

# **Implementing Environmental Policies in Developing Countries: Responding to the Environmental Impacts of Tourism Development by Creating Environmentally Protected Areas in Bahia, Brazil**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

Governments have two apparently conflicting roles to play: promoter of economic development and protector of environmental quality. Economic development interests tend to have priority on most government agenda in developing countries, creating obstacles to the implementation of environmental protection policies. This trend can be reversed by introducing environmental protection concerns into the mainstream development agenda by decentralizing environmental policy implementation to development-oriented agencies.

Government agencies often fail to implement environmental policies mainly because they lack political support, they have insufficient financial resources, they have not developed adequate institutional capacity, and they tend to overlook the importance of cooperation at the local level. However, the Bahia State government in Northeast Brazil was able to overcome all four of these obstacles in establishing environmentally protected areas (APAs) by introducing them into the mainstream development agenda, which was chiefly oriented toward tourism development. At the state level, a large number of APAs were created, primarily as the result of the decentralization of administrative authority among several state agencies, including development-oriented agencies linked to tourism development. This decentralization generated an apparently unintentional system of incentives for state agencies to implement APAs. The increased inter-agency competition for political control of protected areas improved the institutional capacity of each agency, and generated funds and political support at the state and local levels for APA implementation, overcoming the four obstacles. State agencies' actions were supervised by an independent oversight body, the state environmental council (CEPRAM), which had the power to interfere in the establishment of APAs and block development projects related to them.

At the local level, seven case studies show that the involvement of state development agencies, and the local expectation of economic benefits from tourism, were important factors in preventing the usual local resistance to the establishment of APAs. In this context, three points determined the intensity of local political, financial, and institutional support for enforcing APA guidelines. First, APAs created as means of curbing already existent environmental problems caused by tourism or urban development mustered more local support than APAs created as environmental safeguards for public infrastructure projects.

Second, APAs contained within a single municipality received more local support than APAs involving multiple municipalities. Third, the involvement of local actors at the early stages of the APA creation fostered local support for enforcement. From the lessons at the story at the state level, additional incentives to local institutions by a central authority linked to a politically independent system of checks-and-balances might improve implementation at the local level