



Research article

Advocacy coalitions and protected areas creation process: Case study in the Amazon



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ABSTRACT

Protected areas are the cornerstones of conservation policies worldwide. However, only few researches are led to analyse the way they emerge, except for criticising top-down governmental choices. Yet, the historical approach and strategic analysis of public policy building over the long term allows a better understanding of the stakes of action capacity of these policies. We therefore mobilize the advocacy coalition framework to show that protected areas creation is always due to coalitions of actors who belong to different professional fields and act at different scales but nevertheless share common stakes. On the basis of a comparative study in French and Brazilian Amazon, we show that if all coalitions for protected areas share a common objective of limited deforestation, they are still very different according to the type of conservation they promote (strict biodiversity conservation, population-based conservation or sustainable forest management). We also show that the ability of the coalitions to build efficient public policies is highly depending on internal factors (i.e. their ability to gather strategic resources) and on external factors (i.e. socio-political context and international pressure). Finally, the comparative analysis of coalitions pleading for the same type of protected areas in two different countries allows us to insist on the importance of qualitative embedded researches when it comes to understand why some protected areas have more chances to reach environmental effectiveness in one socio-political context than in another one.

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1. Introduction

Protected areas are management arrangements, whose aim is the protection of natural ecosystems in a specific geographic area. Today they are the main public policy tool for “in situ” ecosystem protection worldwide and they account for more than 15% of land in the world. They are very diverse, and their diversity reflects the different opinions concerning the means required to protect the environment.

Many researches have been led recently on the topic of protected areas. A rapid review of recent literature shows that these researches mainly aim at finding means to improve protected areas efficiency, but in many different ways. Some are oriented toward the definition or analysis of indicators of management efficiency (Addison et al., 2015; Aung et al., 2004; Calado et al., 2016; Cook et al., 2014), or of financial efficiency (Cornejo et al., 2016). Others are more interested in direct management and propose technical

tools in order to facilitate manager's work and decision-making (D'Antonio et al., 2013; Del Carmen Sabatini et al., 2007; Kidd et al., 2015; Lin and Li, 2016; Lopez y Royo et al., 2009).

Another category of researches aims at analysing the conditions for a protected area to be better accepted at the local scale (Allendorf et al., 2012; Apostolopoulou et al., 2012; Arjunan et al., 2006; Jones et al., 2012; Liu et al., 2010). These works are mainly based on the analysis of local people perceptions and strongly stress the importance of participation in the construction and management of protected areas.

All of these researches are mainly based on quantitative data, and focus on the analysis of situations at the present time, and mainly at the local scale. The current management practices and the managers' ability to create social acceptance of the protected area at the local scale are supposed to explain their environmental efficiency. Only very few papers analyse management situations over long period of time (Aung et al., 2004). However, long-time analysis is very important to understand and manage not only the conflicts that frequently accompany the creation and management of protected areas (Buisson and Dutoit, 2006) but also the

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inner structure and action capacity of these protected areas.

Moreover, if some authors discuss the legitimacy on some specific models of protected areas, and in particular defend participative ones over those that promote a strict protection of biodiversity (Hutton et al., 2005), the strategic processes that are underneath the creation processes of these areas are hardly ever documented. The dominant discourse is that protected areas are top-down policies, imposed by the state, not adapted to the local context, and that reproduce the North-South model of domination (Banerjee, 2003), which would partly explains their failure to protect the environment.

To question this discourse, we are interested in analysing the creation processes of protected areas, in order to understand how environmental actors manage or not to mobilize allies and strategic resources to influence public policy making. Indeed, since the years 1970, we observe a reshaping of decision and territorial management processes. In terms of territorial management, it implies the action of various actors (state, NGOs, firms, scientists ...) that contribute to decision processes. It also implies the emergence of strong conflicts between various policy sectors. Indeed agriculture, mining, forestry or conservation sectors have difficulties to coordinate as they carry very different views on what is the right thing to do on the territory (Sarvašová et al., 2013).

The objective of this work is therefore to analyse how protected areas emerge thanks to the action of coalitions that defend environmental stakes.

The case study is the French and Brazilian Amazon and we mobilize an actor-based theory to understand the creation of various types of protected areas. The theoretical framework is the Advocacy coalition framework (A.C.F.). Indeed, Sotirov and Memmler (2012) show that the A.C.F. is particularly adapted to analyse natural resources management policies. Furthermore, our work in environmental management is not only interested in the coalitions themselves, but also to the relationship between these coalitions and the concrete management arrangement that emerge (outputs).

After the presentation of the theoretical framework and methodological approach, we present the historical process of protected areas creation for three different models, in a comparative way between French and Brazilian case. These results allow us to test our hypotheses that are then discussed in the discussion part.

2. Theoretical framework and methodological approach

2.1. Analysis of changes in environmental management policies: advocacy coalition framework (ACF) inputs

The advocacy coalition framework (Sabatier, 1988; Sabatier and Weible, 2007) is interested in the necessary conditions for the occurrence of change in public policies. It defends the idea that, in a given policy field, different coalitions of actors compete. The coalitions are composed of individuals (civil servants, scientists, journalists, private actors, etc.) who share the same beliefs concerning the policy field. The core beliefs of a coalition are very stable over time, whereas secondary aspects like management tools can be modified more easily. The advocacy coalition framework shows that although a change in public policies that only involves small progressive changes in a dominant paradigm can occur without a rupture and over a long period, a radical change in a dominant paradigm requires a rupture in the political system, which is more often enabled by a change in the external conditions (change of government, a change in public opinion, etc.) (Fig. 1).

By applying this framework, we are specifically interested in revealing the processes by which actors promoting environmental issues manage to transform their ideas into territorialized public

policies – protected areas – which conflict with other land uses.

The policy subsystem we are interested in is the territorial management of the Brazilian Amazon region. Indeed, despite the discourses on forest conservation, the Food and Agriculture Organization (F.A.O.) states in 2010 that more than 60 millions ha of the Amazon forest have been converted to other land uses (agriculture, mining, energy, roads ...). During the past 50 years, both massive development programs and conservation ones have been led in the Amazon region. This expresses what has been called the schizophrenic attitude of Brazil government (Aparecida de Mello and Théry, 2003; Brown and Purcell, 2005; Taravella and De Sartre, 2006).

The idea that economic development of the Amazon region necessarily implies deforestation (called “land valorisation”) dates back to the colonial period. Programs of forest conservation appeared in the beginning of the XXth century and became popular in the seventies, when development programs promoting deforestation grew extremely intensive. Protected areas are the main tools promoted for forest conservation.

The objective of this paper is to study the emergence of these management arrangements (protected areas), i.e. the coalitions that promoted them and the institutional result.

We make the following hypotheses:

H1 – Coalitions of actors at the origin of protected areas creation were all opposed to destruction of forestland but don't necessarily share the same objectives.

H2 – The success of coalitions to build the protected area they promote depends on internal and external factors like the socio-political context.

H3 – The action capacity of the protected areas depends on the strength of pleading coalitions.

2.2. The case study

Our case study is located in the northern part of the Amazonian forest, on the Guiana Shield (Fig. 2), at the border between French Guiana, a French overseas department, and Amapá, a Brazilian state. They share a common border 730 km long. These territories present vast and well-preserved forest ecosystems in a context of rapid socio-economic change (population growth, construction of infrastructure, etc.). Even though they belong to different countries, they resemble each other ecologically and geographically, thus justifying the use of a comparative approach (Boudoux d'Hautefeuille, 2012; Lezy, 2000). For us, the most important aspect is that they present a large number of protected areas.

The interest of this comparative approach between two countries is to test the influence of the socio-political and historical context on the composition, action and success of the coalitions.

2.3. Methodological approach and data production

This analysis is mainly based on the production of qualitative data, in order to analyse the complexity of the situations, and the influence of the social, institutional and historical context. Moreover, qualitative approaches are components of critical approaches, based on a sociological, or even socio-anthropological, dimension to the field work (Dumez, 2013; Olivier De Sardan, 2015).

Data was collected during a doctoral thesis over a period of two years. Our approach favours long-term investment in the field and thorough inquiries, it crosses interviews, direct observations, and information from written or visual sources (see Table 1). All through the research process, systematic crossing of the information was at the basis of producing results. This enables hypotheses

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