

Successful community forest management without formal ownership rights: a fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis of twelve voluntary forest management initiatives in the Peruvian Amazon

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In the Peruvian Amazon, many examples exist of local communities that protect their forests. Often, they do so independently of government policies and external financing. Their main motivation is to protect the ecosystem services they derive from the forests, such as water supply, ecotourism, timber and NTFPs. Few communities also protect the forest for its intrinsic biodiversity value.

While some communities have a land title, most protect forests that are officially state-owned. This is surprising given the consensus in the literature regarding the importance of tenure security for successful forest management. It is often assumed that such tenure security must be provided from the outside, through government action. This paper applies fuzzy set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) to conduct some cross-systematic comparison on twelve CFM initiatives in the San Martin, Amazonas and Loreto regions. Their forest ownership status ranges from completely informal to completely formal, and includes internal agreements, co-managed municipal conservation areas, conservation concessions, and private conservation areas.

We conclude that formal ownership rights, i.e. land titles, are by no means indispensable for successful community forest management. In addition, forest management in communities with strong ownership rights is not always successful. When formal ownership rights are 'paper titles' that are not accompanied by strong enforcement mechanisms, they do not contribute much to tenure security. In communities with and without formal ownership rights over the forest, strong monitoring and sanctioning mechanisms aimed at enforcing formal or informal property rights are essential for avoiding deforestation. Communities with a combination of (1) robust community enforcement and (2) either good access to government sanctioning (GS) or strong formal ownership (FO) tend to successfully protect the forest.