus, responds to the lack of *territorial foresight*. Territorial foresight is a complex approach that is multidimensional (multiple factors), multi- temporal (past, present and future), multi- scale (external and internal influence) (Salas: 2013) in addition to the contextual dimensions as micro, meso and macro level) in the interaction of stakeholder into a territory identifying the possible alliances and collaborative- and conflictive- degrees among the actors involved in the territorial foresight.

In most of the cases, the decision making processes regarding the future of a territory in Latin America have not followed a public good perspective- that is key for a good territory management. Instead, it prevail the interests of particular actors (Sandoval: 2014). For example, in extractive areas it is mostly common that the surrounding community is excluded from all the decision making activity regardless of the potential- and effective- affections they might be exposed to by enforcement of these activities (Arsel, Hogenboom & Pellegrini: 2016). Mostly, this happens because the government officials are not capable of understanding the relevance of citizen engagement. Paradoxically, the exclusion of the citizens of the decision taken to start with an extractive activity is also the cause of the failure of some of the *extractive projects* in the region (Arrow: 1951).

The prevalence of particular interest over public good, have being long studied as part of the *Collective Action Theory*. This theory affirms that, rationally, an individual will always prevail their own benefit over the collective good (Olson: 1965) (Ostrom: 1999). For this authors, the altruism does not exist because the individual will always seek for the own benefit in the short or medium term. The Collective Action theory justifies the need for the State's intervention to enforce the incentives that promote collective action towards a public good. This is probably the biggest challenge for the region. Another theory that becomes handy in terms of territory management is *territorial ethics*. This theory explains that the interactions between the ethics and the regional political economy must be regulated by the principles of efficiency and equity in which the Government is key to guarantee the community's quality of living over the particular interests (Cuervo: 2012). Furthermore, most of the participative processes are generally characterized for their lack of transparency and public legitimacy. Therefore, a new approach to extractive activities and territory development is needed.

The obstacles of civil engagement in territorial foresight

The lack of civil engagement into the territorial foresight processes has three possible causes that reflect the capacity of government to see further more than the medium term: a) inadequate tools to consider the populations' points of view and interests, b) underestimation of the citizen's participation in the development processes and, c) prevalence of third party's interest. In these three scenarios, to sort the obstacles depend on the capacity the policy makers has to develop a sustainable and efficient territorial foresight. Moreover, the theory presents some factors that involve the decision making to sort the obstacles mentioned either for the civil actor or for the government decision maker. These factors can be psychological (cognitive deviations), economic (collective action) and sociological (culture). The first factor, the psychological, can make the government's decision maker to believe his or her point of view is more valuable than the others and create negative incentive to negotiate. The second factor, the economic, the particular interests and the corruption generates a perversion in the system because, if the State is not capable of enhancing solutions for the community welfare, maybe other actors will. Again, it inhibits the interests, between the actors, to negotiate. The third factor, the third party interest, this affects the cultural arrangements of a community and occurs when this populations lost its trust in the Government's capacity to solve a problem (Calderon: 2012).

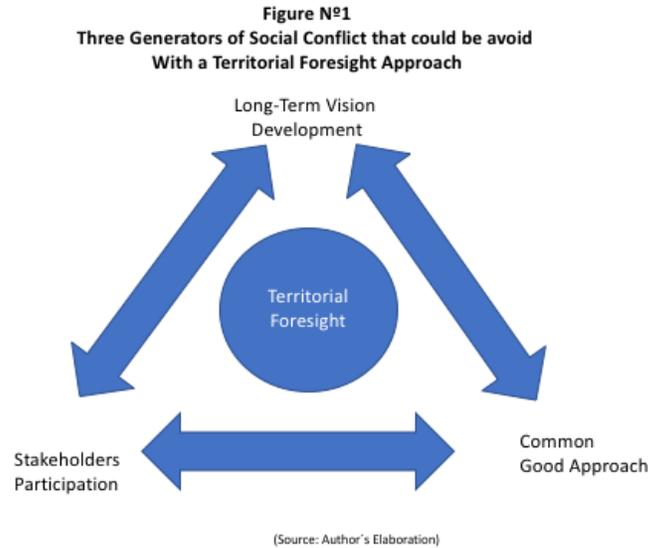
Methodological approach

The present analysis is based on a qualitative approach, based on a literature survey, using propositional generalization (Creswell, 2014) reviewing the main authors who work on the issue of social conflicts from the perspective of long-term planning. From this perspective, we based on a case analysis some conclusions supported by evidence of practice (Kumar, 2014), which allow us to consider how territorial foresight can help prevent social conflicts.

Results, discussion and implications

A way through social conflicts: The Territorial Foresight

Three of the major shortcomings presented in the previous section that generate social conflicts are *the absence of a long-term vision of the territory, the weak participation of stakeholders and the lack of an approach to the common good* (see Figure N°1). In all three cases it is feasible to use territorial foresight as a tool to solve them.



Firstly, regarding the Long Term Vision, the Territorial Foresight is *the analysis of possible futures* and within them, to choose *the one* we want to work with as the so-called *bet scenario* (Godet, 2001). This is also known as *Vision of the Future* (Mojica, 2005) and allows the decision makers to enhance a long-term plan for a territory.

Secondly, regarding the *stakeholder participation*, Territorial Foresight has a social character in its implementations, thus it does include social actors in the construction of the Vision of the Future of the territory these actors inhabits (Godet, 2001). Furthermore, the Territorial Foresight cannot be generated only by one agent, rather it must have a shared character. As Godet indicates, *if the future is not thought and produced by social actors, it will not happen* (Mojica, 2005). For the development of the territorial approach, it has to guarantee that all the territories' stakeholders will be part of the process, regardless of whether they come from urban and rural sectors. This has been the development approach that Europe has had in the postwar period and that today has been collected by the OECD within your documents called: *Territorial Development Reviews* generated for each of the member countries.

Thirdly, regarding the *common good* approach that the Territorial Foresight presents, it is essential that we consider, within future alternatives developed by foresight, which ones will generate the greatest possible welfare for all elements of the population on average. This contrasts with the more individualistic position avoiding the *cognitive bias* mentioned before.

The Territorial Foresight, as an approach, lands in reality through the *territorial plans*. This last one is the fundamental tool for the implementation of what has being defined using foresight. This tool allows the *tangibility of a vision of the future* and it provides the necessary elements that will be complemented with projects and the measures needed to achieve this *Vision of Future*. The

plans must have a long-term component, the participation of all actors and the spirit for the pursuit of common good for all citizens.

The Territorial Foresight as a tool for medium and long-term decisions in the territory

Although as is known the object of study of foresight is the future, we must understand that this discipline is not focused on empty speculation about it but on the basis of an orderly revision of the future (possible futures) to build a bet scenario in which the actions to generate development in a territory will be planned (Mojica, 2005), (Mojica, 1999). In short, Foresight is a discipline that helps in the decision-making process and orients it from the short term planning to the medium and long term. However, it is not just about making long-term decisions.

Vijay Govindarajan, a researcher from Dartmouth College, states that Territorial Foresight is useful to *make strategic decisions that fit into three boxes: past, present and future*. According to Govindarajan, from the box of the past *we must keep only what helps us to the future, the box of the future (which for us is the long-term box) should be where we put most of our efforts to achieve the desired change since it looks for the optimal design, but the third box is equally important: that of the present (that of short-term decisions) because, if we do not ensure it, our future will be at least complicated* (Govindarajan, 2016).

The Foresight is fundamentally oriented to the generation of visions for long-term change, but in its interaction with the strategy is that it really achieves the desired change in a territory. This strategy, to be feasible, has to be supported by plans in which some objectives are defined goals and indicators that inform the implementer about the advances on the results' achievement and gaps. This means that the short-term objectives must be linked to long-term objectives and vision and so on. It should also show the sense of urgency in the implementation of each of them.

Territorial plans are the fundamental tool for the implementation of foresight in the geographical allowing the decision maker to integrate the three previous points and because it allows the tangibility of a Vision of the Future already designed.

Territorial Foresight and Planning

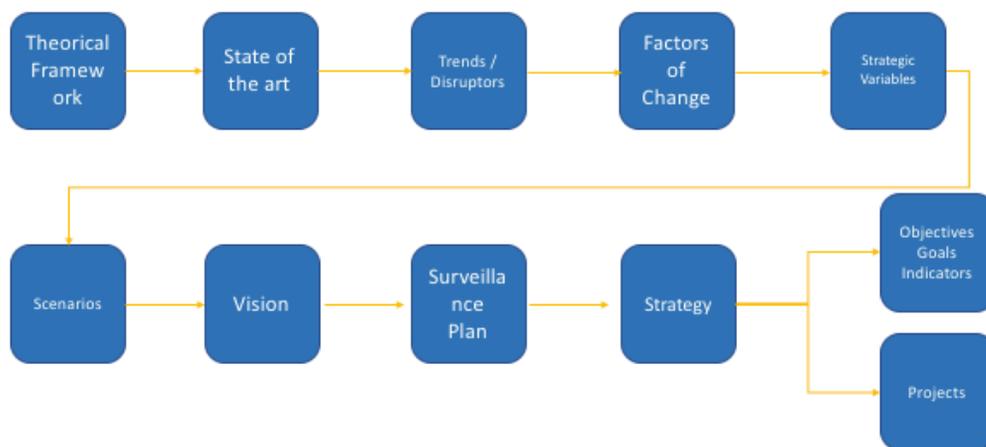
The prospective part of the analysis of a human phenomenon allows us *to land in possible future scenarios and a Vision of the Future*; however it is not complete without a Plan. In other words, the vision is not complete if the action is not reached (Godet, 2001). Thus, the necessary interaction between foresight and planning is marked by the tangibility of that vision in all the processes necessary for it to become a reality (Mattar & Perrotti, 2014). This is the basis of the new planning with a vision of the future that is being implemented in the emerging economies in the world. But these processes do not include a lineal interaction between actors, but a *systemic*

and interactive from the foresight perspective. Thus marks with its bases to these new planning processes, especially in territorial scope, given that not only provides long-term alternatives, but they are born of a consensus and an interaction with the actors, by its participative character (Mojica, 2005), (Mojica, 1999).

Specific Prospective Actions for the prevention of Social Conflicts

In order to prevent social conflicts, the Foresight must be able through its methodology to respond to the expectations of the population. For this, it is necessary to understand some particularities in the application of the *Voluntarist Foresight* model to the territory (territorial foresight). The *Latin American Voluntarist Foresight model* is a direct derivation of the *French voluntarist foresight* model. This model can be seen in Figure N°2 presented below.

Figure N°2
Voluntarist Foresight Model: Latin American Version (E. Mojica)



Source: Author's elaboration based in Mojica (2005)

The elements of territorial foresight in the prevention of Social Conflicts

Game of Actors:

One of the most important steps in the implementation of the territorial foresight is the determination of the *relevant stakeholders that will participate in the futures construction* exercise. To this end, it is important to create preliminary tables for the determination of the relevant stakeholders, especially in the case of organized civil society, so that the people chosen to have adequate representation and that all positions are reflected (Mojica, 2005). Once the representatives that will be in the session are chosen, the application of the *stakeholder methodologies* will help to balance the participation of each of the relevant members of the

community and thus be able to count on the appropriate representativeness, which will later derive in the validation of the community and its legitimacy.

Theoretical framework:

The theoretical framework is fundamental to have a formal reference regarding the understanding of the phenomenon that is being studied and avoid a casuistic approach to the topic. In this sense, the theoretical framework helps to specify *a model of territorial development adaptable to the in-situ conditions* that we wish to analyze.

The model of Territorial Development helps to identify concepts, components (agents of change, areas of action, level of context) and key factors that help to understand the functioning and expected behaviors of the phenomenon and / or territory under study. These key factors will later be a formal input to discuss the "*Factors of Change*" from the perspective of possibilities of occurrence in the long term.

In all the Territorial Foresight practices it is relevant that the knowledge of the phenomenon is detailed and profound. However, in the case of the prevention of social conflicts it is necessary not only to understand in detail the constitution of the territory itself, but the relations of the community with the environment as well as their cosmovision regarding the composition of the territory. In this sense, historical, sociological and anthropological analyzes will be fundamental since they work as a slight approximation to the characteristics of the zone of potential conflict.

In this theoretical framework, which will then be of general knowledge of all the stakeholders involved in the decision, the potentials in all the senses of the territory (natural resources, human resources, and environment) must be clearly expressed. Furthermore, the Opportunities and Threats must be clearly expressed and quantified in a credible manner. If the area has a particular potential for the generation of natural resources, it must be clearly expressed the potential value of these and the possibilities of use. All the alternatives have to be valued, always under the principle of common good over the individual good.

State of the Art and Technological Surveillance:

A Foresight practice need to include *the latest advances* in the field of the phenomenon to be analyzed that are tangible (a reality). For the specific case in which we have a budding social conflict referred to the exploitation of natural resources or territory for other purposes, it is necessary to develop an analysis of the main recent alternatives provided by technology for both efficient and clean extraction of the resource, quantifying what it would cost to have them and the effects of their use.

At the same time, it is important to also consider the technological alternatives that we will have available for the management of the same resource.

Factors of Change and Strategic Variables:

It is important to take into consideration the fundamental topics that can alter the course of development in the territory. Therefore, it will be particularly relevant to apply the tools that best help the analysis. There are some tools that are mostly used for this purpose such as the *Marc Giget Tree* (Gándara & Osorio, 2014), *the Matrix of Preconceptions* (which is of fundamental application in order to filter the preconceptions, which form conflicts) or the *Matrix of Change* (which allows reflection on the tendencies, expected and feared, high possibility of occurrence in the territory), all these tools are used for the identification of the Factors of Change of greatest impact in the territory in the long term.

Once the *Factors of Change* have been identified, a choice will be made between the implementation of the *structural analysis method* (Micmac) or another technique such as, for example, *Francois Regnier's abacus* for the selection of *strategic variables*. The tool to be used depends to a large extent on the number of key stakeholders involved that allows an agile exercise in the analysis of the causal and hierarchical relationship of the variables. The central idea is to reach a consensus in the identification of the strategic variables to have an exercise characterized by its credibility before all the agents involved.

Scenarios:

One of the most important steps of the process is to generate *Future Scenarios* constructed hypotheses on possible events that have to be relevant, coherent and credible, as well as rupturing and mutually exclusive (Schwartz, 1991). Aiming so, the build of scenarios depends on the knowledge, culture and experience of the stakeholders that formulate them (Mojica, 2005). The conformation of a scenario can be represented as the *sum of hypotheses* with the following metaphor:

$$\bullet \text{ Scenario} = \Sigma H1 + H2 + H3 + H4 + H5 + \dots Hn$$

In this way it will be clear to all stakeholders what happens in each of the scenarios and what is what by consensus (and validating it with the population) can be defined as the *bet scenario*, which for the specific case is the image of future that the population wants for its territory.

Vigía Plan (Surveillance Plan):

The surveillance plan is of very important in the Territorial Foresight process; because, although the previous scenarios the vision is chosen, it is very important to *have control of the constituent elements* of the scenarios that you wish to be tangible or not. Therefore it is possible to have control over these variables so that the unwanted scenario does not arise (Mojica, 2005).

Vision / Planning Interaction:

In order to be able to make tangible the process of creating a vision of the future for the territory, steps that start with the planning of the territory are required. From this planning, valuable points can be obtained: i) a broad perspective of the present (which provides the theoretical framework

and state of the art), ii) the factors that will transform the model and that feed the planning objectives (factors of change and variables) strategic) iii) and the images of possible futures (scenarios). All these elements will have in the planning process a correlate with objectives, goals and indicators that should contribute to reach the future image that is sought to achieve.

Finally, it is fundamental in such Territorial Foresight that the strategies, objectives, goals and indicators are validated before the "community - beneficiary of the process" and that these elements must be in accordance with the planning instruments of the following levels (others at the subnational level, sectoral and national) in order not to break the articulation of the national planning system. In case there is an objective, goal or indicator that conflicts with what is established in the next level, it will require a thorough examination in order to achieve harmonization.

Conclusions

- From a technical perspective, social conflicts of an environmental nature essentially have three background origins: (1) the *lack of long-term vision* in the territory, (2) the *lack of stakeholder participation* in decision-making and (3) the *absence of the search for the common good* by the actors.
- Assuming willingness of the actors to solve them, the three origins indicated above can be worked from the *voluntarist foresight model* as a way to prevent social conflicts.
- The prospective (foresight) analysis must be orthodox in the previous design of the field intervention, as well as in the use of a simple methodology in the application of the tools that allows taking into account all the relevant actors and factors.
- The territorial foresight will require a coordinated action with the territorial planning for the generation of a vision and the articulation of this with the strategy, in order to achieve its enforcement.

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