

University of Florida

Tropical Conservation and Development

TCD Research Grant Field Report

Project “Under what conditions will NTFPs policies promote forest conservation in Brazil?”

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Introduction

This report is part of the requirements of the TCD field research grant that I was awarded to support your research proposal entitled “Under what conditions will NTFPs policies promote forest conservation in Brazil?”. My objectives in the proposed exploratory field season included rethinking about my research questions in a more fine-tuned way to incorporate the gained knowledge of the local context and to reflect local demands for scientific information. This report was written in a descriptive way to facilitate an easy reading.

Stage 1: Rio Pardo de Minas, MG

I have scheduled with EMBRAPA to participate in the week meeting that they would define the project tasks and divide them between the project components. Fortunately, the meeting was scheduled for the beginning of May. We met in Rio Pardo de Minas on a Monday with people that already knew and were engaged with the project EMBRAPA/PNUD’s project (“Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use into NTFP and Agroforestry Systems Production Practices in Multiple-Use Forest Landscapes of High Conservation Value” also called ‘BEM DIVERSO’). There were people from “rural labor union of Rio Pardo”¹ (that were also part of local communities); ICMbio²; EMATER³; CAA⁴; besides EMBRAPA and me. In the first day we prepared ourselves to the two-day workshop that would happen with the community in the following days. The Regional Workshop aimed to present information about the project as well as empower the local communities and partners over the project, ensuring dialogue and participatory construction of a work plan to be implemented. There were over 100 participants in the workshop, many of them local communities members, but also professors from local universities and government representatives.

The workshop days were really interesting; many members of the communities showed up (more than 100 people). The communities presented themselves and talked about the history of local land use and how water accessibility changed over the years. Actually, the majority of them correlated the water scarcity problem with the plantation of eucalyptus trees in the region. It is impressive how they have been losing springs; one community had only 2 springs left out of 14 that existed 20 years ago. The afternoon of the same day highlighted that there was a clear communication problem within people of the project, one of the project’s members ignored what we had discussed in the previous day and pretty much told the communities that they would respond the water scarcity problem that they were going through. Most people that were in the previous day looked at each other with doubt. We kept with the meeting intense schedule without really knowing how the project would respond to the expectation it’d raised in the communities.

¹ <https://www.facebook.com/STTRRPM/>

² <http://www.icmbio.gov.br/portal/rds-nascentes-geraizeiras?highlight=WyJyZHMlXQ==>

³ <http://www.emater.mg.gov.br/>

⁴ <http://www.caa.org.br/>

The other day was a field day, when we went to one of the communities. Four community leaders showed us around and took the group in a trail. In the way they talked about their fight stories with big eucalyptus producers and how it was related to the locations we were visiting. We then stopped in important point of the trail, where there was a big concentration of *cariocar brasiliensis*. They mentioned that they are planning to build a religious structure to celebrate the reserve creation and that “God sent them the right people when they were almost giving up of fighting”. They took the participants of the workshop preparation meeting to an on-going construction of a cooperative facility aiming to process local fruits to increase the value of their products. It was also a day of learning how this community had access to many government socio projects, (not only “bolsa familia”, but also implementation of cisterns and new houses) and how they managed their productive land.

A meeting about the Rio Pardo Basin purposely followed the workshop because of the overlap of stakeholders. The meeting brought together organizations and movements to discuss the restoration of the basin waters. A highlight of this event for me was a part of the day that we divided ourselves in working groups to discuss action strategies. I was part of the educational working group. I already knew some members of the group from the previous days, but was even more impressed with 2 current masters students that were part of the first class of the local farm school. They find education to be essential to the local process of fighting for territory. Their empowerment was outstanding. The sequence of events with the communities’ participation ended with a big celebration of local culture/ traditional music. A very important thing in Brazil that day was the change in the presidency when Michel Temer became the “interim” president of the country. I had a meeting with EMBRAPA people to discuss the specifics of the research part of the project and how we could collaborate. Nonetheless, we mostly talked about how the new political situation of the country would impact the socio-biodiversity product policies (what I was interested to investigate). The “new president” of the country had diminished the number of ministries, including the “Ministry of Agrarian Development”, main responsible for the socio-biodiversity products policies.

We closed the week meeting with an evaluation day. It was very interesting to see how most of us liked the same things and were not clear about the same things. The discussion was really stimulating and important, however, it made it clear to me how the project was away from what the “paper project” stated. It was also clear the project group was not good in communication, once most of the people in the group (specially the non-EMBRAPA/PNUD people) mentioned that although it was the 4th meeting about the project they were attending it was the first one they understood the mainly applied side of it. Before they thought it was mostly a research project. Nevertheless they said that was still unclear the connection between what we had being discussing about doing and the project’s goals, what endorsed my worrisome. It seemed that the project’s managers had decided to leave the science part of it for another location, and that in Alto Rio Pardo they would focus more in empowering the local institutions once they were already well established. EMBRAPA/PNUD people then left, but before they made sure to reinforce to me that I would have their support for my research, we just had to stay in touch to guarantee it was related to the projects objectives.

I stayed in Rio Parto for a couple of weeks and had closer conversations with people for ICMbio, CAA and the local labor union. In the following days, took the opportunity to understand the landscape and the local people a little bit, while I was waiting for EMBRAPA’s answering about the project available data. There was a particular event that was very important to me, I joined an

ICMbio's field day when there was an election to choose the representatives of one community for the reserve committee. This community was very open to the discussion, and highlighted that although they were against the creation of the reserve when it had been first proposed, they were very satisfied with the transparency of the process. They make sure to clarify many of their worries about how the reserve could affect the local way of life and landscape. The reserve managers, Mauro and Mayumi, used the opportunity to introduce me and say that I was interested in studying NTFP. They jumped in excited about the possibility of helping somebody with their work. But again they said " why are you studying fruits... our main problem is water," ... "also would be interesting to see what is going to be the collection of wood with the reserve."

All the events were adding up to the difficulty in communicating with people in EMBRAPA. Was hard even to get information about field research already conducted there and the type of data available. This started to demotivate me about the field site. Even though the local communities were very engaged in the fight for territory and were very keen to contribute with any research that would raise their understanding about the area, my proposal would have to be modified to include their demand. Furthermore, I came to acknowledge that my proposed interdisciplinary work would basically be conducted by me, once EMBRAPA was not planning to conduct any formal research related to this project in the area, at least not for now. Something that my research committee had already told me that would not be doable in the remaining time I have for my Phd. However, there was still the possibility of thinking about a project that I could use EMBRAPA/PNUD's resources. With all that, I decided to take a while to go back to the theory and try to find a new path to my research. Once the integration of my dissertation proposal within EMBRAPA's project did not meet expectations and the political situation in Brazil did not seem to guarantee the continuity of the socio-biodiversity programs I aimed to study. Because I really liked the openness of the communities in Rio Pardo de Minas, I wanted to come up with some questions that would be both meaningful for them and for research. Yet, the communication of people from EMBRAPA was not easy and was making me rethink about the benefits of the partnership.

Stage 2: Rio Claro, RJ

In Rio, I took advantage of networking with my former professors and colleagues, while I was studying. Most professors that I met gave me important feedback about how they solved field obstacles. One of them told me his whole research area changed because of a bad experience in the field, and advised me to keep the eyes open for new work perspectives as I tried to figure out my research questions. He also suggested me to consider to change my research to Atlantic forest Biome, because it would be easier to find collaboration and I had a better understanding of the ecosystems.

In Jun 10 I went to a seminar promoted by the International Institute of Sustainability. The seminar was about payments for environmental services (PES), what was a happy coincidence once the topic was related to what I have done in my master. Therefore I had a deeper look into it and got to know about the many on going PES in Brazil that are not related to carbon. Looking in the papers about them, I realized that there was still a big research gap about the PES regions that not Amazon in Brazil. Not many papers were available about PES in Atlantic forest, although more than 15 PES projects currently exist in the biome. Without noticing I started to envision research questions about the PES thematic. "What is the additionality of the PES in Atlantic Forest?" ; "What types of people participate on it?"; "what are the trade-offs between socio and

environment outcomes in these projects?"; "How is the PES related to the restoration policies in the Biome?"; "What makes PES so different in the North of the country from the SE?"; "Which institutions participate and how is their interaction?"

I then found out that the Brazilian national agency of waters (ANA) has a program to incentive the create PES called "water producer" (<http://produtordeagua.ana.gov.br/Principal.aspx>). My initial idea was to perform an impact evaluation of some projects within the program. But calling and sending e-mails to the people in ANA I found that they had hired a consultancy to perform an impact evaluation of it to celebrate its anniversary. Still, they inform me that they would focus in the big picture. In consequence would be of use for them if I decided to investigate something related to the projects. I then went to visit a project that was relatively close. This project is a payment for water services in Rio Claro municipality. It is called "produtores de agua e floresta" (PAF). PAF project has now over 70 producers and has spent over 8 million reais. For the rest of the field season I then tried to gather data about PAF and other information that would be necessary to understand the counterfactual scenario of the project absence.

One of the reasons to choose PAF project, because it's "success" incentivized the process of scaling it up for the whole Guandu watershed. Guandu River is one of the most important sources of water for Rio de Janeiro city, where over 6 million people live. In the case of the Rio Claro's PES an impact evaluation could also be important because the direct beneficiaries of the restoration and conservation of the watershed include a broad range of users (it is used for energy, industry and direct consumption). Showing the benefits of the project could increase the willingness to pay of the users. The payment for the producers is comes from the watershed budgeted. Understanding how a watershed committee works was another interesting part of this field season. I went for a couple of technical meetings of the Guandu committee and also to a general plenary of the committee. In these events I had the chance to talk with stakeholders to understand their points of view, what was going on in the region and where I could get the information I needed. It was very enlightening. The contacts that I made in those meetings also made possible to get all the shape files and the contracts of the proprieties that are part of the project. Nevertheless, I also had to understand the bureaucracy process of gathering official data in Brazil. In Rio de Janeiro state, INEA is the institution responsible for administrating the rural cadastral data. By law, any public data should be available by request. I manages to get the cadastral data for the whole municipality (443 properties, from which 328 are considered small properties by the forest code), although it took me a lot of effort to get it.

Conclusion

I was demotivated with the first field site I originally had planned to study, and realized there was still the possibility of thinking about a project that I could use EMBRAPA/PNUD's resources. Consequently, I've decided to take a while to go back to the theory and try to find a new path to my research. While I was doing that I started looking in a new research idea that lead me to a new research site.

Overall, although the field season did not go as planned, it was crucial to my research. With the data and information I gathered in the field is going to be possible to write a solid proposal. Thank you TCD for making it possible. I am looking forward to share the results of my spatial analysis in the Latin American Studies Field Research Clinic.