

Participation, representation, and representativeness of traditional peoples and communities in Eastern Amazon State Water Resources Councils

Participação, representação e representatividade dos povos e comunidades tradicionais nos Conselhos Estaduais de Recursos Hídricos da Amazônia Oriental

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the participation, representation, and representativeness of Traditional Peoples and Communities (PCTs) in the State Water Resources Councils (CERHs) of the Eastern Amazon to verify whether such spaces have been the stage for debates, defense of collective interests, and decisions which are relevant to these populations. For this purpose, documental research was carried out regarding the laws, decrees, regulations, resolutions, and minutes published between the years 1997 and 2022 on the websites of the environmental secretariats of the states of Amapá, Maranhão, Mato Grosso, Pará, and Tocantins, resulting in the identification and analysis of 34 terms of office, 23 regulatory decrees, 169 resolutions, 30 minutes, etc. The results obtained indicated that the councils of Amapá, Tocantins, and Maranhão do not have in their decrees the projections of vacancies for PCTs, unlike the councils of Pará and Mato Grosso. Nevertheless, in these councils, the definition of vacancies for representatives of the PCTs was not addressed in 88.89 and 100% of the meetings held, respectively. In the end, it was found that the projections of vacancies for PCTs representatives in the councils do not guarantee effective participation, representation, and representativeness. Therefore, strategies that promote the inclusion and full participation of PCTs in CERHs of the Eastern Amazon are urgently needed.

Keywords: decentralized and participatory management; subjects of rights; indigenous people; quilombolas; collective interests; territories; water.

RESUMO

Este artigo apresenta análise da participação, representação e representatividade dos Povos e Comunidades Tradicionais (PCT) nos Conselhos Estaduais de Recursos Hídricos (CERH) da Amazônia Oriental, com o objetivo de verificar se tais espaços têm sido palco de debates, de defesa dos interesses coletivos e de decisões relevantes a essas populações. Para tanto foi realizada pesquisa documental referente às leis, decretos, regimentos, resoluções e atas publicados entre os anos de 1997 e 2022, nos sites das Secretarias de Meio Ambiente dos estados do Amapá, Maranhão, Mato Grosso, Pará e Tocantins, resultando na identificação e análise de 34 mandatos, 23 decretos de regulamentação, 169 resoluções e 93 atas. Os resultados obtidos mostraram que os conselhos do Amapá, Tocantins e Maranhão não possuem em seus decretos a previsão de vagas para os PCT, diferentemente dos conselhos do Pará e do Mato Grosso, em que foi identificada a definição de vagas para os representantes dos PCT, porém estes não estiveram presentes em 88,89 e 100% das reuniões realizadas, respectivamente. Ao fim, constatou-se que a previsão de vagas aos representantes dos PCT nos conselhos não garante a efetiva participação e a representatividade, sendo premente o desenvolvimento de estratégias que possam promover a inclusão e a participação plena dos PCT nos CERH da Amazônia Oriental.

Palavras-chave: gestão descentralizada e participativa; sujeitos de direitos; indígenas; quilombolas; interesses coletivos; territórios; água.

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Introduction

The management councils are public spaces, provided for in the 1988 Federal Constitution, in which representatives of the Government and civil society, in the context of equality, inclusion, publicity, plurality, and divergent points of view and interests, discuss and debate important issues for the formulation of sectoral public policies, with their actions guided by the principle of participation (Lavalle et al., 2021).

Regarding inclusion and plurality, it is necessary to give visibility to groups that, despite their historical importance, origin, and occupation of the Brazilian territory, are social minorities excluded from the process of establishing their demands before the Government, such as the Traditional Peoples and Communities (PCTs) (Alves and Mencher, 2018).

According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2010), Brazil is inhabited by 305 indigenous peoples, which represents approximately 896,917 people, and according to the National Coordination of Articulation of Rural Black Quilombola Communities (CONAQ), there is an estimated quilombola population of approximately 10 to 15 million people, in addition to 24 other types of traditional communities recognized by the National Council of Traditional Peoples and Communities (CNPCT) (IBGE, 2010; Brasil, 2016; Oberlaender, 2022).

The data presented above confirm the need for PCT representation in the different management councils, especially those that deal with issues such as the environment, conservation units, and water resources since they have a close relationship with the territory and the way they use the natural resources, and those aspects determine their cultural, social, religious, ancestral, and economic reproduction (Brasil, 2007).

Despite this recognition, it is known that the PCTs, over the years, have been historically excluded groups and have suffered various threats, with the acquiescence of the Government. The Government legitimizes the expansion of the mineral-agro-export economic model, disregarding the people who inhabit the territories and privileging the hegemonic groups and their market strategies, which include activities in the agricultural, mining, and hydroelectric sectors, as well as the construction of roads, dams, etc. (Costa Filho, 2020; Milanez et al., 2021; Peixoto et al., 2022).

In the context of water resources, there have been significant impacts on the PCTs, their territories, and ways of life, such as the contamination of river and lake waters by heavy metals from mining activities, intense irrigation caused by the expansion of the agricultural frontier, especially concerning soybean production, which has impacted the availability of groundwater, as well as the construction of dams that alter the natural course of rivers, affect the ecosystem, cause the eviction of people from their territories, among other violations (Anaya and Espírito-Santo, 2018; Sauer, 2018; Milanez et al., 2021).

Considering the current scenario of vulnerability to which the PCTs are subjected, especially with their different forms of management and use of water, this article will give special attention to the State Councils of

Water Resources (CERHs) in Eastern Amazon, which include the states of Amapá, Pará, Maranhão, Mato Grosso, and Tocantins. The councils should be participatory spaces in which the Government and Civil Society would negotiate, debate, and deliberate on water management issues.

Therefore, it is necessary to reflect on some issues/problems that help understand how the representation, participation, and representativeness of the PCTs in the CERHs in the Eastern Amazon occur. They are: how do the definition and the choice of the PCTs' representatives in the councils occur? Which are the CERHs that have PCTs representation? How many seats are destined for the representatives of the PCTs? Who are the representatives of the PCTs that are engaged in the councils? Are the representatives of the PCTs able to insert their demands and interests into the governmental agenda so that they can be implemented in the form of public policies?

In this sense, given the issues presented, this article intends to analyze the participation, representation, and representativeness of the PCTs in the CERHs in the Eastern Amazon to reveal whether such spaces have been able to give visibility and voice to the various traditional identities concerning their demands, especially the impacts on the rivers and lakes that exist in the different territories they occupy.

Literature review

Participation, representation, and representativeness in the state water resources councils

The National Water Resources Policy, through Law No. 9.433/1997, establishes, among its fundamentals, that the management of water resources must be decentralized and rely on the participation of public authorities, users of water resources, and civil organizations, as well as their respective segments.

The National Council of Water Resources (CNRH), the CERHs, and the Drainage Basin Committees (CBHs) are part of the National System of Water Resources Management (SINGREH) and are participative deliberative entities (Brasil, 1997). The CERHs are present in all Brazilian states and have a diversified composition so that all sectors of society with an interest in water have representation and can participate in decisions about the management of water resources, bringing the demands of those they represent to the plenary sessions.

For a better understanding of the CERHs as participatory entities or institutions, some theoretical conceptual aspects about democracy, representation, participation, and representativeness must be introduced.

The concept of democracy is dynamic and presents several theoretical angles because it changes according to the historical process of the people's empowerment. The collective decisions taken in a democratic process must consider the dimensions of fundamental human rights and allow individuals and groups to aggregate and articulate their interests, protect themselves from arbitrary abuses of power, and enjoy the ability to exercise freedom in their public and private lives (Landman, 2018; Asenbaum, 2021).

Heller et al. (2016) explain that Western liberal democracies have fostered public spaces for citizen participation, as is the case of public policy management councils, such as the CERHs, and, for this purpose, they work to intensify democratic mechanisms and the so-called direct democracy or participatory democracy.

We are interested in the conceptualization of citizen participation, taking as a reference the article written by Sherry Arnstein, which is still the basis for several studies on participation. Arnstein (2002) explains that participation is the redistribution of power that enables deprived citizens, currently excluded from political and economic processes, to promote meaningful social reforms that allow them to be actively included and share the benefits of the evolving society.

About the concept of representation, it is important to highlight the theorization brought by Hanna Pitkin, considering etymological and historical studies in her useful book *The Concept of Representation*, in which the author presents some definitions of the term *to represent*: “to make present or manifest what is absent”; “it is to act substantively on behalf of the other”, that is, it is inferred from Pitkin’s studies (1972) that to represent is to bring the representative, legitimized by their represented with all their complexities, into the participatory space.

The representation, when institutionalized, contributes so that those who cannot directly participate in the decisions, become present through the representatives. However, Barbosa et al. (2016) warn that being in someone’s place, not always, means acting for this person. Moreover, it is not possible to guarantee that the one who is not present will be properly represented.

Therefore, the quality of the relationship between the representatives and the represented individuals impacts representativeness in participatory spaces, because the greater the distance between the representatives and the represented individuals, the less representative they are, and vice-versa. Representativeness is directly linked to the way the representative speaks on behalf of the collective and if he/she does it with the demands and needs of the represented individuals in mind. Therefore, he/she must refrain from self-representation or self-interest and be accountable for his/her actions to the represented (Carlos et al., 2018; Rocha et al., 2020).

The CERHs as participative entities must pursue and promote the aspects previously presented, regarding effective participation, representation, and representativeness, especially when it comes to water management, particularly in the Eastern Amazon, as it is the setting for large agricultural, mining, hydroelectric, etc. projects, and requires quality representation from all interested sectors, including representatives of the PCTs.

The traditional peoples and communities

Currently, there are legal devices composed of conventions, laws, and decrees that guarantee the territorial, social, environmental, and economic rights of PCTs, as a result of the political protagonism of indigenous people, quilombolas, and other traditional communities.

An important milestone in this process was the “Alliance of Forest Peoples”, which emerged in the mid-1980s when some of the most important leaders of the indigenous peoples and rubber tappers in Brazil came together to claim for demarcation of territories and protect their natural assets and their different forms of management and use from the creation of extractivist reserves (Silva, 2019).

An important international legal instrument is the Convention no. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, adopted at the 76th International Labor Conference in 1989, in which the indigenous or tribal self-identification is recognized by establishing it as a subjective criterion for defining the peoples subject to the Convention (International Labor Organization, 1989).

Another milestone is the Convention on Biological Diversity signed during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, which highlights the important role played by indigenous peoples and local communities in biodiversity conservation (Brasil, 2000).

In 2006, the National Commission on Sustainable Development of Traditional Peoples and Communities was established by a decree, with the main duties of coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the National Policy on Sustainable Development of Traditional Peoples and Communities (PNPCT), established by decree No. 6.040/07 (Brasil, 2007).

In the PNPCT, Article 3, we find a definition for PCTs:

Culturally differentiated groups that recognize themselves as such, possessing their own forms of social organization, occupying and using territories and natural resources as a condition for their cultural, social, religious, ancestral, and economic reproduction, using knowledge, innovations, and practices generated and transmitted by tradition (Brasil, 2007).

There is also the National Council of Traditional Peoples and Communities (CNPCT), an advisory collegiate body that is currently part of the basic structure of the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights, under the National Secretariat of Policies for the Promotion of Racial Equality, established by Decree No. 8.750, of May 9, 2016. Its purpose is to monitor and improve public policies for PCTs (Brasil, 2016).

Regarding the right to land, the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) and the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA), in partnership with the Palmares Cultural Foundation, are the federal agencies responsible for recognizing the lands of indigenous peoples and quilombola communities, respectively.

However, besides the indigenous peoples and quilombolas, 24 other PCTs are officially recognized in Brazil, such as *andirobeiras*, strawflower harvesters, *caatinga* inhabitants, *caçaras*, nut collectors, extractivists, wetland inhabitants, artisanal fishermen, *terreiro* people, *babaçu* coconut breakers, *retireiros*, riverside dwellers, rubber tappers, etc. (Brasil, 2016).

Despite the national and international legal devices, countries like Brazil do not seem to have a substantial impact on recognizing the importance and rights of PCTs (Navarro et al., 2022), especially in the conservation of biodiversity, because these populations suffer constant threats from large developmental projects, particularly those that impact water resources. Therefore, the PCTs must be present in the CERHs of the Eastern Amazon, otherwise, as Milanez et al. (2021) state, these spaces will serve to soften the rampant expansion of capital, creating the illusion of a consented expansion.

Material and Methods

The present work considered the Eastern Amazon as a territorial cutout, with the CERHs of Amapá, Maranhão, Mato Grosso, Pará, and Tocantins as the object of study, according to Figure 1.

The study has a qualitative-quantitative approach since it aims to describe in an interpretative way the components of a complex system of meanings, as well as its techniques for quantifying and analyzing information (Gil, 2022). As for data collection techniques, bibliographic research and documental research were used.

The documental research aimed to collect and identify the State laws governing water resources, the regulation and appointment decrees, the internal regulations, the resolutions, and the minutes of meetings (ordinary and extraordinary) published between the years 1997 and 2022 on the websites of the water resources management agencies of the states of Amapá, Maranhão, Mato Grosso, Pará, and Tocantins, resulting in the identification of 34 council terms of office, 23 council regulation decrees, 169 resolutions, and 93 minutes of meetings, etc.

To reveal whether the CERHs in the Eastern Amazon have been spaces for discussion debates, and have been meeting the demands of the PCTs, three categories of analysis were used: “representation”, “participation”, and “representativeness”. Variables were listed to enable the verification of each one of them, based on a detailed study of the decrees and minutes of the meetings, using the content analysis technique proposed by Bardin (2011).

According to Bardin (2011), content analysis can be understood, in a summarized way, as being composed of three stages, namely: pre-analysis, exploration, and codification of the results.

Table 1 shows the methodological path used to choose the variables, having established stages, phases, and objectives, adapted from Bardin (2011).

Table 2 shows the categories of analysis and their respective variables.

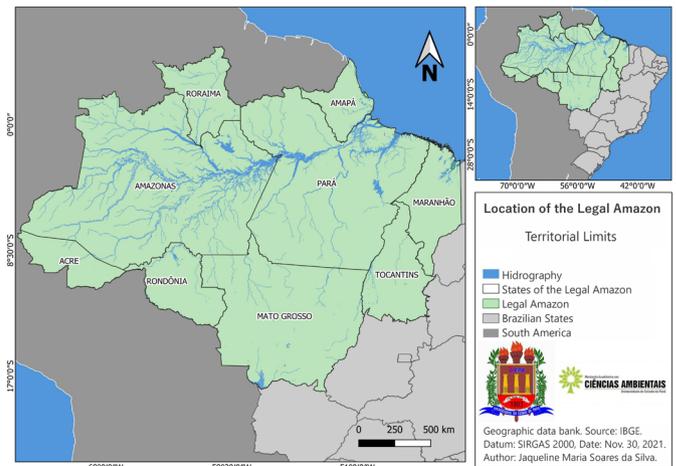


Figure 1 – Territorial cutout: Eastern Amazon.

Table 1 – Stages, phases, and objectives.

Stages					
Pre-Analysis		Exploration		Codification of the Results	
Phases	Objective	Phases	Objective	Phases	Objective
1. Identification and access	The decrees and minutes of the meetings were identified on the institutional websites, as well as the ways to access the documents.	1. Reading	In-depth readings of the decrees and minutes were made which allowed the identification, in their contents, of variables of importance for the three categories of analysis: representation, participation, and representativeness.	1. Systematization	The systematization of the seven variables, by category of analysis, was developed with the help of Excel spreadsheets.
2. Organization	The decrees, meetings, and minutes were organized and quantified by term of office and by CERH.	2. Rereading	The decrees and minutes were re-read to exhaust the possibility of finding new variables, then a total of seven variables were selected.	3. Interpretation	The quali-quantitative variables were interpreted by coding them to support the analysis of the three categories.
4. Delimitation	Preliminary readings of the decrees and minutes were made to identify those of greatest relevance to the study.	-	-	3. Presentation	The results were presented as figures, tables, graphs, and percentages were used when necessary

Source: adapted from Bardin (2011).

Table 2 – Categories of analysis and variables.

Categories of Analysis	Variables
Representation	1. definition of seats for PCTs representatives.
	2. the number of seats reserved for PCTs.
Participation	1. filling of seats by PCTs representatives.
	2. identification of the PCTs representatives.
	3. attendance of representatives (main holder and deputy) at council meetings
Representativeness	1. existence of speeches and/or manifestations of the PCTs representatives that reflect the demands, questions, and/or propositions of the segment they represent.
	2. delimitation of the main issues discussed in the meetings in which the PCT representatives were present.

Results and Discussion

The composition of the CERHs in the Eastern Amazon

The composition of the CERHs in the Eastern Amazon is based on the rules and standards defined in their regulatory decrees, Legally Constituted Civil Organizations (OCLCs), and Users of Water Resources (URHs) and happens in two ways: appointment or election, as shown in Figure 2.

In case representatives of Government Relations are chosen, all the regulation decrees of the Eastern Amazon CERHs establish that governmental institutions and agencies must indicate the public servants that will fill in the positions. However, only the councils' decrees of the states of Pará, Mato Grosso, and Amapá have set the criteria for such indication, such as affinity or relevant work in the environmental area, water resources management, and/or sustainable development.

Representatives of the URHs and OCLCs sector are chosen through elections of the entities interested in competing for the positions. The positions are made available in a public notice prepared by the state water resources management agencies. The regulation decree of the Amapá council is the only one that does not provide for elections and the entities are defined in the decree itself.

The lack of criteria for appointing representatives, as well as the lack of a public notice and election, demonstrate the fragility of the mechanisms for choosing the representatives who will act in the CERHs. Such aspects may imply the appointment of people with no experience or affinity with the water resources area and, as stated by Barddal and Torres (2020), limit the possibility of citizens in general acting as council members.

The representativeness of the PCTs

By examining the regulation decrees of the CERHs in the Eastern Amazon, it was possible to verify that only the councils of Pará and Mato Grosso defined seats for the representatives of the PCTs segment and that integrates the OCLCs. In Table 3, it is possible to observe the total number of seats made available and the distribution of seats by sector in each term of office, as shown in Figures 3 and 4.

Table 4 shows the number of seats made available for PCTs, by term of office, in the CERHs of Mato Grosso and Pará.

Concerning the variation in how the seats for representatives of the PCTs are defined, it was possible to observe that although the CERH of Mato Grosso has been in operation since 2002, seats for indigenous communities, along with the civil society and users of water resources to represent the CBHs of the state, were established in the regulation decrees only in 2020. As for the quantitative variable of seats reserved for the PCTs, one seat was initially planned, and then six seats.

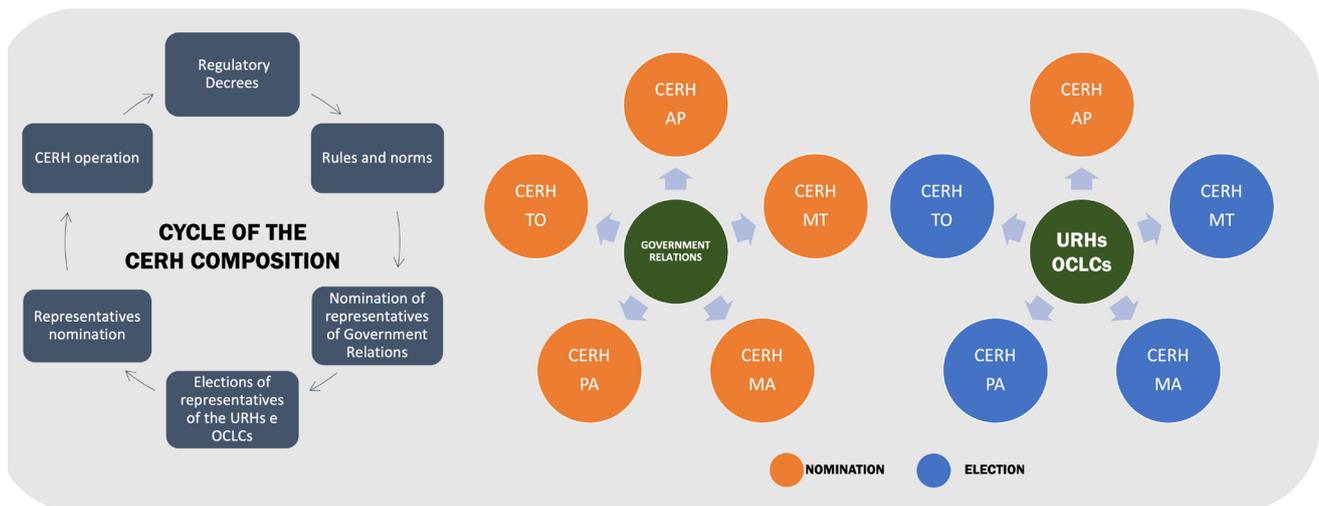


Figure 2 – Composition of the CERHs in the Eastern Amazon.

Table 3 – Total seats and distributions by sector.

CERHs	Terms of office	No. of total seats	Government Relations		URHs		OCLCs	
			Government Relations	URHs	URHs	OCLCs		
CERH Mato Grosso	2020-2021	28	14	50%	8	28.57%	6	21.43%
	2021-2022	36	12	33.33%	12	33.33%	12	33.33%
CERH Pará	2012-2014	27	11	40.74%	8	29.63%	8	29.63%
	2016-2020	21	10	47.62%	5	23.81%	6	28.57%
	2021-2025	21	10	47.62%	5	23.81%	6	28.57%

Source: adapted from Mato Grosso (2020; 2021) and Pará (2011; 2016; 2021).

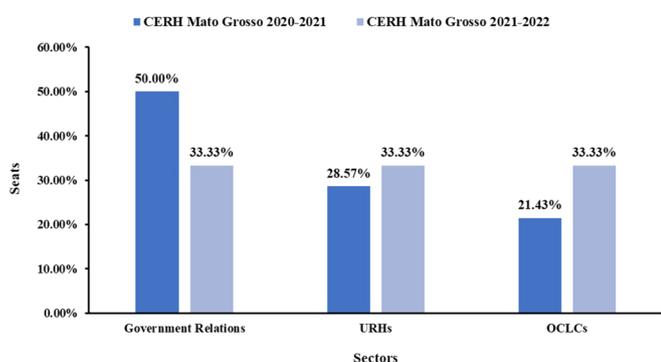


Figure 3 – Distribution of seats by sector and CERH term of office of Mato Grosso.

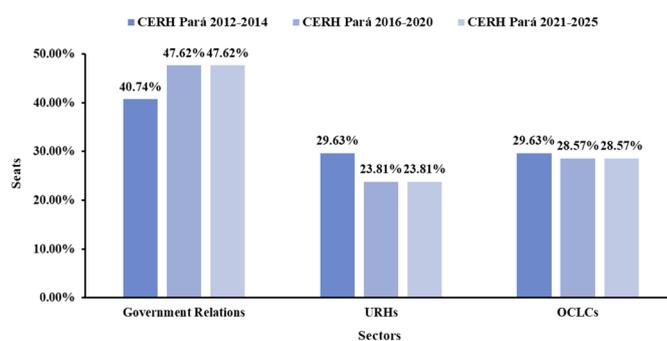


Figure 4 – Distribution of seats by sector and CERH term of office of Pará.

Table 4 – Seats dedicated to PCTs in the CERHs of Mato Grosso and Pará.

CERHs	Decreets	Terms of office	Seats*			Text about the definition of PCT seats in the regulatory decrees
			Total	OCLCs		
				Other segments	PCTs	
Mato Grosso	Decree no. 362/2020	2020-2021	28	6	1	§2 The representatives referred to in subparagraph II (CBHs) of this article will be appointed by the State Forum of Drainage Basin Committees within the same term established in § 1 of this article, and they must be representatives of civil society, water users, or indigenous communities.
	Decree no. 796/2021	2021-2022	36	12	6	
Pará	Decree no. 276/2011	2012-2014	27	8	2	V - 2 (two) seats for representatives of traditional populations , entities, and institutions from the hydrographic regions defined by the Resolution of the State Council of Water Resources No. 004, dated September 3, 2008.
	Decree no. 1556/2016	2016-2021		6		
	Decree no. 1495/2021	2021-2025	21	6	1	b) organizations of indigenous peoples, quilombolas, and traditional communities.

*The seats refer to the main holder ones, but each main holder has a respective deputy.
Source: adapted from Mato Grosso (2020; 2021) and Pará (2011; 2016; 2021)

Despite the fact a representative of the indigenous community can have a seat on the council, such representation has to be expanded by adopting exclusive seats for PCTs, giving the quilombola communities and other local traditional communities the opportunity to have a legitimate presence in this entity.

The CERH of Pará has been in operation since 2006, that is, it has 17 years of regulation, but specific seats for PCTs were defined only after 2011. Regarding the variable number of seats, at first, two seats were available, and in the following terms of office, the number was reduced to one seat.

Despite the reduction in the number of seats, it is relevant to point out that the text of the regulation decree of the CERH of Pará was the one using a PCTs nomenclature that was the closest to the one defined in decree no. 6040/07, which precisely delimits which segment the seat is reserved for.

The CERHs of Amapá, Maranhão, and Tocantins do not define in their decrees seats for the representatives of the PCTs and they lack legitimization of these vulnerable social groups. This contributes to the historical invisibilization of traditional identities, despite their notorious presence and territory occupation.

The lack of seats for PCT representatives in the CERHs not only contributes to the inexistence of dialogue channels between these peoples and the public authorities, but also denies them the right to be consulted about major projects (roads, railroads, ports, hydroelectric plants, transmission lines, mining activities, and others) that directly or indirectly have an impact on the quality and quantity of water in the rivers that surround and/or cross their territories (Costa Filho, 2020; Peixoto et al., 2022).

There is a clear lack of interest in the presence of PCTs in water resources councils and that is related to the territories inhabited by these populations since they hold a large part of the natural resources, which are of interest to the market, especially the mining, farming, and timber extraction sectors. Arruti (2021) outlines a series of threats suffered by the PCTs, which have been ratified and intensified by the current government, such as “*marco temporal*”, or timeframe. This concept is defended by ruralists in an attempt to extinguish people’s participation mechanisms by eliminating 2,500 councils in Brazil and transferring the authority to demarcate indigenous (FUNAI) and quilombola (INCRA) lands to the Ministry of Agriculture, among others.

Milanez et al. (2021) ratify the right, established by Convention no. 169, that the PCTs have to be consulted about the projects that heavily affect them. Therefore, the regulation decrees of the CERHs of Tocantins, Amapá, and Maranhão urgently need to provide for seats for the representatives of the PCTs to guarantee their legitimate right to participate in decision-making spaces that discuss water management.

In the discursive plan, the importance of allocating seats to the representation of PCTs in the CERHs is recognized, but is it of interest to discuss if the definition of seats that legitimates the representation, by itself, guarantees the participation and representativeness of PCTs in the councils of Mato Grosso and Pará. Therefore, for a more qualified understanding of this matter, the authors will analyze in the following sections the categories of participation and representativeness of the PCTs in the councils.

The participation of PCTs

Table 5 shows data that can be used to analyze the participation of the PCTs in the CERHs of Mato Grosso and Pará.

When analyzing the information for the CERH of Mato Grosso, it was possible to observe, regarding the variability in how PCT seats are filled, that in the 2020-2021 term of office, one seat was made available to the representatives of the CBHs, with the possibility of appointing a representative from an indigenous community. However, the main and deputy representatives chosen did not belong to an indigenous community.

For the 2021-2022 term of office, six seats were available for the representatives of the CBHs of three drainage regions (Amazon, Paraguay, and Tocantins Araguaia). However, of the six seats, only one seat for a deputy member of the CBH of the Tocantins Araguaia drainage region was filled by a representative of the Xavante indigenous ethnic group.

Table 5 – Information about positions, representatives, meetings, and attendance for the CERHs of Mato Grosso and Pará.

CERHs	Terms of office	Seats			Representatives		Meetings			
		Total	PCTs		Main holder	Deputy	Total No.	Main holder presence	Main holder absence	Deputy presence
			Provided	Occupied						
Mato Grosso	2020-2021	28	1 (3,57%)	0 (0%)	-	-	-	-	-	-
	2021-2022	36	6 (16,67%)	1 (16,67%)	Not PCT ³	PCT ⁴	9	5 (55,56%)	4 (44,44%)	0 (0%)
Pará	2012-2014	27	2 (7,41%)	0 (0%)	-	-	-	-	-	-
	2016-2021	21	1 (4,76%)	1 (100%)	PCT ⁵	PCT ⁶	18	2 (11,11%)	16 (88,89%)	0 (0%)
	2021-2025	21	1 (4,76%)	1 (100%)	PCT ⁵	PCT ⁶	3	0 (0%)	3 (100%)	0 (0%)

³Not PCT: Not a PCT representative. The main holder seat was occupied by a representative who does not belong to the indigenous community; ⁴PCT: The representative belongs to an indigenous community. The deputy seat was occupied by a representative of the Xavante indigenous ethnic group. Technician of the Xavante Indigenous Special Sanitary District — Special Secretariat of Indigenous Health (SESAI)/Dseixavante; ⁵PCT: The representative belongs to a PCT. The main holder seat was occupied by the entity “Movement of the Riverside Dwellers of the Islands and Varzeas of Abaetetuba – MORIVA”; ⁶PCT: The representative belongs to a PCT. The deputy seat was occupied by the entity “Quilombola Association of the Low Caeté – Laranjituba and África – AQUIBAC”.

Source: adapted from Mato Grosso (2020; 2021; 2022) and Pará (2011; 2016; 2021).

Regarding the variable attendance of the representatives of the PCTs, it was found that nine meetings were held in the council in the 2021-2022 term of office. Of these meetings, the representative was absent in four meetings (28th, 90th, 91st, and 93rd), and, according to the internal regulation of the council, in the absence of the main representative, the deputy representative should replace him. However, when examining the minutes of the four meetings, which describe the representatives who attended the meetings, the presence of a deputy representative from an indigenous ethnic group was not identified in any of them.

When analyzing the CERH of Pará, regarding the variable filling of seats by PCTs, it was observed that, in the 2012-2014 term of office, two seats were made available to traditional communities, entities, and institutions representing the drainage regions of the state. However, when consulting the decree that provides for representative appointment, it was found that these seats were not filled, i.e., no applications were submitted under the qualification notice.

Regarding the 2016-2021 term of office, in the CERH of Pará, one seat was made available exclusively to PCTs, and the main holder and deputy seats were observed to have been occupied by entities representing riverine communities (MORIVA) and quilombola communities (AQUIBAC), respectively.

Although these data seem optimistic, when analyzing the attendance of these representatives to board meetings, it is possible to identify a serious distortion between theory and practice. Out of the 18 meetings held, the main representative was present in only two meetings, i.e., an attendance of 11.11% only. The situation gets even more complicated when the deputy representative does not fulfill his/her duty of replacing the main representative, a total of 16 meetings without participation, i.e., an absence of 88.89%.

To emphasize the seriousness of the problem, when consulting the internal regulations of the CERH of Pará, it is established that unreasonable absences in two consecutive meetings or three alternate ones will imply notification for the replacement of the main and deputy representatives (Pará, 2018). However, the entities in question remained until the end of the term of office, and the sanctions stipulated were not enforced.

Regarding the 2021-2025 term of office, one exclusive seat was made available to the PCTs, and surprisingly, the same entities (MORIVA and AQUIBAC) that represented the PCTs in the previous term were qualified and elected for the main and deputy positions, despite the high number of absences in the meetings. As for meeting attendance, when analyzing the minutes of the three (35th, 13th, and 36th) meetings held, it was verified that the main and deputy representatives of the PCTs were absent in all of them.

Kasahara et al. (2020) and Rocha et al. (2020) point out some of the reasons why representatives do not attend meetings, such as no information coordination between the main and deputy representatives, difficulty commuting from the representative's place of origin to the meeting location, the absence of representatives in the training sessions offered by the water resources management agency, the lack of

government support to ensure the continuous training of participants and financial support, the deputy representative's lack of understanding about the importance of playing the role of deputy in the meetings, weaknesses in the process of becoming a representative, low capacity to exercise their rights, representative's personal struggles, etc.

The absence of the representatives in board meetings directly impacts the quality of participation, and according to Bordenave (1994), such a situation can be interpreted as passive participation. This means the representative is inert; he or she is part of, but does not take part in the process of participating, making his/her participation fictitious.

The representativeness of the PCTs

When analyzing the content of the minutes and the agendas of the meetings of the CERHs of Pará and Mato Grosso, it was possible to examine the variables affecting the issues discussed in the plenary sessions and the existence of speech and/or manifestation by a representative of the PCTs.

It was found that the minutes of two meetings of the CERH of Pará did not record the speeches and/or manifestations of the representative of the PCTs that reflected the proposals, demands, and questions of interest of the segment represented, limiting them only to voting, when necessary, for the approval of the following matters addressed in the plenary session: annual meeting schedule, the composition of the technical chambers, Program for Consolidation of the National Pact for Water Management (PROGESTÃO)'s goals, studies for preparing a state plan for water resources, among others. This corroborates the study done by Rocha et al. (2021) who identified a difference in the attitudes of representatives, with some of them being more proactive and others more restrained. The ones who are more restrained only approve or not the matters addressed.

In addition, the perception of an agenda is notorious, primarily to meet the demands of the state water resources management agency and fulfill the target plan established in PROGESTÃO, thus ensuring that funds are transferred to the state. According to Morais et al. (2018), the issues that make up the agenda of the meetings, as well as who or what segment proposes it, indicate the quality of the representativeness of the representatives.

For the council to actually be representative, besides being present in the meetings, representatives must be able to actively participate in the council, formulating proposals, scheduling discussions, and raising questions, among others (Barddal and Torres, 2020; Rocha et al, 2020). In addition to the low attendance in the meetings by representatives of PCTs, the interests of this segment are not addressed, corroborating the findings of Rocha et al. (2020) who demonstrated that some segments are poorly represented in health councils.

Rocha et al. (2021) warn that the representatives have not been able to bring the positioning of the entities they represent to the discussions and decisions of the collegiate body, and this contributes to weakening the plenary and making it susceptible to manipulation or influence by other players who have privileged knowledge and influence final decision-making.

The combination of all the aspects raised leads to a complex situation concerning the effective performance of the representatives of the PCTs in the CERHs of Pará and Mato Grosso. Even though seats have been defined for these populations, a severe limitation in participation and representativeness persists.

The results presented here cannot be associated only with the difficulties that surround the representatives, because the role of Government Relations in this process must be investigated in more detail and how groups that were historically excluded from discussion spaces, and that are now being contemplated, cannot fully achieve effective

participation and representativeness. So, how can PCTs have full access to the councils?

From a long-term perspective, PCTs having full access to the CERHs can advance as soon as strategies are formulated jointly by Government Relations and PCTs to overcome the weaknesses found concerning representation, participation, and representativeness in the CERHs in the Eastern Amazon.

Figure 5 presents strategies to strengthen the representation, participation, and representativeness of the PCTs in the Eastern Amazon CERHs based on the weaknesses identified in this research.

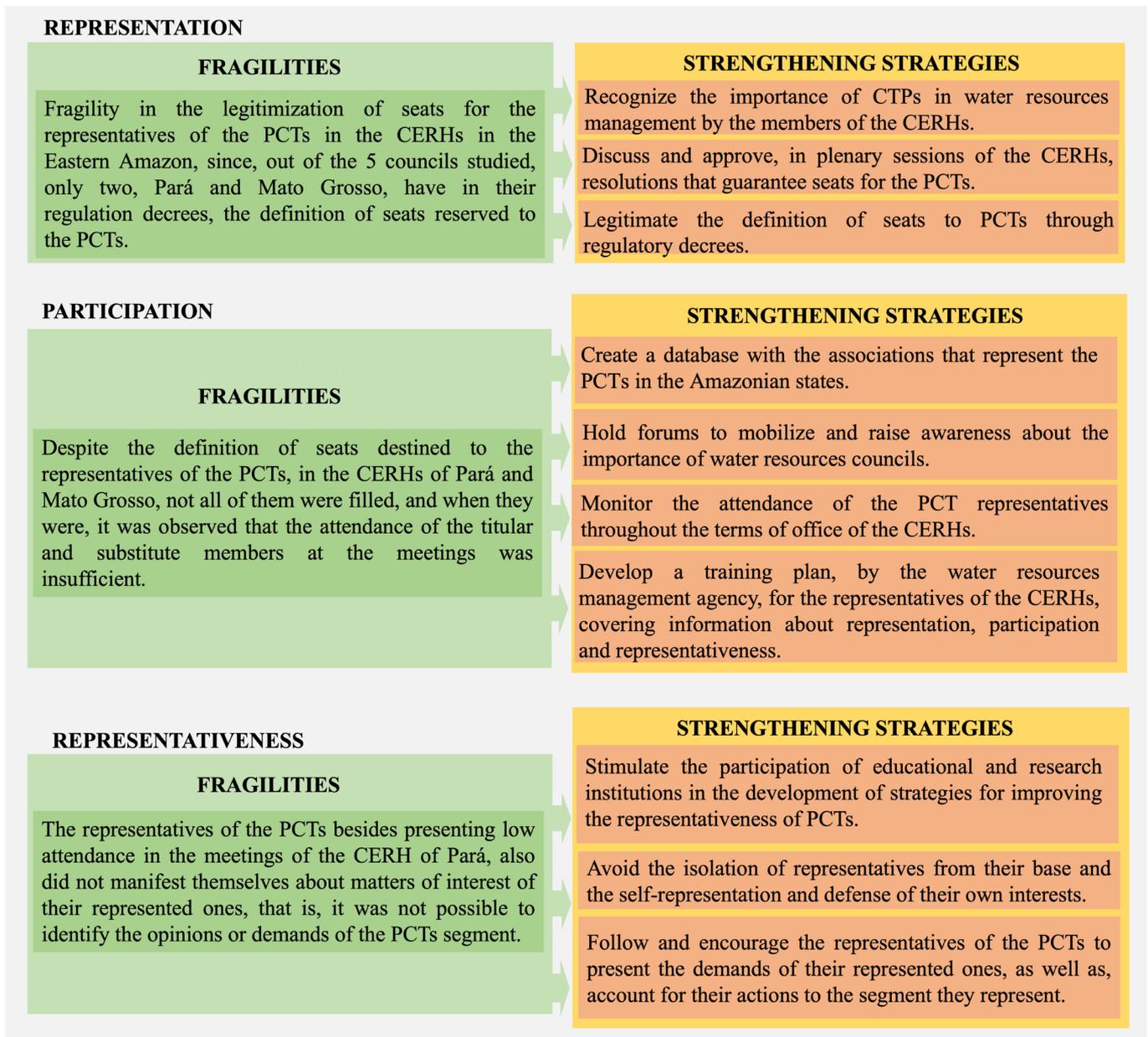


Figure 5 – Weaknesses and strategies to strengthen the representation, participation, and representativeness of the PCTs in the CERHs in the Eastern Amazon.

Conclusions

Because of the aspects mentioned in this article, some conclusions can be reached about the representation, participation, and representativeness of the PCTs in the CERHs in the Eastern Amazon.

As for representation, the data pointed out that the CERHs in the Eastern Amazon are different from one another as to the definition of seats for the representatives of the PCTs. Therefore, it is possible to infer that such councils are at different levels of representation because of the five councils studied, only two, Pará and Mato Grosso, provide for PCTs seats in their regulation decrees.

In terms of participation, the findings revealed that despite the definition of seats for PCT representatives in the councils of Pará and Mato Grosso, not all of them were filled, and when they were, it was observed that the attendance of the main and deputy members in the meetings was insufficient.

Regarding representativeness, the results indicated that the representatives of the PCTs have low attendance in the meetings of the

Pará council and also did not manifest themselves about matters that are in the interest of their represented ones. In other words, it was not possible to identify the opinions or demands of the segment they represent.

Finally, it is possible to conclude that despite recognizing the importance of PCT representation in the CERHs in the Eastern Amazon, the seats legally enforced do not guarantee the effective participation and representativeness of these peoples in water management discussions because of weaknesses, including the lack of understanding by Government Relations and the council members themselves about the importance of defining exclusive positions for PCTs' representations and the low participation and representativeness of PCTs' representatives in the meetings. The reasons probably range from the way the representative entity arrives at and stays in the council to not knowing about its rights and duties in the collegiate board and, above all, towards the ones it represents.

Contribution of authors:

Silva, J. M. S.: Conceptualization; Data curation; Formal Analysis; Funding; Investigation; Methodology; Supervision; Validation; Visualization; Writing — Original Draft; Writing — review & editing; Pontes, A. N.: Supervision; Validation; Visualization; Writing — Review & Editing.

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