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## Socio-environmental conflict management as a starting point for economic development

La gestión de los conflictos socio ambientales como punto de partida del desarrollo económico



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### ABSTRACT

The objective of this literature review article is to carry out an analytical observation and determination of fundamental aspects in the field of socio-environmental conflict management and its interaction with the economic development of the people involved, be they communities and/or regions. A detailed review of articles found in different bibliographic registries such as Dialnet, SciELO, Latindex and others has been carried out. We were able to identify 22 articles with topics related to the management of socio-environmental conflicts and their impact on the economic development of the communities involved, which allowed us to analyze relevant information for the development of the article. Upon finding a diversity of literature by authors on the subject, it became evident that an efficient management of socio-environmental conflicts has an impact on the development of the people, which is reflected in a culture of peace. In this line, it was concluded that an efficient interaction of the institutions involved, whether public or private, in the framework of the prevention of socio-environmental conflicts, will bring about sustainable development for the State and its populations.

**Keywords:** socio-environmental conflict management, economic development, institutions

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## RESUMEN

Este artículo de revisión de literatura tiene como objetivo efectuar observación analítica y determinación de aspectos fundamentales en el ámbito de la gestión de los conflictos socio ambientales y de su interacción con desarrollo económico de los pueblos comprometidos, llámense comunidades y/o regiones. Se ha realizado una revisión en detalle de artículos encontrados en distintos registros bibliográficos como Dialnet, SciELO, Latindex y otros. Se logró identificar 22 artículos con temas relacionados a la gestión de conflictos socio ambientales y su incidencia en el desarrollo económico de las comunidades comprometidas, que permitieron analizar información relevante para el desarrollo del artículo. Al encontrarse con una diversidad de literatura de autores en la materia, se evidenció que una eficiente gestión de conflictos socio ambientales, repercuten en el desarrollo de los pueblos, la misma que se ve reflejada en una cultura de paz. En esta línea, se concluyó que una eficiente interacción de las instituciones comprometidas, sean públicas o privadas en el marco de la prevención de los conflictos socio ambientales, traerá consigo un desarrollo sostenible para el Estado y sus poblaciones.

**Palabras clave:** gestión de conflictos socio ambientales, desarrollo económico, instituciones

## 1. Introduction

When analyzing the problem of the management of socio-environmental conflicts, the way they are dealt with by the State and its institutions, due to different escalations related to various mining projects, give rise to a feeling that one cannot avoid finding oneself in the midst of a context that cannot be managed and that there is no apparent sign of a solution. As a complement and within the global approach, the World Bank, by granting financing to the governments of the region so that they can invest in various projects, such as the construction of roads or wastewater treatment, seeks to ensure that the populations and the environment are not affected by the mining projects, and that they are not affected by the mining projects, seeks to ensure that the populations and the environment are overprotected against risks of probable adverse impacts and in this sense, based on the principle of investment with socio-environmental responsibility, it is improving and optimizing the different mechanisms for managing socio-environmental conflicts, based on granting viability not only in the economic but also in the social and environmental aspects. On the other hand,

Perez (2019) in his article, suggested that, when studies linked to environmental policies are carried out, they have not been recurrently considering the analysis of socio-environmental conflicts. In this line, although it is correct that states strengthen the normative part and the processes of solving socio-environmental problems, it is not responsible to neglect the escalation of social conflicts, which in the long run will bring problems to the State itself. Also, Arizaca (2017), indicated in his article that, in order to strengthen the sustainability of natural resource exploitation activities, they depend on the efficiency of their institutional units that cover the relationship between mining, land, water and population. Maillet & Albalá (2018), in their article, raised a substantiated question, related to the consequences of conflicts and factors related to socio-environmental conflicts in electricity projects in Chile. Medrano et al. (2019) in their article about corporate social responsibility in the relationship between peasant communities and mining companies, recommended engaging mining companies and the community in strategic alliances with a projection of sustained development, where the protagonists obtain benefits, i.e., this link should generate value beyond the life of the extractive operation itself. Likewise, Alvarado (2017) in their article, concluded that the historical analysis of the results of policies seeking an economy independent of its natural resources should serve to maintain the need for political changes in favor of a new type of governance between the governmental and the local. Toledo (2019) in his journal article related to the shared responsibility between government, mining conglomerates and communities, implies that the idea of an efficient functioning of state entities also gives access to governance in the country. Likewise, Massa-Sánchez et al. (2018), in their article related to the large mining sector and social conflicts, in Ecuador, analyzed the degree of relationship between the mining legal part with megaprojects, taking as a type case the Mirador project. Pinto & Luyo (2018), in their article in which they focused their analysis of what happened in the context of the Las Bambas mining megaproject and which escalated into a social conflict with serious repercussions in 2015. The article tried to show that the petitions of the population were supported by objective motivations because the inconsistent changes made in the environmental impact studies that were executed by the Chinese corporation (MMG), were fundamental, since they will harm related areas both directly and indirectly. Also, Aparicio (2017), who had as an objective in his doctoral thesis "to determine the influence of corporate social responsibility in the prevention of mining social conflict case Las Bambas 2014".

In this sense, by having an efficient management of socio-environmental conflicts, which determines a starting point to achieve economic development in the communities or populations involved, it is necessary to carry out an analytical

study of the literature, which strengthens a body of documentation that allows us to know the origin of the conflicts, their optimal management and how to avoid their escalation to the detriment of disturbing social peace, which would have dire economic consequences for the State. In this line, the study and review of the approaches elaborated by various authors, the same ones mentioned in this article, in the framework of the management of socio-environmental conflicts, allows us to rethink the importance of providing feedback on the suitable procedures that efficiently bring the control of such conflicts closer, which would represent satisfying the needs, especially of the communities involved.

The objective of this article consists of a structured review and analysis of the literature on the management of socio-environmental conflicts and their impact on economic development. Thus, Rojas et al. (2019), in their article on research trends in socio-environmental conflict due to oil exploitation, conclude that the study of socio-environmental conflicts has been increasing in Latin America and, with it, the expansion of the realities studied from various perspectives. In this sense, they suggested that socio-environmental conflict is little addressed from the perspective of the thinking of social groups, such as those related to values, information and knowledge of the communities, which are not widely developed in research.

### **Socio-environmental conflict management**

It is necessary to focus the definition to the social conflict as such and it is precisely that, taking what is mentioned in Fairchild's sociology dictionary in which he grants a definition to the social conflict as a social opposition in which the consequent purpose consists in the evil that can originate to one or more persons or opposite sets in their capture or in the damages that they manage to produce to their property or that in which the occupations of an individual or a set of persons, in an unintentional way, impede the performance or damage the composition of the other person. (Fairchild, 1974, p. 92). Likewise, Paredes (2019) in his article entitled "Mining conflicts in Peru: between protest and negotiation", in which he conducted an extensive analytical review of the literature on negotiation processes arising from social conflicts linked to the mining sector, suggests that socio-environmental conflicts fundamentally express the emergence of new actors and disputes over the management of increasingly scarce resources.

Likewise, La Rosa & Rivas (2018), when carrying out a detailed analysis on conflict theory, conceptualize social conflict as a claim in which social protagonists have

different interests, externalizing their respective ideals or interpretations in which they project to obtain the maximum benefit, according to their priorities or needs.

Also, Calderón (2012), points out that social conflicts are closely linked to the management of institutions and social demands, ergo, the more social gaps and lower levels of performance of public entities, then there will be an increase in the number of social conflicts and also assumes that natural resource exploitation projects, whether medium or large scale, have an endemic relationship with the generation of such social conflicts. In this sense, Romero et al. (2020) indicated that community mediation qualifies as a way of solving or managing social conflicts that develop in certain social groups, in which negotiation and openness to dialogue are encouraged, generating conciliation of the problems that affect a community. Along the same lines, Ccama et al. (2019) in their article related to social conflicts in Peruvian mining, conclude that there are several elements (ownership of the subsoil, poor distribution of income from mining, persistent relative poverty in the area of exploitation, land affectation, among others) that cause rural communities to perceive that this exploitation of resources, instead of benefiting them, limits their chances of escaping extreme poverty.

Likewise, considering a more institutionalized appreciation we have the Ombudsman's Office (2015) that indicates as elements or dimensions of social conflict management, we have as such the actors, the problems and the process. It is precisely that Poma & Gravante (2018) in their article aimed to analyze the role of emotions in socio-environmental conflicts in which they interviewed self-managed protagonists who defended their territory and conclude that sharing moral emotions can influence the collective identity and strategic decisions that in the long run can mean a positive or negative complement in the managements of such socio-environmental conflicts. Also, Cuadrado (2017) in his article explores the challenges of governance and how these tend to cause socio-environmental conflicts and analyzes the main demands of the communities and of the responses of the managements of certain committed public institutions and in such sense finds as important factors that favorably influence the management of such conflicts the crisis, communal leadership, small-scale and homogeneous communities, as well as legal demands. This allows us to rethink that, to the extent that these factors are assertively compacted, not only will the demands be met for the benefit of the communities, but a climate of social peace and thus shared economic development will be obtained. Along the same line, we have Canaza (2018) in which, in his study, he stops his analysis in the various socio-environmental claims expanded in the Peruvian territorial scope having on the other shore globalized capitalism. He foresees this situation as mining

conglomerates and the socio-environmental consequences originating in Peru increase, those affected start claims in search of the longed-for environmental justice and in which they consider their rights to climate justice have been violated. Within the framework of the Peruvian State, it is important that governmental efforts are made to give due attention to socio-environmental conflicts and in this line there is R.M. No. 067-2021-MINAM, in which the guidelines or directives for the management of socio-environmental conflicts were approved.

### **Economic development**

At present, it is an undeniable reality that the relationship between natural resource exploitation projects and socio-environmental conflicts has been somehow very close, in the sense that, although it is true that in recent years Peru and much of Latin America have been favored with an increase of important mega-projects, which have been contributing significantly to the economic development of the countries, it is also true that when this growth of investments, especially in the mining sector, has materialized, socio-environmental conflicts have also been increasing. This means that there is a large sector of the population in the various areas of influence or regions where natural resources are exploited, which has been perceiving that, despite the large investments made by the State and large companies, the population has not overcome its condition of extreme poverty and has not been able to efficiently meet its basic needs. On the other hand, the mining sector continues to account for the majority of socio-environmental conflicts in Peru.

In this line, the Ministry of Energy and Mines, in its 2019 Mining Yearbook magazine, stated that metallic mining represented 9.1% of the total national GDP in 2019. It also highlights that copper production contributed 56% of the total mining GDP, while gold and zinc 12% each.

From this perspective of the economic benefit that large investments in the mining sector bring to the national economy, the best scenario would be that the State should be concerned that this mining boom is reflected in the hardest hit sectors and those living in extreme poverty. Likewise, the rural communities in the areas of influence will not be able to adequately exploit the resources until they feel their own development. Therefore, in order for the population to feel that there is a favorable synergy for their development, both the State and the mining projects must modify their terms and must make the communities involved a protagonist and real participant. In this line, León (2019) in his interesting article related to the economic determinants of socio-environmental

conflicts in Peru, specified in relation to the social factor, that the lack of equity in the distribution of profits is an element that contributes to the generation of conflicts, i.e., socio-environmental conflicts are projected to grow while a population or region has a higher rate of inequality in income distribution. Céspedes et al. (2020), interpreted in their article that there is a close relationship between economic development and social conflicts in the Huánuco Region and that these events have a direct consequence on its economic development, linked to the growth of the mining canon.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The analysis-synthesis, holistic-dialectic and deductive methods were used, complemented by a rigorous documentary review, which allowed us to make an analysis of the scientific support found. Precisely from them, the most relevant information is summarized. The knowledge base on the management of socio-environmental conflicts was based on a summary-synthesis of a diversity of articles found, highlighting references in the Dialnet, SciELO and Latindex platforms with the search term "development of critical thinking" "only in the title of the article". A search was also carried out in various sources as a complement to the analysis of the proposed topic in the framework of socio-environmental conflict management.

We have managed to find a large amount of literary material with a range of analysis period of the last 5 years, i.e. 99% of the information collected corresponds to periods 2017-2021 and 1% corresponds to information from the years 2012 and 1974 which have been considered for the relevance of its content, the same that are closely linked to the management of socio-environmental conflicts.

In this line of ideas and statements, based on the literature reviewed and analyzed, it becomes necessary to ask ourselves the question about the different mechanisms of socio-environmental conflict management, in which it is based on the procedures in which the institutions of the Peruvian State are prioritizing their actions in order to minimize the escalation of these events. Then we ask ourselves: How do the institutions intervene in the framework of socio-environmental conflict prevention and to what extent does their efficiency favor economic development?

### 3. Results

In this review article it is relevant to indicate that, from the results of the information obtained, 1 corresponds to a doctoral thesis, 22 correspond to systematic information articles, of which 2 articles correspond to publications in indexed journals. Likewise, relevant information has been obtained from journals of institutional organizations, 2 national and 1 international, as well as information from 2 books: 1 national, 1 international and 1 legal standard. In this sense, a flow chart is detailed in Figure 3 with the summary of the literature review carried out.

Once the review of the articles was completed, topics related to the management of socio-environmental conflicts were identified. These allowed obtaining an important framework of information for the development of this article and within the idea of a research project related to socio-environmental conflicts. Based on the information obtained from diverse literature, the question is posed: How do institutions intervene in the framework of socio-environmental conflict prevention and to what extent does their efficiency favor economic development?

It is necessary to have an approach to the degree of participation and generation in the economic development of the States in the framework of socio-environmental projects and in this sense we have, Ríos (2018) who presented us in his review article related to Mining in Latin America and The Caribbean, a Socio-environmental Approach, interesting indicators in relation to the participation of mining in the GDP in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The article also summarizes the importance of the mining industry for the growth of the people and how it influences the economies of Latin American and Caribbean countries.

There is no doubt, then, that one of the emblematic institutions of Peruvian society, in which the greatest responsibility and protagonism in the management of socio-environmental conflicts lies, is the Ombudsman's Office. In this line, this institutional body expands its attributions to defend and supervise, as well as to prevent and mediate with the purpose of counteracting situations that threaten or violate fundamental rights and to open dialogue processes to help solve a given social conflict. It is important to point out that this governmental institution is not the one that resolves a social conflict, but collaborates, participates, defends and influences the reestablishment of dialogue in order to avoid the escalation of such social conflicts. In this sense, social actors must perceive that such conflicts must be managed as a complex process with the sole purpose of meeting their



respective needs. In this line of ideas, this institution, as representative of the State, carries out its intervention.

They highlight their importance in addressing each element within the framework of public order (social peace) and propose the degree of dynamism between the institutions and the parties involved in the management of socio-environmental conflicts, in which solutions are proposed and from these solutions an important feedback is generated for future escalation of social conflicts. In this order of ideas, when this proposal is taken into account, there is a leading and important incidence of the components of socio-environmental conflict management in the search for maintaining public order and the generation of economic development both in the State and in the communities involved. By way of illustration, the following table Figure 6 summarizes the socio-environmental conflicts registered in the period August 2019-August 2020:

Returning to the statement of revealing the importance of the different approaches in the literature review of the various authors in the field of socio-environmental conflicts, it is clear that these represent sources of feedback for optimization and dynamic strengthening of the management of these socio-environmental conflicts as a way of managing them in order to maintain and improve social peace with the purpose of generating the desired economic development for the States and their communities.

On the documentation determined and analyzed, very important information has been obtained from each of the referenced publications and the knowledge acquired has managed to address critical situations for the development of how to articulate for the development of socio-environmental conflict management in order to achieve economic development.

A situation reiterated in the literature of various authors, in relation to the management of socio-environmental conflicts, is that they have a major point of origin in the existing differences between the communities or peasant societies and the corporations dedicated to the exploitation of natural resources.

Rivas (2018), defines social conflict as that manifestation in which social actors have different interests and this position is included in the analyzed literature, in such a way that Harahap et al. (2018), Truntsevsky et al. (2018), and also, Dordevic et al. (2017), manifested an analogous conceptualization, but the resolution of this is from a different optics each one.

Also, there is diversity in the literature addressed by various authors consulted regarding the importance of the elements of social conflict management. That is to say, not many authors have been evidenced that perform this type of breakdown, considering how relevant it can mean to make an analysis in an atomized form of social conflict. It should be noted that Cárdenas (2017) proposed

in his article that institutional legacies and a dynamic participation of civil society are key elements to understand the process in the management of social conflict and that these elements will help to understand the challenges of the State for the management of conflicts in various regions or areas of influence.

A diversity of literature related to the management of socio-environmental conflicts and their impact on economic development has been found, however, there are epistemological gaps noted in this article. In this sense, it has not been noted an important emphasis in the literature of the authors that, a way to avoid the escalation of social conflicts in general and their escalation to the detriment of the development of the States is to suggest or propose a real and effective training to the actors that are part of a social conflict, proposing gestures of trust and strengthening of dialogue.

## 5. Conclusions

There is a diversity of literature by authors on the management of socio-environmental conflicts, however, the States have not been able to contain the increase or escalation of such conflicts and are not considering a more direct participation of the increasingly impoverished communities. This means that less developed States, such as Peru and most Latin American countries, do not take history into account and consequently there is no adequate feedback, which means continuing to make the wrong political, social, cultural and economic decisions, to the detriment of economic development and an increase in socio-environmental conflicts. In this sense, an efficient interaction between public and private institutions involved in the prevention of socio-environmental conflicts will represent an ideal starting point for sustainable development for the State and its people.

In this sense, it follows that:

The intervention of government institutions in the framework of socio-environmental conflict management has not been able to reduce the social gap with the communities that have a direct influence on the exploitation of natural resources. The lack of integration of actions among governmental institutions as a strategy for a common solution in the area of socio-environmental conflict management has led to the escalation of social conflicts to the detriment of economic development. The issue of conflict prevention is often raised, however, there is no suggestion of optimal training of the actors involved in a socio-environmental conflict.

The state through its institutions and the companies that exploit natural resources have not been taking into account the communities in the areas of influence and it is urgent to specify new terms in the contracts for these projects.

In the absence of efficient management of socio-environmental conflicts, peasant communities have the perception that the State and its system do not benefit them.

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