

Indigenous people in an ecological sensitive environment in the forest margins of the Amazon region in Brazil

The case of Javae in Bananal Island of Tocantins

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The Problem

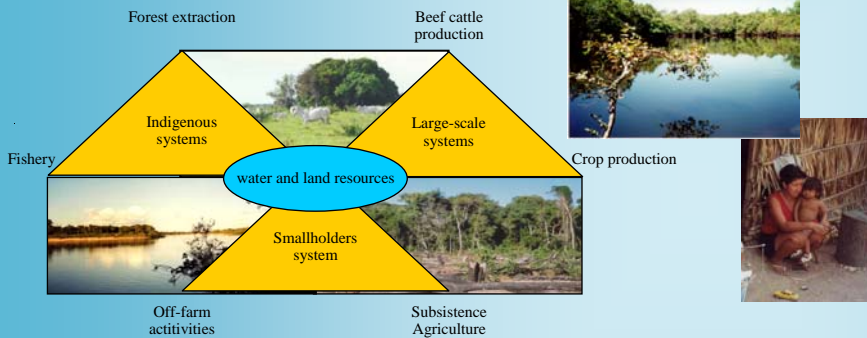
The rainforest zone in Brazil is under pressure through encroachment of farming and other sectors which lead to an ecologically unbalanced development and reduces the living potential of indigenous communities. This is also relevant for the Javaes and Karajas ethnic groups in Bananal Island. The indigenous local knowledge had been affected through contact with non-indigenous people. There is a need of restoration and valorisation of the traditional indigenous culture who manage the use of natural resources and to assess the potential of future socio-economic development.



Study area in Tocantins State

Objectives

The study intends to better understand and explain the development of indigenous systems. The living standard is quantified and explained and the ecological balanced uses of natural resources is investigated. As specific objectives aims to: (1) better understand the rural farming systems complexity and profile where the indigenous systems are, (2) identify socio-economic and cultural factor influencing the resources management by the different systems in the region, (3) evaluate the sustainability of the resources management by the indigenous system.



In the forest margin indigenous people in the forest, smallholder and large-scale systems in the savannah compete for resources

Methodology

Information base: Micro-survey based on indigenous groups leaders interviews and Rapid Rural Appraisal interviews with 12 indigenous families. Interviews with settlers (24 families), large-scale farmers (52 families) and secondary information.

Type of Analysis: Application of the Farming System Approach, analyses to understand the resources capacities and the process of decision making. Comparative and historical analysis. Living standards parameters

Results and Conclusions

- Most of the lands in Bananal Island are demarcated as Indigenous Lands. In 1996 all other non-indigenous population where expelled out of the area. A solution in the direction of restoring indigenous systems respect.

- The respect of preservation of their culture starts with respect to their languages. In some villages a bilingual system education was implemented although is only until the primary school.

- The indigenous elders were considered as smallholders and granted with retirement payments becoming an important assurance of families income.

- The main source of income of indigenous families comes from fishery activities. Although this must be better evaluated for the sustainability of the river species.

- The tradition of using fire to clean paths for hunting and clearing small plots for agriculture has caused some disasters as the fire spreads easily in dry season.

- These indigenous communities of Bananal Island are primarily fishers than hunters and smallholders. The agriculture is very rudimental and does not represent a risk for the environment degradation.

- The forest and wild life sustainability diminish with the continuous settlement of indigenous societies. The actions here described help the sustainability of the environment in general. The indigenous families today have the same income level of smallholders of the region. In terms of living standard they meet themselves as the fishermen of the neighbour area of Cantao Park.

- Socio-economic inequalities are evident when comparing the living standard of these indigenous communities with the large-scale systems of the region.

Living Standard Criteria	Indigenous Systems		Non-indigenous systems		
			Large-scale farming		
	Sao Joao Village	Loroty Settlement	Lagoa da Confusao	Formoso do Araguaia	
1 Family Income per member	1.615,83	2.355,44	133.637,78	66.232,04	
2 Cash Balance	Rainy season	3.428,75	2.403,07	395.970,06	157.201,40
	Dry season	3.428,75	2.328,35	509.258,79	206.631,29
3 Family supply	Food consumption	Proteins sources Fish Rice (Kg/member)	Fish Meat, chicken and fish 447,50	Meat and chicken 213,47	Meat and less chicken 196,49
	Drinking water	Supply directly from the river	Artesian wells and rivers.	Public water system distribution.	Public water system distribution.
	Houses	Rustic straw buildings.	Simple brick walls houses, frequently not finished.	Stable finished houses.	Stable finished houses.
	Energy	No public energy system.	No public energy system.	Public energy system.	Public energy system.
	Sewerage system	No. Use of the bush.	No. Use of pit latrines.	No. Use of concrete cesspit	No. Use of concrete cesspit
4 Health situation	First aid post.	First aid post.	Public and private health systems.	Public and private health systems.	
5 Independence on resource owner	No land title but land use rights.	Full title but partial land rights.	Full title and rights.	Full title and rights.	
6 Education and qualification, no. of families with school level.	0,00%	8,33%	19,23%	65,38%	
7. Cultural freedom, valorisation of traditions	Primary bilingual education system				