



Photo by Miguel Pinheiro/CIFOR

The role of multi-stakeholder forums in subnational jurisdictions






The Green Municipalities Program


Para, Brazil

Key messages

- The Green Municipalities Program (PMV) multi-stakeholder forum (MSF) was effective in bringing together participants who do not normally engage in dialogue to negotiate and generate joint solutions to reduce deforestation in Para. However, the participants responded more to the interests of the already-powerful agribusiness sector, thereby worsening the situation for the excluded actors, whose tenure rights and security were reportedly affected by the MSF's processes.
- It was unclear to the MSF participants whether the perceived changes in deforestation were a result of the MSF's actions or of the combined federal command-and-control actions.
- Interviewed participants considered the MSF's equity to be challenged by the lack of participation of local communities and indigenous actors.

MSF at a glance

Participants	  
Organizers	
Year started	2011
Funding	
Forum Type	Decision-making, management
Outcome	Recommendations

 Government NGO Private sector

Summary

At the beginning of the 21st century, more than 25,000 km² were deforested annually in the Brazilian Amazon. Since 2004, however, deforestation has diminished, principally through the establishment of policies to address deforestation and climate change. These include the 2009 National Policy on Climate Change, which aims to reduce deforestation in all biomes and to increase the use of alternative energy sources, and the Action Plan for Prevention and Control of the Legal Amazon Deforestation.

Para is the second largest Brazilian state (1,247,954 km²), and is divided into 144 municipalities. Its economy is principally based on mineral and timber extraction, agriculture, cattle ranching, fishing and tourism, amongst others (IBGE 2018a). Para, along with Mato Grosso, tops the list of the Brazilian states with the highest deforestation rates (PRODES 2017). By 2012, 21% of its territory had been altered due to deforestation.

To address these high deforestation rates, the Government of Para set up the *Programa Municípios Verdes* (PMV; Green Municipalities Program), recognized as one of the largest environmental forums in Brazil. The program was created in a context of shifting paradigms in the Brazilian Amazon, as the country transitioned from the federal government's expansion of the economic frontier through development projects (1960s–1990s) to an agenda built to mitigate

deforestation (2003–2014). It was organized around a steering committee (Comitê Gestor, COGES), a multi-stakeholder forum (MSF) mainly composed of government institutions, the private sector, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and rural producers (principally from the agribusiness sector). Up until 2017, there were three to four meetings a year, which were attended by official participants (who were allowed to vote) as well as an extended audience that at some point reached almost 300 people.

The MSF's lines of action were structured around local agreements with municipalities, controlling and monitoring deforestation, and strengthening joint environmental management by supporting local environmental agencies. **Its overall goals were to reduce deforestation by 80% by 2020, increase the number of rural property registries in the Rural Environmental Registry (CAR), remove the municipalities from Para from the Brazilian Ministry of the Environment's (MMA) deforestation list, decentralize enforcement mechanisms to the municipal level and engage municipalities in the PMV.** A total of 124 out of the 144 municipalities in the state voluntarily participated in the MSF, attracted by its proclaimed benefits, such as legal security (ensuring that producers would not suffer from fines and economic embargoes), increased market value of agricultural products (such as certification guaranteeing avoided deforestation and ethical working conditions)

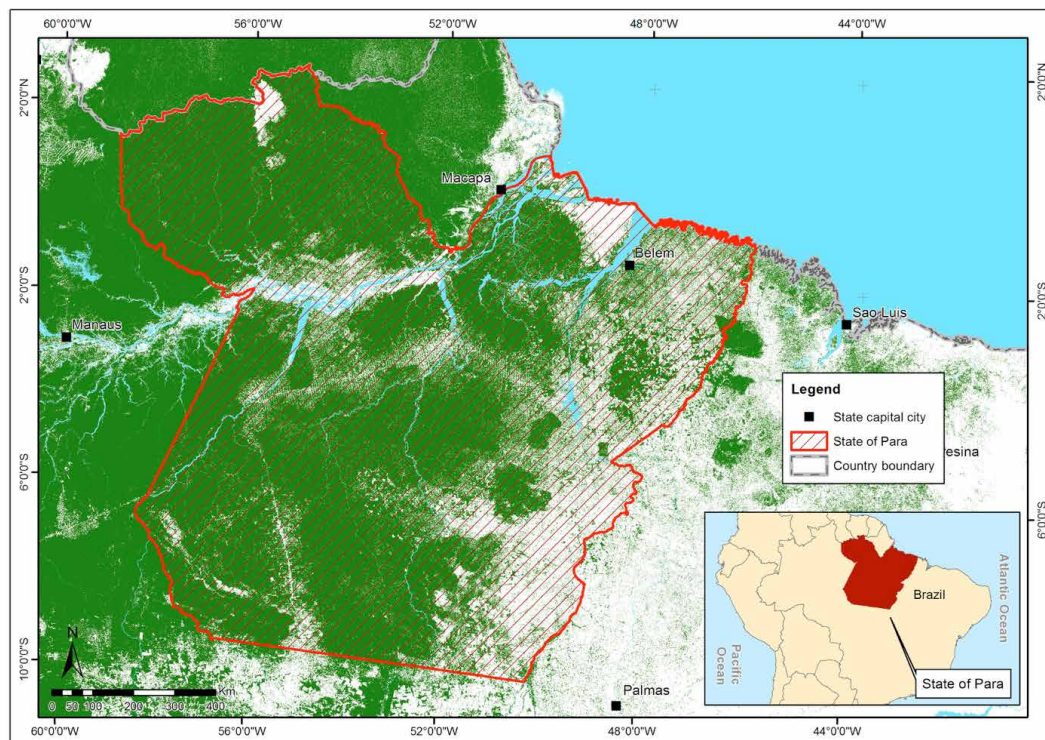


Figure 1. Location of study area: the state of Para in Brazil

and attracting investments due to greater legal security. The conditions for municipalities to enter and remain in the PMV included signing terms of commitment with the Federal Public Prosecution Service, consisting of a set of seven goals, which were monitored and validated by the steering committee.

We studied the PMV MSF in Para as part of a study exploring the potential of MSFs to improve land and forest governance (Figure 1). For this research, in-depth interviews were carried out with 21 MSF participants, 10 nonparticipants, 3 MSF organizers and 5 key context informants with knowledge and firsthand experience of land use and land-use changes in Para. The study aims to:

1. identify the processes and outcomes that influence the MSF's effectiveness in achieving sustainable land use
2. examine how the MSF addresses issues of power and inequity in decision-making processes.

How effective was this MSF?

A large majority of participants perceived the MSF to be effective or very effective. However, some respondents considered its effectiveness to be constrained due to the lack of an evident, permanent and effective reduction of deforestation: after 7 years of PMV efforts, only 5 (out of 17) of Para's municipalities diminished their deforestation enough to be expunged from the MMA's critical deforestation list. Up until 2011, deforestation in the region decreased to some extent, only to begin increasing again. Moreover, since the overall pattern of deforestation rates in Para was to a great extent similar to that of the rest of the Brazilian Amazon, it is not known whether the limited improvements were a result of PMV actions or of combined federal command-and-control efforts. Furthermore, although the CAR increased its registries, it did not resolve agrarian conflicts: over 120% of Para registered under the CAR system, suggesting that there were areas registered more than once, and according to interviewed experts and the specialized literature (Moreira 2016; Terra de Direitos 2016; Tupiassu et al. 2017), those who registered were predominantly large producers and land-grabbers.

Interviewees also mentioned that the fundamental causes of deforestation in the region, such as land grabbing, illegal deforestation, deforestation in settlements and the lack of land regularization were not addressed at the MSF. Capacity building events organized by the MSF and the structuring of municipal environmental management bodies were recognized by its participants as successful. However, they also argued that due to a high political turnover and because they considered most municipal administration units to be dominated by local elites involved in

deforestation, the strategy to decentralize environmental management failed to combat deforestation.

Some participants from NGOs and nonparticipants from different sectors saw the program's approach to regional problems as being directed toward the interests of the large-scale productive sector with greater economic power, such as soybean producers and cattle ranchers, to the detriment of small producers and local communities. Furthermore, issues related to the socio-environmental problems of the less privileged rural populations were not included in the program's guidelines: family farmers, indigenous peoples and local communities and their respective grassroots organizations and cooperatives were not represented at the MSF. Such people and groups considered that their demands, such as the urgency to title their lands, were not met.

On the other hand, participants highlighted that through capacity-building activities, municipalities had generally managed to strengthen their environmental management capacities. Most participants also considered that the MSF had given room to dialogue and alliances between actors that had not taken place previously.

Was this MSF able to address inequity?

Key context informants and MSF nonparticipants felt that the motivation behind the creation of the PMV was more of an instrument to accommodate the needs of the actors that drive deforestation, and reflected less of a genuine concern about deforestation, rural conflicts and social injustices. They accused these powerful deforestation drivers as being responsible for the traditional peoples' violent withdrawals from their territories. Furthermore, they accused the MSF of greenwashing the activities driving deforestation. They argued that while the MSF's alleged goal was to reduce deforestation, that by validating the presence and behavior of large capital representatives – large rural producers – who drive deforestation, the MSF failed to challenge the status quo. Some participants from the government and NGOs considered that throughout the forum, the PMV had left the concept of equity largely unaddressed in several aspects, such as in the lack of engagement of: actors important for regional development; representative social movement organizations; regional universities; and, most importantly, representatives of small rural properties and communities who are affected by a lack of state policies and constant threats of expulsion from their territories (and sometimes even murder). Moreover, the PMV's scope of actions did not address gender equity in its processes or outcomes.



Equity

The MSF was perceived to be equitable or very equitable by 52.4%

52.4%



Effectiveness

The MSF was perceived to be effective or very effective by 85.7% of its participants.

85.7%

Overall, interviewees considered the program to give more power to the already powerful actors while worsening the situation of the excluded actors. Although marginalized groups, such as indigenous peoples, local communities and grassroots organizations – the historical bastions of forest cover maintenance – were excluded from the process, they could have contributed greatly with diverse knowledge on how to improve production models with low environmental impacts. Inclusion of and collaboration with these stakeholders and the development of assistance schemes that accommodate the specificities of local realities and informal institutions could allow these small-

scale actors and their traditional livelihoods to thrive while contributing to fair, equitable and environmentally friendly land-use models.

Recommendations

- *Mutual needs and interests and extending stakeholder participation:* Finding common ground among participants can encourage the effective participation of a wider group of stakeholders in the MSF, such as indigenous peoples, academia, smallholder farmers and local communities, and thus strengthen its decision-making processes. An increased inclusiveness of these actors in the MSF would also increase the ownership of its processes and outcomes.
- *Power balance:* The MSF needs to revisit the power relations among stakeholders by inviting people to the table and through more procedurally just practices such as taking turns in moderating the meetings.
- *Recognition of capacity gaps:* Capacity building should be part of the MSF's processes, especially for those participants who require further technical assistance to shift their land-use practices toward more environmentally friendly approaches.

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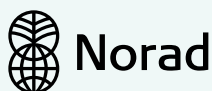
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