

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

**Green Governance in South America:
A Comparative Assessment of Environmental Policies in Venezuela and Colombia**

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Abstract

Exploring the nuances of environmental governance in Venezuela and Colombia reveals a complex interplay of government actions, NGO involvement, and international influence. I draw on interviews with 18 key informants to understand how the countries' approaches to governance and civil society engagement differ, despite the similarities they share in facing environmental challenges. Venezuela's restrictive policies towards NGOs and constrained international cooperation contrast with Colombia's more inclusive strategies and robust international support. However, the findings also highlight complexities within each country's approach, seeing as Venezuela has found ways to involve local governments and NGOs in grassroots environmental initiatives to fill the gaps left by policy inaction, while Colombia faces institutional challenges when it comes to addressing the disconnect between policy formulation and on-the-ground action. Based on these findings, I provide policy recommendations aimed at enhancing collaborative frameworks between governments, NGOs, and local communities. This approach looks to both address current environmental challenges and also establish a foundation for future sustainability efforts.

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I. Introduction

In the realm of global governance, environmental policy has become an increasingly pressing concern, transcending national boundaries and calling attention to the intricate interplay between government structures, climate investment strategies, and policy effectiveness. This is evident in the cases of Venezuela and Colombia, two neighboring Latin American countries facing similar environmental challenges yet taking divergent paths in regards to their policy responses. As a result, the question of why and how these policy variations emerged has become of critical importance in understanding each nation's approach to environmental governance. Although existing literature may provide insights into individual aspects of environmental policy in these countries, a comparative case study is needed to reveal how the countries' approaches interact and influence each other.

In a time defined by the challenges of climate change and ecological sustainability, the decisions made by countries in creating and implementing environmental policies reverberate far beyond their borders. The rise in global temperatures, driven primarily by human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation, has triggered a cascade of destructive impacts. Extreme weather events, including hurricanes, droughts, floods, and wildfires, have become more frequent and severe, leading to widespread displacement of populations, loss of biodiversity, and destruction of critical infrastructure (Shivanna, 2022). Unfortunately, the disproportionate burden of these consequences falls on vulnerable communities with limited resources and adaptive capacity (Islam & Winkel, 2017). Through their unique environmental and socio-economic contexts, Venezuela and Colombia serve as microcosms of this global issue. This comparative analysis offers insights that extend beyond the countries' immediate contexts,

shaping discussions surrounding the efficacy of government structures, investment decisions and the acquisition of multilateral climate funds.

This analysis revolves around a central research question regarding the relationship between governmental framework and policy effectiveness, as represented by the level of carbon emissions generated by each of the two South American countries. The urgency of this topic is underscored by the critical need for nations to mobilize resources in order to address the escalating environmental crisis, making this investigation not just an academic case study but also a vital contribution to the ongoing global dialogue on sustainable development.

Drawing on 18 interviews with experts in the fields of environmental policy, government, and climate finance, this paper will first outline the governmental structures of Venezuela and Colombia, followed by an examination of their respective investment strategies in environmental initiatives and an assessment of the effectiveness of these policies. The study culminates in a discussion regarding the potential for obtaining climate funds from multilateral organizations, ultimately offering policy recommendations for future initiatives.

This project's comparative case study approach bridges gaps in the existing literature by offering a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing policy outcomes in Latin America. By evaluating the interconnections between government structures, investment frameworks, and policy effectiveness, this comparative analysis contributes to an in-depth comprehension of the complexities surrounding environmental governance. This paper not only seeks to add to existing literature regarding the role of government in shaping environmental policy (Kulin & Johansson, 2019; Salvador & Sancho, 2021), but also offers a new context-specific understanding of environmental governance in Venezuela and Colombia in order to pave the way for future research policy interventions.

The decision to compare Venezuela and Colombia within the context of environmental governance is fundamentally grounded in their shared ecological landscapes and differing political contexts, thus offering a unique lens through which to examine how each country's distinct political and economic backdrop shapes their environmental policy and conservation efforts. Both nations share the Andes mountains and portions of the Amazon rainforest, areas renowned for their rich biodiversity and ecological significance. These shared natural ecosystems present a compelling backdrop for analyzing how each nation navigates environmental conservation amidst diverse challenges. Venezuela has experienced considerable political instability and economic challenges in recent years, which have had profound impacts on its environmental governance and policy-making. In contrast, Colombia has demonstrated a political evolution that, despite its own set of challenges, has increasingly embraced environmental sustainability, supported by active civil society participation and a more stable policy environment. These varying contexts not only emphasize the complex interplay between political governance and environmental policy but also offer insights into the mechanisms through which countries with rich biodiversity navigate the pressing challenges of conservation and sustainability amidst differing political realities.

The findings from this comparative analysis reveal a divergence in environmental governance between Venezuela and Colombia, which is significantly impacted by their varying political and economic dynamics. Venezuela's struggle with political upheaval and economic distress has greatly impeded its environmental governance, leading to a restrictive operational environment for NGOs and a notable disconnect between governmental initiatives and expert advice. On the other hand, Colombia's commitment to environmental sustainability is evident in its robust policy framework and the active involvement of civil society, though challenges in

policy implementation persist due to institutional capacity constraints. Drawing on these insights, I present recommendations for fostering stronger government-community relationships and institutionalizing the involvement of diverse stakeholders in environmental decision-making processes. These strategies, coupled with cross-national collaboration, are pivotal for enhancing the efficacy of environmental governance and advancing sustainable development in the region.

II. Background

The environmental politics of Venezuela and Colombia, set against the backdrop of Latin America's diverse ecological landscape, present a complex interplay of historical, governmental, and international forces. As nations possessing rich natural resources and facing pressing environmental challenges (Rendon et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Zapata & Agudelo, 2021), both countries have established distinct paths in their approach to environmental governance and policy implementation. To understand this divergence, it is necessary to explore and establish historical developments and the role of governmental structures in shaping their distinct environmental policies.

An Introduction to Environmental Politics in Latin America

Latin American environmentalism primarily emphasizes the need for balance between economic development and biodiversity conservation (Romero et al., 2012; Grau & Aide, 2008). Many countries in the region have generated economies that are highly dependent on the exploitation of natural resources, such as agriculture, forestry, and fisheries (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2023). As a result, environmental politics raises issues related to the roles of powerful actors, including the state, the elite, and corporations. These actors interact in ways that shape discourses and practices related to the distribution and use of natural resources. In fact, several case studies set in Latin American

countries (Barri & Wahren, 2010; Aguilar-Støen, 2015) illustrate how “entrenched elites have hindered structural transformations towards an environmental governance that ensures more sustainable and equitable production” and “how new governments accommodate their politics to the demands of the elites” (Castro et al., 2016, p. 139). Political interactions are heavily involved in the dynamics of environmental governance, and the strength of each nation’s democratic regime plays a role in determining how effectively each government will be able to enforce policy.

Governments play a central role in formulating and enacting environmental regulations. These legal frameworks establish the foundation for environmental protection and sustainable resource management. They are tasked with overseeing the extraction of natural resources, including minerals, forests, and water, to ensure sustainable practices and prevent over-exploitation (Baud et al., 2016). Another extremely important role involves managing the different interests and needs of all the stakeholders involved. Given the region’s diverse economic activities, cultural landscapes, and environmental challenges, effective policies must consider the concerns of local communities, indigenous groups, industries, and environmental organizations. However, weak formulation, implementation, and enforcement mechanisms in many Latin American countries hinder the effectiveness of this policy-making process (Peters & Filgueiras, 2022). Governments lack the financial resources and institutional capacity needed to adequately monitor and enforce the frameworks they establish. Corruption within government institutions can also undermine environmental governance efforts, as some regulatory bodies become susceptible to bribery or lack the autonomy necessary to effectively enforce laws. Ultimately, environmental governance requires strong and capable institutions that are able to

engage with other social, economic, and environmental systems in order to create sustainable and equitable solutions to environmental challenges.

Venezuela's Environmental Governance: An Overview

Venezuela's journey in environmental governance, characterized by early leadership and subsequent challenges, illustrates the complex interplay between resource dependency, political shifts, and effective policy implementation. Initially setting a regional precedent with the establishment of Latin America's first Ministry of Environment in 1977, Venezuela acknowledged the critical balance between exploiting its oil reserves and conserving its rich biodiversity (Dickinson, 1981). This move highlighted Venezuela's recognition of environmental stewardship amidst the country's increasing economic developments, thus establishing it as a leader of environmental governance in the region.

One of the most important pieces of environmental legislation in Venezuela is the Organic Law of the Environment, which was approved in 1976 and revised in 2006. This law establishes the country's commitment to sustainable development and the protection of its diverse natural environment. It serves as a comprehensive framework for regulating activities impacting the environment and gives the government authority to control industries contributing to ozone depletion and climate change. Similarly, the Law of Socio-Natural and Technological Risks, passed in 1979, prioritizes climate change and environmental contamination by mandating the creation of a National Plan of Adaptation to Climate Change. The Law of the Plan for the Homeland, enacted in 2013, is a follow-up plan to Hugo Chavez's National Project Simon Bolivar 2007-2013, and was passed with the purpose of serving as a strategic guide for policy and governance until the 2019 presidential elections. The law itself "lists 12 broad and ambitious goals in relation to climate ranging from elaborating both mitigation and adaptation plans, to a

number of objectives that pressure industrialized countries to follow through on international commitments and pay their ‘climate debt’ in the form of reparations to less developed countries” (Nachmany et al., 2015, p. 4).

However, a heavy reliance on oil and the environmental degradation that has resulted from extensive extraction activities has presented a series of ongoing challenges that come into conflict with the intentions established by the aforementioned laws. The economic necessities of state-owned enterprises, like oil and natural gas company PDVSA (Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A.), has resulted in financial gains being prioritized over environmental considerations (Teran-Mantovani, 2018). Furthermore, the transition from the aforementioned Ministry of Environment to the Ministry of Popular Power for Ecosocialism in 2015 marked a significant shift, reflecting broader socio-political changes and embedding environmental policies within a framework advocating for social justice, equity, and sustainability. This rebranding under the Bolivarian Revolution looked to critique capitalist development models, thus promoting a vision of sustainable and equitable development that existed in harmony with the natural environment (Barreto, 2020).

Despite these ambitious goals, Venezuela’s environmental governance has been hampered by economic crises and political instability, affecting the enforcement of environmental regulations and sustainable practices across sectors. Venezuela is currently experiencing one of the most severe economic crises in the world. A shrinking economy, a collapsed currency, and hyperinflation have brought about widespread poverty and a lack of basic services (Cangero, 2017). This has also produced an unprecedented social and humanitarian collapse, as the Venezuelan people struggle to find access to food, medicine, and adequate healthcare (Briceño-Ruiz, 2019). As a result, Venezuela’s capacity to uphold environmental regulations and

pursue sustainable initiatives has been critically undermined, thus impeding efforts to safeguard its natural ecosystems and tackle environmental challenges.

The Ministry of Ecosocialism in Venezuela, established with the purpose of integrating environmental sustainability into the country's socialist agenda, has faced significant challenges and criticisms regarding its effectiveness and impact. Despite the introduction of the aforementioned laws, the implementation and enforcement of these regulations have been significantly inadequate. This failure can be attributed to several factors, including bureaucratic inefficiencies, lack of funding, and a disconnect between legislation and on-the-ground expertise (Capdevilla, 2018).

In this challenging context, Venezuela faces significant environmental challenges that exacerbate the country's crisis. The degradation of natural habitats through deforestation, particularly in the Amazon, poses a major threat to the country's biodiversity. The oil industry, which has long been vital to Venezuela's economy, contributes to pollution through oil spills and affects both terrestrial and marine ecosystems in states such as Anzoátegui, Falcón, and Zulia. The government's mismanagement of PDVSA, coupled with inadequate planning and maintenance, has intensified the frequency of these oil spills and their impact on these ecosystems (Herrera et al., 2023). Many communities are also plagued by water scarcity and contamination, with inefficient waste management further worsening this issue. Additionally, illegal mining in the Orinoco Mining Arc, which is an area rich in minerals that the government sectioned off for mining activities, has contributed to deforestation, river pollution, and habitat destruction. Climate change compounds these problems, threatening Venezuela's coastal regions and impacting food security (Observatorio de Ecología Política de Venezuela, 2023).

Colombia's Approach to Environmental Policy & Management

Colombia's approach to environmental governance has reflected a commitment to sustainability and biodiversity preservation, shaped by legal frameworks, historical milestones and a variety of stakeholders. Since the late 20th century, Colombia has emerged as a leader in Latin American environmental policy, guided by the understanding that its rich biodiversity must be protected. The 1991 Constitution of Colombia marked a pivotal moment in environmental governance, since it was "characterized as an 'ecological constitution', as it recognises Colombian citizens' collective right to a healthy environment" (Garrett, 2021, p. 48). It emphasized the state's duty to promote sustainable development and protect natural resources, thus providing a constitutional foundation for environmental actions.

Following this, one of Colombia's landmark environmental laws, Law 99 of 1993, formalized the structure for environmental management through the creation of the National Environment System (SINA - Sistema Nacional Ambiental) and established the Ministry of Environment (now the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development). The SINA was designed to coordinate environmental policies across various governmental bodies and engage with civil societies as well as local communities (Zapata & Plata, 2022). The Ministry also centralized environmental policy-making and regulation, which highlighted Colombia's dedication to integrating environmental considerations into national strategies.

Another important part of Law 99 of 1993 "was the obligatory nature of environmental licenses, an administrative act before any activity that may affect the environment. Likewise, the principles of the Rio Declaration of 1992 were incorporated, and other principles such as the subsidiary rigor and pre-emption rules among authorities at national, regional and local levels were established" (Garrett, 2021, p. 49). Additionally, Colombia has actively participated in

international environmental treaties and initiatives, such as the Paris and Escazú Agreements, therefore reinforcing its commitment to global environmental standards and collaboration (Independent Institute for Environmental Issues (UfU e.V.) & Facultad de Jurisprudencia, Universidad del Rosario Bogotá, 2020).

However, the nation has also faced its fair share of challenges. Colombia's diverse ecosystems, ranging from the Amazon rainforest to the Andean mountains, are under constant threat from deforestation and illegal mining. While the government has made strides in creating protected areas and supporting reforestation efforts, enforcement remains a challenge due to limited resources and the presence of armed groups (Salazar et al., 2018).

The prolonged conflict in Colombia with these armed groups, such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), National Liberation Army (ELN), and paramilitary groups, along with subsequent peace processes, has had significant implications for environmental governance and conservation efforts in the country (Moore & Mpingo, 2023). The presence of armed groups has led to environmental degradation through several mechanisms. The exploitation of natural resources to finance conflict activities, such as illegal mining and logging, has resulted in deforestation, water contamination, and loss of biodiversity. Furthermore, the use of Colombia's natural landscape for guerilla warfare has often put conservation areas in the midst of conflict zones. This leaves protected areas vulnerable to exploitation and illegal activities (International Crisis Group, 2021).

Additionally, the 2016 peace agreement with the FARC, which had operated mostly in rural areas, created new problems. The departure of rebels from formerly FARC-controlled areas "provided an opportunity for other insurgencies and organized crime to assert control. With state authority in the countryside still feeble, those groups pushed back the forest to expand

enterprises like coca growing, cattle ranching, illegal gold mining and logging, sometimes working with legal businesses” (International Crisis Group, 2021). The FARC had also restricted deforestation in the areas they controlled, since the tree canopies helped them conceal themselves from being spotted from the air. But when they signed the peace agreement, they also ceased to limit land clearance. As a result, deforestation levels increased significantly (International Crisis Group, 2021).

Nonetheless, Colombia has shown leadership in addressing climate change in recent years, setting ambitious goals for carbon neutrality by 2050 and engaging in international climate negotiations with a focus on equity and sustainable development (Climate Action Tracker, 2022). Through policies and laws such as the 2021 Climate Action Law, Colombia aims to balance the protection of its rich biodiversity with the needs of its people. The law establishes a comprehensive framework for climate action across various sectors, and legally establishes the aforementioned net zero greenhouse gas emissions target for 2050 (Climate Action Tracker, 2022). Although, while Colombia’s legal framework evidently emphasizes sustainability, ongoing environmental problems in the country underscore the need for continued commitment and, more specifically, action at all levels of government and from the nation’s people.

III. Literature Review

Governance Structures

The literature on governance structures in Latin America, specifically in Venezuela and Colombia, reveals contrasting approaches to environmental management as a result of their unique social, political, and historical contexts. In regards to Venezuela, scholars highlight the centralized nature of the country’s governance, which, under the Bolivarian Revolution, reflects the belief that the state should lead the way in addressing social and environmental injustices

(Brewer-Carías, 2005; Hanes et al., 1995). This approach, while looking to consider environmental concerns within broader equity goals, has faced challenges related to political instability and economic crises, which have hampered effective policy implementation and enforcement.

In Venezuela, the case of the Arco Minero del Orinoco (Orinoco Mining Arc) showcases the central government's significant control over environmental policy and its implications for local communities and ecosystems. This mining project, originally intended to increase national revenue through the extraction of valuable minerals, has raised substantial environmental and social concerns, including deforestation, water contamination, and the displacement of indigenous communities (Rendon et al., 2020). Marfil et al. (2018) argue that the centralization of the decision-making process under the Bolivarian government has led to policies that prioritize economic objectives over environmental and social considerations. This case reflects the challenges of a centralized governance structure in balancing developmental goals with environmental sustainability and social equity.

Conversely, Colombia's governance structure is characterized by more of a blend of central and local efforts, with significant engagement from civil society and international partners. Studies emphasize the role of decentralized governance enabling innovative and localized environmental solutions, particularly in conflict-affected regions (Bencardino et al., 2019; Gómez, 1997). These studies suggest that Colombia's approach has facilitated more engagement with a range of stakeholders in environmental conservation efforts, although it is still important to note that the country continues to face its own set of challenges.

The implementation of the country's National System of Protected Areas (SINAP) showcases this more nuanced and localized approach to environmental management, seeing as

the system integrates national parks, regional reserves and community-managed conservation areas. According to Gómez (1997), this decentralization can enhance environmental outcomes by tailoring policies to local needs and involving communities in conservation efforts. SINAP's effectiveness demonstrates how Colombia's decentralized model facilitates stakeholder engagement, thus fostering collaborative solutions to environmental challenges.

Scholarly debates have focused on the effectiveness of these governance structures in addressing complex environmental issues, including deforestation, biodiversity loss, and climate change adaptation and mitigation. Proponents of decentralized environmental governance argue that it enhances the effectiveness of environmental management by involving local communities and governments, which are more familiar with local ecosystems and their specific challenges (Agrawal & Ostrom, 2001; Junge, 2001). Decentralization can also empower local communities, increase accountability, and ensure that environmental policies are more responsive to local needs and conditions (Ahmad & Talib, 2014). However, decentralized systems may lead to “reduced standards of environmental governance—a ‘race to the bottom’ approach [that results in] increased pollution and emissions” (Yang et al., 2021, p. 22). Advocates for centralized governance structures maintain that they combat the tragedy of the commons and prevent competitive deregulation by ensuring unified standards and policies (Luo et al., 2019); although, this centralization may dilute the sense of responsibility that local governments and communities feel towards their natural surroundings, since the direct connection between local actions and their environmental impacts is not as evident (Yang et al., 2021).

The debate also acknowledges the concept of hybrid governance models, which combine the strengths of both centralized and decentralized systems. This mixed approach can offer flexibility and adaptability, allowing for localized environmental management within a broader

national or international regulatory framework. This perspective acknowledges the complexity of environmental issues and the need for governance structures that are both responsive to local ecosystems and capable of addressing global environmental challenges (Baker et al., 2020).

Shifting from the broader debate between decentralized and centralized governance to the specific cases of Venezuela and Colombia highlights the need to tailor governance models to each country's unique circumstances. In Venezuela, there exists a need to strengthen governance mechanisms by enhancing transparency, stakeholder participation, and the effectiveness of its legal framework. In Colombia, environmental governance must deal with the complexities of post-conflict recovery, as the country looks to integrate environmental protection and peacebuilding and further development efforts (Bencardino et al., 2019). Understanding the nuances of the governance structures in both Venezuela and Colombia proves to be imperative when it comes to exploring the ways in which these structures impact the effectiveness of environmental policy and action in both countries.

Effectiveness of Environmental Policies

Different climate change performance indexes utilize different indicators to produce different results about the state of the global climate. To compare countries' contributions to climate change, some rankings only take into account objective measurements, such as the amount of carbon emissions produced, while others include subjective aspects, such as the effectiveness of certain environmental public policies. In regard to the emission of carbon dioxide, Venezuela falls on the lower to middle end of the spectrum with 2.8 tonnes of carbon emissions per capita in 2021. In comparison, Colombia produced 1.8 tonnes of carbon emissions per capita in 2021 (Ritchie et al., 2020).

In its current state, Colombia appears to have experienced a greater level of success in its efforts to curb climate change in comparison to Venezuela. In 2020, the Colombian government pledged to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 51 percent in its revised Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Subsequently, the country has taken action, such as establishing a green bond framework and integrating ESG principles into the nation's financial sector, to back up its intentions. With support from the World Bank and the Inter American Development Bank, the nation published information on eligible green projects and categories, as well as their performance indicators. The portfolio includes 27 investment projects, classified in six categories: water management, use and sanitation, clean transportation, ecosystem services and biodiversity protection, non-conventional renewable energy sources, circular economy, and sustainable agricultural production adapted to climate change (Mejía-Escobar et al., 2021).

On the other hand, Venezuelan businesses have yet to really champion sustainability. The adoption of eco-efficiency practices is not perceived as an incentive to improve competitiveness, and instead environmental strategies adopted generally aim at reducing costs or avoiding non-compliance sanctions and negative effects on the company image (Fernández-Viñé et al., 2010). In general, Venezuela has yet to view the issue of climate change from an ethical perspective, which has resulted in a large amount of inaction. As a result, "environmental integrity has remained at the level of laws and speeches, and in the best of cases, through isolated actions, yet it is still lacking coherence, as well as systemic and continuous action" (Febres, 2014). This attitude is evident in the country's most updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), which was published in 2021. While the government identified several environmental issues, especially within the energy sector, the report primarily centered around the fact that the

country is in dire need of foreign investment in order to achieve any sort of solution (República Bolivariana de Venezuela, 2022). Overall, the Venezuelan government's historic resource exploitation, particularly in the oil sector, has resulted in a lack of effective policy implementation; on the other hand, Colombia has been more inclined towards conservation efforts, implementing policies aimed at preserving its rich biodiversity, promoting sustainable practices, and diversifying its energy portfolio.

Climate Finance

Green economic growth in Latin American countries is a crucial goal that aims to balance economic development with environmental sustainability. Green finance mechanisms, including sustainable investment funds and green bonds, are a way through which nations can utilize capital in order to fund environmentally friendly projects (Bortz & Toftum, 2023). The World Bank Group (WBG) is the biggest multilateral funder of climate change investments in developing countries. More specifically in regards to providing financial support, the WBG focuses on boosting a nation's public domestic resources, increasing their mobilization of private capital, and supporting the use of concessional climate finance (Independent Evaluation Group, 2009). The Bank supports fiscal reforms, such as fossil fuel subsidy reforms, that increase the domestic resources geared towards climate action. It also provides technical assistance, both in terms of assessing the impact of public-private partnerships and helping countries implement carbon pricing. On the other hand, some of these multilateral climate funds, such as the Adaptation Fund and the Green Climate Fund, allow developing nations direct access to funding, as opposed to using an international intermediary (Chaudhury, 2020).

The relationship between financial institution efficiency, especially in regards to their investment in green technology innovations, and green economy growth in highly polluted

economies has been studied. Utilizing regression analysis and data extracted from several institutions, including the World Bank, the Energy Information Administration, and International Monetary Funds, researchers found that financial institution efficiency helps improve green growth in the long run, especially since this goal aims to disentangle economic growth from carbon emission production (Deng et al., 2023). Financial institutions, by prioritizing green investments, send a signal to the market about the feasibility and profitability of sustainable projects. These institutions also play a critical role in the energy transition process, seeing as “the pricing of green bonds and the cost of capital for carbon-intensive sectors of the economy is likely to depend on the way in which, and the extent to which, the banking sector prices transition risks” (Maino, 2022, p. 29). By effectively pricing transition risks and thereby influencing the pricing of green bonds and capital costs in carbon-heavy industries, financial institutions wield substantial power in pushing the economy towards more sustainable practices.

Government investment in green infrastructure is also impacted by public opinion. Researchers used multilevel analysis and data from the International Social Survey program, the World Bank, the International Country Risk Guide, as well as the Environmental Performance Index, in order to try to uncover a correlation between normative views about government responsibility and public support towards government environmental conservation spending (Kulin & Johansson, 2019). Ultimately, people who think the government is responsible for protecting the environment are more likely to support increased government spending on the environment if government quality is high (Kulin & Johansson, 2019). It is this relationship between government quality and effectiveness of environmental policy enforcement that this paper aims to expand on and examine through qualitative research.

Research Gap

While existing literature has explored various aspects of environmental policy in Venezuela and Colombia (Teran-Mantovani, 2018; Villaveces-Izquierdo et al., 2016), the political, economic, and environmental landscapes of both Venezuela and Colombia are dynamic and have undergone significant changes. Existing research does not adequately capture the current state of environmental policies and their evolution over time. Gaining perspectives from experts within the environmental policymaking field could aid in contextualizing the unique and country-specific challenges that both Venezuela and Colombia face in the development and implementation of effective environmental policies.

Furthermore, current research does not deeply delve into the challenges associated with the implementation and enforcement of environmental policies, especially in South American countries. This includes understanding the factors contributing to policy gaps, non-compliance, and the effectiveness of regulatory mechanisms. Investigating the extent of policy integration, institutional bottlenecks, and governance deficiencies is critical to an examination of the ways in which environmental policies are carried out.

IV. Methods

Existing studies rely heavily on document analysis and official reports, somewhat neglecting the perspectives of key stakeholders involved in the formulation and implementation of environmental policies. This research aims to address this gap by incorporating insights from interviews with experts from within the environmental governance field. I decided to use interviews as my primary method of data collection since the inclusion of first hand perspectives would not only add nuance to my findings, but provide outlooks I would not find through strict policy analysis. Environmental policies are also dynamic and subject to change, so interviews

provide a platform to capture evolving perspectives and policy shifts, allowing my research to reflect the most current and relevant information. Ultimately, I conducted interviews with 18 stakeholders, representing an array of expertise within the environmental sector, including directors of Venezuelan and Colombian environmental NGOs, members of international development banks, and academic professionals specializing in energy and sustainability.¹ (See Table 1).

Table 1: Interview Respondents

Interviewee	Position/Expertise	Affiliation
Jorge Concha	Director of Analysis and Technical Evaluation of Sustainable Development	Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean (CAF)
Carlos Sucre	Sector Specialist - Extractives (within the Energy Division of the Department of Infrastructure & Energy Sector)	Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)
Osmel Manzano	Regional Economic Adviser - Country Department for the Andean Group	Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)
Raymond Lodato	Associate Instructional Professor - Committee on Environment, Geography and Urbanization	University of Chicago
Joaquin Benitez	Director of Environmental Sustainability	Universidad Católica Andrés Bello (UCAB) - Venezuela
Oswaldo Felizzola	Coordinator and Professor - International Center for Energy and Environment (CIEA)	Instituto de Estudios Superiores de Administración (IESA) - Venezuela

¹ Some interviewees asked me to maintain a certain level of confidentiality when referring to their name and/or affiliation.

Bibiana Sucre	Executive Director	Provita - Venezuela
Vilisa Moron Zambrano	President	Sociedad Venezolana de Ecología - Venezuela
Antonio de Lisio	Coordinator	Alianza para la Acción Climática en Venezuela
Alejandro Luy	General Manager	Tierra Viva - Venezuela
Luis Cornejo	Director	Reusamas - Venezuela
Jon Paul Rodriguez	IUCN Species Survival Commission Chair & President of Provita	IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) & Provita - Venezuela
Carlos Casallas	Impact Investment Fund Manager	Fondo Acción - Colombia
Catalina Gongora	Policy Leader	The Nature Conservancy - Colombia
José Daniel González Calvo	Senior Sustainability Specialist	Asobancaria - Colombia
Lucas Buitrago Garzón	Advocate	Colombian environmental NGO
Anonymous Informant #1	Member	Colombian environmental NGO
Anonymous Informant #2	Expert in economic analysis of climate impacts	International research center

I also decided to conduct a comparative analysis between the two countries of Colombia and Venezuela because it allows for an exploration of how differing environmental contexts shape policy approaches. Although the nations share a geographical border, Colombia and Venezuela have distinct political and economic circumstances that have influenced their policy decisions. Colombia's relatively stable political environment, contrasted with Venezuela's

political and economic challenges, offers a comparative lens to understand how these factors impact environmental policy formulation and implementation.

More specifically, both countries also have significant oil reserves, but their approaches to resource management and environmental governance differ. Investigating how these oil-rich nations address environmental concerns provides insights into the varying strategies for balancing economic development with ecological sustainability. This comparative analysis enhances the generalizability and applicability of its findings, since this sort of research enables me to better understand whether observed outcomes are a result of specific factors or are more broadly applicable. By examining Colombia and Venezuela in tandem, I am able to more closely address the multifaceted nature of the challenges faced by environmental policymakers.

From December 2023 through March 2024, I gathered interview-based data. 18 in-depth interviews were conducted with professionals in the fields of policymaking, environmental governance, and climate finance. These key informants were selected based on their expertise, experience, and relevance to the research topics. I found an initial set of interview participants through personal contacts, which were facilitated by the professional network my parents had established in their homeland of Venezuela. From there, I contacted individuals via email, WhatsApp, or Instagram in order to schedule interview appointments. Interviews took place primarily via Zoom and were roughly 45 minutes in length. All interviewees were conducted in Spanish, with the exception of one. Interviewees were asked a series of open questions covering topics such as policy formulation, stakeholder engagement, and international collaborations. I used an interview script to serve as a guideline and allowed conversation to flow naturally². At the end of each interview, I used a snowballing method where I asked participants to share information about my research with other potential interviewees. With one exception, all

² This interview guide can be found in the appendix.

interviews were recorded with consent through software on a personal laptop and transcribed through [turboscribe.ai](https://www.turboscribe.ai), a speech transcription program.

Upon completion of the interviews and their transcription, I went on to analyze the data. I utilized a sort of content analysis, since each interview was slightly tailored to each informant's role and expertise. As a result, I chose to focus on participants' particular experiences and phrasing by bolding sections that I found to be relevant or insightful. After completing this initial read-through, I sorted these quotations and key concepts into four research categories: the role of government in general policy making, establishing environmental challenges in Venezuela/Colombia, the functions of NGOs, and financing environmental projects. These categories aligned with recurring themes and insights that I found to repeat throughout the interview transcripts.

While these key informant interviews served as a valuable research method, they also come with certain limitations. The selection of participants relied on purposive sampling, which exacerbates the risk that certain perspectives within the targeted fields may have been underrepresented or excluded. Participants may have also provided responses that they believe align with societal expectations or political correctness. This bias is particularly relevant in sensitive or politically charged topics such as environmental politics. However, the key informant method offers a host of benefits that outweigh the associated risks and challenges. These interviews provided an invaluable opportunity to access the perspectives and insights of individuals deeply embedded in their respective fields. Key informants often possess insider knowledge and expertise that can shed light on intricate policy networks and little-known mechanisms within environmental politics. This information is crucial in uncovering the reasoning behind policy decisions and implementations.

V. Findings

Through the use of key informant interviews, this comparative study of environmental governance in Venezuela and Colombia reveals several differences shaped by political, economic, and institutional dynamics. In Venezuela, interviews describe a governance system struggling with political instability and economic hardships, leading to restrictive NGO policies and difficulties obtaining international environmental support. Conversely, Colombia's approach is presented as being more inclusive and proactive, characterized by a robust policy framework, active NGO participation, and a willingness to uphold its international agreements; although, the nation continues to work to overcome hurdles in policy execution and institutional efficiency. The role of NGOs is pivotal in both contexts, as these organizations influence and implement policy at varying levels and in different ways. Interviews also reveal contrasting scenarios in multilateral and international support: Venezuela faces challenges in securing external funding due to political and economic isolation, limiting its environmental initiatives. Meanwhile, Colombia successfully attracts international support, benefiting from global partnerships that bolster its environmental projects, despite encountering challenges in fully leveraging this support to overcome local institutional and policy implementation hurdles. Overall, this comparative analysis of environmental policies in Venezuela and Colombia emphasizes the complex reality of achieving effective environmental governance.

Divergence in Environmental Governance

Environmental governance plays a pivotal role in ensuring the sustainability of natural ecosystems and the well-being of the populations. It encompasses strategies, policies, and practices aimed at managing environmental resources responsibly, addressing environmental issues, and promoting equitable access to a clean and safe environment. The trajectories of

environmental governance in Venezuela and Colombia depict contrasting outcomes, driven by divergent political, economic, and institutional dynamics. Throughout this series of interviews of key stakeholders in both countries, a complex picture emerges, illustrating not only the differences in their environmental governance strategies but also the shared challenges they face in achieving sustainable development goals.

In Venezuela, the environmental agenda has significantly deteriorated amid profound political upheaval and economic distress. Interviewees from various sectors voiced their concerns over the country's environmental governance mechanisms. Antonio de Lisio, a coordinator for the Venezuelan NGO Alianza para la Acción Climática en Venezuela (Venezuela's Alliance for Climate Action), describes the situation as quite dire, noting that "Venezuela is one of the most delayed, so not to say the most delayed since I don't have all the information, but it is one of the most delayed [countries] in terms of climate change communications, in terms of adjustment plans, and adaptation to climate change. Whatever progress made is really very poor in terms of climate mitigation and linked to this, there is a rejection of the participation of civil society."³ Many interviewees echoed this sentiment, emphasizing the fundamental challenges faced by the nation in environmental governance.

Specific issues identified by interviewees include a restrictive legal environment for Venezuelan NGOs, a notable disconnect between NGO expertise and government-led initiatives, and the government's hesitance to participate in international environmental agreements. In emphasizing the lack of collaboration between the government and civil society, several respondents mentioned the example of President Maduro's strategy to save the last glacier in Venezuela by covering it in a "geotextile blanket, in an operation that has raised criticism from

³ Quotes included from interviews with Spanish speaking key informants are translations from Spanish done to the best of my ability. Direct quotes in Spanish are included in the appendix.

scientists and environmentalists.”⁴ This initiative is symptomatic of a top-down approach to environmental policy that sidelines expert advice and community engagement, which, unfortunately, is not all that uncommon of an issue when it comes to the development and implementation of environmental projects in Venezuela.

Moreover, the Venezuelan government’s reluctance to engage with international environmental agreements, such as the Escazu agreement⁵, isolates the country from vital regional collaborative efforts to address shared environmental challenges. The agreement aims to ensure public access to environmental information and increase public participation in the environmental decision-making process. However, as a member of a Venezuelan environmental NGO pointed out, Venezuela’s refusal to sign the treaty deprives the nation of the opportunity to share in the collective knowledge and resources that are crucial for tackling transnational issues such as climate change and biodiversity loss. Furthermore, the government’s tight grip on environmental data hinders both domestic and international efforts to understand and address Venezuela’s most pressing environmental challenges. Another member of a Venezuelan environmental NGO pointed out how this lack of transparency makes it extremely difficult for scientists, researchers, and policymakers to develop effective strategies for environmental conservation and climate action. Without accurate and accessible data, it becomes nearly impossible to not only assess the impact of environmental policies, but also gauge the country’s progress in meeting its international commitments.

⁴ Singer, F. (2024). *A thermal cover at 16,500 feet: Maduro’s strategy to save the last glacier in Venezuela*. EL PAÍS English.

<https://english.elpais.com/climate/2024-03-05/a-thermal-cover-at-16500-feet-maduros-strategy-to-save-the-last-glacier-in-venezuela.html>

⁵ International Institute for Sustainable Development. (2021). Escazu Agreement Takes Effect, Enshrining Right to Sustainable Development.

<https://sdg.iisd.org/news/escazu-agreement-takes-effect-enshrining-right-to-sustainable-development/>

Despite these evident challenges in Venezuela's environmental governance, several interviewees also made sure to point out that the country does in fact have a pretty robust legal framework for environmental protection. When asked about the current regulatory framework for environmental protection in Venezuela, Vilisa Moron from the Sociedad Venezolana de Ecología responded “the legal framework is good, that is, the laws. In the last 20 years there has been an update of important laws such as the forest law (Ley de Bosques), the water law (Ley de Aguas), some regulations have been updated, even in the Constitution there are articles that take into account environmental rights.” The country’s dedication is also reflected in Venezuela’s established national parks system, as highlighted by another respondent, thus showcasing a structured approach to preserving natural spaces. This parks system currently protects 43 national parks and 36 natural monuments, covering a significant portion of the country’s diverse ecosystems.⁶ Evidently, in some ways, Venezuela’s commitment to the environment is enshrined in its legal documents, which, on paper, offer comprehensive measures for conservation and sustainability.

However, the implementation of these policies has been consistently undermined by a lack of institutional capacity and resource allocation. Several respondents highlighted how a lack of investment in environmental institutions has resulted in weak enforcement of environmental laws and policies. This deficiency in institutional strength and financial backing complicates Venezuela’s ability to uphold its environmental commitments, thus exacerbating the challenge of bridging the gap between policy and practice in Venezuela’s environmental governance landscape. The aforementioned national parks system, while respected in principle, also suffers from inadequate institutional support and funding, which makes it difficult to effectively

⁶ Instituto Nacional de Parques. (2019). *Parques Nacionales de Venezuela*. INPARQUES; Gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela. <https://www.inparques.gob.ve/cms/main/galeria>

manage. Furthermore, Venezuela's situation is further complicated by outdated legislation that neglects modern environmental challenges and strategies, such as climate change and carbon markets, illustrating a gap between the country's legal framework and its applicability to contemporary issues.

Conversely, Colombia has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to environmental sustainability, as reflected by its robust policy framework and ongoing statistical research. Many interviewees emphasized the country's proactive stance in passing laws and ratifying international agreements related to sustainability and environmental protection. In particular, several respondents from Venezuelan environmental NGOs looked to Colombia as an example of effective environmental governance and community engagement. Their comments indicate a shared understanding among Venezuela's environmental sector, which recognizes their own country's struggles and views Colombia's more inclusive and stable approach as a model that has proved to be more successful.

One of the key factors in Colombia's success has been the active involvement of civil society in environmental governance. Non-governmental organizations, community groups, and indigenous populations have played vital roles in shaping Colombia's environmental policies, advocating for sustainable practices, and participating in conservation projects. This approach allows for diverse perspectives to be considered throughout the process of developing and implementing environmental policies. By involving a broad spectrum of stakeholders in the conversation, Colombia has managed to create a solid foundation of support for environmental priorities that has also been able to transcend political changes. As Carlos Sucre from the IDB pointed out, despite recent shifts in political administrations with varying ideologies, as leftist Gustavo Petro became president of Colombia following moderate conservative Ivan Duque, the

country has maintained a consistent focus on environmental priorities. This level of stability has been instrumental in enabling long-term planning and the implementation of sustainability efforts, since it provides a degree of continuity that is necessary for tackling environmental issues that require sustained action over extended periods of time.

However, Colombia's environmental governance framework, while comprehensive on paper, has also encountered its fair share of hurdles when it comes to the actual implementation of policies. Throughout several interviews, these challenges were frequently attributed to the capacity constraints within the institutions tasked with carrying out these policies. Lucas Garzón noted that although "Colombia has a very strong legal tradition, that is we love standards, we create standards for everything and we also adopt international standards very easily", the country also "has an issue of lack of capacity in the institutions that have the responsibility of implementing policies." This observation emphasizes a broader problem that permeates Colombia's approach to environmental governance, as there appears to be a disconnect between the country's legal framework and its practical application.

Several factors contribute to this gap, including the challenges of acquiring the necessary resources and engaging with the stakeholders involved. This issue is further exacerbated by a lack of inter-agency coordination. The existence of two key entities—the Ministry of Environment and its attached entities, and the autonomous regional corporations—creates a complex web of responsibility without a clear hierarchy. As one interview respondent explained "although the Ministry puts out public policy, many corporations sometimes decide or simply do not apply them and also make decisions autonomously, sometimes not very technical, in theory, for example, autonomy processes should be consulted with the Ministry so that they have a technical check, but it is not done, in reality many corporations simply do what they want for

convenience or practicality.” This autonomy, coupled with a lack of resources, hampers effective environmental management, as there exists a lack of cohesive decision-making amongst the different entities involved.

Catalina Gongora, Policy Leader at The Nature Conservancy - Colombia, echoed this sentiment, and also emphasized how regional corporations and municipalities, tasked with developing and executing plans, find themselves navigating a labyrinth of policies that address topics ranging from water security and resource management to territorial ordering and climate change initiatives. The absence of a clear path to integrate these varied directives within specific territorial contexts, which come with their own unique challenges, generates a systemic issue. As a result, Gongora describes the evolution of environmental regulation as having “been a bit disorganized and looking to solve problems, rather than a comprehensive and systemic vision.”

This issue is further exacerbated by the disproportionate allocation of resources and uneven enforcement of environmental laws. Carlos Casallas from Colombian NGO Fondo Acción describes this imbalance as a result of the country’s centralist structure, in the sense that a few major cities emerge as focal points of policy and resource distribution, which leaves vast rural areas neglected. In these less-monitored regions, environmental regulations are regularly overlooked without facing any repercussions. Instances of illegal dumping and water contamination are not uncommon, and basic preventative measures, such as vehicle emissions checks, are rarely enforced. This lack of oversight and sanction reveals a broader issue of resource allocation and enforcement within Colombia’s environmental governance framework.

Further complicating this scenario is the unequal distribution of the environmental budget among regional authorities. One interview respondent cited studies⁷ that showed how “three

⁷ Díaz Salgar, M. A., Rudas Lleras, G., Suárez Vásquez, A., & Gonzalo Zapata Giraldo, J. (2022). *Análisis institucional y de las finanzas del sector ambiental colombiano, 2016-2020* (1st ed.). Foro Nacional Ambiental.

corporations accumulate 70% of the country's territorial environmental budget and the others have very small amounts left and have no way to permanently hire personnel.” This fiscal imbalance then forces non-governmental organizations to step in and provide financial support to underfunded corporations. In this case, the reliance on NGOs to compensate for these systemic deficiencies emphasizes a need for a more equitable distribution of resources and more consistent enforcement of environmental laws across all regions of Colombia, ensuring that the country’s environmental governance can effectively respond to the diverse needs of its natural landscape.

The divergent paths of environmental governance in Venezuela and Colombia highlight the importance of strong institutions, inclusive policy-making, and effective resource allocation for sustainable development. While Colombia has been able to demonstrate some of the benefits of engaging civil society and prioritizing environmental concerns, both countries continue to face challenges in policy implementation and coordination. Addressing these obstacles requires a collective effort to ensure that governance structures are not only robust on paper but also effective in action. Comparing the environmental situation in both of these nations highlights a need for governance that is adaptable, transparent, and inclusive in order to achieve lasting environmental sustainability.

Role of NGOs in Environmental Advocacy and Implementation

In the face of increasing environmental challenges across the world, non-governmental organizations have emerged as critical actors in the process of advocating for environmental protection and implementing sustainability practices. However, the capacity given for these NGOs to operate varies significantly from one country to another, influenced by legal frameworks, government relationships, and access to resources.

As previously mentioned, Venezuelan NGOs face a restrictive operational environment, characterized by legal and financial hurdles that stifle their effectiveness. The majority of Venezuelan respondents brought up the country's proposed Law on International Cooperation to support this claim. If the law were to be passed, NGOs in Venezuela would have to register with a new agency and then disclose their beneficiaries and the nature of their activities to the state. The agency "would also create a fund where all international donations are held and make the decisions about which NGO activities to finance."⁸ Interviewees emphasized how this law would pose significant delays for NGO operations, since the projects themselves and funding for these initiatives would have to be approved.

Another difficulty that emerges is the lack of structured spaces for NGOs to voice their opinions on environmental policies. Jon Paul Rodriguez, IUCN Species Survival Commission Chair and President of Venezuelan environmental NGO Provita, discussed the predicament faced by these entities and highlighted the absence of regular, systematic opportunities for NGOs to engage in the policy-making process. He noted how "for example, the government conducts a public consultation on a law, then it opens a meeting in some city in the country that invites everyone, all people, all institutions, all sectors, so in those spaces we [NGOs] can participate, but there is no function in civil society in that sense." This statement demonstrates a critical gap in Venezuela's approach to integrating civil society in environmental governance, seeing as the national government fails to harness the expertise and insights of NGOs when attempting to draw up sustainable policies and practices. Antonio de Lisio, from the Alianza para la Acción Climática en Venezuela, also brought up the lack of transparency and engagement with civil society organizations regarding a national climate change law that was being discussed in 2021.

⁸ Frangie-Mawad, T. (2022). *Chavismo's latest target*. Foreign Policy. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/09/25/ngos-venezuela-law-humanitarian-crisis-chavismo-caracas/>

Despite hearing about a consultation process in recent years, they found that no civil society organizations were actually consulted. Furthermore, no law was even drafted up, which indicates another discrepancy between governmental claims and actual execution.

The role of NGOs in Venezuela is further complicated by the political polarization the country has experienced, which has influenced the operational environment of these organizations, impacting both how they are perceived and how they engage with other stakeholders. A member of a Venezuelan environmental NGO described the divisive climate, suggesting that the actions of some NGOs, which have taken a strong opposition against the government, have inadvertently cast a shadow over the entire sector. A few other respondents also discussed the government's reaction and how this has led to a broad generalization where all NGOs are lumped into a single category of being thought of as directly oppositional to the government. This has made it significantly challenging for organizations that want to maintain a non-political, action-oriented focus on environmental issues to navigate their relationship with government entities and continue playing a role in the environmental landscape.

Nonetheless, despite national-level constraints, Venezuelan NGOs have adopted innovative strategies to promote environmental awareness. Reusamas is an organization that utilizes a foster care facility both as a base for recycling operations and an educational center. Luis Cornejo, the Director of Reusamas, explained how this model not only facilitates the collection and recycling of materials but also introduces environmental education to the local community, teaching various age groups, including the elderly, about the principles of reduce, reuse, and recycle. This holistic approach not only enhances the immediate impact of recycling efforts but also cultivates a culture of sustainability throughout the local community that generates a connection between individuals and their surrounding environment.

The innovative and resilient efforts of organizations like Reusamas, against the backdrop of Venezuela's challenging national constraints, underscore a broader narrative of persistence and adaptability among Venezuelan NGOs. Furthermore, while these organizations have historically faced hurdles in contributing to environmental policy and navigating a politically polarized landscape, recent developments hint at a slowly changing tide in government-NGO relations. A few interviewees have noted a shift towards increased government openness to collaboration in recent years. Alejandro Luy, general manager of Venezuelan environmental NGO Tierra Viva, described how the Ministry of Ecosocialism has initiated outreach to select non-governmental organizations, inviting them to various events and activities across different sectors. Ultimately, he explained that “the current situation is not the same as it was ten years ago, but it is not similar to what it was twenty-five years ago either”, seeing as previous political administrations had more open channels for NGO participation and collaboration on environmental matters.

In Colombia, NGOs have a more collaborative relationship with the government, as they are more involved in the development of policy and the implementation of environmental projects. This dynamic acknowledges the value of NGO contributions and highlights the role of civil society in shaping environmental governance. When discussing differences between environmental policymaking in Venezuela and Colombia, one member of a Venezuelan environmental NGO pointed out how Colombian organizations carry out research that is immediately considered by the national government when making policy. This approach not only allows for the creation of evidence-based policy, but also strengthens the accountability and legitimacy of these governmental processes, as it creates a more inclusive and participatory form of environmental governance.

Nonetheless, the role of NGOs in environmental advocacy and implementation continues to face significant challenges as a result of frequent changes in government personnel and priorities. Although Colombia's national government has done a pretty good job of prioritizing environmental concerns in general, the turnover of key officials often leads to a reset in agendas and priorities, thus disrupting ongoing projects and partnerships. Colombian NGOs create relationships with the Ministry of the Environment, only to find themselves having to readjust their strategies with every cabinet or ministerial change. As Carlos Casallas from Fondo Acción highlighted, the high turnover of technical staff and contractors within ministries and the central government leads to a loss of knowledge and momentum in environmental initiatives. Furthermore, though it could appear that a way to combat the challenges associated with changes in government and government priorities could be to reinforce the relationship between NGOs and local governments, local-level implementation of environmental plans faces its own problems. Casallas explains how a scarcity of knowledgeable and skilled personnel creates a significant barrier for local governments looking to create environmental plans that not only align with national priorities but also address issues more specific to their region:

“At the local level, you do not so easily get knowledge, talent, or people with the capabilities to formulate these plans. You get it in the big departments, in Bogotá, in Antioquia, in Atlántico, in Valle del Cauca, but in smaller-scale departments it is not so easy to get someone to help you write a good plan. So many times your plans are either disjointed or not robust enough or they do not have one, and they are not woven in a correct way to respond to needs and priorities.”

Evidently, there also exists the critical challenge of capacity at the local level, which compounds the difficulties posed by frequent administrative changes, making it hard to sustain environmental advocacy and effective implementation of projects across all regions.

In their attempts to navigate and address environmental challenges, NGOs in both Venezuela and Colombia have adopted their own strategies to fill governance voids, each adapting to their unique socio-political landscape. In Venezuela, where the political and economic crisis has significantly impacted environmental governance, NGOs look to forge stronger collaborations with local respondents. One key informant from a Venezuelan NGO highlighted the longstanding and positive relationship their organization has cultivated at the local level, particularly noting over three decades of work on Margarita Island where they have worked with the local office of the ministry, mayors, and the regional government. This local-level engagement exemplifies the critical role these organizations play in filling governance gaps, especially in areas where national involvement may be lacking or ineffective.

Colombia has strategically leveraged NGOs with international networks to enhance its environmental advocacy and implementation efforts. These organizations serve as intermediaries, bridging local initiatives with global resources and expertise. By utilizing these international connections, Colombia has been able to gain access to funding opportunities, knowledge, and technical assistance. When combined with a local understanding, the outcome is effective environmental strategies. Carlos Casallas from Fondo Acción emphasized how “this interaction between local NGOs and international NGOs is key because of that knowledge of the territory, knowledge of people, and knowledge of [local-level] problems.” Like in the case of Venezuela, this collaboration recognizes the critical role of local knowledge and partnerships in contributing to the success of environmental projects.

Despite these efforts within their domestic contexts, interview respondents made it clear that there seems to be a gap in cross-border collaboration between Venezuelan and Colombian NGOs. Members of Colombian NGOs recognize the barriers that are generated by the Venezuelan national government's policies, highlighting the difficulties that emerge when trying to establish a united front against environmental issues that spill over the countries' more than 2,200-kilometer-long border. Meanwhile, a few respondents that operate out of Venezuela suggested that there's a sense of unfulfilled potential in regards to environmental collaboration with Colombian organizations. Amidst these diplomatic and bureaucratic hurdles, there have been some attempts at collaboration via academic networks. Universities in Venezuela and Colombia have managed to establish some form of contact, though it remains indirect and less effective than hoped, illustrating the complexities involved with fostering cross-border partnerships.

The sentiments shared by key respondents reflect a broader issue: the lack of a unified approach to addressing environmental challenges that transcend the Venezuela-Colombia border. Despite sharing critical ecosystems, like the Guajira Peninsula, the Andes Mountains, the Orinoquia region, and the Amazon rainforest, collaborative environmental management between the countries remains unrealized within the current framework of NGO cooperation, with existing efforts often hampered by political and logistical barriers.

Multilateral Support and International Influence

The role of multilateral support and international influence on environmental initiatives differs significantly between Colombia and Venezuela, reflecting the broader political and economic conditions in each country. Venezuelan organizations face significant challenges in securing international financial support for their environmental projects amidst the nation's state

of turmoil. For the last several years, the International Development Bank's office in Venezuela has been closed and the CAF (Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean) has not funded credit projects within the country. Jorge Concha, CAF Director of Analysis and Technical Evaluation of Sustainable Development, highlighted these difficulties, stating "in terms of external financing, in recent years Venezuela, due to the issues of sanctions and the economic situation, has not been able to acquire external financing from the main multilaterals."

In this restricted environment, Venezuelan NGOs have had to look for alternate sources of funding. Currently, financing for projects in Venezuela comes from grants offered by other countries or private investors. This approach is a direct result of the Venezuelan central government's reluctance to engage with the international community, thus forcing organizations to explore other avenues of financing for their environmental projects. An example of such a project is Aves y Café, which is led by Venezuelan NGO Provita and funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This environmental initiative utilizes agroforestry techniques, which integrate agricultural and forestry practices to create ecosystems that are diverse, productive, and sustainable, in order to promote sustainable livelihoods and aid in habitat restoration. The program protects forests home to over 230 resident and several migratory bird species and supports new producers in adopting organic crop management practices, fostering reforestation and the revival of abandoned coffee plantations. Participants learn about developing coffee and shade tree nurseries, enhancing crop profitability through environmental certifications, and the importance of social organization for biodiversity conservation.⁹

⁹ Provita. (2022, March 24). *Programa Aves y Café de Provita llegará a 600 hectáreas de cultivos con enfoque sostenible y amigable con las aves – Provita*. Provita; Provita. <https://www.provita.org.ve/2022/03/24/programa-aves-y-cafe-de-provita-llegara-a-600-hectareas-de-cultivos-con-enfoque-sostenible-y-amigable-con-las-aves/>

Colombia, on its part, has also embraced the financial support offered by international and multilateral organizations. Several interviewees identified projects that have been funded by development banks and emphasized the way in which these external resources complement Colombia's domestic efforts in combating environmental issues. The Bicarbón Orinoquia project, funded by the World Bank, was established by a member of a Colombian environmental NGO as a prime example of this approach to international collaboration. This initiative, which also has support from the national governments of Germany, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States, aims to address deforestation and reduce carbon emissions in the Orinoquia region, an ecologically significant area of Colombia¹⁰. The project's focus on sustainable land management and conservation practices emphasizes Colombia's commitment to generating innovative solutions that address both socio-economic development and environmental protection. By drawing on this collective pool of resources and expertise at both a domestic and international level, Colombia is able to implement comprehensive strategies that it might not have been able to on its own.

This open stance towards the involvement of international organizations is indicative of not only an approach to environmental governance that recognizes the interconnectedness of global environmental issues, but also a broader institutional framework that facilitates this participation in international financing. Antonio de Lisio from Alianza para la Acción Climática Venezuela noted that “there is an institutional framework in Colombia, Venezuela does not have it, an institutional architecture that belongs to the central government and even to local governments, such as the government or the mayor's office of Bogotá, to participate in international financing.” This institutional layout not only allows Colombia to secure the funding

¹⁰ Proyecto Biocarbón Orinoquia. (2021). *Folleto Proyecto Biocarbón Orinoquia*. Proyecto Biocarbón Orinoquia.

necessary for environmental initiatives but also strengthens the government's active role in promoting environmental sustainability.

In discussing the funding and execution of environmental initiatives in Colombia and Venezuela, it also became clear that it is essential to understand the selection process for project financing. Interview respondents identified common characteristics that make certain project proposals more appealing to funding institutions. Projects that actively engage local communities in their planning, implementation, and monitoring phases stand out. This emphasis on community involvement emphasizes the fact that sustainable environmental solutions require support and participation from the people that are most directly impacted by these initiatives. Another critical factor is the potential for a significant level of impact, since funders are often looking for initiatives that can contribute to global environmental goals. Projects that can demonstrate a clear and measurable impact on conservation efforts, carbon reduction, and biodiversity protection are likely to obtain more support.

Furthermore, the size of the organization presenting the proposal sometimes plays a role in the funding decision. While this is not always a determining factor, larger organizations with a proven track record of successful project implementation and management may have an advantage in securing funding. A member of a Venezuelan environmental NGO identified this as a challenge, noting that smaller organizations or those newly established often struggle to compete with larger, more established organizations for limited funding resources. This issue is further exacerbated in places like Venezuela, where political and economic turmoil complicates the funding process. Smaller organizations, despite their potential of generating significant impact via community-centric projects, may find it difficult to demonstrate the level of stability and capacity for project management that many funders look for.

This comprehensive comparative study, based on key informant interviews, highlights the contrasting realities of environmental governance, the pivotal role of NGOs, and the varied impact of international support in Venezuela and Colombia. Despite facing distinct political, economic, and institutional challenges, Venezuela struggles with restrictive NGO policies and limited international support, while Colombia benefits from a more inclusive governance approach and stronger international partnerships. Yet, both nations encounter significant obstacles in policy execution and institutional efficacy. This analysis not only points to the divergent paths of environmental governance but also emphasizes the shared challenges in sustainable development efforts, underscoring the importance of collaborative, adaptive strategies and the need for strong, supportive frameworks to enhance environmental management across the region. As a result, this investigation serves as a call to action for both countries to bridge gaps in governance, leverage NGO contributions more effectively, and fully utilize international support to address the pressing environmental challenges that they face.

VI. Discussion & Policy Recommendations

Lessons from both Venezuela and Colombia emphasize the critical importance of stable governance, economic resilience, and institutional capacity in environmental management, offering valuable insights for future policy development at a national, regional, and global level. Learning from each country's unique challenges and approaches can help shape improvements to environmental governance. For instance, Venezuela's focus on engaging with local communities and Colombia's model of working collaboratively highlight how being adaptable and inclusive can help tackle environmental issues. These examples stress the importance of creating policies that cater to specific country needs while also considering a variety of viewpoints from different

stakeholders, such as local communities and international organizations, to develop effective and lasting environmental strategies.

Strengthening Government & Community Relationships

The relationship between government entities and local communities emerges as a critical factor in the successful implementation of environmental projects. In Venezuela, the focus on local-level initiatives, such as the Reusamas recycling project, presents a practical approach to combating larger, national issues. This initiative demonstrates how community involvement in recycling efforts can significantly reduce local waste and provide economic opportunities. These community-led environmental projects can benefit from local knowledge and foster a sense of ownership towards local ecosystems. This strategy not only capitalizes on the community's direct engagement with their surrounding environment but also elevates the role of local government in environmental governance. By empowering local governments to take part in addressing environmental issues specific to their area, an opportunity emerges to enhance awareness and action at the grassroots level. Particularly in Venezuela, where the national political and regulatory environment can be restrictive for environmental advocacy, leveraging local-level projects like Reusamas emerges as a strategic means to circumvent broader national constraints.

Given the government's current stance, the role of Venezuelan NGOs extends beyond traditional environmental advocacy to act as intermediaries that can bridge the gap between the community and government. They can facilitate dialogue, promote environmental education, and spearhead conservation efforts by leveraging international partnerships and support. Additionally, NGOs can explore indirect avenues of influence, such as engaging with local government officials interested in bolstering the environmental sector or utilizing digital

platforms to raise awareness and mobilize public opinion. These strategies aim to gradually establish a foundation for community-led environmental action that, in the long term, could foster a more conducive atmosphere for policy dialogue and change.

Furthermore, the Venezuelan context underscores the importance of resilience and adaptability for NGOs. By cultivating strong local relationships and building community capacity for environmental stewardship, these organizations can lay the groundwork for sustainable environmental governance from the bottom up. Although the current political climate presents significant challenges, a focused approach on empowering local communities may eventually lead to a shift in national policies. In the meantime, Venezuelan NGOs must navigate the existing landscape with creativity and persistence, ensuring that their vital work in environmental conservation continues despite overarching challenges.

In Colombia, a recommendation to institutionalize the involvement of NGOs and indigenous groups in the environmental decision-making process would look to address the disconnect between policy formulation and community needs that continues to exist. Formalizing the participation of these stakeholders ensures that environmental policies are inclusive of the diverse perspectives and expertise within the country. Establishing advisory councils or committees that include NGO representatives and indigenous leaders can ensure that a wide array of perspectives and expertise are integrated into policy development. Such formal structures would provide a systematic and continuous channel for these stakeholders to contribute to the shaping of environmental policies, enhancing the inclusivity and effectiveness of governance processes. This step would not only validate and strengthen the voices of these crucial actors but also ensure that policies are considerate of the realities of those most affected by environmental issues.

Moreover, Colombia should consider leveraging these advisory entities to fill in any existing gaps between policy formulation and the needs of local communities. By institutionalizing the involvement of NGOs and indigenous groups, Colombia can ensure that its environmental policies are not only comprehensive but also culturally sensitive and aligned with the unique ecological knowledge and practices of its diverse populations. These bodies could function as critical platforms for dialogue, consensus-building, and the co-creation of sustainable development strategies, fostering a governance model that is truly reflective of Colombia's rich environmental and cultural landscape. Additionally, the importance of incorporating indigenous opinions in Venezuela should not be overlooked. Similar to Colombia, Venezuela's indigenous communities possess unique ecological knowledge and have a vested interest in the conservation of their traditional lands. Including their voices in these sorts of conversations could enrich environmental strategies and foster a more comprehensive approach to sustainability.

Encouraging Cross-National Collaboration

The environmental challenges facing Venezuela and Colombia do not recognize national borders, thus highlighting the importance of cross-national collaboration for effective management and conservation efforts. Establishing neutral platforms for dialogue and cooperation can play a pivotal role in fostering shared understanding and joint action on transboundary environmental issues. Intermediary organizations, such as international conservation bodies, United Nations agencies, or regional environmental NGOs like the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO), could facilitate this process by bringing together stakeholders from both countries. These platforms would serve not only as venues for exchanging best practices and insights but could also foster collaborative projects that address

shared environmental challenges, such as deforestation, biodiversity loss, and climate change impacts.

Although, it would also be necessary to acknowledge the Venezuelan government's isolationist tendencies and strained international relations when discussing the role of these neutral platforms and intermediary organizations. These platforms must be carefully designed to navigate political sensitivities while focusing on shared environmental goals that transcend political divisions. Neutral intermediaries, such as those aforementioned, can facilitate dialogue and collaboration without directly confronting the political issues that may hinder progress. By centering discussions on pragmatic environmental concerns and leveraging the universal appeal of conservation and sustainability, these organizations can create a common ground for cooperation. Focusing on common environmental challenges that require cross-border solutions, such as the conservation of shared ecosystems like the Amazon rainforest and the Andes mountains, or managing the impacts of climate change on shared water resources could enable these entities can create a space for dialogue and joint action that is insulated from broader political tensions. Initiatives could include joint research projects, environmental education campaigns, shared conservation efforts, and the exchange of best practices in sustainable development, all of which can contribute to building trust and understanding between the two countries.

VII. Conclusion

Through a comparative analysis and key informant interviews, this investigation delves into the complex fabric of environmental governance in Venezuela and Colombia, highlighting how these neighboring nations navigate the challenges of environmental policy amidst varying political, economic, and institutional landscapes. The juxtaposition of Venezuela's struggle with

political instability and economic challenges against Colombia's proactive environmental stance offers a unique lens through which to examine the effectiveness of environmental governance. Findings from my conversations with experts involved in the environmental sector of both countries reveal the divergent paths taken by each nation and the critical role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in bridging the gap between policy, community engagement, and international collaboration.

Building on these insights, future research should examine the operational mechanisms and impacts of organizations that facilitate cross-border environmental collaboration, in order to provide a better understanding of how these partnerships can be optimized for greater effectiveness. This exploration becomes increasingly critical as climate change intensifies, affecting shared natural resources and necessitating a unified response. By identifying the challenges and opportunities inherent in cross-border cooperation, researchers will be better able to present more integrated and effective environmental stewardship strategies that will ensure the sustainable management of shared ecosystems, facilitate the alignment of policies across borders, and bolster the resilience of communities to environmental changes. It is also necessary to further investigate the extent to which community engagement and public participation contribute to the shaping of policies, focusing on how these democratic processes affect the longevity and success of environmental initiatives. This includes examining the strategies that effectively mobilize public support and foster a sense of ownership and responsibility towards local, national, and global environmental challenges. Moreover, further exploring funding mechanisms for NGOs, given their crucial role in bridging gaps in national policies, could be a valuable aspect of future research. Understanding how to better financially support these organizations will enhance their effectiveness and expand their activities and impacts. By

addressing these focal points, future research can offer recommendations that are necessary for strengthening environmental governance and fostering more resilient, sustainable ecological and social outcomes.

Ultimately, this investigation into Venezuela and Colombia's environmental governance frameworks underscores the profound impact of administrative structures on environmental outcomes. While focused on these two nations, the implications resonate universally, suggesting that robust governance and regulatory clarity are critical for environmental stewardship. This investigation contributes to a broader discourse on the indispensable role of governance in addressing ecological concerns, underscoring the imperative for nations globally to deliberate the environmental repercussions of their governance choices. The findings also begin to hint at a broader principle: the need for a deeper integration of environmental care into the fabric of our societies. As we move forward, it is critical to understand that effective environmental governance requires not only appropriate policies and frameworks but also a societal shift towards valuing and actively participating in environmental conservation. This understanding opens the door for further research into how societies can foster a culture of environmental responsibility that supports governance structures in achieving sustainability goals.

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IX. Appendix

Sample Interview Guide

Biographical Information

- Tell me a little bit about your current job/position
- What led you to pursue a career in [x] [environmental policy, government, or climate finance]?
- Could you describe your educational and professional background in relation to your current role?

General Policymaking

- How would you define the role of political leadership in shaping and implementing effective environmental policies in a country?
- What are some of the major barriers or obstacles that hinder the development and enforcement of robust environmental regulations at a national level?
- Are there alternative governance mechanisms/strategies that can be employed in the absence of strong political leadership in order to advance environmental protection and sustainability?
- How can international organizations & other countries assist nations in strengthening their environmental policies/regulations?
- How important is capacity building and education in improving environmental governance in countries?

Environmental Policy in Venezuela & Colombia

- What are the most pressing environmental challenges that Venezuela is currently addressing? What are the environmental challenges that Colombia is facing?
- How would you describe the legal & regulatory framework for environmental protection in Venezuela/Colombia?
- To what extent are civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations involved in shaping & monitoring environmental policies in both countries?
- How are Venezuela and Colombia addressing climate change and promoting renewable energy resources within their policies?
- How engaged are Venezuela and Colombia in international environmental agreements/initiatives? Are there any notable differences in their levels of participation & commitment?

Climate Finance

- How do the environmental challenges that Venezuela & Colombia are currently facing align with the goals of climate funds?
- Can you elaborate on the availability of climate funds allocated for environmental projects in Venezuela? What types of projects are typically funded?
- Are there any specific criteria or eligibility requirements that Venezuelan organizations or projects must meet to access climate funds?
- Similarly, could you discuss the climate funds and financing opportunities that are available for environmental initiatives in Colombia? Are there any noteworthy differences compared to the funding for Venezuela?
- What kinds of environmental initiatives or projects tend to have a higher likelihood of receiving funding, and what factors are considered during the selection process?
- What are future priorities and strategies for supporting environmental sustainability and climate resilience in both Venezuela and Colombia, and also, in general, the larger global community?

Before we end, is there anything else that might be helpful for me to know, either about your experience with environmental policymaking, or anything you can think of in terms of the relationship between the role of government and effective environmental governance?

Sample Interview Guide (translated into Spanish)

Información Biográfica:

- Cuéntame un poco sobre su trabajo/posición actual.
- ¿Qué le llevó a seguir una carrera en [x] [política ambiental, gobierno o finanzas climáticas]?
- ¿Podría describir su formación educativa y profesional en relación con su rol actual?

Formulación de Políticas Generales:

- ¿Cómo definiría el papel del liderazgo político en la configuración e implementación de políticas ambientales efectivas en un país?
- ¿Cuáles son algunas de las principales barreras u obstáculos que impiden el desarrollo y la aplicación de regulaciones ambientales sólidas a nivel nacional?
- ¿Existen mecanismos o estrategias de gobernanza alternativos que se puedan emplear en ausencia de un liderazgo político fuerte para avanzar en la protección ambiental y la sostenibilidad?
- ¿Cómo pueden las organizaciones internacionales y otros países ayudar a las naciones a fortalecer sus políticas/regulaciones ambientales?
- ¿Cuán importante es la capacitación y educación para mejorar la gobernanza ambiental en los países?

Política Ambiental en Venezuela y Colombia:

- ¿Cuáles son los desafíos ambientales más apremiantes que actualmente enfrenta Venezuela? ¿Cuáles son los desafíos ambientales que enfrenta Colombia?
- ¿Cómo describiría el marco legal y regulatorio para la protección ambiental en Venezuela/Colombia?
- ¿En qué medida las organizaciones de la sociedad civil y las organizaciones no gubernamentales están involucradas en la formulación y el monitoreo de las políticas ambientales en ambos países?
- ¿Cómo están abordando Venezuela y Colombia el cambio climático y promoviendo recursos de energía renovable dentro de sus políticas?
- ¿Qué tan involucrados están Venezuela y Colombia en acuerdos/iniciativas ambientales internacionales?
- ¿Hay diferencias notables en sus niveles de participación y compromiso?

Financiamiento Climático:

- ¿Cómo se alinean los desafíos ambientales que enfrentan Venezuela y Colombia actualmente con los objetivos de los fondos climáticos?
- ¿Puede elaborar sobre la disponibilidad de fondos climáticos asignados para proyectos ambientales en Venezuela?
- ¿Qué tipos de proyectos se financian típicamente?
- ¿Existen criterios específicos o requisitos de elegibilidad que las organizaciones o proyectos venezolanos deben cumplir para acceder a fondos climáticos?
- De manera similar, ¿podría discutir los fondos climáticos y las oportunidades de financiamiento que están disponibles para iniciativas ambientales en Colombia?
- ¿Hay diferencias notables en comparación con la financiación para Venezuela?
- ¿Qué tipos de iniciativas o proyectos ambientales tienen mayor probabilidad de recibir financiamiento y qué factores se consideran durante el proceso de selección?
- ¿Cuáles son las prioridades y estrategias futuras para apoyar la sostenibilidad ambiental y la resiliencia climática tanto en Venezuela y Colombia como, en general, en la comunidad global más amplia?

Antes de terminar, ¿hay algo más que pueda ser útil para mí saber, ya sea sobre su experiencia con la formulación de políticas ambientales o cualquier cosa que pueda pensar en términos de la relación entre el papel del gobierno y la gobernanza ambiental efectiva?

Quotes from interviews with Spanish-speaking key informants (included in order of appearance in the text)

“Venezuela es de los más atrasados, para no decir el más atrasado, no tengo el record completo, pero si es uno de los más atrasados en cuanto a comunicaciones de cambio climático, en cuanto a planes de ajuste, de adaptación al cambio climático, realmente es muy pobre lo que avanza en términos de mitigación climático y vinculado a esto hay un rechazo a la participación de la sociedad civil” (pg. 24)

“El marco legal es bueno, o sea, las leyes. En los últimos 20 años ha habido una actualización de leyes importantes como la ley de bosques, la ley de aguas, algunos reglamentos se han actualizado, incluso en la constitución hay artículos que toman en cuenta los derechos ambientales” (pg. 26)

“Tenemos un tema de falta de capacidad en las instituciones que tienen la responsabilidad de implementar las políticas, tenemos en general, y bueno eso no solamente funciona para el tema ambiental sino en muchos otros temas, Colombia tiene una tradición legal muy fuerte, o sea nos encantan las normas, creamos normas para todo y adoptamos muy fácilmente también normas internacionales” (pg. 28)

“a pesar de que el Ministerio lanza política pública, muchas corporaciones a veces deciden o simplemente no las aplican y toman decisiones también de manera autónoma, a veces no muy técnica, en teoría por ejemplo los procesos de autonomía deberían consultarse con el Ministerio para que tuvieran un check técnico, pero no se hace, en la realidad muchas corporaciones simplemente hacen lo que quieren por conveniencia o por practicidad” (pgs. 28-29)

“ha sido un poco desorganizada y buscando solucionar problemas, más que una visión integral y sistémica” (pg. 29)

“interesantes que muestran que tres corporaciones acumulan el 70% del presupuesto ambiental territorial del país y las otras les quedan cantidades muy pequeñas y no tienen cómo contratar personal permanentemente” (pgs. 29-30)

“por ejemplo, el gobierno conduce una consulta pública sobre una ley, entonces abre una reunión en alguna ciudad del país que invita a todo el mundo, a todas las personas, a todas las instituciones, a todos los sectores. Entonces, en esos espacios podemos participar, pero no hay como una función en la sociedad civil en ese sentido” (pg. 31)

“La situación actual no es la misma que hace diez años atrás, pero no se parece tampoco a la que hace veinticinco años” (pg. 33)

“A nivel local, tú no consigues tan fácilmente conocimiento, talento, personas con las capacidades para formular estos planes. De pronto lo consigues en los grandes departamentos, en Bogotá, en Antioquia, en Atlántico, en el Valle del Cauca, pero en departamentos de una escala más pequeña no es tan fácil conseguir alguien que te ayude a escribir un buen plan. Entonces muchas veces tus planes o son desarticulados o no son lo suficientemente robustos o no tienen una, no están hilados de una forma correcta para responder a unas necesidades y unas prioridades” (pg. 34)

“Entonces esa interacción entre las ONGs locales y las ONGs internacionales es clave por ese conocimiento de territorio, conocimiento de personas, conocimiento de problemáticas” (pg. 35)

“Por otro lado, también en cuanto a financiamiento externo, pues en los últimos años Venezuela, por el tema de sanciones y situación económica, pues no ha podido tomar financiamiento externo con los principales multilaterales” (pg. 37)

“Hay una arquitectura institucional en Colombia, no la tiene Venezuela, una arquitectura institucional que pertenece al gobierno central e inclusive a gobiernos locales, como puede ser el gobierno o la alcaldía de Bogotá, participar en el financiamiento internacional” (pg. 38)