

[Raul Pacheco-Vega, PhD](#)

Understanding and solving intractable resource governance problems.

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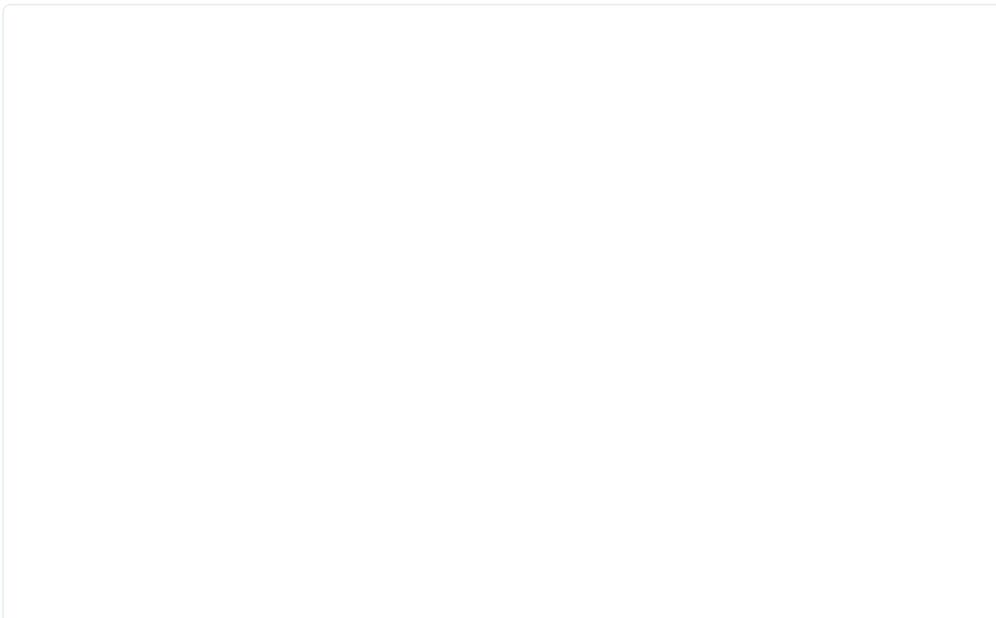
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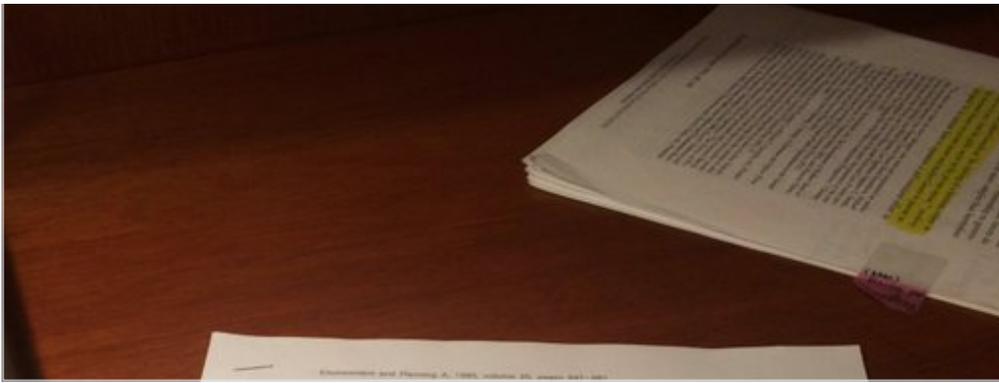
[Finding the most relevant information in a paper when reading: A three-step method \(the AIC technique\)](#)

It occurred to me as I was [writing my blog posts on reading strategies](#) that some people may wonder *how to find the most relevant information when reading*. I had tweeted about it, but I hadn't actually written about it. So, I thought I'd write about how I work to find the most relevant information when I'm reading a paper. This applies to articles, book chapters, reports and books. I use a three-step process (and I focus on 3 main elements of a paper) which I call the **AIC content extraction**.

First off, while many people will recommend *reading the abstract first*, I don't necessarily agree that it should be the **major** source of information. I have found that many abstracts are so constrained by space (100-150 words) that they rarely relay exactly the content of the paper (which ends up being much richer than the abstract posited). I think *we always should read abstracts*, but be somewhat skeptic of whether they will provide us with the full description of what the paper is about. I wouldn't [write a rhetorical precis](#) based on an abstract, for example!

I do, however, expect that **the introduction to a paper will tell me, by the second or third paragraph, what the paper is about**. For example, below I noted that the introductory paragraph of a paper on industrial restructuring in the beer industry in Canada tells us the **context** and the **reason for the paper**.





Dr Raul Pacheco-Vega

@raulpacheco

I like this model of introduction: context, what explains phenomenon. HOWEVER, some puzzles remain. Hence this paper

15 7:54 PM - Jan 3, 2017

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Note 3 explanatory elements within the paper:

- What is the context of this research? Why are the authors doing it?
- What explains the phenomenon they are studying?
- The “BUT THIS IS WHY WE’RE DOING THIS” – the WHY that explains what the paper will tackle and the reasons for it.

Some authors will provide then a detailed description of what the paper is about (methodology, research methods, data description, etc.), as shown below.





Dr Raul Pacheco-Vega

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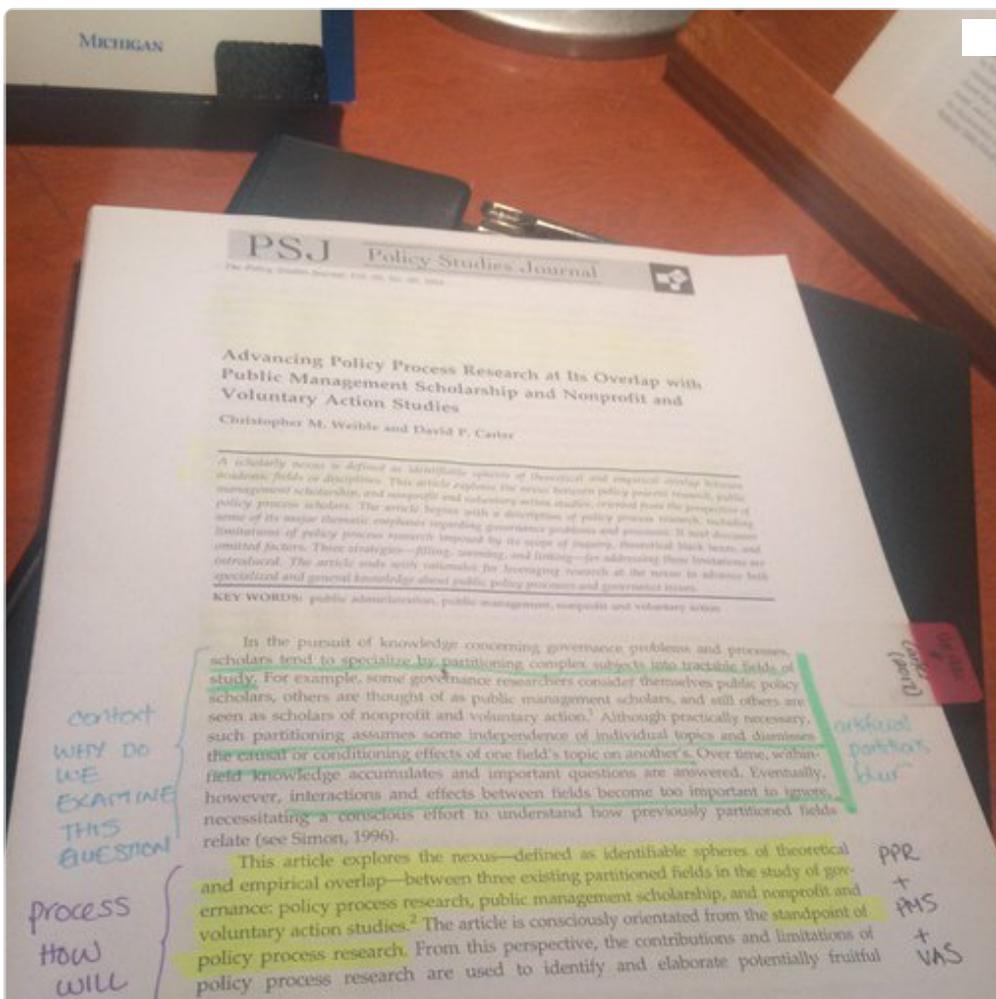
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Then next paragraph explains "this paper explains X phenomenon through a study of Y and Z compared" then, data.

1 8:11 PM - Jan 3, 2017

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Other papers will provide you with a summary of Context, Rationale, Method, and Findings within the first few paragraphs, as this paper on the nexus between voluntary and non-profit research and policy studies' scholarship by Dr. David Carter and Dr. Chris Weible shows.



Dr Raul Pacheco-Vega

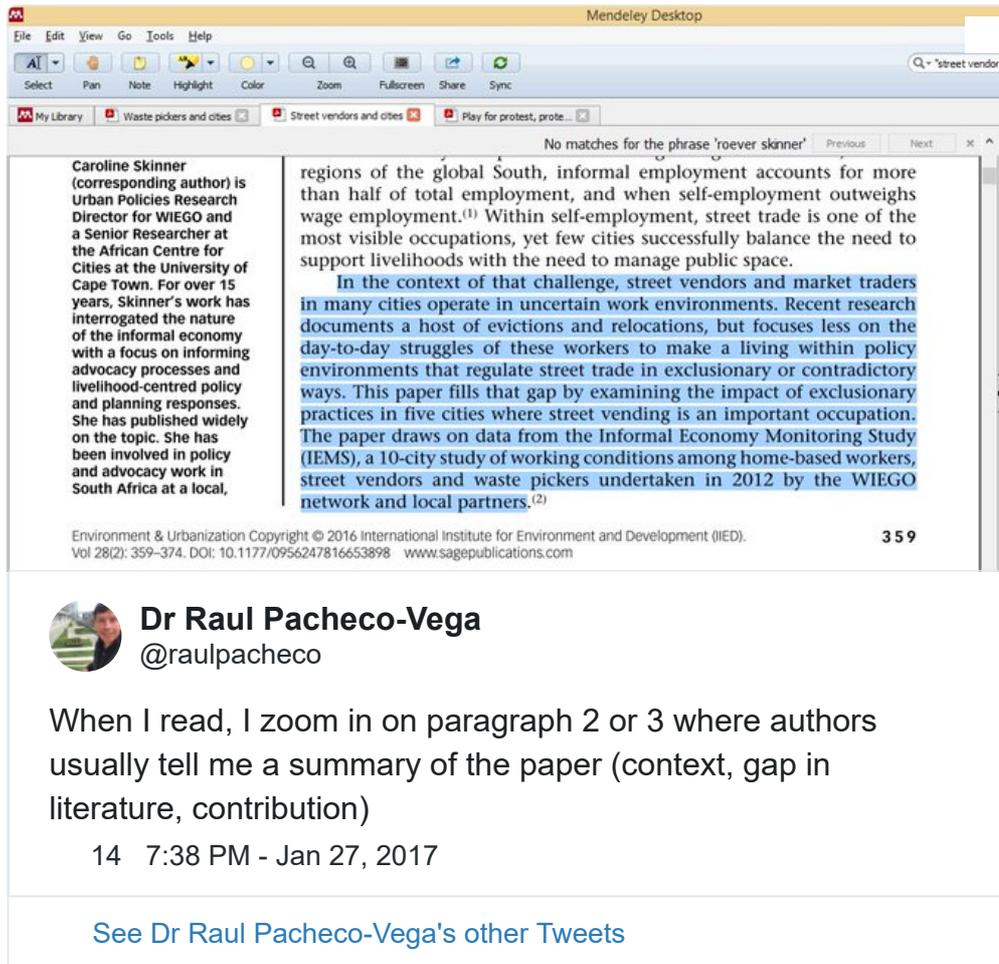
@raulpacheco

.@chris_weible & @DCarterSLC offer great example on how to read/write. Paragraph 1 context, 2 what article is about

4 7:36 PM - Jan 8, 2017

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I always zoom in on the introduction because that's where I expect that the paper authors' will set up the entire manuscript. I look for a summary of the paper (again, looking at the context for why this research is needed, the gap in the literature, and what the contribution of the paper is).



Caroline Skinner (corresponding author) is Urban Policies Research Director for WIEGO and a Senior Researcher at the African Centre for Cities at the University of Cape Town. For over 15 years, Skinner's work has interrogated the nature of the informal economy with a focus on informing advocacy processes and livelihood-centred policy and planning responses. She has published widely on the topic. She has been involved in policy and advocacy work in South Africa at a local,

regions of the global South, informal employment accounts for more than half of total employment, and when self-employment outweighs wage employment.⁽¹⁾ Within self-employment, street trade is one of the most visible occupations, yet few cities successfully balance the need to support livelihoods with the need to manage public space.

In the context of that challenge, street vendors and market traders in many cities operate in uncertain work environments. Recent research documents a host of evictions and relocations, but focuses less on the day-to-day struggles of these workers to make a living within policy environments that regulate street trade in exclusionary or contradictory ways. This paper fills that gap by examining the impact of exclusionary practices in five cities where street vending is an important occupation. The paper draws on data from the Informal Economy Monitoring Study (IEMS), a 10-city study of working conditions among home-based workers, street vendors and waste pickers undertaken in 2012 by the WIEGO network and local partners.⁽²⁾

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 **Dr Raul Pacheco-Vega**
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When I read, I zoom in on paragraph 2 or 3 where authors usually tell me a summary of the paper (context, gap in literature, contribution)

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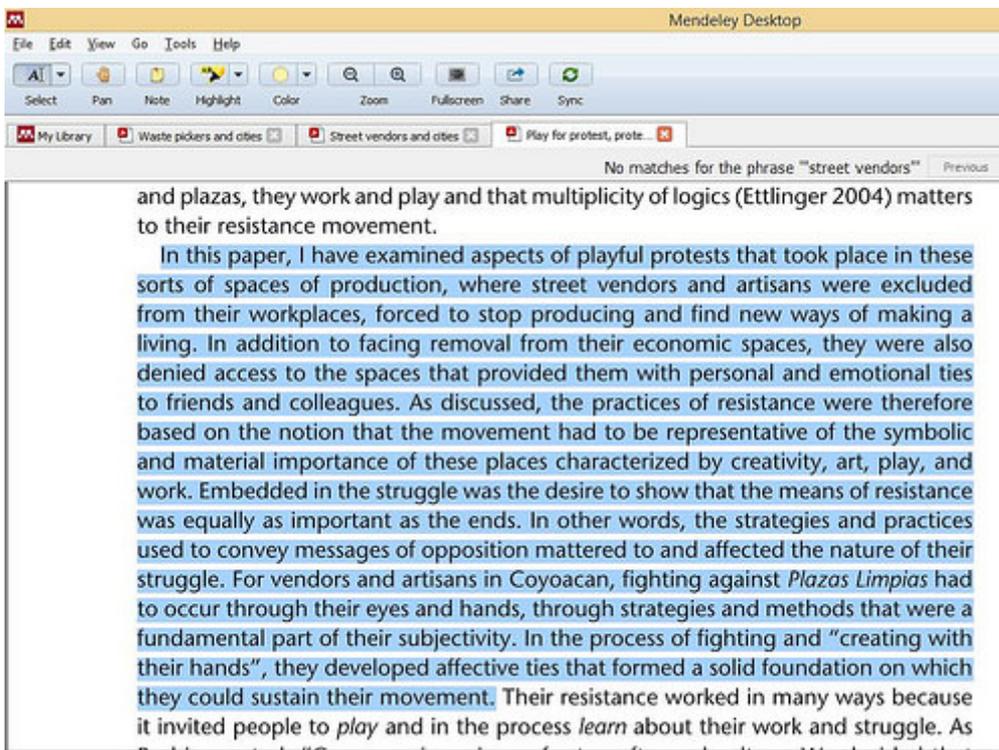
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One of the suggestions that many scholars and academic writing coaches offer is that one should read at least the following elements if one is in a rush.

- *The abstract.*
- *The introduction.*
- *The conclusion.*

I tend to agree, which is why I suggested that this is a three elements/steps method, though in methodological papers, I tend to focus more on the actual application of the method. But I **always** expect that the *abstract*, *introduction* and *conclusion* will follow a storytelling model and that they will provide me with a broad overview of what the paper is about (this suggestion applies obviously to larger-size manuscripts, like books).

In the **conclusion** of a paper, I always expect to find a summary of what's been done and how, as Dr. Veronica Crossa does in this paper on varying strategies that street vendors used in Mexico City's Coyoacan to resist removal and eviction.



Note that Dr. Crossa summarizes the entire paper in the first few sentences of one of the concluding paragraphs, but provides additional context and insights further down.

I find that applying this three-step method (Abstract, Introduction and Conclusion) gives me at least the bare bones of an understanding of a paper. I absolutely do NOT recommend skipping the middle of the paper (methods, data, results, argument), but at least these three elements may provide a tool to decide on whether to do a [detailed memorandum](#) on the paper, whether to simply write a [rhetorical precis](#), and what kind of information to look for throughout the paper for your [Conceptual Synthesis Excel Worksheet](#).

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By [Raul Pacheco-Vega](#) – January 28, 2017

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About Raul Pacheco-Vega, PhD

I am an Assistant Professor in the Public Administration Division of the Centre for Economic Research and Teaching, CIDE (Centro de Investigacion y Docencia Economicas, CIDE, AC) based out of CIDE Region Centro in Aguascalientes, Mexico. My research is interdisciplinary by nature, although I consider myself more of a political scientist and geographer, as those [...] [more →](#)

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 **Josh MacFadyen**
@joshmacfadyen

The CFP deadline for our Rural, Agricultural, and Environmental network meeting at SSHA Chicago is tomorrow. Feel free to contact me for more info on the conference or how to use the new proposal app.

4h

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If you or anybody you know (inc grad students) would like to become a reviewer, contact me.

(You can also contact me with a suggestion for a book to review).@unigr_cbs @border_in @bordaesth @SDUBorderRegion @BorderStudiesRM @BorderEconomy @ASU_Transborder #AcademicChatter

7h

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