



About the Project

This research explores the socioterritorial conflicts that the Interoceanic Corridor infrastructure project generates with particular focus on security-related impacts. The Interoceanic Corridor of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec is one of the major strategic infrastructure initiatives of the current Mexican government, along with the Mayan Train, the Dos Bocas refinery and the Santa Lucía airport. It has been promoted as a multimodal road and rail transportation corridor that will link the Gulf of Mexico with the Pacific Ocean. It is projected as a viable alternative to the Panama Canal, for the benefit of global corporate trade, which intends to speed up and amplify the circulation of goods and products and thereby simultaneously stimulate the local economy.



Key Findings

- **Lack of & Quality of Information:** This research found widespread discontent regarding the information about the Interoceanic Corridor infrastructure project that was disseminated by state agencies. Local residents felt they received more adequate and reliable information through social networks or civil society organisations.
- **Consultation & Participation:** Whilst a series of information events regarding the project was carried out by government agencies, in 2019 and 2020 especially, there were reports of procedural flaws, violations, and exclusions of rights holders. Thus, these events cannot count to fully comply with the ILO standards for Indigenous consultations according to C169.
- **Lack of or Limited Benefits:** There was a strong sense among a large part of the population in the Isthmus region that there would not be any concrete benefits for them from the project. Local business owners and unions with connections to the political elite were seen as principal future beneficiaries.
- **Negative Impacts:** There was a diverse range of negative impacts that were already experienced by some residents, among them eviction and displacement, loss of livelihood resulting from removal of vegetation, and disruptions of herding schemes through the construction work.
- **Conflicts & Division:** A range of conflicts have emerged between different population groups, some to do with access to work or supplier contracts, and others with disputes over changes of land use, the latter leading to the most serious clashes.
- **Insecurity & Repression:** Even in its initial stage, the infrastructure project has caused security-related impacts among particular communities and actors. In particular, oppositional actors and social movement leaders suffered from verbal and physical threats, as well as rights violations.
- **Fearful Future Impacts:** There were fears around the social, cultural, economic and environmental changes that this infrastructure project will entail. Among them were, in particular, an industrialisation and urbanisation of the region, which could lead to contamination and water scarcity, an increase in extractive megaprojects, and possibly even to cultural extinction of Indigenous populations.
- **Previous Historic, Socioterritorial & Environmental Grievances:** Different communities have existing, previous and historic grievances that they want addressed and remedied before agreeing to a new development project. These include oil spills, contamination from sulphur-mine waste, untreated wastewaters from a refinery, and loss of land and displacement resulting from past infrastructure projects.
- **Desired Infrastructures & Community Visions:** Respondents expressed a range of desired infrastructures and community visions. Among them were, in particular, a desire for improved basic and agricultural infrastructure, but also investment into health, education and housing fit for climate change. Overall, there was a strong aspiration to establish infrastructures that allow stewardship (of nature) and care (for others).

Infrastructures make, unmake and remake worlds. Infrastructures are not just material structures placed into the landscape, but they profoundly alter communities, their social makeup, relations and natural environment. This research aims to gain new perspectives on infrastructures themselves and possible alternative, less intrusive structures that allow the sustenance of life.

Policy Recommendations

- Make all project-relevant information available to the public on a single website, in order to generate trust. Enhance the accessibility of information materials by considering the particular needs of women, remote rural populations, Indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples and illiterate individuals.
- Consult communities from the initial stage of infrastructure planning through community analyses (*diagnósticos comunitarios*) and elaboration of life plans (*planes de vida*).
- Avoid community division and social decomposition by all means, as social cohesion has direct impacts on security. Instead, strengthen cultural identity, social and political organisation and established forms of reciprocity of Indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples and peasants.
- Women are largely excluded from (both traditional and state) decision-making institutions. Ensure that women's visions, desires and needs regarding their work and life plans are consulted and considered for the intended infrastructure project.
- Prioritise basic infrastructures (water, electricity, local roads), and promote the construction of traditional and climate-adapted housing that integrates contemporary living with land-based livelihoods.
- Food sovereignty and health are big topics for communities in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Adhere to community demands in relation to the promotion of traditional food production and medical systems.
- Stop all criminalising pronouncements and measures against oppositional actors. Instead, make sincere efforts of conflict resolution and mitigation of negative impacts with the affected parties and interest groups.
- Address and eliminate established structures of corruption and extreme inequality before implementing infrastructure projects.
- Address and correct previous historic, territorial and environmental grievances before realising an infrastructure project in a region.
- Plan and realise micro instead of mega or macro projects that are designed and driven by the communities themselves, and respond to their desires and needs.
- Adapt or erase parts of national legislation that are in conflict with or contradict the self-determination and autonomy of Indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples.

Based at:



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Take-Away Point

Community infrastructures have the greatest chances of acceptance and sustainability. As genuine community infrastructure, we understand those that are designed, realised and maintained by the community, and of which the entire community benefits. Community infrastructures, based on diverse social, cultural and economic life projects, can enhance humanity's overall resilience in the face of climate change.

Further Information

For updates on this research and more information on infrastructures please check the project website.

Website:
<https://infrastructure-reworldings.com/>

Contact the Researcher

Dr Susanne Hofmann
Latin America & Caribbean Centre
London School of Economics
s.hofmann@lse.ac.uk

Website:
<https://www.lse.ac.uk/lacc/people/susanne-hofmann>