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“Utilisation of diversity in land use systems:
Sustainable and organic approaches to meet human needs”

Land Use Conflict or Cooperation: Challenges in the Management of the Serra Dos Orgaos National Park, Brazil

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Abstract

In many developing countries inconsistent policies often contradict conservation and development goals and affect the ways actors use and manage natural resources, creating, as a result, conflicting land use systems. In order to conserve the environment, the primary instrument has been to keep the population out by a zoning policy, creating protected areas by a law without consultation of local stakeholders. In the Brazilian Atlantic Forest of Rio de Janeiro, apart from problems related to land tenure insecurity, natural resources and biodiversity conservation are threatened by the conflicts of interests between the conservation of the biodiversity and the development of diverse land uses of surrounding communities such as illegal settlements, intensive use of agrochemicals, hunting and fire for land clearing.

Recognizing that the effective management of resources cannot mean only “zoning the forest” and that the effective participation of local stakeholders and institutional partnerships in the decision making process are a precondition to protect the nature and to improve livelihoods systems, this project aims to analyse the social dimension of ecosystem management. Based on the collective action and the “Institutional Analysis and Development” approach, it is this research’s objective to answer how institutional actors and the land tenure regime affect the way different actors use and manage the natural resources and which factors promote or constrain the alternatives of land use surrounding the protected areas.

By understanding these factors, this research will help to inform policymakers about ways to improve a management plan which achieves, at the same time, the preservation of natural resources and the protection of economically vulnerable groups.

For the empirical study several data collection techniques will be applied, such as narrative expert interviews, focus group discussions with representatives of institutions, questionnaire-supported household’s surveys and in-depth interviews with members of local communities.

Keywords: Atlantic forest, collective action, natural resources management, southeast Brazil, stakeholder analysis