

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AREAS (EPA) IN BRAZIL: IMPORTANCE AND MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

The article discusses the history and evolution of Environmental Protection Areas (EPAs) in Brazil, inspired by French and Portuguese models, emerging in the 1980s. Environmental legislation, including the National System of Conservation Units (SNUC), is addressed as an important tool for the protection and management of APAs. The methodology used systematic literature review, encompassing scientific articles and technical documents. The results highlight challenges such as territorial conflicts, inadequate land use, and lack of efficient management, including management plans and advisory councils. The need for urgent measures to strengthen management, invest in oversight, and promote social participation is emphasized, ensuring the effectiveness of APAs in the conservation of Brazil's natural resources.

Keywords: APA, Management Plan, management council

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INTRODUCTION

The category of Environmental Protection Area (APA) emerged in Brazilian law at the beginning of the 1980s, inspired by the French model of Parcs Naturels Régionaux (PNR) and the Portuguese model of Parque Natural, adapted to the Brazilian social context and with fewer restrictions compared to the French model.

In 1981, the National System of Nature Conservation Units (SNUC) was created through Law No. 9,985. The SNUC is responsible for establishing the norms and criteria for the creation, implementation, and management of all Brazilian conservation units, including the APAs. The SNUC Law established the categories of conservation units existing in Brazil, which are divided into integral protection areas and sustainable use areas. The APAs are a category of sustainable use. The concept remains a subject of criticism from the Brazilian conservationist movement, and for some authors, the creation of these spaces is merely a zoning instrument and does not provide effective protection for their natural resources (LEITE, 2015).

The objective of the present study was to reflect on the contribution of Environmental Protection Areas to nature conservation and to discuss the main conflicts and management challenges.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed for conducting this study is based on a systematic literature review. The selection of articles and documents was conducted in two stages. Initially, keywords such as "Environmental Protection Areas," "territorial conflicts," "environmental impacts," "land use," "environmental management," and "Management Plan" were employed. The selected studies should address issues related to the problem of conflicts in Environmental

Protection Areas (EPAs) and their effects on the environment. A total of 118 studies were selected, of which 14 related to the topic were used.

RESULTS

Although Brazil has a significant extent of protected areas, around 2,659 protected areas covering 256,536,634 ha CNUC (2022), including about 416 APAs, these units have been the subject of discussions regarding their effectiveness. Part of the literature points to the ineffectiveness of APAs as a form of efficient conservation (Silva, 2012; Dourojeanni and Pádua, 2013; Oliveira, 2017).

Environmental management in Environmental Protection Areas (EPAs) is a complex and highly relevant topic for the preservation and sustainable use of natural resources. Various studies have addressed how concepts are articulated, constructing discursive matrices that involve environmental and urban issues, thus becoming a power game regarding the appropriation of territory and its resources (Acserald, 1999). This clash of interests often results in socio-environmental conflicts.

The participation of society is considered a fundamental premise for the success of management proposals for Conservation Units, whether for the preservation or sustainable use of natural resources (Cozzolino and Irving, 2006). The active involvement of the community in decision-making for the management of Conservation Units is considered essential for the development of public policies that meet their visions and demands (Cozzolino and Irving, 2006).

However, the management of APAs faces significant challenges. The number of employees and financial resources allocated to the conservation of Conservation Units is often insufficient, which compromises the effectiveness of environmental protection actions (Dourojeanni and Pádua, 2013). Moreover, the unplanned growth, especially related to the expansion of export agriculture, has generated significant environmental impacts, such as deforestation and the degradation of the Cerrado (Salmona, Ribeiro, and Matricardi, 2014).

Environmental Protection Areas (EPAs) are of utmost importance in the conservation of Brazilian ecosystems and sustainable development. However, various problems have arisen, compromising the effectiveness of these areas and putting their integrity at risk. One of the main challenges is the occurrence of territorial conflicts within the boundaries of the APAs, resulting from unplanned urban growth and the expansion of agricultural activities, which often seek to use these areas for other purposes (Silva, 2017).

The improper use of land represents another challenge for the APAs, with disorderly occupation and illegal activities, such as deforestation and illegal mining, harming the conservation of ecosystems and the provision of ecosystem services (Santos, 2020).

The lack of adequate oversight is a factor that contributes to the degradation of APAs, as the absence of human and financial resources limits the capacity for monitoring and combating illegal activities (Oliveira, 2018).

The absence of management plans and effective management groups also represents a critical point. Management plans are fundamental for guiding conservation actions and the sustainable use of APAs, while management groups are responsible for promoting societal participation and the integration among the various actors involved (Rocha, 2013).

CONCLUSION

Despite the advancements in Brazilian environmental legislation, the APAs still face challenges in their management and preservation, such as the lack of financial and human resources, pressure from economic activities that threaten protected areas, among others.

Given these challenges, it is necessary to adopt urgent measures to overcome the problems faced by the APAs. It is essential to strengthen the management of these areas by investing in oversight, training, and the structuring of the responsible bodies. Moreover, promoting social participation and establishing partnerships between the government, private sector, and civil society are fundamental to ensuring their effectiveness.

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