



## Governance at the Intersection of People and Nature

### PRODIGY

As a research project combining different disciplines and knowledge holders, PRODIGY wants to understand the connections between nature, economy and society in the southwestern Amazon region between Peru, Brazil and Bolivia.

Our research is based on the idea that diversity in ANY system increases resilience to disturbances. Therefore, we study functional diversity not only in the soil or ecosystem, but across ALL components of the southwestern Amazon region, including local communities, decision-making processes, economic activities, values and norms.

When Greta Thunberg urged the world leaders with the words, “I want you to panic”, it was an expression of urgency. More importantly, though was what followed this prominent statement: “and THEN, I want you to act”. It is this sequence of (1) acknowledging the urgency, then (2) overcoming the mood of panic, and (3) accelerating the development of solutions, that are needed. However, **such governance mechanisms require actions that do not merely react to occurring challenges but anticipate future crises and risks – in other words: reflexive governance.** Thoughtful decision-makers need to take decisions on the best available information. Such decisions might entail discovering new pathways and opposing the mainstream. But first of all, they need to be tailored to the specific context they address and include the diversity of local voices. **This diversity of knowledges and experiences is crucial to support resilient future societies.**

Fostering reflexivity within institutions in southwestern Amazonia, entails the following prerequisites: (1) the **clarification of responsibilities** between governance institutions (and their financing); (2) the awareness raising for existing **power structures** and opening spaces for enhanced local participation; (3) the **breaking of corruptive cycles** while developing economically, ecologically and socially sustainable livelihood opportunities; and (4) taking the **continuous reproduction of illegal activities** into account while clarifying responsibilities, raising awareness, and breaking corruptive cycles.

In addition, knowledge of interacting social-ecological tipping points is also highly relevant. Such knowledge can inform the international debate on the implementation of protection measures, such as the current debate about protecting 30% of the planet's surface for safeguarding biodiversity and the climate. During the preparation and implementation of such measures, local decision-makers should conduct a comprehensive **analysis of the potential conflict** aggravating impacts of the proposed measure. The addition of context-specific knowledge can serve as a measure for conflict prevention and an entry point to **strengthen social cohesion** by maintaining or giving people the possibilities for sustainable livelihoods and thus building up coping abilities to future disturbances and shocks.

Lastly, **massive investment** in the underfunded state and non-state institutions in southwestern Amazonia and a parallel **strengthening of collaboration** on and across scales to enhance environmental regulation and public security in the Amazon are promising approaches that could counteract the current detrimental development.

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