



WAGENINGEN
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH

Struggles for justice in contested riverine territories of the Ecuadorian Amazon rainforest

Country: Ecuador, Amazon rainforest

Host institute: It is up to the Phd researcher

Online possible: No



Project description

The Ecuadorian Amazon rainforest is one of the most biodiverse regions on planet Earth. In recent years, however, it has been increasingly affected by hydropower developments. More than 400 dams have been built in the last ten years alone, as Ecuador goes through the so-called green energy transition. Many of these projects are met with resistance by local and Indigenous communities, claiming violations against Indigenous rights and against the Rights of Nature. This research project takes place on the Pusuno River, which has been seriously affected by a hydroelectric dam, and in connection with the Piatúa River, another river that is threatened by a hydroelectric dam. Surprisingly, the communities of the Pusuno and the Piatúa (Kichwa communities) don't know each other. This project will focus on creating spaces for the communities of the two rivers to meet and build bridges, potentially joining efforts in their resistance against these processes of non-consensual hydro-extractivism.

Central questions are:

How did the dam construction process in the Pusuno River take place, and how have the local human and more-than-human communities of the river been affected since then?

How can scholars and allies facilitate bridge-building across the communities of the Pusuno and Piatúa Rivers?

Methodology: Participatory action research and ethnographic methods (participant observation, informal conversations, semi-structured interviews, audiovisual material)

Expected outcomes: to better understand what the impacts of the dam on the Pusuno River have been for the local communities, for the biodiversity of the river, and for the river itself; and to help connect and build bridges between the communities of the Pusuno and the Piatúa rivers.

Project details

Group: Water Resources Management (WRM)

Project type: MSc Thesis

Begin date: April 2024 (preparatory phase) September 2024 (Fieldwork)

End date: March 2025

Requirements: student must speak Spanish and be sensitive and attentive to cultural differences and power dynamics inherent to research processes.

Contact

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Examiners: Rutgerd Boelens, Jaime Hoogesteger.

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