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“Filling gaps and removing traps
for sustainable resource management”

Influence of the International Environmental Agenda on Amazonian Cooperation Treaty Organisation (ACTO) Regional Governance

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Abstract

International regimes, both global and regional, can play a key role on the international environmental governance. However, due to the increasing frustration with these regimes, the topic is gaining also attention in political practice and academia. On this path, based on qualitative data from key regime policy documents developed between 1978 to 2018 by the regime, the aim of this study is to analyse the institutional design (ID) and forest policy developed within the Amazonian Cooperation Treaty Organisation (ACTO) and address the following empirical questions: 1) What is the ID of ACTO; and how is the environmental agenda influenced on its evolution? 2) Which policy goals, policy instruments and the precise settings of these instruments can be identified within the regime; and how were these influenced by the international environmental agenda since the last forest policy was adopted? The results show that along the lifetime of the regime the membership features did not change; meanwhile the “scope” and “flexibility” were slightly changed; and the “centralisation” and “control” features were strongly modified. Also, we identified that three main impulses, boost by the international environmental agenda, drove these important changes in ACTO ID. In addition, the forest policy developed by ACTO is characterised by a large number of issues covered, coherent and non-conflicting policy goals, short term and very limited quantity of donor projects as the only instruments; and an extreme lack of regulatory, (des)incentive, and informational instruments developed within the regime. In conclusion, the ID evolution helped to increase the formalisation of the regime and present a solid image of ACTO in front of the international community. Moreover, the policy development show that one of the main regime’s informal goals is to raise funds from the international community through legitimacy provided by member countries. Therefore, we conclude that ACTO is a weak international regime that depends on donor funded projects, driven by the international agenda, to achieve its policy goals.

Keywords: ACTO, forest policy, governance, institutional design