

Forum: Practical Perspectives

Adapt or die: strategies of the government of Meta to face the challenges posed by the Colombian General Royalty System

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In 2012, a new General Royalty System (GRS) was established in Colombia, promoting changes in the context of territorial management. This article analyzes the adaptive capacity of the local government in the region of Meta, considering the budget reduction and administrative challenges brought by GRS. The study adopts a comprehensive analytical model on adaptive capacity, built on a systemic approach that allows exploring the government's adaptation to achieve the benefits of the reform. Results show a contrast between a relatively satisfactory initial adaptive strategy and meager results regarding a lasting organizational and institutional adjustment.

Keywords: adaptation; capacity; royalties; meta.

Adaptar-se ou sucumbir: estratégias do governo da região de Meta diante dos desafios do Sistema Geral de Royalties Colombiano

Em 2012, o Sistema Geral de Royalties (SGR) entrou em vigor, transformando a gestão territorial colombiana. Este artigo analisa a capacidade de adaptação do governo da região de Meta ao SGR, considerando os múltiplos desafios administrativos e orçamentários acarretados pela sua implementação. Foi desenvolvido um modelo analítico abrangente com uma abordagem sistêmica, detalhando a adaptação do governo de Meta para poder alcançar os benefícios da reforma. Os resultados mostram um contraste entre uma resposta imediata relativamente satisfatória em se adaptar ao sistema, porém com um tímido resultado em termos de ajustes estruturais organizacionais e institucionais.

Palavras-chave: adaptação; capacidade; royalties; meta.

Adaptarse o sucumbir: estrategias de la Gobernación del departamento del Meta frente a los retos del Sistema General de Regalías colombiano

En 2012 entra en vigencia el Sistema General de Regalías (SGR) transformando el entorno de la gestión territorial colombiana. Este artículo analiza la capacidad de adaptación de la Gobernación del Meta al SGR, considerando los múltiples retos administrativos y presupuestales que supuso su puesta en marcha. Para tal efecto, se desarrolla con el caso un modelo analítico comprensivo de enfoque sistémico, que detalla los alcances de la adaptación de Meta para lograr los beneficios de la reforma. Los resultados muestran contraste entre una respuesta inmediata relativamente satisfactoria a la situación emergente, frente a un alcance reducido en su traducción a ajustes organizacionales e institucionales estructurales.

Palabras clave: adaptación; capacidad; regalías; meta.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/0034-761220180246x>

ISSN: 1982-3134 

Article received on July 19, 2018 and accepted on July 11, 2019.

[Translated version] Note: All quotes in English translated by this article's translator.

1. INTRODUCTION

Two models have ruled royalty administration in Colombia. First one was created by the Constitution of 1991 and regulated by Law 141 of 1994. A second one, currently in use and regulated by Law 1530 of 2012, has generated challenges for territorial entities due to the scheme of budget distribution. This scheme determined a progressive decrease for productive territories, such as the Meta regional government, limiting them to 10% of resources after receiving 80% in the old model. Box 1 compares the regimes:

BOX 1 ROYALTY REGIME

	1994 Regime	2012 Regime
Destination	Fixed allocation (Coverage in health, education, child mortality, drinking water and sewage system).	Free allocation
Allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% productive regions • 20% non-productive regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10% Science, Technology and Innovation Fund [FCTel] • 10% Regional pensions savings • 30% Savings and Stabilization Fund [FAE] • 10% Productive regions • 40% Non-productive regions (22% Regional Compensation Fund FCR / 18% Regional Development Fund FDR)
Operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% discretionary investment by productive regions. • 20% National Royalty Fund manages resources of non-productive regions. 	Collegiate Organs of Administration and Decision [COAD], in charge of approving public investment projects for each fund.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Under this scenario, Meta began a process of transition to adapt to budget reduction as well as to administrative challenges imposed by the model. This article analyzes the transition in detail, showing the capacity of the department to take on the GRS challenges.

The literature on royalty regimes has been seen from four large perspectives: i) evaluation of implementation (Núñez, Castro, & Rincón, 2014); ii) fiscal impact (Benítez, 2013; Bonet, Guzmán, Urrego, & Villa, 2014); iii) comparative analysis (Cabrera, 2012; Castillo, 2013; Rojas, 2015); and iv) effects of GRS in territorial development (Bonet & Urrego, 2014; Botero, Hofman, & Hernández, 2015). This work fills a void related to the analysis of capacities in subnational governments to respond to demands of GRS. It also adds adaptation as a relevant capacity in relation to processes of institutional regional transformation.

The article integrates three sections. First the concept of adaptation within the framework of systemic literature on capacity is discussed, presenting a comprehensive analytical model. Second,

the case is described from the processes associated to GRS implementation. The last section presents an analysis in relation to the conceptual model.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: AN ADAPTATION CAPACITY ANALYTICAL MODEL

2.1 Conceptual bases

In this paper we build on systemic approaches, focusing attention to context effects (Arnold, 1988). This literature observes actors' capacity to predict, adapt and modify their strategies in relation to external demands and to implement learning, adding resiliency¹ (Morgan, 2006). Within this focus:

- Systems have grades of autonomy and develop within specific limits.
- Systems coexist in emerging contexts.
- The response to unpredictability is a capacity ability to be taken on and developed (Isaza, Herrera, Lozano, Méndez, & Balanzó, 2015).

The systemic approach focus on observing organization's interaction, taking particular note of adaptation to rules in changing games. Thus adaptation appears as a requirement – and therefore a capacity – inherent to systems.

Adaptation is defined as the capacity of a system to dominate change and adoption of new ideas (Morgan, 2006). Parsons suggests adaptation refers to the aptitude of a system to adapt to its surroundings and to adapt the surroundings to its needs (Ritzer, 1993). In this article we will define it as the ability of a system to anticipate, adapt and respond continuously, efficiently and innovatively to emerging needs, rules and environments.

3. AN ADAPTATION CAPACITY ANALYTICAL MODEL

We propose an analytical model aiming at rendering operational the discussed concepts. The model includes seven dimensions, describing attributes of adaptive capacity:

- Anticipation: organizations' capacity to visualize contexts and situations allowing it to define and scheme towards future expectations (ILPES, 2009).
- Sensibility: reaction of the organization regarding unpredictability. It evaluates the flexibility to adapt or to resist to change (Christie et al., 2012).
- Crisis: reactive repertoires regarding sudden changes, creating immediate organizations' responses to particular junctures.²

¹ Is interesting to demarcate the concepts of *adaptation and resiliency*. Resiliency is “the capacity of a material, mechanism or system to recover their initial state when the perturbation to which it had been subjected ceases” (RAE). Adaptation goes beyond recovery, since it implies profiting from contingencies as change and innovation opportunities.

² This notion and its attributes are a result of the empirical evidence of this study. It is included here for reasons of completion.

- **Stability:** grade in which the organization reduces the “volatility of performance via the institutionalization of good practice and rules, as well as identifying and mitigating internal and external risks” (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2010, p. 11).
- **Adaptability:** capacity of appropriation with which the organization takes on and dominates specific changes, while responding to other demands. Morgan (2006) suggests that limited comprehension is pervasive during such periods, and increases as the process goes on.
- **Renovation:** attitude and discipline of the organization to transform processes, promote and use creativity, establish incentives and generate opportunities (Engel, Keijzer, & Land, 2007).
- **Learning:** continuous process of examination, redefinition and improvement of practices in the organization regarding new circumstances (Engel et al., 2007).
- **Accountability:** follow-up, self-regulation and adjustment of behaviors in relation to results (UNDP, 2010).

Box 2 collects and categorizes these postulates along with organizational verifiable data sources:

BOX 2 CONCEPTUAL DIMENSIONS

UNIT OF ANALYSIS	VERIFIABLE COMPONENTS	SOURCE
Anticipation	Formulation of an adaptation strategy	UNDP
Sensibility to Change	Degree of acceptance or resistance to system change (equilibrium between stability and change)	Baser and Morgan (2008)
Crisis	Identification of obstacles or existing blockages	ILPES (2011)
Stability	Training on new processes	UNDP
	Degree of political interference	UNDP
	Clarity in organizational roles	UNDP
	Number of organizational changes to cope with demands	UNDP
	Number of trainings on new processes	UNDP
Adaptation	Number of trained officials	UNDP
	Officials who completely understand the new process	FEDESARROLLO / DNP
	Adaptation of new processes	Morgan (2006)
	Technological changes such as the acquisition of technology, hardware, software or specialized equipment to improve the performance on new functions	FEDESARROLLO

Continue

UNIT OF ANALYSIS	VERIFIABLE COMPONENTS	SOURCE
Renovation	Self-evaluation processes	Engel et al. (2007)
	Formulation of a new vision (measured by stages in vision updating)	UNDP
	Number of employees/parties instructed on the vision	UNDP
	Level of investment in science, technology and innovation	UNDP
	Institutional efficiency	UNDP
Learning	Discipline of officials to learn and absorb new ideas	Engel et al. (2007)
	Launching of an educational strategy to improve the officials' capabilities	Engel et al. (2007) / Alaerts and Kasperma (2009)
	Existence of communication channels with citizens	UNDP
Accountability	Existence of a standard monitoring system	UNDP
	Grading of control entities	DNP

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

4. METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

We follow an interpretative approach (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2015), building abductively on the case (Reichertz, 2007). This is, trying to understand the empirical phenomenon while developing the tools allowing its observation, in a process of iterative adjustment nurturing from both conceptual and empirical sources.

The case focus on agency deployed on specific adaptation dimensions taking place between 2012 and 2015. Data gathered includes: i) semi structured interviews of decisive actors in the process of transition of the Governor's Office of Meta and the National Planning Department [DNP], ii) documentation and secondary information of context and evidence. Box 3 describes analytical use of data sources:

BOX 3 APPLIED CONCEPTUAL DIMENSIONS

Unit of analysis	Components	Method
Anticipation	Formulation of a strategy of adaptation	Documentary review/ Interview Former Meta's Governor
Sensibility to Change	Degree of acceptance or resistance to system change (equilibrium between stability and change)	Interviews to regional officers
Crisis	Identification of obstacles and existing barriers in the Governor's Office	Interviews to regional officers

Continue

Unit of analysis	Components	Method
Stability	Degree of political interference in processes related to GRS	Interview with former Meta's Governor
	Clarity of roles within the configuration of GRS in the entity	Interview with former Meta's Governor and DNP officers
	Changes in organizational structure of the Governor's Office to tend to new competencies of GRS	Documentary review (Administrative acts and COAD acts)
	Trainings on the new GRS	Interviews to regional and DNP officers
Adaptation	Officials who completely understand the new GRS processes	Interviews to regional officers
	Number of projects set before the technical secretary of the department's COAD (specified 2012-2015) vs the number of approved projects in the department's COAD (specified 2012-2015)	Documentary Review
	Acquisition of technology to fulfill the new functions	Documentary Review (Budget) / Interviews to regional officers
Renovation	Creative processes	Interviews to regional and DNP officers
	Advances in the formulation of a new territorial vision	Interview with Former Governor of Meta / Documentary Review (Development Plan)
	Level of investment in science, technology and innovation	Documentary Review
	Institutional efficiency (financing alternatives)	Interviews to regional officers / Documentary review
Learning	Discipline of officials to learn and absorb new ideas	Interviews to regional officers
	Educational strategy to improve the capacity of officials in the formulation of projects	Interviews to regional officers
Accountability	Existence of a channel of communication with citizens on investment of royalties (at the national level)	Interviews to regional and DNP officers / Documentary review (web page of Governor's Office of Meta)
	Existence of a standard system of monitoring for GRS	Interviews to regional and DNP officers / Documentary Review
	Grading of GRS in the reports of CGR	Documentary Review [Follow-up reports and GRS Audits]

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

This analysis does not intend to provide a measurement. The description and verification of observed phenomena is oriented towards verifying the degree of concretion of each dimension: materialization of each is estimated, concentrating in the development of descriptors.

5. THE CASE: ADAPTATION OF THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF META TO GRS

In 2012, the governor's office of Meta starts a process of adaptation to the rules put in practice by GRS. To ease the reading, a descriptive report is presented, of a case which synthetizes the main milestones of the process in two matrices (See Box 4 and Graphics):

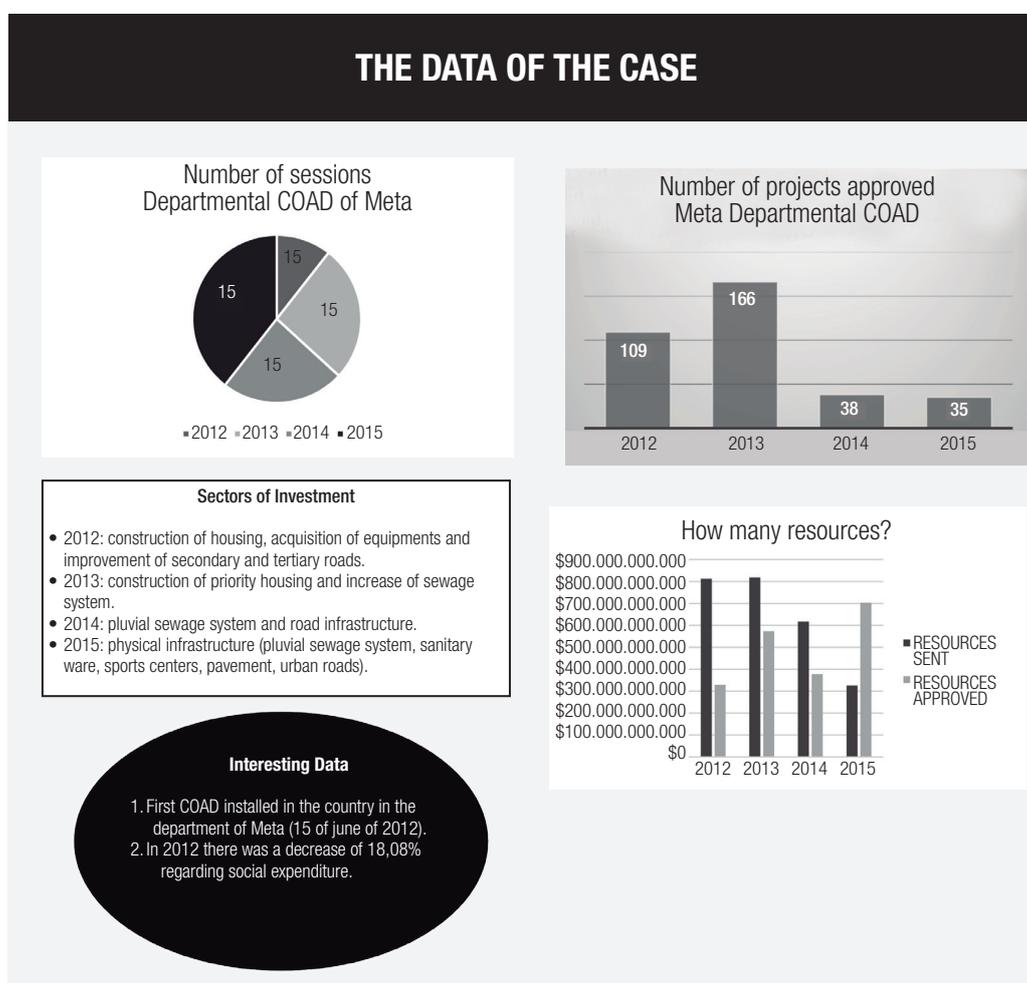
BOX 4 TIMELINE

		YEARS			
		2012	2013	2014	2015
NORMATIVE ASPECTS		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decree 4923 of 2011 putting in place GRS operation. - Law 1530 is sanctioned on 17 of May. - Paralysis in investment, without executing 46% of GRS allotted resources (CGR, 2013, p. 22). - Creation of the Development Plan coincides with GRS implementation. - Normative uncertainty. - Multiannual plan for investments of an indicative type regarding sources of financing (Departmental Assembly of Meta, 2012, p. 197). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First biennial royalty budget 2013-2014. - Problems with project approval due to sectoral assessment delay. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Massive approval of projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creation of Evaluation System via Scoring to fulfill Development Plan goals. Priorities are drinking water and sewage system, transport, culture, education and social inclusion.
	ORGANIZING ABILITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shortcomings in projects' formulation using the logical framework template. - Effective achievement of paper 0041, which invests in organizational capacity, knowledge and strengthening of physical and technological resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Massive project approval causes blockages in legal office due to contracting processes. - DNP approach to local reality. - Agile appropriation of General Adjusted Methodology – GAM. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Officers training on project formulation. - Freeing resources due to financial sustainability and contractual processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delayed projects due to Ministry of Housing assessment. - Projects prioritization made viable in previous periods. - Decrease in project formulation.

Continue

	YEARS			
	2012	2013	2014	2015
STRUCTURE (Physical infrastructure/ human resources)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dispersed location of Governor's Office sections. - Scarcity of human resources regarding new competencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of computing equipment delays project approval. - New director of planning (technical secretary of COAD). - New Treasury Secretary. - Three new mayors participate in departmental COAD. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acquisition of technological equipment. - Three new mayors participate in departmental COAD. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New director of planning (technical secretary of COAD).

Source: Elaborated by the authors.



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

³ Resources Sent: Disbursement of resources made by the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit to each of the beneficiaries of GRS, according to the distribution made of the totality of said resources to the accounts authorized by each of the beneficiaries / Resources approved: Resources approved of projects of investment financed and charged to GRS (Map of Royalties).

Data shows that the entity undertook a process characterized by the construction of capacities, the search for alternatives in acquiring needed resources, investment prioritization (transport and housing), a constant personnel rotation, delays in projects at the contracting stage and accountability. Up next, these elements will be discussed starting from an analytical framework so as to read the process in terms of regional adaptive capacity to GRS.

6. DISCUSSION

Anticipation: there is no evidence of previous preparation of the Governor's Office to face change. Candidates for Governor did not visualize possible scenarios. This reveals a low capacity of perception of actors regarding external gradual stimuli (Chiavenato, 2000).

Sensibility to change: there was a loss of control in decision-making regarding COAD decrease of resources and uncertainty due to absence of specific rules, the organization's attitude was one of resistance, reflected in framing GRS as an inefficient and foreign regulation. The governor's office shows low capacity to deal with unpredictability (Martínez, 2005).

Crisis: the situation allows existing shortcomings to emerge (i.e. weaknesses in project formulation, effects of temporary officer's contracts). The crisis allowed to recognize and tackle pre-existing conditions, its reach better understood when modifying interaction patterns arise.

Stability: The Governor's Office tries and maintain an institutional equilibrium (invests in physical, human and technological resources; preserves officials aiming at a learning curve; and has a dialogue at the national level). Scarcity of provisions, excess of functions and the demand for personnel regarding new competencies affect the degree of stability. This suggests that gradual stability is due to previous existing robustness.

Adaptation: The Governor's Office deploys an ample repertory of adaptation: the permanence and training of officials, the appropriation of rules, the attitude during and after the crisis, and the investment in infrastructure. The case shows that subsistence of the system effectively depends in its adaptation.

Renovation: The officials used their creativity to tend to new requirements, but the crisis did not promote the search for financing alternatives. It is evident that there are no renovation practices, and research and alternative funding was not set as a priority in the investment agenda. Renovation of the entity is limited: there are no capacities allowing tackling contingencies as change catalysts.

Learning: GRS introduces conditions which promote good practices (i.e institutional synergy amidst levels of government, via COAD; and the demand for better planning processes). Regardless of it, there was no definition of a strategy towards anticipating and preventing future needs based on this experience.

Accountability: The Governor's Office of Meta was limited to achieving the minimum demands for transparency and publicity (Law 1530 of 2012), but a tendency to increase spaces of citizen participation was not noticed. In spite of diverse monitoring and evaluation tools provided by GRS, it appears not to be will to create spaces bringing citizens closer.

7. CONCLUSION

Results show a contrast between an immediate relatively satisfactory response to GRS as an emerging context situation in the stages of stability, adaptation and learning; and a reduced reach in organizational topics related with the dimensions of anticipation, sensibility, renovation and accountability. Structural problematic aspects persist and actually limit the versatility of Governor's Office response.

This aspect opens the discussion for future investigations regarding adaptive capacity. We suggest advancing on developing indicators allowing measuring with more detail adaptive capacity in the public sector. Specifically, addressing with greater detail the discussed dimensions, focusing on structural aspects that could flesh them out. This paper serves as exploratory input for the conceptual and empirical development of adaptive capacity in Colombian territorial offices.

The case allows for the observation that, in spite of paving the way, not every policy at the national level strengthens local capacities. There is a need to revise Colombian decentralization practices. It seems that some of structural inhibiting aspects reflect an institutional architecture prioritizing financial resources transfers over capacity development. Such practice, pushing territorial entities taking on duties without a proper learning system, shows a recipe for a slow decentralization with lagging institutional development.

Finally, it is expected that exposure of this case will help revise the dynamics present in the Governor's Office of Meta, and we hope that the results serve to provide ideas for other territories which are subjected to the same regulatory framework.

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