

International organizations and land governance: the role of FAO and the World Bank in reformulating the Public Policy for Land Regularization in Piauí

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Abstract

The state of Piauí is on the MATOPIBA agricultural frontier, made official by federal decree 8447/2015, and is a hub for attracting investment. To support the initiative, in 2015 the Piauí state government passed Law No. 6709/2015 for land regularization and in 2016 a loan from the World Bank (WB). However, several problems related to land grabbing deepened, leading to the blocking of rural property transactions in 2017. The situation was overcome with the approval of State Law 7.294/2019, supported by the United Nations Voluntary Guidelines on Land Governance (VGGT). This article aims to analyze the role of International Organizations (IOs) in the land conflict in Piauí, particularly in changing the state's land policy. Interviews, documents, relevant legislation and media reports were used as sources of data and analyzed in light of the literature on the role of IOs in public policy. The research demonstrates the contribution of IOs together with civil society organizations, the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office and the government of the state of Piauí in resolving the impasse and changing land policy.

Keywords: Market agrarian reform; Voluntary Guidelines on Land Governance; land grabbing.

Organizações internacionais e governança da terra: o papel da FAO e do Banco Mundial na reformulação da Política Pública de Regularização Fundiária do Piauí

Resumo

O estado do Piauí encontra-se na fronteira agrícola MATOPIBA, oficializado no decreto federal nº 8447/2015, constituindo um polo de atração de investimentos. Para apoiar a iniciativa, em 2015 o governo do estado do Piauí aprova a Lei nº 6709/2015 para regularização fundiária e em 2016 um empréstimo do Banco Mundial (BM). Entretanto,



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diversos problemas relacionados a *land grabbing* se aprofundaram, levando ao bloqueio de transações de imóveis rurais em 2017. A situação foi superada com a aprovação da Lei Estadual 7.294/2019, apoiada pelas Diretrizes Voluntárias sobre a Governança da Terra (DVGT) das Nações Unidas. O presente artigo tem como objetivo analisar o papel das Organizações Internacionais (OIs) no conflito de terra no Piauí, em particular na mudança da política fundiária do estado. Foram utilizados como fonte de dados entrevistas, documentos, legislação pertinente e notícias da mídia, analisados à luz da literatura sobre o papel das OIs nas políticas públicas. A pesquisa demonstra a contribuição das OIs em conjunto com organizações da sociedade civil, o Ministério Público Federal, o governo do estado piauiense na solução do impasse e mudança da política fundiária.

Palavras-chave: Reforma agrária de mercado; Diretrizes Voluntárias sobre a Governança da Terra; land grabbing.

Organismos internacionales y gobernanza de la tierra: el papel de la FAO y el Banco Mundial en la reformulación de la Política Pública de Regularización de Tierras en Piauí

Resumen

El estado de Piauí está en la frontera agrícola de MATOPIBA, oficializada por el decreto federal 8447/2015, y es un polo de atracción de inversiones. Para apoyar la iniciativa, el gobierno del estado de Piauí aprobó en 2015 la Ley n.º 6709/2015 de regularización de tierras y en 2016 un préstamo del Banco Mundial (BM). Sin embargo, varios problemas relacionados con el acaparamiento de tierras se agravaron, lo que llevó al bloqueo de las transacciones de propiedades rurales en 2017. La situación se superó con la aprobación de la Ley Estatal 7.294/2019, apoyada por las Directrices Voluntarias de las Naciones Unidas sobre la Gobernanza de la Tierra (DVGT). Este artículo pretende analizar el papel de las Organizaciones Internacionales (OIs) en el conflicto de la tierra en Piauí, en particular en el cambio de la política de tierras del Estado. Se utilizaron como fuentes de datos entrevistas, documentos, legislación relevante e informes de los medios de comunicación, analizados a la luz de la literatura sobre el papel de las OIs en las políticas públicas. La investigación demuestra la contribución de las OIs junto con las organizaciones de la sociedad civil, el Ministerio Público Federal y el gobierno del estado de Piauí en la resolución del impasse y el cambio de la política de tierras.

Palabras-clave: Reforma agraria de mercado; Directrices Voluntarias sobre Gobernanza de la Tierra; acaparamiento de tierras

Introduction

This article aims to contribute to an understanding of the concrete role of International Organizations (IOs) in the issue of the contemporary 'global land rush', a topic that has deepened since the beginning of this century. To this end, we will present a pioneering case study involving what we believe to be the first application of the Voluntary Guidelines for the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT) to resolve a land conflict in Brazil. We will empirically demonstrate the power

resources mobilized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Bank (WB), within the framework of their relations with civil society organizations and Brazilian political and judicial authorities, and how they favored the advancement of a titling process. It is not our aim to discuss the broader role of the WB and FAO in the agrarian question in general, including land reform. Nor will we develop a theoretical discussion on global governance. Specifically, we seek to add our research findings to the understanding of the contemporary phenomenon of *land grabbing* (Sauer; Leite, 2012; Borras Jr. *et al*, 2012; Sauer; Borras Jr., 2016; FAO, 2021).

The case described below is part of the historical framework of what has been called the 'global land rush,' a movement that gained momentum at the confluence of the financial, energy, food, and environmental crises of the mid-2000s (Pereira, 2017). Also called *land grabbing* or *land foreignization* (for cases in which the change in control of land occurs in favor of foreigners), this is a complex phenomenon, involving many factors and elements that we are unable to review in depth in this text. However, what is common among the cases is the operationalization of the change in control of land and its natural resources (Pereira, 2022). In some cases, common lands are transformed into commodities or other types of property. In others, there is dispossession and coercive expulsion of the people who occupy certain areas so that they can serve other interests, usually linked to capitalist exploitation. There are also cases in which market forces, in normalized operation, convert the ownership or use of land in duly institutionalized ways. In these processes, social conflicts and ecological degradation often occur. In short, this is a specific—but far from unprecedented—movement in the historical expansion of capitalism and the institutionalization of nature through the state (Dias; Lima, 2019).

In this context, civil society actors and sectors of some governments have sought to resist and react to the advance of these powerful forces in various ways. For example, while La Via Campesina called for a ban on large-scale foreign land transactions, other more moderate groups began to push for the creation of governance of land transactions to mitigate their adverse effects and maximize investment opportunities (Nascimento, 2018). In fact, the issue of land governance had already been the subject of debate in the FAO and other organizations previously, but the context in question gave new impetus to negotiations on the multilateral agenda. The WB led the negotiation of the Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment that Respects Livelihoods and Resources (PRAI), an initiative set in motion by the G8 in 2009 to relax the land market and which largely reflected the interests of the private sector. Published in 2010, the PRAI received criticism from governments and civil society organizations who condemned the overly market-based perspective of this governance mechanism (Nascimento, 2018).

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Subsequently, a long process of negotiations resulted in the creation of the Voluntary Guidelines for the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT), unanimously approved by the United Nations Committee on World Food Security (CFS) in May 2012, with significant participation from Brazil (França, Marques, 2017). It is the first international normative instrument to apply a human rights approach to the governance of land, fisheries, and forests, defining a new global standard for land tenure and natural resources. It was also adopted by FAO and came about with the expectation that it would become a relevant reference for public policymakers and international negotiations, as in fact happened, not without difficulties and setbacks, in Brazil, in Mercosur (especially the Specialized Meeting on Family Farming - REAF) and in other international initiatives with significant Brazilian participation (Garcia, Bueno, Reydon, Fernandes, 2017; França, Marques, 2017).

Our case study is set in this context. The state of Piauí, which was part of the project to expand the agricultural frontier called MATOPIBA¹ (Boechat, Pitta, Pereira, T, 2023), and whose lands are targets of the aforementioned global race, had a land policy supported by the WB and which ended up being the target of intense protests by social movements and national and international civil society organizations due to its socio-environmental impacts. As a result of the pressure, the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office ordered the policy to be suspended and reformulated with the stakeholders. The public policy was renegotiated, culminating in State Law No. 7,294/2019 (Piauí, 2019).

According to the Piauí government, the law is an innovative regulation, as it is the first case within the MATOPIBA space in which the United Nations VGGT were used to think about land governance.

The article is divided into six sections, including this introduction. The next section describes the methodology. The third presents the formation of the impasse in Piauí. The fourth provides a theoretical discussion on how IOs influence public policies. The fifth reports on the case study itself and the last presents the conclusions.

Methodology

The research design was centered on a case study, a method chosen because it was intended to investigate the actions of FAO and the WB in the process of formulating the new Land Regularization Policy for the state of Piauí, a contemporary circumstance (Yin,

¹ MATOPIBA is an acronym based on the initials of the Brazilian states of Maranhão, Tocantins, Piauí and Bahia. This region was consolidated by the federal government on May 6, 2015, through the Agricultural Development Plan (PDA) and the creation of the Management Committee via Decree No. 8,447/2015 (Brasil, 2015).

2018). In this sense, in an attempt to describe how these actors interacted, we considered a case study to be the most appropriate method.

As a technical procedure, we used a literature review, which allowed us to create a historical overview from the formation of the state of Piauí, through the modernization of the countryside to *land grabbing* as a current phenomenon. We then reviewed the literature on the diffusion of public policies, with a specific focus on the participation of IOs in the process of formulating public policies in the local context.

Documentary research was then used, based on public documents made available by the institutions that are part of the process under analysis—FAO, the WB, INTERPI, the Land Regularization Centre of the Piauí State Internal Affairs Department, and NGOs—as well as research on local news portals. The data was then analyzed in the light of theoretical studies by Jakobi (2009) and Faria (2018), which deal with the influence of IOs on public policies.

It should be noted that all this documentary research was preceded by an *onsite* visit to Teresina-PI in November 2021. During the visit, we met key players such as a WB consultant at the Piauí Land Institute (INTERPI), a civil servant at the Piauí State Land Regularization Center, the State Attorney at the head of INTERPI's Legal Department, and a Budget and Credit Operation Superintendent at the State Planning Department (SEPLAN), who directed us to locate documents that could help with the research. However, it should be noted that the conversations with the key players did not serve as material for analysis.

We therefore have an exploratory and theoretically-oriented case study. It is exploratory because we have not identified any academic literature that explores the conflict in question from the perspective proposed here, or the application of the VGGT to resolve disputes of this type. It should also be noted that, due to the proximity of the facts, academic materials on the subject are still very rare. Thus, the exploratory nature of this study is justified, and collecting, organizing, and publishing information about the episode has become a relevant objective to enable future research (Yin, 2018).

The impasse over land titling in Piauí in the context of global *land grabbing*

The state of Piauí is a target area for investment in land by national and international capital, mainly because it is part of the country's agricultural frontier, MATOPIBA (Reydon *et al.*, 2017; Coca, Soyer, Barbosa Jr., 2023). Another attraction for investors was that the state had rules that did not respect fundamental human rights, already consolidated in the international and national order, about land ownership and use. This was the case, for example, with State Law 6.709/2015, which governed land regularization in the state.

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In 2016, the land regularization policy in the state of Piauí received support from the WB through a US\$120 million loan agreement signed on April 27, 2016. The amount was used for the *Piauí: Pillars of Growth and Social Inclusion Project*, which, in addition to expanding access to and improving the quality of education, health, agriculture, and water resources, aimed to strengthen the real property rights of the poor population in rural areas (Silva Júnior, 2022).

However, according to the newsletter *Povos do Cerrado em Defesa de seus Territórios e Contra a Devastação Causada pelo Agronegócio no Piauí* (2019), the law and the WB-funded project actually favored agribusiness, as they only provided for individual titling, failing to recognize the territories of traditional peoples and communities, which further aggravated land conflicts.

In line with this perspective, FIAN International, the Social Network for Justice and Human Rights and the Pastoral Land Commission published a paper in 2018 entitled *The Environmental and Human Costs of the Land Deal - the Case of MATOPIBA, Brazil*. This paper pointed out that the land regularization process in Piauí was being used by owners of large plantations and agribusiness companies to legalize their land claims and formalize their property rights. Meanwhile, communities encountered various obstacles in their attempts to have their traditional land rights recognized and protected (Fian Internacional *et al.*, 2018, p. 63).

Given this context, after pressure from social movements, supported by national and international NGOs, the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office (MPF) recommended the suspension of the land regularization policy in 2017. Civil society organizations claimed, among other things, that State Law No. 6.709/2015, which regulated the state's public land regularization policy up to that point, did not recognize the territories of traditional peoples and communities, contributing to an increase in conflicts over land (PNCSA *et al.*, 2019).

Once the impasse was established, both the NGOs and the MPF directed the government of Piauí and the WB to call FAO to take part in the debate on land governance, since they recognized the technical capacity of that IO and suggested the VGGT as a reference for dealing with the issue. After a few years, and with the intermediation of a consultancy appointed by the FAO and the WB, the new Law No. 7.294/2019 began to regulate Piauí's land policy and the WB-funded project returned to activity. The alleged objectives of the new law are to guarantee the right to land by legitimizing ownership, taking into account the demands of social movements, as well as to order the control and use of the land so as to avoid the improper use of properties in the state of Piauí and to provide greater legal certainty (Silva Júnior, 2022).

Against this backdrop, knowing that the state of Piauí has based its current land regularization policy on the VGGT, we will now examine the role of IOs and how they influence the formulation of public policies in the domestic context.

International organizations and the process of formulating public policies

There is no doubt that IOs have influenced states in their public policy formulation process. The type and degree of influence varies between concrete cases, but from a more general point of view, it is possible to state that IOs have become crucial actors in the development of global public policies (Reinicke; Policy, 1998) and that they provide an organizational structure in which representatives of states can meet and discuss future policy lines. IOs thus structure a field of international politics, bringing together actors, setting global agendas and promoting policy development (Jakobi, 2009).

Faria's (2018) classification is useful for understanding and describing the role of IOs in these processes. For the author, the influence of IOs in the public policy formulation cycle can be observed in at least four phases of the public policy cycle:

a) Agenda-setting—through campaigns on issues that permeate the daily lives of countries (environment, violence, health), IOs influence governments to adopt certain themes in their government agendas and lead them to act. In the same vein, Jakobi (2009) adds that IOs, through their agenda-setting capacities, can urge members to set common goals;

b) Policy formulation and elaboration—considering that IOs are also a place for debate and construction, they have also disseminated ideas of 'good or best practices' among member countries (or not), such as, for example, the DVG, which is an instruction guide that directs countries to build responsible governance for the management of land and natural resources;

c) Implementation—in addition to theoretical knowledge, IOs generally collaborate with technical and financial assistance to help governments implement policies or programs;

d) Monitoring, follow-up, and evaluation—at this stage, IOs evaluate compliance with established goals and objectives. Here, it is worth noting that the IOs themselves draw up and disseminate their evaluation methodology proposals.

But how do IOs spread their ideas and influence countries' public policies? Oliveira and Faria (2016) present a list:

a) Institutional inducement—occurs when an institution (domestic or international) exerts any form of pressure on a government or organization to adopt a certain policy;

b) Cooperation—working together to define objects, partners, responsibilities, deadlines, resources, purposes and results expected from the transfer;

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c) Networking and circulation of individuals—the influence of interpersonal relationships on the identification of the various policy instruments that exist to deal with a public problem;

d) Translation—the adaptation of formal instruments or the abstract dimensions of policies to the different specificities of the local context;

e) Political renewal—a change in the government's program, which can make a public body more open to adopting instruments from other countries.

In simpler terms, Gilardi (2016) presents three classes of mechanisms: learning, emulation, and competition. In this paper we use Coêlho's (2016) theoretical concept of a mechanism, which is a means by which political ideas are communicated between states.

Gilardi (2016) explains that learning is observed in situations in which the successful implementation of each public policy by one actor increases the chances that a similar type will be adopted by others. As for emulation mechanisms, they can be observed in situations in which the policy would be more likely to spread due to a social moment considered favorable. The competition mechanism, for the author, is related to the adaptation and adoption of policies by an agent who proposes some advantage in their own favor, to the detriment of other agents.

Somewhat differently, Heinze (2011) presents four classes: learning, externalities, emulation, and socialization. The first mechanism, learning, has the same definition as Gilardi (2016). Socialization is defined as situations in which actors' behavior is guided to the extent that they come to share beliefs as a result of interacting with other actors. As for externalities, the author considers this to be a phenomenon that occurs when incentives are put in place to influence a certain type of policy. Finally, emulation occurs when actors seek to increase the legitimacy of their choices in terms of public policy by adapting to parameters that are widespread in the international sphere.

In this context, IOs, through coercion, using their power, encourage the adoption of a certain policy. An example of this is the imposition of conditionalities on the granting of loans by the WB and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) under the Structural Adjustment Programs.

IOs can also act through socialization, a mechanism through which a path is opened for the standardization of rules, which would be defined as appropriate based on the interactions between the actors; through externalities, which are similar to coercion, but whereby (positive or negative) incentives are offered to the actors in order to compel them to adopt a certain type of policy and through emulation, which is “the desire or need of domestic actors to conform to the norms spread in the international sphere” (Heize, 2011).

As for the instruments used by IOs to influence states in the decision-making process, Jakobi (2009) presents five, namely:

a) Discursive dissemination—establishing ideas on national political agendas. It resembles the state's instrument for informing and guiding the choices of its citizens, but also includes rather implicit rules or assumptions about how political problems should be tackled. It is therefore a very important instrument of IOs, particularly because it often precedes other instruments. Ideas prepare the ground for political initiatives to follow and are also the first element of political change. Ideas alone, however, may not be enough. Instead, the dissemination of ideas by IOs rarely occurs alone, but is most often part of or linked to other instruments.

b) Standard setting—a well-known strategy, even if it is often reduced to binding standards only. The setting of standards by IOs is in some way equivalent to the regulatory capacity of the nation-state, even if the former is not able to execute collective decisions in the same way. Conventions represent a classic standard-setting function, but many other more informal means, such as benchmarking, explicit objectives and rules, which countries must comply with, are also formulated.

c) Financial means—a payment from the organization to a country to establish programs or institutions related to an international policy objective. Parallel to the governmental capacities that we can find in public policies at the national level, incentives are thus established to guide specific behavior.

d) Coordination functions—are surveillance instruments, as well as informal and formal monitoring. International coordination functions assess the progress of countries toward a common political goal.

e) Technical assistance—concerned with supporting or improving the capacities of a state in its goal of moving towards an internationally outlined political objective and is comparable to social support programs at the national level. IOs mainly apply this instrument in relation to developing countries, which often lack the experience or administrative capacity to implement international policies.

We opted to use the framework proposed by Jakobi (2009) because we believe it is the most comprehensive and complete for identifying the instruments most frequently used by IOs. In addition, we used a basic sequence of the public policy cycle, according to Carvalho, Fernandes and Faria (2021), to evaluate the use of the instruments.

The participation of FAO and WB in the formulation of land policy in Piauí

We will now analyze the participation of FAO and the WB in the formulation of land regularization policy in the state of Piauí. Information and evidence was gathered through

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media reports, FAO documents, and the Piauí judiciary and government. The problem of land regularization in the state of Piauí—and in Brazil—is a long-standing one. Recognizing this, we created a timeline that begins in 2015, the year in which the Federal Government, through Decree No. 8447/2015, made the creation of MATOPIBA official. That year, the state government also passed Law No. 6709/2015 to regulate the state's public land regularization policy. In addition to this initiative, in the following year, 2016, the state received financial support, through a loan signed with WB, to finance the “Piauí Project: Pillars of Growth and Social Inclusion,” as already mentioned (Brasil, 2015; Piauí, 2015, Silva Júnior, 2022).

However, according to the *Boletim Informativo Povos do Cerrado em Defesa de seus Territórios e Contra a Devastação Causada pelo Agronegócio no Piauí* (2019), the public policy in place at the time did not respond to the desires and needs of some parts of society, especially rural society, which caused the problem of land grabbing to enter the debate agenda, pressuring the government to include it again on its agenda to formulate effective responses (Silva Júnior, 2022).

This study did not identify sufficient evidence that FAO or the WB were actively involved in shaping the Piauí government's agenda, leading to a land governance proposal based on the VGGT. However, we did find that the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office, through Official Document No. 2017, citing and presented the VGGT as a legal basis for the government and the World Bank to suspend the public policy in force, regulated by Law No. 6709/2015 (Silva Júnior, 2022). The MPF wrote (2017, p. 3-4, emphasis added):

Considering the **Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forest Resources**, adopted at the 38th Special Session of the United Nations Committee on World Food Security in May 2012, which constitute an internationally accepted **reference standard on tenure governance**;

Considering that the above guidelines cover the need for **States to recognize and respect all legitimate holders and their tenure rights (Item 3A - 3. 1); to safeguard legitimate tenure rights against threats and infringements to protect their holders against their loss** (item 3A - 2); to promote and facilitate the enjoyment of legitimate tenure rights (item 3A - 3); to provide access to justice to deal with infringements of legitimate tenure rights (item 3A - 4) and to prevent tenure disputes, conflicts and corruption (item 3A - 5);

Considering items 9.4 and 12.6 of the Guidelines specified above, which **require States** to provide for the appropriate recognition and protection of legitimate tenure rights, livelihoods, food security, the environment and human rights against the risks that could arise from large-scale transactions in the tenure rights of indigenous peoples and other communities with customary tenure systems, prioritizing production and investment models that do not result in the large-scale transfer of tenure rights to investors;

Considering, in the same sense, item 7.3 of the Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forest Resources, which **imposes on States the need to identify existing tenure rights and their holders whenever they intend to recognize or allocate tenure rights, with the participation of the communities directly affected**, under the terms of items 3B-6 and 9.9 of the same statute.

Thus, the influence of the international norm was noted in the case, pointing to a process of learning (Gilardi, 2016) or discursive dissemination (Jacobi, 2009), since the MPF began its participation imbued with that international instrument (Silva Júnior, 2002).

In addition to this document, a letter entitled *O programa de terras do Banco Mundial no Estado do Piauí, Brasil, é uma licença para a grilagem de terras*²—which is a license for land grabbing, dated 2018, signed by several Brazilian and international NGOs and addressed to the WB—expressly requested the establishment of a roundtable dialogue to assess the effects of the land regularization program financed by the Bank in Piauí. It stated that the roundtable should involve representatives of the affected communities, the State Agrarian Court, the Piauí Land Institute (INTERPI), the State Public Prosecutor's Office and the MPF, the Piauí Legislative Assembly, FAO, and civil society support groups, and should also be convened by FAO as the main UN agency for implementing the VGGT. The letter also demanded that the WB publicly disclose how the land titling/regularization project in Piauí, and any other loans, projects, and operations to which the WB was a party, complied with the Voluntary Guidelines (Silva Júnior, 2022).

In this sense, according to the data collected by the research, it is evident that there was an adjustment in the government's agenda based on feedback from the MPF and civil society actors on the practical effects of State Law No. 6709/2015 (Silva Junior, 2022).

After the MPF's recommendation and the appeal from national and international NGOs in 2017, the problem of weak land governance (Reydon et al, 2017) returned to the state government's decision-making agenda. The following year, the first steps were taken to create the Land Forum of the MATOPIBA Corregedores Gerais da Justiça, which would be a space to discuss and present ideas on land governance (Silva Júnior, 2022).

However, the Forum's work began even before it was formally created, through the work of the executive coordinator of the Land Regularization Center of the Piauí Judiciary, who brought FAO's experience of supporting the application of the VGGT in Latin America and the Caribbean to the state's judiciary (FAO, 2021). It should be noted that the coordinator takes on this role as a consultant for FAO and the WB.

According to the *Activity Report/Action Plan 2018*, prepared by the consultant and made available by the Court of Justice of the State of Piauí, he, along with two magistrates

² The World Bank's land program in the State of Piauí, Brazil, is a license for land grabbing - International Declaration. Letter to the World Bank, March 28, 2018. Available at: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1snGH_R9neVb7JaThHlAs36ZY2CBd5vik. Accessed on: May 22, 2022.

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and the Corregidor Geral, began a circuit of meetings with the institutions APROSOJA, OAB, Legislative Assembly, Secretariat for Agrarian Development, Federal University of Piauí, Federal Institute of Piauí, INCRA, INTERPI, ANOREG, the Public Defender's Office, the Association of Municipalities, and the MPF, all actors linked to the land issue in Piauí, to listen to them and present proposals for drawing up the state's land regularization policy in light of the VGGT and the Sustainable Development Goals (Torsiano, 2018).

During this stage of presenting proposals, ideas, and solutions, the FAO and WB consultant, according to the aforementioned report, also presented the then Governor of Piauí (Wellington Dias - PT) with the proposal to organize a “Workshop on Land Regularization: Legal Security and Economic Development”. The aim was to encourage the construction of the State Land Regularization Plan in an integrated manner, with the involvement of the state's land agencies, as well as to create a Working Group to review the State Land Regularization Law. These suggestions were approved by the government, which undertook to support the implementation of the initiatives presented (Silva Júnior, 2022).

The workshop took place on March 6, 2018 and served to publicize the installation of the Land Regularization Center. It was a moment in which the consultant met with experts and authorities in land matters to hold a public debate, dialoguing with the strategy of social participation, inclusion, and transparency (Silva Júnior, 2022).

According to the Piauí State Court of Justice³, the inauguration of the Piauí State Land Regularization Center was marked by the presence of various government institutions and social movements related to the agrarian issue in the state. Representatives of social movements such as the State Coordination of Quilombola Communities of Piauí (CONAQ), the Federation of Rural Farmers and Family Farmers of the State of Piauí (FETAPE), and the Pastoral Land Commission -PI (CTP) took part (TJPI, 2018; Silva Júnior, 2022).

After the workshop and the installation of the nucleus, a schedule of meetings and activities was determined between 03/14/2018 and 04/22/2018. During this period, meetings were held with the Interdisciplinary Commission to review the regulatory frameworks for Land Regularization and define which municipalities would participate in the public hearings, among other technical activities. As a result of this move by the FAO and WB consultant to dialogue with government institutions, the local judiciary and, above all, civil society, the proposal for a State Plan for Land Regularization and Sustainable Rural Development following the VGGT culminated in the drafting of the new legislative framework Law No. 7,294/2019. (Piauí, 2019; Silva Júnior, 2022).

³ TRIBUNAL DE JUSTIÇA DO PIAUÍ. **TJ/PI**: CCJ Inaugura sede do Núcleo de Regularização Fundiária. Teresina Piauí, April 17, 2018. Available at: <https://www.anoreg.org.br>. Accessed on: 05 Feb. 2022

Therefore, in this phase of the public policy cycle, FAO and the WB, through their consultant, acted directly, creating spaces such as workshops and meetings with the actors interested in the issue of land governance, to disseminate their ideas and provoke political initiatives for change through discursive dissemination. At the same time as the IO spread its ideas and the local government took the initiative to embrace them, we saw the presence of the instrument that Jakobi (2009) classified as determining standards (Silva Júnior, 2022).

In our case, the VGGTs—which until then were Voluntary Guidelines (soft law) that, despite perhaps having significant normative weight, are not law—are now adopted as a guiding standard for the formulation of a law that will determine the actions of the state and the other actors involved in land regularization policy in the state context.

The new law, in line with the recommendations of the VGGT regarding the right to possession, determined that public and vacant state lands occupied by indigenous, quilombola, and traditional communities should be regularized, to the detriment of the regularization of productive areas in the cerrado of Piauí. Article 15 of Law No. 7,294/2019 states that “in the event of a conflict in the regularization of occupations on vacant or public state lands referred to in this Chapter, the state will prioritize regularization for the benefit of local communities [...], if the conflict is between these communities and private individuals or legal entities” (Piauí, 2019, Silva Júnior, 2022).

Another point in the law that should be highlighted, and which also reflects the recommendations of the VGGT, concerns issues relating to participation, social control, and monitoring of the land regularization policy. Article 6 of Law No. 7,294/2019 states that the Piauí Land Institute will submit a report on regularized properties every six months to the State Council for Rural Development and Agricultural Policy (CEDERPA) and the Piauí Legislative Assembly, informing them at least of the beneficiaries, the areas regularized, and the amounts collected. In addition to complying with the Voluntary Guidelines, the new policy enshrines the principle of publicity, also enabling access to information (Piauí, 2019, Silva Júnior, 2022).

After the State Public Policy for Land Regularization was formulated and implemented under Law No. 7,294/2019, INTERPI became responsible for implementing the policy. From that moment on, the public policy had to be implemented through the *Projeto Piauí: Pilares de Crescimento e Inclusão Social*, the result of an agreement between the Piauí state government and the WB. According to the project's operational manual, “the World Bank, through a credit operation with a sector wide approach program, will work on land regularization actions. In this agreement, there are even actions included in a traditional loan modality called technical assistance to support the state public sector” (Governo do Piauí, 2018).

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Thus, since INTERPI is responsible for implementing the land regularization policy, according to the operational manual, the project carries out actions aimed at supporting the implementation of the state's regularization policy, supposedly establishing a more reliable, transparent and efficient property registration system by: i. Strengthening and modernizing INTERPI; ii. Identifying, demarcating, and registering state land; iii. Land regularization of INTERPI's agrarian reform settlements; iv. Land regularization of quilombola territories; v. Operationalization of the Land Regularization Nucleus of the General Justice Office (Silva Júnior, 2022).

Further research is needed to find out how the project has been effectively implemented. Monitoring, as presented above, has been assigned to INTERPI by the new law. However, the WB also has its own monitoring system, since it requires INTERPI to draw up periodic reports presenting financial and other information on the implementation of the policy. In addition to the bureaucratic information, the WB requires a biannual report on monitoring compliance with the indicators, which it classifies as intermediate and disbursement.

Regarding the disbursement indicator, the project's final objective was to achieve the number of 7,500 land title requests made by small rural producers through the state's land regularization program. In addition to all this, concerning monitoring, the SEPLAN website itself has a resource for following up on reports. However, in terms of evaluating the project or the public policy itself, the only information found during the research was the publication of a notice on the SEPLAN website of a meeting between representatives of the WB and the government to open the first stage of the Mid-Term Review Mission of the *Programa Piauí: Pilares de Crescimento e Inclusão Social*, which took place in June 2018. The meeting sought to reassess the targets and, if necessary, change some indicators.

Thus, concerning implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, it is apparent that FAO no longer appears to be actively participating through its consultant, but the WB is. The participation of this IO is through: the instruments—financial means, specifically the loan; coordinating functions—the means of monitoring; and technical assistance—support for the state public sector.

Final remarks

In this case study, we found that faced with the public problem presented by national and international civil society organizations and the MPF, the government of the state of Piauí turned to IOs for theoretical, technical, and financial help to reformulate its land policy. The various FAO and WB instruments were fundamental in overcoming the impasse that had

paralyzed the land regularization program, which made it possible to resume the land titling process. In other words, it facilitated the incorporation of land into the market via private property, even though it benefited or excluded spaces for local communities.

With regard to the process of governance (regulating to mitigate impacts and maximize opportunities) and the actions of IOs, it is evident that, in the context of land grabbing, IOs simultaneously seek crisis management and political stabilization, but also the opening up of spaces (physical and institutional) for the operations of global capital (Santos, 2018). In this sense, and in light of what has been analyzed in this paper, we agree with Sassen (2015) that this process of “global governance is directly associated with the operationalization of new spaces and mechanisms for capital accumulation, including through the appropriation of land hitherto not incorporated into the market dynamic” (Sassen, 2015, p. 86). The general result seems to converge with Deniger et al.’s (2011, p. 10) view, that the WB’s policies aim to facilitate the procedures for transferring land ownership—or, as the bank itself put it, to create “competitive environments” for transactions. Therefore, regulating land policy in the state of Piauí based on its norms and ideals provides legal certainty and reliability for the territorialization of national and international capital.

The state of Piauí, for its part, can show the world that it has the most up-to-date public land policy. For example, FAO itself, in its report published in 2021, entitled *Uma experiência brasileira para a governança responsável da terra e regularização fundiária*, highlighted that the “pioneering spirit and experience of the Piauí Regularization Center is a reference in the application of the VGGT” (FAO, 2021, p. 11). The same document shows that the other states that make up MATOPIBA are also being targeted for the dissemination of FAO’s VGGT, the aim of which is to make the country’s agricultural frontier a place aligned with market regulation models, making it attractive to national and international investors.

These final considerations, however, need to be revised in light of research that investigates the process analyzed here from the perspective of NGOs, social movements, and local communities in Piauí; as well as evaluations of the impact of the new law on social tensions and its ecological consequences. After all, it is not out of question that the VGGT may have been effective in the improvement of socio-environmental relations. We hope that this work can open up avenues for such research.

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