

How to Use the IAD Framework
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1. Decide if your primary concern is **explanation of a puzzle** (why does outcome X occur in cases like Y, but not Z?) or **policy analysis** (what is likely to happen if current policy A would be replaced by policy B? What would need to be done in order to implement B?).
2. Summarize 2-3 plausible **alternative explanations** for why this outcome occurs, or why your preferred outcome has not been realized; express each explanation as a **dynamic process**.
3. **Identify the focal action situation(s)**, the one (or a few) arena(s) of interaction which you consider to be most critical in one or more of these alternative explanations.
4. **Systematically examine categories of the IAD framework** to identify and highlight the most critical (1) actors in positions, (2) rules in use, (3) attributes of communities, (4) types of goods, (5) evaluative criteria, and (6) feedback loops in these focal action situations.
5. **Follow the information** flow in each of these focal action situations. What sources of information are available to which actors under which circumstances, and what might prevent them from using that information to change the outcomes that result?
6. **Locate adjacent action situations** that determine the contextual categories of the focal action situation, that is, outcomes of adjacent situations in which collective actors are constructed and individual incentives shaped, rules are written and collective procedures established, norms are internalized and other community attributes are determined, goods are produced and inputs for production are extracted from resource systems (that may need replenishment), and where evaluation, learning, and feedback processes occur.
7. **Select those adjacent action situations** that are critical for distinguishing among alternative explanations, and repeat steps 4 and 5 (and if necessary, step 6) for those action situations.
8. **Compare and contrast the ways these linked and nested action situations are interrelated in the processes emphasized by each of your alternative explanations.** Do the same actors write, implement, and enforce rules? How do outcomes of other action situations shape processes of information flow and evaluation in the focal action situation(s)? Which incentives or values of actors are reinforced or undermined by outcomes of these action situations?
9. **Identify the most critical steps for more detailed analysis**, by isolating components of adjacent action situations that determine the context currently in place in the focal action situation(s), and that if changed would result in fundamental changes in outcomes. But remember that if you change one contextual factor in one action situation, then you must also incorporate all relevant changes in closely related action situations. (*Ceteris paribus* is more complicated in institutional analysis!)
10. Draw upon principles of research design or evaluative research to **select cases** for further analysis by whatever **methods** are best suited to that purpose. **Follow relevant conventions when writing up your conclusions**; DO NOT describe this process of discovery in detail.