

TRANSNATIONAL CAPITAL AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE MODELS FRAGMENT AMAZONIAN PROTECTED AREAS

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Abstract: The architecture of global environmental finance operates on a foundational premise: that massive capital injections can permanently insulate tropical biomes from economic degradation. Most international governance paradigms focus heavily on expanding this spatial matrix of protected perimeters across the Amazon basin. However, the systemic decoupling between macro-conservation financing and the micro-level realities of traditional societies exposes a critical paradox. Although transnational programs like the PPG-7 and ARPA successfully consolidated millions of hectares on paper, they prioritized top-down, technocentric monitoring while freezing the operational budgets and technological supply of human-inhabited reserves. In this investigation, we unravel the 36-year legacy of these mechanisms across the Amazon's first four Extractive Reserves established in 1990. We demonstrate how this financial vacuum effectively drives localized forest-to-pasture conversion by trapping frontline communities in structural poverty. The evidence highlights that macro-centric capital density is functionally unviable without decentralized micro-governance equity, establishing an urgent conceptual baseline to reform international climate finance.

Keywords: Global climate finance, Socio-ecological systems, Extractive reserves; Political economy of conservation, Agro-extractive supply chains.

O CAPITAL TRANSNACIONAL E OS MODELOS DE GOVERNANÇA LOCAL FRAGMENTAM AS ÁREAS PROTEGIDAS DA AMAZÔNIA

Resumo: A arquitetura das finanças ambientais globais opera sob uma premissa fundamental: a de que injeções massivas de capital podem isolar permanentemente os biomas tropicais da degradação econômica. A maioria dos paradigmas de governança internacional concentra-se fortemente na expansão dessa matriz espacial de perímetros protegidos ao longo da bacia amazônica. No entanto, o desacoplamento sistêmico entre o financiamento da macroconservação e as realidades em nível micro das sociedades tradicionais expõe um paradoxo crítico. Embora programas transnacionais como o PPG-7 e o ARPA tenham consolidado com sucesso milhões de hectares no papel, eles priorizaram um monitoramento tecnocêntrico e vertical (*top-down*), enquanto congelaram os orçamentos operacionais e o aporte tecnológico das reservas habitadas por populações humanas. Nesta investigação, revelamos o legado de 36 anos desses mecanismos nas quatro primeiras Reservas Extrativistas da Amazônia, estabelecidas em 1990. Demonstramos como esse vácuo financeiro impulsiona, na prática, a conversão localizada de floresta em pastagem, ao aprisionar as comunidades da linha de frente na pobreza estrutural. As evidências destacam que a densidade de capital macrocêntrica é funcionalmente inviável sem a equidade da microgovernança descentralizada, estabelecendo uma linha de base conceitual urgente para reformar o financiamento climático internacional.

Palavras-chave: Finanças climáticas globais, Sistemas socioecológicos, Reservas extrativistas, Economia política da conservação, Cadeias produtivas agroextrativistas.

EL CAPITAL TRANSNACIONAL Y LOS MODELOS DE GOBERNANZA LOCAL FRAGMENTAN LAS ÁREAS PROTEGIDAS DE LA AMAZONÍA

Resumen: La arquitectura de las finanzas ambientales globales opera bajo una premisa fundamental: la de que inyecciones masivas de capital pueden aislar permanentemente a los biomas tropicales de la degradación económica. La mayoría de los paradigmas de gobernanza internacional se concentran fuertemente en la expansión de esta matriz espacial de perímetros protegidos a lo largo de la cuenca amazónica. Sin embargo, el desacoplamiento sistémico entre el financiamiento de la macroconservación y las realidades a nivel micro de las sociedades tradicionales expone una paradoja crítica. Aunque programas transnacionales como el PPG-7 y el ARPA consolidaron con éxito millones de hectáreas en el papel, priorizaron un monitoreo tecnocéntrico y vertical (*top-down*), mientras congelaron los presupuestos operativos y el aporte tecnológico de las reservas habitadas por poblaciones humanas. En esta investigación, revelamos el legado de 36 años de estos mecanismos en las cuatro primeras Reservas Extractivistas de la Amazonía, establecidas en 1990. Demostramos cómo este vacío financiero impulsa, en la práctica, la conversión localizada de bosque en pastizal, al atrapar a las comunidades de la línea de frente en la pobreza estructural. Las evidencias destacan que la densidad de capital macrocéntrica es funcionalmente inviable sin la equidad de la microgobernanza descentralizada, estableciendo una línea de base conceptual urgente para reformar el financiamiento climático internacional.

Palabras-clave: Finanzas climáticas globales, Sistemas socioecológicos, Reservas extractivistas, Economía política de la conservación, Cadenas productivas agroextractivas.



Introduction

The Amazon basin anchors critical planetary ecosystem services, safeguarding approximately 20% of global river discharge and functioning as a vital carbon sink indispensable for climate stabilization (EXBRAYAT et al., 2023; MALHI et al., 2008). However, accelerating anthropogenic pressures-perpetuated by speculative land grabbing, state-backed infrastructure, and aggressive agricultural expansion-have structurally compromised primary forests, inducing severe ecosystem degradation and pushing the biome toward an irreversible ecological tipping point (LOVEJOY; NOBRE, 2020; SMITH et al., 2026). To mitigate this frontier expansion and stem biodiversity loss, the Brazilian state established an extensive network of protected areas (PAs) (BAUCH et al., 2015; SILVA; PERES, 2025). Within this governance framework, Extractive Reserves (RESEXs) represent a pioneering socio-

ecological paradigm, explicitly designed to harmonize natural resource conservation with the traditional livelihoods and land rights of local communities (HALL, 1997).

Yet, a profound socio-environmental paradox undermines these conservation targets: despite decades of multi-million-dollar capital injections from transnational funding mechanisms, the institutional execution of these programs has systematically failed to secure long-term sustainability (ANDONOVA; FAUL, 2022). Large-scale initiatives, primarily the Pilot Program for the Protection of Brazil's Tropical Forests (PPG-7) and the subsequent Amazon Protected Areas Program (ARPA), channeled unprecedented multilateral capital to establish comprehensive mosaics of protected areas and preserve ecological integrity (AMIN et al., 2019; ZHOU et al., 2026). While these transnational partnerships successfully expanded the spatial footprint of PAs and suppressed macro-deforestation rates within supported perimeters, their developmental efficacy inside human-inhabited RESEXs remains highly contested (JONES et al., 2025). Rather than catalyzing local socio-economic viability, these top-down financial architectures have triggered severe negative externalities, including persistent localized forest degradation, accelerated biodiversity loss, and chronically low productivity across agro-extractive supply chains (HOMMA, 2021; UBIALI; ALEXIADES, 2022).

Recent breakthroughs in socio-ecological systems modeling emphasize that while community-based management constitutes the most economically viable mechanism for regional stewardship, the economic returns to frontline populations remain disproportionately modest compared to their conservation output (CAMPOS-SILVA et al., 2025). This structural tension is further amplified by contemporary data; while reinforced state enforcement has successfully driven macro-deforestation rates across the wider basin to historic lows, high-resolution spatial monitoring reveals that internal degradation vectors and institutional operational deficits within individual human-inhabited reserves remain critically unaddressed (GOMEZ; ANDERSON, 2026). Recent evaluations of conservation economics reveal a staggering systemic deficit between global carbon-mitigation capital allocations and the local operational budgets required to sustain protected socio-ecological perimeters (TURNER et al., 2026).

This systemic underperformance exposes an unresolved institutional bottleneck where macro-conservation financing completely decouples from micro-level governance (AGRAWAL; REDFORD, 2006). This structural misalignment between the state's geopolitical conservation agendas and the complex, interconnected realities of rural, traditional, and emerging urban populations in the Amazon leaves local communities trapped in persistent vulnerability, excluded from technological supply, and suffering from extreme poverty (CAVALCANTE FILHO et al., 2020; FREITAS et al., 2022; MARTINS et al., 2025; SOARES-FILHO; RAJÃO, 2019). Consequently, a fundamental knowledge gap remains unresolved: why have multi-million-dollar transnational capital injections failed to catalyze socio-environmental sustainability or alleviate structural poverty at the extractive frontier?

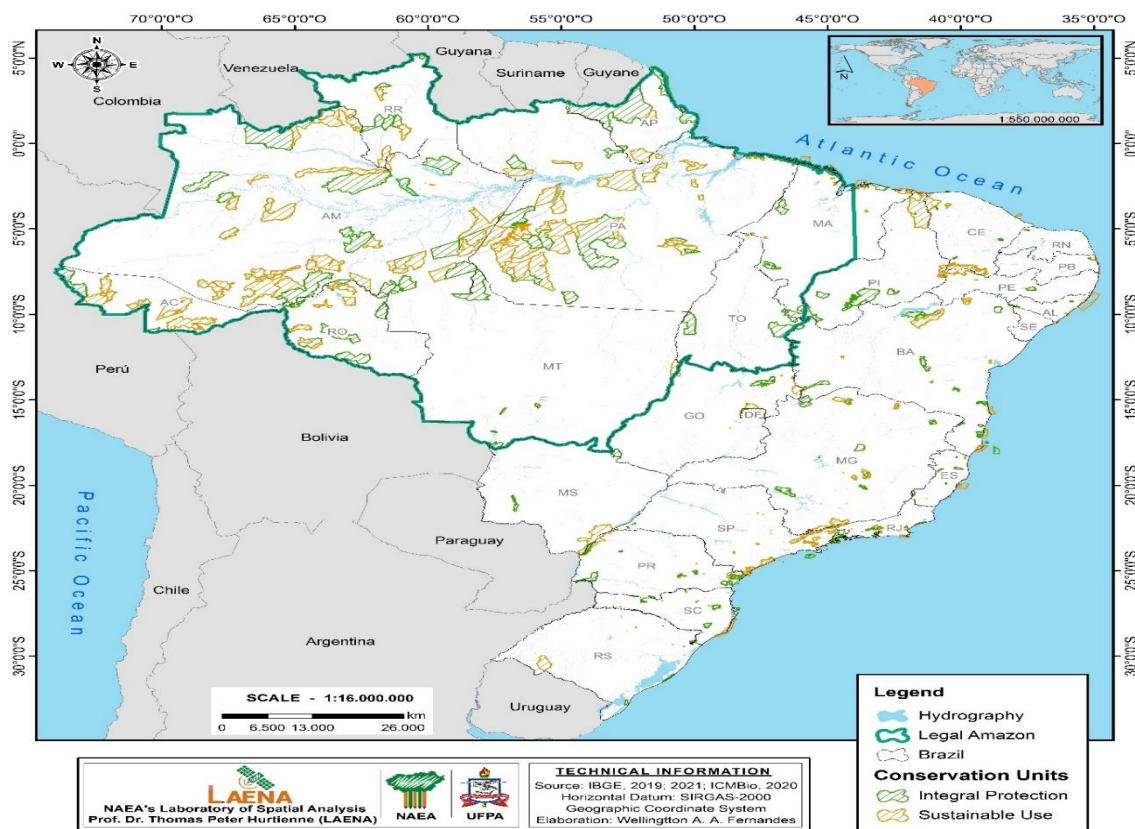
Here, we evaluate the structural limits and long-term socio-environmental outcomes of PPG-7 and ARPA funding allocations across the Brazilian Amazon to resolve this paradox. Spanning a 36-year empirical trajectory since the historic establishment of the biome's first four RESEXs between January and March 1990—specifically the Alto Juruá, Rio Ouro Preto, Rio Cajari, and Chico Mendes RESEXs—this study systematically analyzes the intersection of multi-decadal financial flows and local governance efficiency. Our primary objective is to dissect how macro-level transnational capital injections decouple from micro-level governance, identifying the structural points of friction between state conservation agendas and traditional community autonomy. By exposing the mechanisms that prevent international climate finance from translating into localized technological supply and poverty

alleviation, this investigation establishes a new conceptual baseline for tropical forest conservation and sustainable bioeconomy policies.

Methods

To evaluate the decoupling of macro-level transnational conservation financing from micro-level socio-environmental governance, we deployed an institutional analysis framework adapted from Ostrom (2009), combined with qualitative process tracing (BENNETT; CHECKEL, 2015). The geographic scope of this investigation encompasses the Brazilian Legal Amazon, a territory anchoring an expansive network of federal and state protected areas (PAs) legally enacted to mitigate biodiversity loss and satisfy international climate commitments (PAIVA et al., 2020). While our analytical paradigm prioritizes the multi-decadal performance of Extractive Reserves (RESEXs), we explicitly examined both Sustainable Use and Strict Protection perimeters that received direct capital allocations from the Pilot Program for the Protection of Brazil's Tropical Forests (PPG-7) and the Amazon Protected Areas Program (ARPA) (Figure 1).

Figure 1 - Map of identification of PAs in the Legal Amazon



By tracking these intersecting management categories, this design captures the structural realities of human-inhabited conservation zones under intensifying anthropogenic pressures, including speculative land grabbing, illegal logging, and agricultural encroachment (SILVA; PERES, 2025).

Rather than relying on a conventional, non-systematic literature review, we executed a comprehensive institutional data-triangulation protocol to capture financial, regulatory, and socio-

ecological evidence spanning a 36-year empirical trajectory (1990–2026). We extracted primary legislative acts, multi-lateral cooperation agreements, and operational management audits directly from official repositories, including the World Bank Group, the Brazilian Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (MMA), and the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMBio). To ensure analytical depth and reconstruct the institutional legacy of transnational funding, we gathered and cross-referenced targeted multi-lingual scientific literature (English, Portuguese, Spanish, and French) addressing the structural phases of global environmental funds. Specifically, we tracked the deployment of US\$ 463.1 million executed during Phases I and II of the PPG-7 aimed at agro-extractive supply chain development (Ministry of the Environment - MMA, 2009), alongside the cumulative allocations of the US\$ 400 million ARPA initiative across its strategic phases designed for permanent spatial consolidation and ecological enforcement (WORLD BANK, 2024).

Data analysis followed an inductive qualitative synthesis rooted in political economy and socio-ecological systems theory. We established causal links between macro-level financial architectures and local-level socio-environmental externalities by mapping the structural mechanisms connecting transnational funding agencies, state institutions, and traditional community organizations. Because this study evaluates systemic institutional performance rather than direct biophysical testing, we leveraged process tracing to diagnose management efficiency, technocentric supply gaps, and points of friction regarding land-tenure conflicts and local vulnerability. We systematically coded and validated the extracted evidence across independent data classes to construct a verifiable timeline of governance failures. This qualitative-synthesis paradigm bridges interdisciplinary thresholds, ensuring that macro-level international financing parameters directly intersect with the micro-level socio-economic realities reported by traditional Amazonian populations at the extractive frontier.

Results

During Phase I of the Pilot Program for the Protection of Brazil's Tropical Forests (PPG-7), transnational financial capital targeting the sustainable use structural line was concentrated within the four pioneering Extractive Reserves (RESEXs) established in early 1990: Alto Juruá, Chico Mendes, Rio Ouro Preto, and Rio Cajari. Collectively spanning over 2.2 million hectares, these territories received a combined baseline investment of US\$ 9.98 million channeled through the European Union, the Rainforest Trust Fund, and the Brazilian government (Table 1).

Table 1 - Consolidation of multilateral capital investments during Phase I of the PPG-7 (1995–1999)

RESEXs	Total Area (ha)	Key Financial Contributors	Cumulative Phase I Investment (US\$)	Annualized Per-Reserve Allocation (US\$)
Alto Juruá	537,946	European Union	6,120,000	1,224,000
Chico Mendes	970,570	Rainforest Trust Fund	3,000,000	600,000
Rio Ouro Preto	204,631	Government of Brazil	860,000	172,000
Rio Cajari	532,397	Total Program Core	9,980,000	1,996,000

Source: Adapted from Ministry of the Environment (MMA, 2020)

Macro-economic indicators during this multiyear cycle were anchored by the structural stabilization of the Brazilian currency, maintaining a near 1:1 parity with the US dollar, alongside an accumulated domestic inflation rate of 9.5% and a cumulative Selic interest rate of 26.8%. Concurrently, demographic profiles across the supported areas comprised 4,170 inhabitants in Alto Juruá (1,042 families), 5,976 in Chico Mendes (1,092 families), 699 in Rio Ouro Preto (175 families), and 2,293 in Rio Cajari (573 families).

When we cross-analyze total capital injections against localized family densities based on these empirical distribution parameters, severe asymmetries in the structural micro-distribution of funds emerge. Within the highly populated Chico Mendes RESEX, the annualized investment allocation of US\$ 600,000 translated into a nominal sum of US\$ 549.45 per family per year, or a micro-level execution of roughly US\$ 45.78 per month per family unit. Conversely, within the smaller territorial and human footprint of the Rio Ouro Preto RESEX, the annualized investment of US\$ 172,000 yielded a localized parameter of US\$ 982.85 per family per year, equivalent to approximately US\$ 81.90 per month per family unit.

During the historical transition to the 2000s, Phase II of the PPG-7 faced severe institutional friction, culminating in a structural capital deadlock. Although a multiyear allocation of US\$ 10.37 million was nominally projected, our empirical tracking documents that these resources remained primarily stranded in forecasting and prolonged diplomatic negotiations, resulting in negligible micro-level execution on the ground (Table 2).

Table 2 - Nominal resource forecasting, stagnation, and capital deadlocks during Phase II of the PPG-7 (2003–2009)

RESEXs	Total Area (ha)	Key Financial Contributors	Forecasted Phase II Pledges (US\$)	Annualized Per-Reserve Allocation (US\$)
Alto Juruá	537,946	European Union	8,570,000	Frozen in Negotiation/ Non-Executed
Chico Mendes	970,570	Rainforest Trust Fund	1,000,000	Timid Execution/Structural Deficit
Rio Ouro Preto	204,631	Government of Brazil	800,000	Frozen in Counterpart/Non-Executed
Rio Cajari	532,397	Total Program Core	10,370,000	Systemic Institutional Deadlock

Source: Adapted from Ministry of the Environment (MMA, 2020)

This systemic paralysis within the PPG-7 framework was heavily compounded by macroeconomic volatility, as the Brazilian Real (BRL) fluctuated severely between 1.50 and 3.60 per US dollar, while domestic inflation accumulated at 6.6% with an average Selic rate of 14.4%.

Crucially, our analysis reveals that the operational collapse of the PPG-7 Phase II directly triggered the structural birth and positioning of the Amazon Protected Areas Program (ARPA) in 2003. ARPA was established not as a parallel initiative, but as an institutional replacement mechanism to absorb the defunded socio-environmental demands of the biome.

While international capital streams under the PPG-7 gridlock remained stagnant, the Chico Mendes RESEX experienced a severe demographic expansion, jumping to 12,017 inhabitants encompassing 1,838 active families (an increase exceeding 100%). This localized population explosion directly collided with the non-execution of PPG-7 funds, trapping traditional communities in

an infrastructure vacuum precisely at the moment ARPA assumed the macro-financing monopoly across the frontier.

Launched in parallel with the restructuring of the PPG-7, the Amazon Protected Areas Program (ARPA) shifted environmental governance toward a large-scale spatial consolidation model. Our empirical tracking of the multi-phase ARPA architecture reveals a cumulative investment projection of US\$ 424.9 million, sustained by a complex ecosystem of multilateral and corporate entities, including the World Bank Group, KfW, BNDES, GEF, Moore Foundation, Anglo American, and WWF (Table 3).

Table 3 - Capital investments and territorial consolidation across the three developmental phases of the ARPA program

ARPA Phase	Protected Perimeter Metrics	Cumulative Capital Investment (US\$)	Consolidated Area (M ha)	Unit-Level Investment Intensity (US\$/PA)
Phase I	63 PAs	88.9 Million	32.5	1.41 Million
Phase II	97 PAs	121.0 Million	19.9	1.24 Million
Phase III	25 PAs	215.0 Million	17.7	1.34 Million
Total Horizon	185 PAs	424.9 Million	70.1 (by 2039)	1.33 Million (Avg)

Source: Adapted from Ministry of the Environment (MMA, 2020) and World Bank (2024)

A chronological dissection of Phase I outputs confirms the dynamic creation of 13.2 million hectares under strict preservation protocols alongside 10.8 million hectares allocated for sustainable use frameworks. Although 8.5 million hectares reached institutional consolidation criteria and triggered the establishment of the Protected Areas Fund (FAP), the unit-level funding intensity decreased as the program scaled. Specifically, capital density compressed from US\$ 1.41 million per PA in Phase I to US\$ 1.24 million per PA during Phase II, before a compensatory capital infusion raised the baseline to US\$ 1.34 million per PA in Phase III to drive the permanent consolidation of 60 million hectares.

Our empirical tracking of ARPA's performance indicators documents a severe divergence between nominal funding expansions and physical execution targets during subsequent operational cycles. In Phase II, which operated under a total allocation of US\$ 121 million, physical creation metrics compressed significantly relative to Phase I, delivering less than half of the initial protected area footprint. Quantitatively, Phase II outputs resulted in: (1) the formal creation of 5.2 million hectares of protected areas, (2) the institutional consolidation of 8.7 million hectares, (3) the deployment of 7 localized sub-projects alongside 30 supported initiatives, and (4) the structural execution of 31 PAs, leaving 41 units remaining within the implementation phase (MMA, 2020).

Table 4 - Capital execution efficiency and physical target delivery across ARPA operational cycles.

ARPA Operational Phase	Total Phase Budget (US\$)	New Protected Areas Created (M ha)	Capital Density Per New Hectare (US\$/ha)	Fully Consolidated PAs (Units)
Phase I	88.9 Million	24.0	3.70	63
Phase II	121.0 Million	5.2	23.26	97
Phase III	215.0 Million	2.0	107.50	25

Source: Developed by the author, leveraging empirical indicators adapted from Ministry of the Environment (MMA, 2020) and World Bank (2024)

Our chronological dissection of the multiyear Phase III framework-supported by a cumulative fund of US\$ 215 million-reveals an escalating capital-to-target mismatch over a nine-year active operational trajectory. New perimeter creation dropped to 2.0 million hectares, while institutional milestones were restricted to the consolidation of 25 PAs and the structural maintenance of 231 previously established perimeters (MMA, 2020). When we cross-analyze total financial inputs against spatial gains across the three cycles, the nominal capital required to establish a single new hectare of protected forest advanced from US\$ 3.70 in Phase I, to US\$ 23.26 in Phase II, reaching US\$ 107.50 during Phase III (Table 4).

Discussion

The empirical evidence uncovered in this investigation exposes a critical historical decoupling between transnational capital architectures and localized socio-ecological durability. While early multilateral frameworks like Phase I of the PPG-7 were globally heralded as institutional milestones for transgovernmental cooperation, our data reveals that the transition to Phase II resulted in an absolute governance paralysis (ANDONOVA; FAUL, 2022). The stagnation of US\$ 10.37 million in prolonged diplomatic forecasting and frozen negotiations (Table 2) demonstrates a pervasive path dependency: top-down financial instruments heavily reflect the changing geopolitical agendas of donor G7 nations rather than the structural needs of frontline populations (ZHOU et al., 2026).

This systemic deadlock within the PPG-7 directly forced an institutional regime shift, giving birth to the Amazon Protected Areas Program (ARPA) in 2003 as a replacement monopoly for regional conservation capital. However, this transition fundamentally altered the philosophy of Amazonian governance. While the PPG-7 was originally conceived to integrate a socio-ecological economy by supporting extractive production lines (HALL, 1997), ARPA pivoted the paradigm toward a large-scale spatial isolation model-functioning primarily as a macro-level "green barrier" against baseline regional deforestation frontiers (SILVA; PERES, 2025; SMITH et al., 2026).

The consequences of this macro-centric pivot are sharply crystallized by the profound demographic-economic divergence documented within the Chico Mendes RESEX. While Phase II PPG-7 financial flows collapsed into a bureaucratic gridlock, the reserve experienced a staggering population surge exceeding 100%, jumping to 1,838 active family units. In contemporary socio-ecological systems theory, freezing financial and technological inputs while local resource dependencies double actively accelerates institutional failure (CAMPOS-SILVA et al., 2025; OSTRUM, 2009).

Because the newly established ARPA heavily prioritized the macro-spatial demarcation of pristine forests, it systematically defunded the micro-level socio-economic mechanisms required to sustain human-inhabited reserves (FREITAS et al., 2022; UBIALI; ALEXIADES, 2022). Trapped in an infrastructure and technological supply vacuum, local extractive communities face severe cash-flow rigidities and persistent, extreme poverty (CAVALCANTE FILHO et al., 2020). As a direct result of this financial decoupling, well-intentioned human-inhabited conservation perimeters suffer from internal degradation vectors, localized illegal logging encroachment, and the inevitable, aggressive conversion of pristine tropical forest stands into extensive cattle pastures to secure short-term household survival (GOMEZ; ANDERSON, 2026; JONES et al., 2025).

Perhaps the most striking finding of our analysis is the escalating capital-to-target mismatch observed across the chronological lifecycle of the ARPA program. Our cross-analysis documents that

the nominal capital required to establish a single new hectare of protected forest advanced exponentially from US\$ 3.70 in Phase I to an unprecedented US\$ 107.50 during Phase III (Table 4). This staggering surge exposes a law of diminishing marginal returns in tropical forest governance, driven by rising institutional transaction costs, complex multilateral bureaucracies, and severe land-tenure conflicts escalating across the agricultural frontier.

This macro-allocation crisis has triggered a chronic operational funding deficit that undermines the entire National System of Conservation Units (SNUC). Multilateral funding bodies routinely celebrate the expansion of millions of hectares on paper, yet a staggering 76.6% of federal protected areas lack the primary operational budgets required for basic enforcement, boundary patrol, and community integration (TURNER et al., 2026).

To prevent these multi-million-dollar mechanisms from collapsing into systemic paper parks, the international environmental financing architecture must undergo an immediate decentralization paradigm shift. Centralized state-level bureaucracies must be bypassed in favor of agile, decentralized, and inclusive co-financing mechanisms that link macro-preservation capital (such as the Amazon Fund and carbon mitigation credits) directly with localized technological supply, community-led bioeconomy chains, and the structural empowerment of local deliberative councils at the extractive frontier.

Conclusion

This investigation provides a definitive empirical baseline for tropical forest governance, demonstrating that the permanent conservation of the Amazon basin is structurally unviable through top-down macroeconomic mechanisms that systematically decouple preservation capital from micro-level socio-economic durability. The 36-year legacy spanning the transition from the PPG-7 to the ARPA framework exposes a critical path dependency: channelling millions into macro-level satellite monitoring while freezing localized technological supply and micro-level operational budgets actively accelerates the institutional collapse of protected frontiers. When international funding architectures ignore the socioeconomic development of human-inhabited reserves while frontline populations double, they do not create absolute barriers against deforestation; instead, they force traditional communities into persistent poverty, directly driving internal degradation vectors and extensive forest-to-pasture conversion for household survival.

To mitigate this systemic failure, future transnational climate funding frameworks must undergo an immediate decentralization paradigm shift. Centralized state bureaucracies must be bypassed in favor of agile, inclusive co-financing matrices that directly link global carbon-mitigation investments with localized bioeconomy supply chains and the structural empowerment of traditional deliberative councils. Ultimately, resolving this macro-micro financing paradox constitutes the only viable pathway to safeguard planetary ecosystem services while securing long-term socio-environmental justice at the extractive frontier.

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