



Research Group MEGA



Mobilization, Extractivism,  
and Government Action

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# Pushing the Envelope? Mega-Projects, Contentious Action, and Change

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## Introduction

This paper introduces Research Group Mega's (RGM) investigative program. It is the product of intense, focused discussions of an initial draft during workshops held at the Center for Inter-American Policy and Research, Tulane University, November 4-5, 2016 and LASA 2017, April 29-May 1, Lima, Peru. We hope it will be the beginning of a fruitful line of broad discussion and inquiry.

The proliferation of protest (and contentious action more broadly) to mega projects – especially in relation expanding extractivism since the 1990s – has attracted growing attention among scholars, policy makers, and business circles (Arsel, Hogenboom, and Pellegrini 2016). Most research focuses on local resistance movements and associated campaigns in relation to their origins, trajectories, and impact on the project they oppose, i.e., whether it was stopped, delayed, or did it move forward (McAdam and Schaffer Boudet, 2012, Delamaza, Maillet, and Martínez 2016, Maillet 2016). Another prominent line of research examines the effectiveness of mechanisms that mitigate local protest, principally community consultation and compensation (Walter and Urkidi; Falletti and Riofrancos, 2015).

The focus on the local leaves an important question relatively unaddressed. What impact, if any, does the proliferation of contentious action against mega-development projects, such as mines, dams, and extensive capital-intensive agribusiness have on national policies and governmental institutional change?<sup>2</sup> We refer specifically to big projects with local costs that generate protest or contentious action more broadly. Through this work, we wish to contribute to an emerging literature on the subject of the policy and institutional consequences of contentious action.

We are all familiar with the fact that a prominent feature of contemporary development policy in Latin America since the 1990s, and especially since the 2000s, has been the intensification of natural resource extraction. This trend holds for countries where the state plays a prominent role in economic development as well as for countries that continue to rely more heavily on private enterprise.

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<sup>2</sup> The work being done on the criminalization of protest is an exception to this observation (de Castro, Hogenboom, and Baud 2016). Workshop participants individually have begun research in this direction.

Whether governments are of the left, center-left, or conservative extractive activities fuel economic growth. Increased state revenue also funds poverty alleviation programs following a consensus developed after 2000 that extreme inequality in the region was no longer tolerable (de Castro, Hogenboom, and Baud 2016).

However, since the 1990s Latin America has also seen improvements in citizen rights, local community empowerment, and indigenous and ethnic rights. This influenced an upsurge in local resistance to intensified extractive activities by state enterprises and transnational corporations. Local communities in remote areas often vigorously resisted large-scale oil and natural gas projects, mining ventures, mega dams for hydroelectric energy, crop expansion (usually soya) and genetically modified organisms. They feared the impact of these projects would destroy their community due to negative environmental economic, and social impacts, cultural disintegration, loss of local autonomy, and physical eviction.

Social movement research on anti-mega project resistance concentrates largely on site-specific conflicts and campaigns to stop them. It has generated a wealth of case studies and many focus on struggles of indigenous peoples. They detail actors, interests, strategies, tactics, actions, and their impact on the fate of the project, the local community, and protest organizations. The stories they tell have become familiar and recurrent.

Given the nature of the conflicts, national and international environmental, human rights, and alter-globalization movement organizations frequently joined anti-mega project campaigns. However, although they have broader policy goals, in this issue area research generally focuses on their role in campaigns to stop projects. Indeed, frequently they are key coalition partners in successful anti-mega projects campaigns (Silva 2016, McAdam and Schaffer Boudet, 2012).

From a governance perspective national states, international organizations, and transnational corporations experience anti-mega project campaigns as disruptive events and an incipient literature on their responses has emerged. One strand emphasizes increased repression (de Castro, Hogenboom, and Baud 2016). Another stresses developing best practices for local community participatory mechanisms.<sup>3</sup> A third focuses on corporate social responsibility.<sup>4</sup> This literature tends to be highly prescriptive and/or critical with respect to official responses to community resistance. Few studies examine the policy and institutional effect (or its absence) of resistance to mega projects.

Research addressing these lacunae is important for several reasons. For democratic polities it raises questions about the responsiveness of government to citizen interests and preferences. This is especially relevant in times when most Latin American democracies, at least rhetorically, support the expansion of citizen, human, and peoples' rights. Social movements are perceived to be agents of change that raise issues generally excluded from policy agendas or that are only weakly

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<sup>3</sup> See: <http://www.un.org/en/land-natural-resourcesconflict/extractive-industries.shtml>, accessed April 24, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> See: [http://www.conocophillips.com/in-communities/Pages/default.aspx?utm\\_source=Google&utm\\_medium=PaidSearch&utm\\_campaign=Social-Responsibility&utm\\_content=Conoco\\_phillips&gclid=C1vPuvCLvdMCFZCDaQodQg8KgQ](http://www.conocophillips.com/in-communities/Pages/default.aspx?utm_source=Google&utm_medium=PaidSearch&utm_campaign=Social-Responsibility&utm_content=Conoco_phillips&gclid=C1vPuvCLvdMCFZCDaQodQg8KgQ), accessed April 24, 2017.

enforced. To the extent that they engage with politics and the policy process the policy consequences of movement are highly relevant. This is fertile ground for political science, political sociology, and political ecology.

Researching the policy consequences of social movements has relevance for sources of change in governance regimes. To what extent do they contribute to incremental institutional and policy change where environmental, citizen, human, and peoples' rights are neglected in the formulation of development projects or type of development more broadly? What impact do they have in situations where institutions are weak and policy is poorly implemented and enforced? Do many local protests contribute to positive or negative outcomes? Should the focus be on contentious action, social movements and protest or should it be on the broader context of the policy process of which contentious action is but one part?

## **Mega-Projects, Contentious Action, and Change**

### ***Project Scope: Policy and Institutional Outcomes***

Specification of the scope of policy and institutional outcomes was a major subject of discussion during RGM's workshops. The research group's conversations focused on the following questions and issues.

(1) What levels of policymaking are most useful to address: national, international organizations, subnational, or private, i.e., transnational corporations? There was a general consensus for national level policy and institutional change concerning megaprojects. Policymaking at that level sets the rules for an entire country, including, of course, subnational levels and corporate actors. However, decentralization can push policy decisions to subnational levels. Thus, to the extent that decentralization is empirically relevant to the policy process and as a locus of decision-making it should not be ruled out.

The international arena cannot be ignored either. Are international institutions and decision-making centers sensitive to escalation of resistance movements? Do they adjust norms, principles, procedures and policies? How do they affect national and subnational arenas? Relevant IOs and MDBs include the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the United Nations (International Labor Organization), and the Andean Community (CAF), among others. It is however, particularly difficult to analyze the impact of resistance campaigns and movements, including transnational movements, on them. More common is their inclusion as allies for contending policy coalitions. For example, such organizations have influenced governments to adopt legislation regarding free, informed, prior community consent (Hochstetler 2016).

In the end, it may be best to think of level (national, local, regional, transnational) as an open question. The key question being: where does the impact show up and in which direction?

What of corporate impacts? State regulation of corporations is certainly congruent with our focus. However, we thought that to be distinctive it would be best to exclude research that focuses on corporate responses to anti-megaproject

contentious action. This would apply to the literature on corporate social responsibility and newer work based on the observation that corporations rather than states are increasingly the targets of protest (Bosi, Giugni and Uba 2016). The latter may be true, but the goal of such protests is generally to stop specific projects not to influence state policy or institutional change, which is not our focus.

(a) What types of policy outcomes is RGM focusing on? First, and foremost, it wants to move beyond whether a particular project was stopped, approved or implemented. We agreed on a policy process approach to legislation, decrees, regulation, and (perhaps) rules and practices and constitutional changes. This approach permits researchers to consider a wide range of impacts on agenda setting (including shaping public opinion or public awareness), policy initiation, formulation, implementation, and feedback loops (Johnson Agnone, and McCarthy, n.d.). The literature has increasingly identified policy implementation as fertile territory for investigation (Bosi, Giugni and Uba 2016; Silva 2015, McAdam and Schaffer Boudet 2012, Andrews, 2001, Andrews and Biggs 2015). In short, the value of this approach is that it covers a significant variety of policy-related outcomes.

What types of legislation, decrees, and regulations? These include bans, moratoria, community consulting mechanisms often based on the principle of free-informed-prior consent, oversight and regulatory mechanisms (including environmental impact reporting), support for more eco-friendly development, and community compensation, as well as decentralization of revenues and environmental protection measures. Expanding judicialization of policymaking in some countries makes court rulings and their effect on policy (and institutional change) an interesting and relatively new arena for research.

(b) State-institutional change constitutes a second major set of outcomes of contentious action, which may, incidentally, be mandated by policy change (Andrews 2001; Teele 2014). Increased or decreased state capacity (budgets, personnel and expertise, services offered, pay, new bureaus, type of institution (ministry, agency, coordinating board, etc.). Infrastructural power – reach into territory – is also important. Examples beyond agencies that handle EIRs include ombudsman offices, boards and commissions, arbitration or mediating agencies, and environmental tribunals.<sup>5</sup> Improvements in state efficiency and efficacy are an important emerging subject for research (latest Politics and Society article on Peru by Dargent, Feldman, and Luna 2017). Last but not least, given changing patterns of state-civil interaction and contentious action, are new forms of inclusion or exclusion emerging that are relevant to policy outcomes? This applies to the discussion of community consultation and the role of courts, for example. By the same token, we believed it important to consider informal institutions or practices as well, although these would be even more difficult to research. Here it is relevant to point out that constitutional change or adherence to an international treaty (policy change as previously mentioned) may affect institutional change, as

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<sup>5</sup> Related to environmental tribunals, a movement is advocating the creation of an international tribunal for environmental crimes.

occurred in Ecuador and Bolivia with respect to indigenous peoples or the signing of ILO Convention 169, also affecting indigenous peoples.

(c) Other types of policy outcomes – or governmental action – of interest also exist. These include local development opportunities and incentives for non-traditional renewable energy sources. We should remember that policy outcomes could be geared to controlling mobilization or reasons to protest, such as guidelines to limit negative results of proposed projects.

(d) Categorizing outcomes was another major topic for discussion. Four suggestions emerged. One involved categorizing outcomes along two dimensions: solutions that respond to immediate campaign demands and solutions that address the root of the problem. Second, one might consider whether the focus is on policy outcomes per se at any stage of the policy process or whether the focus is on decision-making involved in policy change. Third, policy outcomes could be categorized on a temporal basis, short-term outcomes and outcomes that are more cumulative and that take place over longer time periods (more on this later). Fourth, outcomes could be categorized in function of their direction. Are they pushing the envelope in the direction of environmental and social sustainability, maintaining the status quo, or do they signal regress, as in criminalization of protest or weakening of regulatory institutions?

(e) There was a consensus against prescribing “modular” policy solutions (for example, a best practices list). Different ways of understanding the consequences of mobilization, what movements achieve, clearly exist. Again, which we focus on should be empirically driven.

(2) What policy issue areas/policy sectors are we considering? The usual suspects apply: oil and natural gas, mining, energy including mega dams, water, and capital-intensive agribusiness expansion. We are not focused on conservation (parks, ecological reserves, monuments) or deforestation. However, to the extent that mega projects impact them they may, obviously, be taken into account.

(3) In terms of policymaking arenas we begin with a preference for the country level. Subnational units, to the extent that they are relevant, may be considered in relation to the country level in terms of political-administrative relations. Typical country cases are Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina, Brazil, Central America, Chile, Colombia, and Peru.

Regional and transnational levels, however, cannot be ignored. Has the ground swell of protest against mega-projects had any effects on multi-lateral institutions and international organizations? Or are they mainly drivers of policy change at the national level?

A theme RGM participants kept coming back to was whether analysis should be movement centric or broader? Should we concentrate on localized protest events, specific campaigns (which involve a whole package of activities and diverse actors from the local, to the national, and international levels), or something else?

We return to this discussion later on in the Working Paper. For now, suffice to say there was significant support for a focus on campaigns. But analyzing political decision makers also seemed a fruitful avenue. Did widespread protest and protest campaigns have an effect in their policy decisions (Uba 2016, Biggs and Andrews 2017)? On a different note, McAdam and Schaffer Boudet (2012) argued that a movement centric focus was not useful. In their view, analyses of competing coalitions of actors relevant to a policy sector would be more fruitful. Policymaking is, in their view, a relational activity involving contending interests, actors, and their power resources.

### ***Analytic and Methodological Issues***

Publics, authorities, and activists alike consider social movements to be agents of change, which makes the question of outcomes one of vital importance; yet, ironically, in comparison to the abundant literature on the emergence of social movements, the question of movement outcomes is understudied because it is one of the most difficult aspects of movement to analyze. First, the very characteristics that draw us to social movements – their passion, fluidity, malleability, precariousness, creativity, and contingent nature – make it hard to establish their connection to observed changes with high degrees of confidence.

Second, it is tricky to evaluate the extent of change; social movements often involve diverse organizations with distinctive, multiple, and complementary demands that may change over time. Moreover, many effects are indirect or mediated because protest movements interact with third party actors and institutional contexts. It is not easy to establish the independent effect of social movements and to specify the conditions under which they matter (Johnson, Agnone, and McCarthy, n.d.; Soule, McAdam, McCarthy, and Su 1999). Related to this, movement consequences have a temporal element, with short term and longer-term effects (McAdam and Schaffer Boudet 2012).

Third, RGM workshop participants noted that much of the extant literature, especially that which is focused on protest campaigns, suffers from selection bias, only “successful” cases are generally studied. This weakens the robustness of factors that appear to be driving change. The corrective, as we all know, is to add cases of mobilization that ended in null results, and cases with no or very little mobilization.

### ***Movement-Centric Based Effects of Contentious Action***

Sidney Tarrow (1998) penned what has become one of the classic definitions of social movements arguing that they are collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites opponents and authorities. This definition, while useful from a political process perspective, is too broad to research their policy and institutional impacts. By the same token, some also consider the political process model it animates to be too formulaic. From our perspective, a tighter focus on campaigns or sustained mobilization offers fertile ground for research. It is the sustained engagement of networks of activists and

their organizations with authorities over time (and with a package of activities) that will have the most impact where policy is concerned.

A key challenge, then, is how to think about a great diversity of protest groups and actions systematically. Here, the broader concept of contentious action proves useful. This refers to episodic public challenges to government action (or claims for government action) by social actors who, when successful, affected the interests of opposing social groups and established authority (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001; Tarrow 1998; Tilly 2004; McAdam and Schaffer Schaffer-Boudet 2012). In this formulation the categories of actors that count is less rigid and the type of actions admitted are broader; thus analysis may focus on actions in institutional settings as well as protest and street mobilization (Andrews 2001; Andrews and Biggs 2015; Teele 2014; Skocpol 1992).

With respect to determining the territorial levels at which policy-significant campaigns should be studied (whether national, sub-national, or international) RGM participants reiterated that that is a matter for empirical research, an open question, not theoretically determined. National level campaigns frequently start out with sustained local mobilization. Thus, while the former may often be the focus of analysis, the latter is not ignored. The same holds true for the international level. It is not unusual to encounter a reciprocal link between the national and transnational levels. Often national-level protest and judicial action seeks the alliance of, and is backed by, transnational movements/organizations (Vía Campesina, churches, etc.), which then may lobby international organizations, which in turn might put pressure on national governments (Silva 2013, Keck and Sikking 1997).<sup>6</sup>

These reciprocal dynamics are not trivial. Demands emanating from different levels may be in tension and policy may not reflect local preferences. Thus, the scale of the campaign is an important consideration. Protest events, to the extent that they are consequential can then be placed in the context of a campaign.

The social movement-centric literature on the outcomes of contentious action has advanced considerably in the specification of the ways in which campaigns and sustained mobilization may have an effect. Their effect may be direct, indirect, mediated, or joint.

(1) Direct effects of movement tend to apply to the immediate short-term consequences and focus on the success or failure of movements to influence policy change based on their explicit policy demands. Gamson (1990) built a typology of outcomes based on responses by authorities regarding levels of acceptance of the movement and new tangible advantages. Acceptance referred to changes in the system of interest representation, including recognition of a new social subject and its political agenda as well as new forms of inclusion in the policy process. Tangible advantages (or gains) referred to changes in public policy on issues raised by protesters, such as the enactment of laws and increases in public expenditures. These dimensions generated a fourfold typology of results: (1) full response in acceptance and gains; (2) cooptation, meaning recognition without gains; (3) pre-

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<sup>6</sup> Thanks to Manuel Vogt for bringing this to my attention.

emption or gains without recognition; (4) collapse of the movement in the absence of gains or recognition.

The typology is useful. However, it generally only focuses on policy outputs as such (laws, decrees, regulations) and ignores the rest of the policy process. We can of course also analyze the direct effect of contentious action on other stages of the policy process, such as agenda setting and policy implementation.

(2) Many or perhaps most of the ways in which movement affect outcomes are not direct. Rather they are indirect, mediated, or joint effects. They may also occur in the medium or long term, indeed sometimes long after a particular campaign is over.

(a) Indirect effects refer to situations in which mobilization influences allies or public opinion that then independently, without activists' participation, influence outcomes. This is relevant for international organizations and multilateral banks too. They seem sensitive to public opinion, widespread protest, and negative reports. Subsequently they may develop "best practices" and push them on national governments.<sup>7</sup>

Compounding methodological problems in establishing causality, changes may not be evident until much later in time. Thus, it is also useful to consider a broader range of *policy relevant* political outcomes, such as, in our case, institutional change (Jenkins and Form 2005, Andrews 2001). The problem of specifying effects – both direct and indirect – is further complicated by the fact that many movements have multiple goals. They may have long-term transformative goals as well as more pragmatic short and medium term goals.

(b) Giugni (2007) proposed a joint effect model. This is a two-step model. He argued that movements often influence public opinion. Politicians, for electoral reasons, react to public opinion by formulating a policy that responds to the movement's objectives.

(c) Building on this approach, political mediation models hypothesize that movements that ally with institutional political actors have a higher probability of influencing positive outcomes (Amenta et al. 2010). For this to occur institutional political actors – state actors and/or elected officials – must perceive a benefit. The task for social movement leaders is to take action and organizational forms that change the perceptions of institutional political actors. They need to see advantages or disadvantages in the electoral arena, public opinion, and mission support in the case of state bureaucracies (Almeida and Stearns 1998, Jacobs and Helms 2001, Kane 2003, Carruthers and Rodríguez 2009). In a related analysis McAdam and Schaffer Boudet (2012), as do other studies including (Silva 1994, Orta-Martínez, Pellegrini, and Arsel n.d.), recognize that resistance movements that include

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<sup>7</sup> This is relevant for the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, among others. The former, for example is conducting a consultation regarding guidelines for addressing issues raised by mega-project resistance. Additional promising areas for research include CAF and Chinese bank development loans, for example in Ecuador.

institutional allies stand a better chance of realizing some of their objectives than those that don't.

This approach lends itself well to contentious action and activists that rely on "insider" "outsider" tactics, meaning that they combine lobbying and direct negotiation with politicians and bureaucrats with protest. Paredes and de la Puente (forthcoming) and Orihuela and Paredes (forthcoming) have used this approach well in their analysis of the establishment of an ombudsman office and greening mining institutions respectively.

(d) Last, but not least, with respect to the specification of outcomes we face the question of establishing benchmarks for change. A key task involves determining the significance of political outcomes for the issue, a question not unrelated to the fact that social movements frequently pursue multiple near term, intermediate, and long term, perhaps transformative, goals. For example a movement may succeed in influencing public opinion that puts an issue on the public agenda, perhaps even on a legislative agenda. But how do we assess impact if opponents successfully block further progress (Huberts 1989; Amenta and Young 1999)? By the same token, responsiveness by authorities may be largely symbolic politics (Gormley et al.1983). Moreover, movement members themselves may have very differing views of the significance of what they have achieved. What counts as effective for some when short-term goals are achieved may be considered negligible by others who keep their eyes on the prize of more transformative goals (della Porta and Diani 1999: 232-33).

Kolk (2007: 28) has developed a promising fivefold typology of political outcomes to address the problem of benchmarking based on their effect on the different stages of the policy-making process.

1. Agenda impact [which] refers to the influence of local movements on the composition of the political agenda.
2. Alternatives impact [which] refers to the extent to which movements are able to influence the content of policy proposals.
3. Policy impact [which] refers to the adoption of legislation or to other forms of binding political decisions caused by a social movement.
4. Implementation impact [which] refers to a movement's influence in accelerating, stopping or slowing down the implementation of public policies.
5. Goods impact [which] refers to the degree to which social movements influence the provision of collective or public goods.

This is a flexible instrument and real cases may well be a mixture of these types either in a single period or across two or more periods, which aids in assessing impacts. Moreover, Kolb argues that in order to evaluate if a movement had an impact or not it is necessary to establish a point of reference against which its impact is compared (Kolk 2007:23).

### *Political/Bureaucratic-Centric Approaches*

An alternative to movement-centric approaches is to focus on political or bureaucratic decision makers in the policy process. The basic question is whether contentious action affects their decisions and if so how? Was it significant in their calculus, marginal, not considered? Bosi, Giugni, and Uba (2016), in an edited volume that explores new directions in the consequences of movements, addressed these questions. Uba's chapter used survey research involving municipal-level politicians. Perhaps the design could be scaled up to national-level legislative representatives. However, it is also possible to envision a more interview, process-tracing kind of approach as well. It might be plausible to extend such approaches to bureaucratic decision-makers. Perhaps recent theorizing on the endogenous sources of gradual institutional change could be applied to anti-megaproject contentious action and its consequences (Mahoney and Thelen 2010).

Experimental methods may be fruitful as well. Recently, Wouters and Walgrave (2017) conducted one involving Belgian regional politicians. They presented them with manipulated news feeds of protests. The experiment showed that politicians were more likely to be influenced by protests when these were larger and when protesters demonstrated unity of purpose. However, key concerns dogging experimental methods remain. To what extent are decision-makers' intended or reported actions congruent with their real behavior? What are the aggregate effects of individual positions on the overall policy outcome?

### *Policy analysis approaches.*

Some scholars have been arguing for the need for a more explicit policy analysis approach (McAdam and Schaffer Boudet 2012, Bebbington 2016). These approaches recognize that policymaking involves competing coalitions of actors with varying power resources in specific institutional and political economy settings. They take into consideration advocates for and against mega-projects and their coalitions or networks. Politicians and bureaucrats may be on either side of the equation, depending. In the context of these relationships we gain a better understanding of the direct, indirect, mediated, and joint effect nature of the policy and institutional consequences, if any, of anti-megaproject contentious action.

The advocacy coalition framework (Sabatier 2007, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993; Schlager 1995; Johns 2003) models this general approach specifically for the policy subfield in political science. Its virtue might lie in that it zeros in on policy sectors, thus permitting a tighter focus on relevant actors, interests, and power resources.

(a) The unit of analysis is the policy sector, for example, energy, water, or air, which is made up of distinctive policy subsectors (a related unit of analysis), in energy for example, thermo, oil, natural gas, nuclear, hydropower, and non-traditional renewable sources (wind, geothermal, tidal, and solar).

(b) Policy subsystems are made up of all the actors (government, industry, and citizen groups) who seek to influence policy in that domain.

(c) Each subsystem contains at least 2 advocacy coalitions (loose networks comprised of government, industry, and citizen groups) that have preferences for distinctive policy outcomes. Policy systems and subsystems are nestled in a context of external constraints and resources.

(d) External constraints: Basic attributes of the problem area (good); basic distribution of natural resources; fundamental sociocultural values and social structure; basic political-institutional structure.

(e) External events to system: changes in socioeconomic conditions; changes in systemic governing coalition; policy decisions and impacts from other policy subsystems. Destabilizing external events can lead to the emergence of new policy subsystems or the strengthening of weak ones and vice versa.

The point would be to understand the impact of activists as a part of larger coalitions that include political and international actors in the formation of new policy subsystems and/or the strengthening of weak subsystems while at the same time hoping to diminish the salience of dominant systems and their supporting coalitions.

In terms of frameworks for analysis, discussants proposed a number of directions, or caveats. For example, we should keep in mind how economic structure influences or limits policy choice. In addition to starting analysis with campaigns, or politician/bureaucratic actors, or more general policy analysis, we might also start from the point of view of policy or institutional change and work our way back to whether contentious action had any impact on them, and if so, how?

Given the emphasis on large, better known anti-mega projects campaigns, working backward from policy and institutional outcomes might also be a fruitful way to get at the impact of more fragmented local movements on change. Interviews with policymakers could be fruitful here. It offers a means to understand their calculations of costs and benefits of existing policies or institutions, an approach that could be generalized to larger campaigns as well.

### *Expanding the Horizon*

The approaches discussed above privilege structural and actor centered conditions. What might be the role of ideas, especially ideas about development? From this perspective, ideas and cognitive mechanisms in general may restructure discourse, a fundamental building block for reaching political accords that guide policy. Indeed, some argue that crafting political accords is, in part, a battle over ideas. What type of development? If not large-scale mining or hydropower, what? For these questions, paying attention to ideas matters a great deal. Not only that, given the uncertainties surrounding policy implementation and effectiveness, firmly

establishing ideas in the discourse may be a very useful task. They serve as a benchmark and guide for future actions with which to pressure authorities.

Factoring in ideas leads to important research questions. Where do movements, politicians and policymakers, get their ideas? Under what conditions do ideas enter the discourse or remain ignored? How are they adopted or reshaped (translated)? How do they affect the content of legislation, the policy process more broadly writ, or institutional development?

Last, but not least, there is the question of norm and policy diffusion. States are not isolated units they exist in an international system. By the same token, movements have transnational dimensions. How does norm and policy diffusion across borders happen? What is gained and lost in translation? There is a growing general literature on the subject that could be fruitfully engaged with.

### ***Establishing Causality***

From the discussion thus far it should be clear that establishing causality from social movements is no easy task.<sup>8</sup> For one, the plurality of actors that may influence policy change makes it difficult to attribute impacts to social movements, which in and of themselves are complex networks of organizations that raise multiple demands and employ diverse strategies. Secondly, the close relationship among variables makes it difficult to disentangle cause and effect. This brings up a third issue, how other actors and conditions mediate outcomes.

A fourth major question regarding causality in the policy impact of social movements involves a temporal dimension. As della Porta and Diani (1999: 232) point out, social movements seek to bring about long term change. However, the height of mobilization and protest usually results in short term incremental reforms. This dovetails with a further issue: judging short term versus long-term goals. The evidence shows that movements tend to have greater impact in obtaining their goals in the early phases of collective action and less in later periods as pushback develops against their achievements. This affects the longer-term implementation and feedback stages of the policy process. By the same token, sometimes the early phases of protest lead to small concessions, which in turn incentivize more protests in the hope of obtaining greater concessions. So the cycle is sometimes protest-concessions-more protest-more concessions. This gives us another angle on how movements may have to adjust their short versus long-term goals.

We have a variety of methodological tools at our disposal to think more rigorously about the effects of protest and social movements, especially in relation to teasing out causal connections. Ecological data gathering on movements, their organization, strategy, goals, and political effects is the logical starting point for analysis (Amenta et al. 2010: 300). That data can then be applied to qualitative historical and small N studies that are especially useful for understanding causal relationships (Mahoney 2008). In these studies we should pay careful attention to the politics of the policymaking process and employ process tracing to establish

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<sup>8</sup> For a more extended discussion of the points discussed below see della Porta and Diani 1999, and Amenta et al. 2010.

connections between causes (movements, protest, and others) and effects.<sup>9</sup> Analysis must show that (a) action altered agendas and plans of authorities and targets; (b) that challengers caused changes in the content of proposals by state actors and legislative representatives; (c) that influential legislators changed their votes on bills; (d) or that movements affected the speed or nature of policy implementation (Amenta 2006). Small N studies employing the methods of difference and similarity (or most similar systems and dissimilar systems) are especially useful for teasing out causal linkages in cases of mediated effects (Amenta et al. 2010: 301). Interviews with key actors and archival research (parliamentary debates and committee hearings, minutes of key negotiations, etc.) are useful here as well.

Quantitative analysis tends to dominate U.S. studies of the relationship between social movements and their political outcomes. Multivariate quantitative methods that include interaction effects are useful for analyzing the contingent nature of protest outcomes, especially for establishing the net effect of social mobilization (Bosi and Uba 2009). Several methods are useful for analyzing temporal dimensions. These include time series for individual cases, hazard-rate models for multiple case studies, and generalized linear regression models in cases where the outcome is continuous (Amenta et al. 2010).

Some studies have begun to combine quantitative with qualitative methods. Again, these have been conducted mainly in studies of U.S. movements, such as the civil rights movement in the United States (Andrews 2001, Biggs and Andres 2015). This leads to calls for more analyses that combine the two in order to more fully understand the complex causal relationships between social movements and the policy and broader political outcomes of their contentious action. Last but not least, social network analysis could prove useful for coalition approaches. What network connections are particularly influential for getting movement goals into policy?

## Conclusions

With its initial workshops, Research Group MEGA set out to carve out a research agenda on the policy and institutional impacts of contentious action around mega-projects since the 2000s. Having established the subject, our discussions centered on the scope of the project in terms of levels of analysis (National, subnational, international), outcomes (policy and institutional), and unit of analysis questions (movement centric, politician centric, policy analysis centric). The workshop advanced considerably in specifying the scope of these features of the problem. Perhaps the most consistent take-away point was the recognition that the policy and institutional impacts of anti-megaproject contentious action may be present in all of the aforementioned dimensions. Thus, research should be driven by where the phenomenon manifests itself empirically not defined a priori for theoretical or other reasons.

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<sup>9</sup> In thinking about the politics of the policy process we should also keep in mind Lowi's (1964) observations on the type of policy – distributive, regulatory, and redistributive – and expected levels of conflict, lowest for distributive and highest for redistributive.

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