MULTI-ACTOR PARTNERSHIP TO IMPROVE IMPLEMENTATION OF CONSERVATION POLICIES: LESSONS FROM THE AMAZON FRONTIER

PAULA BERNASCONI[*1]; JOAO PAULO SOARES DE ANDRADE[2]; CAROLINA DE OLIVEIRA JORDÃO[2]
1.UNICAMP; 2.INSTITUTO CENTRO DE VIDA.

Introduction

The discussion about global climate change, biodiversity loss and ecosystem services usually highlights the importance of reducing deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon. In Brazil, deforestation is mainly controlled by repression through many campaigns, but a series of crackdowns has been unsuccessful and clearing rates seem to rise and fall independent of these programs (Fearnside, 2005). Repression, although undoubtedly necessary, is not enough in a scenario of very complex realities, and lack of governmental and non-governmental institutional presence.

Many studies show the importance of collective action and institutional arrangements in the management of natural resources by a community of organized citizens to achieve more sustainable outcomes (Poteete & Ostrom, 2008, Vatn, 2009, Paavola et al., 2009) especially when multiple interests and values are involved.

The popular participation in public administration, with an emphasis in active citizenship, can be seen as a turning point in the strengthening of public policies and the qualitative transformations in the relationship between State and civil society (Jacobi, 2002).

Recently (2007), the Brazilian federal government launched a program called "Green Arch" aiming to offer a different approach in order to stop deforestation focusing on the development of alternatives for critical municipalities located mainly in the Amazon agricultural frontier and integrating several federal agencies. Out of 43 chosen districts, only 3 achieved the goals set by the program, which involve the control of deforestation rates and a register of the rural properties (known as CAR) in a state environment monitoring and licensing system. In this study we analyze the role of local institutional arrangements in the achievement of the program and policy goals.

Methods

We elaborated an overview of the 43 municipalities considered as priority for actions to control and prevent deforestation in the context of the "Green Arch" program, with a closer look on 3 of them that reached the goals set by the Federal Government: Alta Floresta and Querência from the state of Mato Grosso and Paragominas from the state of Pará. Those were compared with more 3 surrounding districts that have similar political structure and suffer the same kind of deforestation pressure, but were still not able to promote the expected concrete actions to control and prevent deforestation.

In order to carry out the analysis, a few indicators were set: socioeconomic structure (HDI and GDP), local policy approach (top-down or bottom-up), deforestation rates, percentage of registered rural properties (CAR), existence of institutional arrangements and agreements between different sectors to stop deforestation and implementation of state and federal policies.

Preliminary results

Our study showed that a good performance in the achievement of the program goals: high CAR numbers and low deforestation rates for the analyzed districts was related to the existence of partnerships between local sectors which included the local government, rural trade unions, the private sector and NGOs. Other districts with the same characteristics, even with all the efforts from the federal government, could not have such a satisfactory outcome.

In order to move forward in the Brazilian Amazon deforestation control, a set of policies including command and control plus a real task force of multiple institutions and actors should be implemented. If there is no articulation efforts and no development of partnerships between local multi-sector institutions, none of this effort will be worth.

We highlighted the important role of local institutions in promoting agreements based on low-carbon economy in districts that reported high rates of deforestation. The institutional arrangements analyzed in this article can serve as an example of a promotion of a new local governance for the Brazilian Amazon that involves municipal agreements based on the conservation and sustainable management of resources covenanted by the local society.

Main references

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