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ORGANIZATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES OF INTERMUNICIPAL CONSORTIA FOR FOOD SECURITY – BRAZILIAN CASES

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is describe the organizational environment and governance structures in Consortia for Food Security and Local Development (Consad) located in geographical regions of the state of Mato Grosso do Sul. The multiple-case study on which the paper is based was qualitative and descriptive in nature. Semi-structured interviews (133) were conducted in organizations located in these regions having Consads and analyzed using content analysis technique. Results reveal the existence of organizations oriented toward providing support to rural/agricultural undertakings. Although formal partnership agreements exist, both organizations participating in Consads and those not participating evinced lack of knowledge about the objectives and projects of Consad. In terms of governance, it proved not possible to identify any sort of coordinating agent for local Consad initiatives. The study contributes to understanding the organizational dynamics involved in the food security consortia in Brazil.

Keywords: Organizational environment, Intermunicipal consortia, Governance structures, Interorganizational networks.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This study describes the organizational environment and governance structures in the regions of the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso do Sul in which Consortia for Food Security and Local Development (Consad) are located. These consortia are formed to facilitate cooperation of the Brazilian federal government and municipal governments in a determined geographical area, together with local organizations to promote access to food by poor families and to establish projects to include the population in the productive process.

The possibility of establishing this type of intergovernmental and interorganizational arrangement for the purposes mentioned was formalized by federal law n° 11.107/05, which allows municipalities to assume joint commitments as a means for overcoming problems of food security and local economic development (BRAZIL, 2005).

These intermunicipal consortia follow the logic of the economics of proximity, that is, cooperative coexistence between agents located in a determined space, as the basis for an institutional arrangement capable of producing positive externalities (BRITTO, 2002). Specifically, Consads are located in geographical areas having a low level of economic development and are focused on addressing the food and nutritional security needs of the population in these areas.

It is assumed that the public and private organizations present in the areas encompassed by the consortia can provide support to the arrangement formed and to the projects to be implemented in these areas. The literature on social institutions argues that organizational actions are guided by formal or informal institutions that regulate social life and that the institutional environment varies from place to place. Laws, rules and values are examples of institutions that have recognized value in each location but vary from location to location. The presence of institutions serves to regulate complex social relationships and to reduce information asymmetries and the opportunism of the agents (WILLIAMSON, 1985; NORTH, 1990).

The active cooperation between organizations in a particular environment is essential for the implementation of territorial development strategies. It has been assumed that synergy can result from the “organic solidarity”² of the territory itself, that is, that the sharing of common roots can form the basis for mechanism that regulates collective action. This paper examines whether these assumptions adequately represent the organizational and institutional

² Term of Émile Durkheim (1960) demonstrates the functional logic of society, where each individual in his area is part of a larger interdependent organism, each with a specific function.

reality of the Consads established in Mato Grosso do Sul and how the organizational environment encountered is affected the governance structures of the Consads studied.

The Consad territories were established in the context of the Zero Hunger Program (PFZ) of the Brazilian federal government. Although emergency measures in relation to hunger were necessary (YAZBEK, 2003), the assistance provided by this program, which was intended to be transient, eventually became a political and social embarrassment to the government, because failed in one of its principle objectives, that of including the people contemplated by the program in the productive process (BATISTA FILHO, 2007) and eliminating the need for them to receive public assistance in meeting the nutritional needs.

The cases reported on in this article are the Consads located in the ‘Iguatemi’, ‘Vale do Ivinhema’ and ‘Serra da Bodoquena’ territories of the state of Mato Grosso do Sul. The population of these three territories is approximately four hundred and fifty thousand people. This paper investigates the organizational environment and local governance structures established with the intention of contributing to the formulation and consolidation of strategies for structuring projects for guaranteeing the nutritional requirements of needy populations while at the same time increasing their rates of employment and reducing dependence on public assistance.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study is essentially qualitative, descriptive and inductive. The investigation strategy adopted was the “multiple case study” (YIN, 2010).

For the realization of this study, 133 semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives of the principal organizations of an economic nature³ located within the respective Consad regions, chosen on the basis of their accessibility. All respondents were voluntary and did not receive any type of incentive to collaborate with the research. Interviews were conducted by researchers from two educational institutions⁴, in February and March of 2010. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. Data were analyzed using content analysis techniques (VERGARA, 2005; BARDIN, 1977).

The dimensions and variables that observed using content analysis are presented in Figure 1.

³ Unions, cooperatives, associations, NGOs, banks, government agencies, *etc.*

⁴ Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul and Dom Bosco Catholic University.

Dimensions	Variables
Organizational profile	Principle objective
	Products and services offered
Relationship with Consad	Knowledge about Consad
	Participation in Consad
Governance structure	Presence of local coordinator agent

Figure 1. Dimensions and variables identified in the research.

Data were interpreted using pattern-matching technique, in which the results obtained are compared with the theoretical framework established (VERGARA, 2005).

3. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

As mentioned above, the Consads were established in the context of a policy of the Ministry for Social Development and Combating Hunger (MDS) destined for regions with low levels of economic development. The demarcation and extent of these regions is carried out by MDS, based on criteria for determining territorial identity. The process of establishing Consad was outlined as follows by the Ministry in its Guide for Consads (BRAZIL, 2004). Among the recommendations included in this Guide are the following:

- a) Consads should start with a limited number of municipalities (between five and twenty), until they consolidate their institutionalization;
- b) Consad headquarters should be established in a less-advantaged municipality of the region, to avoid being dominated by the municipality normally considered the regional center;
- c) Establishment of decision making and other responsibilities among the organizations that form part of the Consad;
- d) Establishment of bylaws, in which the respective competences are made clear;
- e) Establishment of a deliberative body having the characteristics of forum, responsible for orienting the strategic actions undertaken;

- f) Establishment of a body having the characteristics of a commission, for monitoring the projects undertaken and articulating the partnerships necessary for the implementation of programs;
- g) Establishment of a secretariat to provide logistic support for planned actions, responsible for managing the daily affairs of the entity;
- h) Establishment of a fiscal board to oversee the use of resources obtained.

An organization chart representing the organizational structure proposed for Consads is shown in Figure 2.

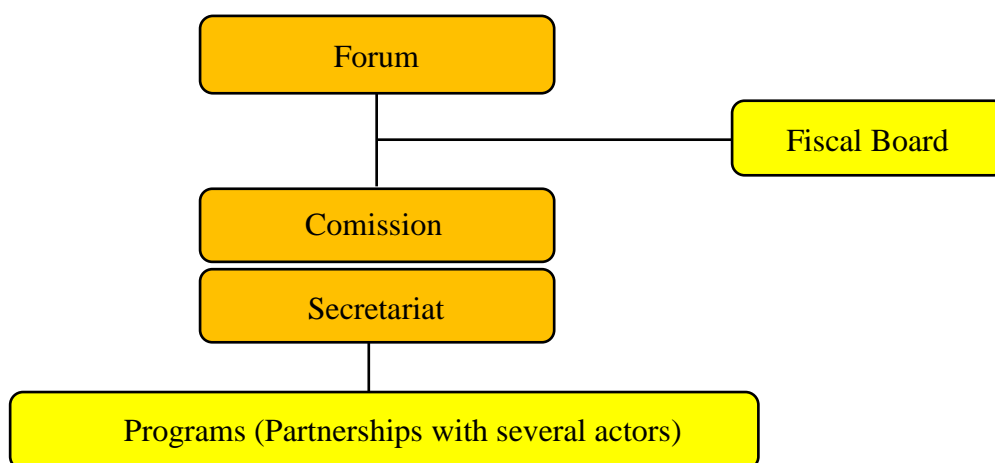


Figure 2. CONSAD Organizational Structure.

At all these levels, private participation should be superior to public participation, with both having important roles to play. The respective functions foreseen for public and private organizations are identified in Figure 3.

Public actors role	Private actors role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appoint representatives to the different bodies of Consad; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appoint representatives to the different bodies of Consad;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Actively participate in regular and special meetings of the bodies of Consad; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Actively participate in regular and special meetings of the bodies of Consad;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide inputs to the Consad plan of action, and assure integration of this plan with municipal and state plans; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strengthen the organization and representativeness of entities and associations taking part;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote the compatibility and complementarity of actions at the national and local levels with respect to the allocation of resources; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify the priority demands of the community, regardless of the segment to which they belong;

▪ Support the Consad providing resources and partnership;	▪ Identify spaces for action complementary to those of the public sector;
▪ Support the organization and maintenance of Consad.	▪ Support Consad providing resources and partnership

Figure 3. Respective roles of public and private actors.

The federal government supports Consad initiatives through financing, having two specific lines of action: (1) projects typically funded by MDS (water cisterns, community kitchens, urban agriculture, *etc.*); and (2) “innovative projects”, arising from Consad action plans and approved by the respective Consad forum (ORTEGA, 2007).

In addition to MDS, seven other federal ministries have programs related to Consad initiatives: the Agrarian Development Ministry (MDA), Ministry of Regional Integration, Ministry of Environment (MMA), Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Tourism, and Ministry of Health. Consortia are understood to be an effective way to tackle collective problems and augment the potential existing within each municipality (ORTEGA, 2007).

3.1 Organizational profile

As mentioned, we sought in this study to characterize the organizational environment in three territories of the state of Mato Grosso do Sul in which Consads were established. Figure 4 shows how the institutional environment, organizational environment and individuals are related, in which individuals and the institutional environment are seen as establishing limits for organizational actions (WILLIAMSON, 1985; FARINA; AZEVEDO; SAES, 1997; SAES, 2000).

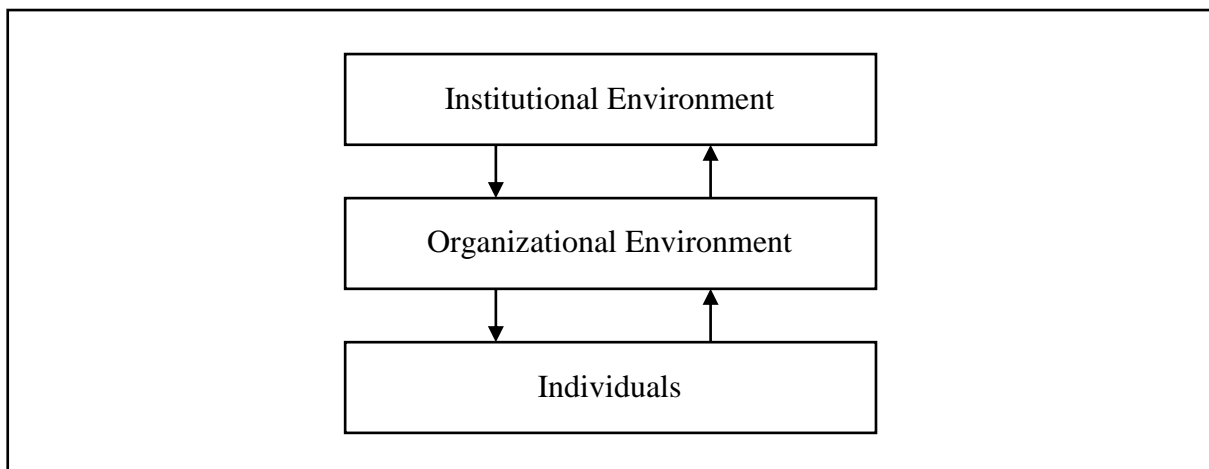


Figure 4. Interrelated levels proposed by Williamson (1985).

The organizations operating in the respective geographical regions were classified according to their functions, objectives and presence. Due to the similarity of the organizations found in the three territories studied, one figure accurately reflects the profile of all, as shown in Figure 5.

Organization	Presence	Main objective
Agraer	State	Rural support and extension.
Iagro	State	Monitoring plant and animal health.
Bank of Brazil	National	Credit and financing.
Farmers association	Municipal	Strengthening of production and marketing of agricultural products.
Farmers union	Municipal	Defending farmers interest.
Rural workers union	Municipal	Defending rural workers interest.

Figure 5. Principal organizations found in the three regions studied.

A common trait among the organizations mentioned in Figure 5 is the existence of a direct relationship of their activities with rural environment, a result consistent with those observed in studies of other Brazilian Consads. Ortega (2007) and Sacco dos Anjos and Caldas (2007) argue that 81% of Brazilian municipalities are predominantly rural, which requires public policies tailored to a rural environment. Matos and Tsuji (2002) state that cooperation and interdependence among local actors allow for the creation of new institutions be created in rural environments, that involve multiple dimensions of the respective territories involved.

The organizations noted in Figure 5 were a recurrent presence in the various municipalities constituting a Consad territory, unlike specific commercial or industrial organizations, much more likely to be restricted to one or a few municipalities. The presence of organizations responsible for agricultural extension and agricultural oversight in a large number of the municipalities of a given region reflects governmental interest in supporting the agricultural sector (BRAZIL, 2008).

In addition, specific regional vocations were identified based on the kinds of organizations present in greater numbers in a determined region. These vocations derive from the existence of local assets that provide the basis for comparative advantages in securing the

participation and coordination of local players (CASAROTTO FILHO; PIRES, 2001; SCHNEIDER; TARTARUGA, 2004). Examples of this can be cited in the municipality of Bonito (which means *beautiful* in Portuguese), located in the Serra de Bodoquena Consad region, considered by many to be one of the most important ecotourism destinations in Brazil. In this municipality are a number of businesses and business associations specifically related to this economic activity, such as the Bonito Association of Tourist Attractions and the Bonito Hotel Association. In the neighboring municipality of Porto Murtinho, located on the Paraguay River, local businesses and business associations such as fishermen's colonies and the Waterway Workers Union, for example, reflect a vocation for activities related to the river.

It is possible to characterize regions in accordance with the number and diversity of organizations operating in that territory. The higher the organization density, the better structured the territory in terms of availability of products and services to the population (MULS, 2008). The complementarity and interdependence of organizations are important to underpin the competitiveness and development initiatives (NOHRIA; ECCLES, 1992; LIN, 1999; BRITTO, 2002). Overall, in the three regions studied, organizational density was low. In four municipalities (Anaurilândia, Paranhos, Japorã and Itaquiraí), few public and private organizations providing support to the population were operated. In just one municipality (Ponta Porã) was it possible to identify a functioning Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), revealing a low level of engagement of the civil society in social projects. The low level of civil engagement can, perhaps, be seen as a justification for government to take a more active role in social welfare activities (COELHO, 2009; DRUCKER, 2010). Further study is needed to understand the reasons for the lack of concern with or participation in social projects on the part of the populations of the regions studied.

Consads, as has already been mentioned, have been seen as a mechanism for bringing together actors from the public and private spheres in a territorial arrangement to promote local development and, as a consequence, the quality of life (ORTEGA, 2007), assisting in the formation and control of public policies, and serving as an instrument for popular participation on public issues. Figure 6 presents the structure of councils linked directly or indirectly to food security activities in the three regions studied. As can be noted, these councils were structured in an identical manner in all three regions.

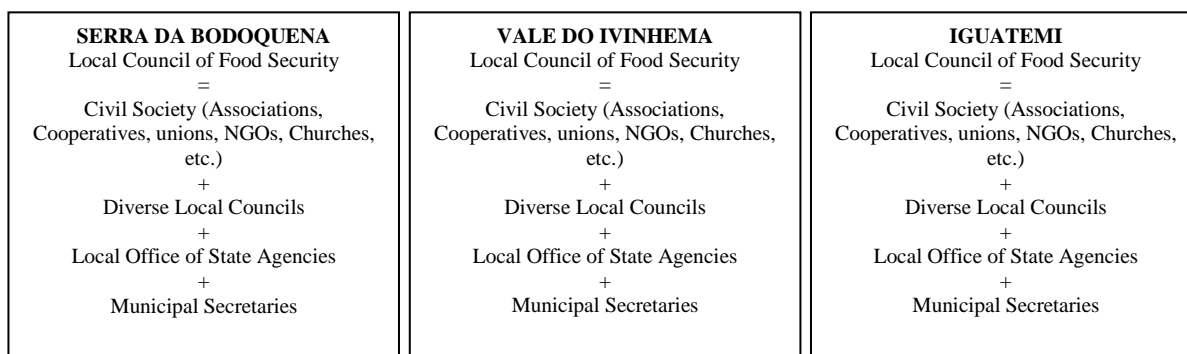


Figure 6. Structure of the food security councils in the three Consad regions studied.

It was found that although many agents act in Consad territories, the level of knowledge and participation of each agent with respect to food security issues and with respect to Consad varies. These matters are discussed in the next section, based on the opinions expressed by respondents during the interview process. It should be noted that the results were based on the opinions of respondents who belonged to the organizations of interest. A limitation to the study in this regard is that, as predicted by Marsden (1990), it is not possible to assess how representative the respondent's views are of the views of the organization as a whole.

3.2 Relationship to Consad

In the Iguatemi Consad region it was found that organizations associated with rural extension, sanitary inspection, credit and training demonstrated knowledge of the existence of Consad, but evinced no knowledge of its operations. Only representatives of the rural extension organization said they were aware of Consad actions; and two of them claimed to have an effective participation. With the exception of a few who demonstrated total ignorance of Consad, representatives of labor and producer organizations in the region claimed to know about Consad.

In the Vale do Ivinhema Consad region, it was found organizations associated with rural extension and credit demonstrated both knowledge of the existence of Consad and participation in Consad activities. Representatives of labor and producer organizations stated they were familiar with Consad, but only one reported participation in Consad activities.

In the Serra da Bodoquena Consad region, it was found that organizations associated with rural extension and credit demonstrated knowledge about existence of Consad and

participated in activities, but representatives of labor and producer associations showed little knowledge about the Consad.

Organizations of those three territories have shown lack of clarity on the subject of food security. Some of these organizations actually had food security actions in progress, but identified them as local development activities. In other words, they made no clear distinction between the concepts of food security and local development.

3.3 Governance

In none of the three territories Consad (Iguatemi, Vale do Ivinhema and Serra da Bodoquena) was it possible to identify a coordinating agent at the territorial or local levels. Britto (2002) suggests that the density of network relationships permits identification of identify the level of centrality and that organizations with a greater number of links have relatively greater importance within the structure and would be natural candidates to take on the role of coordination. Based on this premise, and on knowledge about the program, Agraer – an agency with responsibilities for agricultural development and rural extension - would be the obvious candidate for the coordinating agent role.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Food security and nutrition is a priority objective of the Brazilian federal government, which since 2002 has through the Zero Hunger Program (PFZ) attempted to meet the needs of the population in this regard. Consortia for Food Security and Local Development (Consad) are one of the initiatives of this program, seeking to involve public and private organizations in specific geographic regions in the establishment of projects to ensure access to food by population.

This article described how the organizational environment is characterized in these areas of food security: the profile of organizations, their relationship with the Consad and existence of governance structures. It was found that organizations in the Consad territories studied have objectives related to supporting a rural environment in a variety of necessary functions such as credit, rural extension, sanitary inspection, labor unions, producer associations, cooperatives, *etc.* Findings show that the relationship of local organizations with Consad is generally weak, and that although they have heard about Consad, few have any

concrete knowledge of projects or actions carried out by the Consortia. Governance structures were found to exist mainly on paper. We were unable to identify a local or territorial coordinating agent in any of three Consad regions studied.

The study contributes to understanding the organizational dynamics involved in the food security consortia of the state of Mato Grosso do Sul in Brazil, specifically with respect to the organizations present in the respective regions, the levels of knowledge about and participation of these organizations in the consortia, and the identification of the governance structures utilized in the respective interorganizational arrangements.

Limitations to the study include: a) organizations responding to the study were principally economic in nature. Greater diversity, with the inclusion of local churches, public hospitals and educational institutions would have been desirable; and b) those interviewed were the persons present in the organizations at the time of the interview considered better prepared to answer the questions and not necessarily the most appropriate person to respond.

Recommendations for future research include: a) replication of this study with the inclusion of a broader spectrum of organizations, so as to draw a more complete picture of the organizational environment with respect to consortia activities related to food security; b) investigation of the reasons for the low levels of knowledge about and active participation of the organizations of the regions in the Consads, in order to better understand whether this territorial emphasis makes sense from the point of view of the implementation of the public policy of interest. The assumption that in the formation of these consortia, there would be greater participation by the private sector than of the public sector was shown to be in error. If private sector participation is, indeed, a factor for the success of the consortia model, the use of this model, at least in Mato Grosso do Sul, needs to be reconsidered. Recommendations of a practical nature include the desirability of establishing specific local and territorial coordinating agents. Dependence on coordination of a network of local organizations by the network itself appears unlikely to succeed when the organizations in the municipalities and in the region do not see themselves as part of a network.

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