

Ativismo subnacional e conflitos no governo de Jair Bolsonaro: uma análise das ações dos estados brasileiros na agenda dos Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável (ODS) em 2019



Subnational activism and conflicts within Jair Bolsonaro's government: an analysis of the Brazilian states' actions in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda during 2019

Activismo subnacional y conflictos en el gobierno de Jair Bolsonaro: un análisis de las acciones de los estados brasileños en la agenda de los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS) en 2019

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RESUMO

O artigo analisa o engajamento internacional dos governos subnacionais brasileiros na agenda dos Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável (ODS) durante o primeiro ano do governo Bolsonaro com destaque para a atuação dos governos estaduais brasileiros na defesa do eixo ambiental. Argumentamos que os governos subnacionais têm tido forte ativismo na defesa desta agenda internacionalmente, ao contrário do governo federal, gerando tensionamentos com a política externa. Para isto, a pesquisa analisa a atuação destes atores no âmbito dos Consórcios Nordeste e da Amazônia Legal.

Palavras-chave: ODS, governos subnacionais, Bolsonaro.

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ABSTRACT

The article analyzes the international engagement of Brazilian subnational governments in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda during the first year of Bolsonaro's government with an emphasis on the role of states in supporting the environmental axis. We argue that subnational governments have been strongly active in defending this agenda internationally, unlike the

federal government, generating foreign policy tensions. Therefore, the research analyzes the performance of these actors in the scope of the Northeast and the Legal Amazon Consortia.

Keywords: SDGs, subnational governments, Bolsonaro.

RESUMEN

El artículo analiza el compromiso internacional de los gobiernos subnacionales brasileños en la agenda de los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS) durante el primer año del gobierno de Bolsonaro, destacando el papel de los gobiernos estatales brasileños en la defensa del eje ambiental. Argumentamos que los gobiernos subnacionales han estado fuertemente activos en la defensa de esta agenda internacionalmente, a diferencia del gobierno federal, generando tensiones con la política exterior. La investigación analiza el desempeño de estos actores en el ámbito de los Consorcios Nordeste y Amazonia Legal.

Palabras clave: ODS, gobiernos subnacionales, Bolsonaro.

Introduction

The approval of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) initiated a debate regarding new ways to address underdevelopment by incorporating a sustainable perspective. Furthermore, it pushed national states to propose domestic public policies considering the 17 SDG goals and to reshape their international discourse. At the same time, for countries with a federalist political structure, the implementation of the SDGs demanded coordination with their subnational governments, as it was the case of Brazil. However, as political polarization increased in Brazil with the presidential election of Jair Bolsonaro in late 2018, we were able to observe a conflict between national and subnational governments in the country relating to the SDGs. Furthermore, this discourse polarization had implications in the implementation of the agenda, both nationally and locally.

Bolsonaro won the presidential election in 2018 amidst a political conjuncture of instability in Brazil, mainly due to political parties' disputes, maintenance of corruption cases, increased unemployment, and clashes between the three republican powers. In the meantime, the federal government adopted a foreign policy reorientation called "New Foreign Policy" that is reshaping Brazil's role at the international level.

We argue in this paper that Brazilian subnational governments have carried out strong activism in defense of the environmental agenda, both domestically and internationally, as opposed to the conduct adopted by the federal government. In this context, states and municipalities continued implementing international articulations as they had done for decades, but in this new conjuncture that brought some new features, especially regarding this agenda. Intending to map and understand this scenario, we propose an analysis of the federal and state governments' positions regarding SDGs during the year 2019.

To do so, this article is divided into three sections. The first one discusses how the environmental agenda has gained notoriety in recent decades also due to the SDGs sponsored by the UN. Afterward, we analyze

the activism of Brazilian subnational governments towards SDGs mainly considering the new role represented by two public bodies namely the Interstate Consortium for Sustainable Development of the Northeast and the Interstate Consortium of Sustainable Development of the Legal Amazon. Finally, taking into account the debate concerning subnational actors and federalism in Brazil, we point out the recent tensions between governors and mayors with Bolsonaro's presidency, ratifying our main argument that in 2019 arose a strong antagonism among them regarding the environmental agendas and there is a tendency of this to continue in the short term.

The mapping of these positions was carried out thorough research and analysis of the documents made available by the Interstate Consortium for Sustainable Development of the Northeast and the Interstate Consortium of Sustainable Development of the Legal Amazon; the gathering of information, notes, and mentions about the SDGs published in official Twitter accounts of the governors who are members of the Consortia, that are freely translated here, as well as from secondary sources.

Sustainable Development Goals: a brief history.....

In chronological terms, the international debate regarding anthropogenic interference in the environment represents an extremely recent process. As Daniel Esty and Maria Ivanova (2005) point out, it was only in the 1960s, the period called as the beginning of the "Modern Era" of environmental concerns, that issues involving water and air pollution, road construction, channeling dams, deforestation, oil spills, among others, have become important matters within multilateral organizations. Evolving at a fast pace, the environmental agenda is no longer limited to a domestic level and, at the end of the century, it already represented an increasingly institutionalized global governance (ESTY E IVANONA, 2005; O'NEILL, 2009). Actions ranging from the local level to initiatives at the global scale, environmental issues were established with a multilevel perspective (PATTBERG E WIDERBERG, 2015) but rather with reorganising the overall relation between humans and natural systems. Empirically, this is reflected in the ever greater attention to questions of institutional interactions (e.g. between the issue areas of economics and environment).

By 2015, the United Nations had already learned with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that to ensure implementation, it had to foster the participation of local governments and civil society organizations, thereafter, when the SDGs were launched, they were presented as a multiscale enterprise that had to count with all the support possible, not only by national states. Such a process represented a gain in scale (SACHS, 2012).

At first, a few states began to legitimize environmental policies nationally. Secondly, as it affected the lives of all peoples, it became an international concern. Simultaneously, the terms "development" and "sustainability" gained great repercussions. The Brundtland Commission (1987) defined sustainable development as "the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". The concept was primarily supported by the first UN environmental conference in 1972 in Stockholm

and since then its meaning is shared among the international community (O'NEILL, 2009; SPETH E HAAS, 2007).

In addition to the work launched in Stockholm in 1972, the search for sustainable development gained momentum with the "Agenda 21" signed by 179 countries during the second United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development that took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. This aim for dialogue and institutionalization of the agenda culminated in 2000 at the UNGA with the formalization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), precisely to think about the beginning of the 21st century, with the attempt to reduce extreme poverty by 2015 based on eight goals: 1) eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; 2) achieve universal primary education; 3) promote gender equality and empower women; 4) reduce child mortality; 5) improve maternal health; 6) combat HIV/Aids, malaria and other diseases; 7) ensure environmental sustainability and 8) develop a global partnership for development.

In 2014, after reviewing its activities, the UN itself found that satisfactory results were achieved in terms of poverty reduction and gender parity, while other goals such as reducing child mortality and basic sanitation achieved results below expectations (SACHS, 2012). Thus, in the following year, a new phase was launched, Agenda 2030, updating the previous one and this time called the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The themes were expanded, divided into 169 targets, and included 17 objectives that came into force on the first day of the year 2016 and are expected to be in action until 2030.

The 17 goals established by the SDG are: 1) End poverty; 2) End hunger through food security, nutritional improvement and sustainable agriculture; 3) Guarantee a healthy life and promote well-being at all ages; 4) Ensure inclusive, equitable and quality education; 5) Promote gender equality and empower women and girls; 6) Ensure the management and availability of water and sanitation; 7) Guarantee access to energy for all; 8) Stimulate economic growth, employment and proper working conditions; 9) Build resilient infrastructures, improve industrialization and innovation; 10) Reduce inequality; 11) Make cities and human settlements more inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; 12) Guarantee sustainable consumption and production patterns; 13) Combat climate change; 14) Conserve the oceans, seas and marine resources; 15) Promote sustainable use of ecosystems and forests, combat desertification, land degradation and loss of biodiversity; 16) Stimulate a culture of peace, provide global access to justice and build inclusive institution and 17) Strengthen the global partnership around sustainable development (UN, 2015).

There was a process of increase and, at the same time, of articulation between the different results to be achieved from the objectives. However, one of the main aspects comes not only from this breadth of agendas but from the dialogues put into practice. The SDGs were discussed at the UN General Assembly and, in addition to counting with the participation of national government representatives, they were also stimulated by civil society, representing a multilevel global governance (ANDONOVA, BETSILL E BULKELEY, 2009; PATTBERG E WIDERBERG, 2016; SEYEDSAYAMDOST, 2019)

In the words of Sakiko Fukuda-Parr (2016), the transition from the MDGs to the SDGs has at least three fundamental differences in terms of a) purposes, b) concepts, and c) policies. First, while the MDGs turned to a worldview between north and south, the SDGs encompass a global agenda. Secondly, the MDGs focused on combating poverty and the SDGs, in turn, focus on sustainable development, as such. Finally, the MDGs were elaborated basically by what the author calls “technocrats”, being far from the realities to be affected or modified. In this sense, the SDGs respected political negotiation between different states and multilateral deliberation more.

Complementing the previous analysis, it can be said that one of the main fundamentals of the change from the MDGs to the SDGs was also the decentralization of the participation of different actors in the process. Social movements, epistemic communities, universities, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), advocacy networks and corporations, at least in the last two decades, have gradually entered the proposed agendas. This transformation happened also because development itself is thought from the human point of view, increasingly closer to citizens. Considering the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a landmark, the UN (2015) points out that the SDGs: “[...] seek to realize the human rights of all and achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. They are integrated, indivisible, and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental.”

In addition to the actors and sectors mentioned above, subnational governments have directly approached the SDGs, especially cities. Local public participation in Conferences of the Parties (COP) is emphasized at the heart of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), for instance, the last COP 25 had the largest delegation of local governments from Latin America (ICLEI, 2019). Equally, The United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, mainly the third held in Ecuador in 2016 and called Habitat III, highlighted this greater link, bringing ways of thinking about urban settlements and local governments for the next two decades.

As a result of Habitat III, the New Urban Agenda (NUA) was signed to reflect the growing process of urbanization and city planning, since projections indicate a rate of approximately 75% of the world population will be living in urban areas by 2050 (SACHS et al, 2019). The document reflects mutual commitments between different actors and governmental levels, deals with the permanent search for sustainable development, and empowers the United Nations Program for Human Settlements, UN-Habitat (2016). As written in the Declaration:

This New Urban Agenda reaffirms our global commitment to sustainable urban development as a decisive step towards achieving sustainable development in an integrated and coordinated manner at the global, regional, national, subnational and local level, with the participation of all relevant actors (UN-HABITAT, 2016, p. 09, emphasis added).

Thus, the multilevel articulation highlighted in the previous quote is a necessary characteristic to think about both the NUA and the SDGs. This interconnection is the representation of a broader axis of action to the SDG 11 namely “Sustainable Cities and Communities”. This statement is supported by the analysis of Jeffrey Sachs et al (2019), in which

the authors list five central lines for thinking about the SDGs. One of the areas of transformation is precisely about sustainable cities in terms of basic sanitation and drinking water, urban mobility and efficient use of resources. The initiatives and possibilities are broad, SDG 11 acquires relevance, but subnational governments have a broad role in all goals, and it is worth pointing out some actions by Brazilian federative entities, that is, municipalities and states, capable of stimulating the 2030 Agenda.

A review of Brazilian states' recent positions towards the SDGs.....

In addition to the articulation of cities around the SDGs agenda, two recent initiatives created by Brazilian federated states seek to stimulate this debate: the Interstate Consortium for Sustainable Development of the Northeast and the Interstate Consortium of Sustainable Development of the Legal Amazon. The first one is composed by all northeastern governments and the second by all states in the northern region with the addendum of Mato Grosso and Maranhão, being instituted almost concurrently with the Northeast Consortium, at the end of March 2019 during the Forum of Governors of the Legal Amazon aiming primarily at “[...] capturing of resources for sustainable projects with national and international financial organizations” (BRANDINO, 2019).

Regarding the Northeast Consortium, Clementino (2019) emphasizes its novelty, as it is the first consortium of Brazil among federal states when analyzing the relevance for the construction of articulations at the local, regional and global levels. The author also identifies the Northeast Consortium as a territorial political pact and political alignment between the nine states and their governors, and all current governors opposed to the federal government. Public consortium, in their intermunicipal or interstate typologies, represent management instruments that enable articulations between different public policies and different government levels in stimulating cooperation (LOSADA E SADECK, 2015, p. 47). Created by law, these consortia generate a new legal entity to carry out their actions. In a press interview, the current president of the Amazon Consortium, Governor Waldéz Góes, highlighted the new legal personality of the consortium as an alternative path for new investments and cooperation projects in the Amazon (GÓES, 2019).

The creation of this consortium occurs at a time of greater activism by governors on the environmental agenda, in contrast to the positions and policies adopted by the federal government in this area that weakened the Ministry of the Environment, downplaying the climate change agenda (TRIGUEIRO, 2019; FRANCHINI et al., 2020). Such positions are linked to the anti-globalist discourse adopted by the Brazilian diplomacy during Bolsonaro's government, which begins to criticize and attack the actions of international institutions, such as the United Nations (UN).

For instance, Brazil gave up on hosting COP 25, and the current minister of environment, Ricardo Salles, demonstrated the intention to cancel the UN Latin American and Caribbean Week on Climate Change (Climate Week) in Salvador. Mr. Salles even mocked the event by pointing out that the meeting would be an “opportunity” for the group to

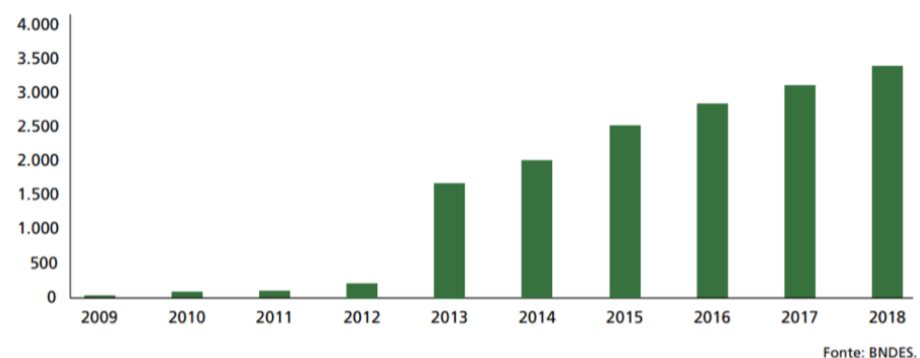
“go sightseeing in Salvador” and “eat acarajé” (UOL, 2019). This position generated disagreements with the mayor of the city, Antônio Carlos Magalhães Netto, contrary to the idea, finally weakening the posture of the federal government once the event was maintained and hosted by Salvador in August 2019.

Another decision of the Brazilian government against the implementation of the SDGs targets was Veto No. 61/2019 (CONGRESSO NACIONAL, 2019) of the Presidency in the Multiannual Plan of the Union (PPA), thus excluding the pursuit of the SDGs of the Multiannual Plan 2020-2023 (LAW NO. 13,971, 2019). The PPA is one of the main instruments of public policy planning of the federal government and this was the only stretch vetoed by Bolsonaro. The president also stated on his Twitter account that “the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations (UN) includes the ‘nefarious ideology of gender and abortion’ (VALOR ECONÔMICO, 2019).

To that end, Amazon is a central issue. The region occupied a prominent position in the national and international media during 2019, mainly due to the increase in deforestation and the fires recorded in the region. According to data from the National Institute for Space Research (INPE), which uses and develops satellites to monitor deforestation and livestock activities in the “Amazon Mission” project (INPE, 2019), the year recorded almost 90,000 fires, representing a 30% increase compared to 2018.

Soon after the release of the data, the country was heavily criticized in multilateral forums and donations from Norway and Germany to the Amazon Fund were suspended. This Fund has developed actions and projects against deforestation since 2008, having raised donations in the amount of R\$ 3.4 billion, corresponding to US\$ 1.3 billion, from Norway (93.8%) and Germany (5.7%) and Petrobras (0.5%) (FUNDO AMAZÔNIA, 2018). The graphic ahead shows the numbers:

Graphic 1 - Amount of donations received by the Amazon Fund (R\$ Million, accumulated)

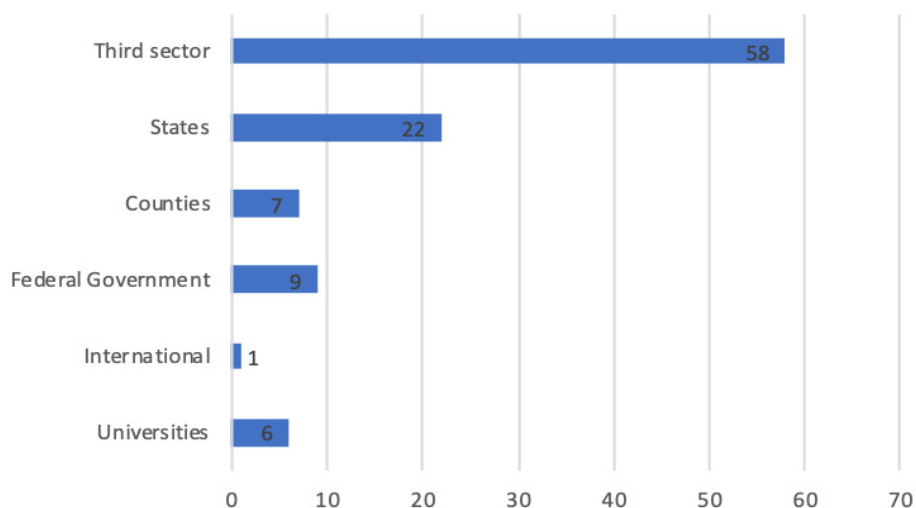


Source: Fundo Amazônia (2018:13)

The reaction of the federal government and the states to the suspension of donations was quite different. President Jair Bolsonaro downplayed the importance of resources for the country and suggested Norway should use the resource to reforest Germany. In contrast, the region’s governors have publicly expressed concerns about the escalation of deforestation and fires and reinforced the Fund’s importance for regional development. It is important to highlight that the cancellation of the Fund had a much grea-

ter impact on the state level. In December 2018, the Amazon Fund had 103 supported projects in its portfolio, accumulating R\$ 1,860,881,542.00 (FUNDO AMAZÔNIA, 2018). Nine projects were carried out in partnership with the Federal Government, twenty-two with the states and seven with the municipalities, as presented in the graphic below:

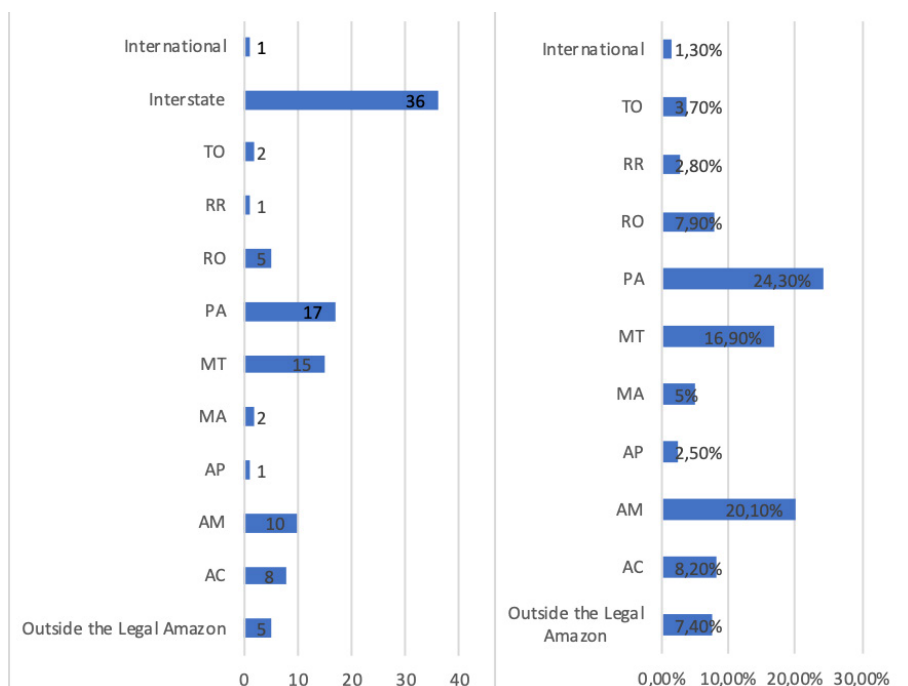
Graphic 2 - Number of projects supported, by legal nature of the responsible



Source: Fundo Amazônia (2018:40)

The graphic below shows the number of projects supported and the percentage value of total support, by state. The states that had the greatest financial support from the Legal Amazon were Pará, Amazonas, Mato Grosso, and Acre:

Graphic 3 - Number of projects supported, and percentage value of total support, by state:



Source: Fundo Amazônia (2018:40)

Afterwards, in August 2019, during the 18th Forum of Governors of the Legal Amazon, the governors issued an alert to the Federal Government about illegal deforestation in the region (BARBALHO, 2019) lamenting that “the positions of the Brazilian government have caused the suspension of resources” (CONGRESSO EM FOCO, 2019) and officially informed the President of the Republic and the Embassies of Norway, Germany and France that the Consortium would seek a direct dialogue with the Fund’s financing countries.

Pursuing their promises, in September, the governors who were members of the Legal Amazon Consortium organized meetings in Brasília with the ambassadors of Germany, Norway, and the United Kingdom to discuss the financing of policies to combat deforestation to reestablish the transfers to the Amazon Fund. At that time, the establishment of direct transfers to state governments (O GLOBO, 2019). On this occasion, the President of the Consortium, Waldez Góes (AP) highlighted the possibility of Banco da Amazônia directly managing donations (O GLOBO, 2019). Another possibility discussed at the meeting was the signing of agreements and covenants individually with each state. The Government of Pará, for example, already has a direct financial contribution contract with the German development bank KfW signed in June in the amount of R\$ 55.2 million (DIÁRIO DE PERNAMBUCO, 2019).

In an interview on the topic, Governor Helder Barbalho (MDB) pointed out the role of the state in the issue: “If this will be done through federal articulation, we are not against this. Now, we are not going to be behind this”. Direct negotiation with donors was also defended by the governor of Mato Grosso, Mauro Mendes, who received representatives from three European countries and defended the decentralization of resources by arguing that management can be done directly by the states. The state of Amazonas has sought to expand investments with the KfW bank and other international supporters who are interested in helping to protect the Amazon, such as France. In a press interview, Governor Wilson Lima (PSC), highlighted: “We respect this issue of the federal government, but we will, as far as possible, establish these international partnerships, understanding what a priority within our public policy is” (DIÁRIO DE PERNAMBUCO, 2019).

In September, intensifying their opposition in relation to the federal discourse, the governors of the Legal Amazon and Northeast Consortia made a series of international trips to discuss the possibilities of cooperation and financing for the region. At the Vatican, the governors participated in the 1st Summit of the governors of the states of Pan-Amazon. During the official trips, the president of the Amazon Consortium, Governor Helder Barbalho (PA), announced the meeting highlighting the opportunity to present the state’s commitments to sustainable development in the region (BARBALHO, 2019). As it can be observed, the governors were not shy in promoting their proposals abroad while stressing the negative side of Bolsonaro’s environmental policies.

Governors Wellington Dias (PI), and Flávio Dino (MA) were the representatives of the Northeast Consortium (DIAS, 2019). Addressing the topic, they highlighted the state’s participation in the implementation of

the Paris Agreement regarding climate actions (CIDADE VERDE, 2019), reinforced their commitment to the 2030 Agenda (CARTA CAPITAL, 2019) and the role of the Northeast Consortium in environmental management.

Following the visit to the Vatican, the group went on to Germany and held meetings with the German Ministry for Cooperation and Development (BARBALHO, 2019) to discuss investment possibilities for the preservation of the Amazon. In the same direction, while in Brazil, the governors met with ambassadors from the European Union in October to discuss the agenda for sustainable development and financing possibilities, as highlighted by the announcement by the president of the Amazon Consortium: “today we are at the second meeting with the ambassadors of Germany, Norway, and the United Kingdom. The technical meeting seeks the resumption of the Amazon Fund and cooperation for new investments in the sustainable economy” (GÓES, 2019).

All of these actions were intended to be very public demonstrations of opposition to the federal posture of confronting Germany and Norway’s environmental history. While Bolsonaro would publish on his Twitter account unsupported accusations to the Amazon Fund finance management and declare that Brazil didn’t need the money, the governors were presenting a very different position, reaffirming the importance of those funds to maintain the preservation policies in the region and the willingness to cooperate with the fund’s donors.

Another demonstration of the activism of Brazilian states on environmental issues took place at the Climate Summit organized by the UN that preceded the organization’s General Assembly, during September. While President Bolsonaro opened the country’s speech at the UN General Assembly criticizing what he called the interference of foreign interests in the Amazon, taking an aggressive stance in strengthening the country’s sovereignty, with attacks on indigenous and environmental NGOs, the governor of Pernambuco reaffirmed, in a parallel meeting, the commitment of the Brazilian states to the Paris Agreement. Paulo Câmara pointed out that “faced with the risks of retrogression on the part of our national government, Brazilian states decide resolutely to assume their role” (FOLHA DE SÃO PAULO, 2019a). The governor spoke on behalf of 11 Brazilian states and the Governors for Climate movement, which has been mobilizing to ensure the implementation of climate policies and the commitments assumed by the country in the Paris Agreement.

Also, in parallel to the president’s speech, the president of the Consortium for the Legal Amazon, Waldez Góes, met with the president of France, Emmanuel Macron, to discuss ways to maintain the financing of European countries for environmental protection programs. The meeting was organized by the president of France, Colombia, and Chile, without the official participation of Brazil⁴. Waldez defended the need to participate in all forums by highlighting that the states end up being primarily responsible for the problems. During the meeting, the French government launched a “collective alliance” to help protect the Amazon region by creating an investment fund. The initiative received the support of the governors who went against the conduct of the Bolsonaro government that disagreed with the proposal. Previously, the president

4. Besides him, the governors of Mato Grosso, Mauro Mendes (DEM), Acre, Gladson Camelli (PP), and Amazonas, Wilson Miranda (PSC), participated in the discussions that followed the Climate Summit.

came to friction with Macron, which culminated in the Brazilian government's refusal to receive US \$ 20 million offered by the G7 for the region (UOL, 2019b) and once again, the governors were representing a completely different discourse abroad, exposing the domestic conflict to everyone willing to understand what was happening in Brazil.

As can be expected, the engagement of states during the UN Summit was not well received by the federal government, which, under the interference of the Foreign Ministry, acted to block Waldez's speech, with the governor participating in the meeting as a listener (FOLHA DE SÃO PAULO, 2019b).

In its official statements, the Consortium of the Northeast does not declare a direct opposition to the ideas and policies of President Jair Bolsonaro, even though it obviously has a negative bias regarding it. Formed by the nine states in the region, it was created on March 14, 2019, and it has been a coalition that has confronted the federal government in many policies that are central to Bolsonaro's agenda, such as the pension reform and the disarmament statute. Among the initiatives of the Northeast Consortium, we highlight the signing of a letter of cooperation with the French government in the environmental area influenced by the SDGs, which took place in Paris. Seeking to raise funds and form agreements with several countries - such as China and Germany -, the partnership with France is aimed at protecting biodiversity, managing waste, mobility, basic sanitation, among other issues (CEARÁ, 2019) that meet the SDG 11.

As highlighted, the governors gathered in their new governance arrangements seized every opportunity to publicly demonstrate their opposition to Bolsonaro's environmental policies and international discourse. What calls for attention is that these demonstrations took place in international settings, exposing abroad the political domestic conflict that has in the sustainable development agenda its obvious tensions, but exceeds this domain. This is a hallmark because the trajectory of Brazilian subnational actors acting abroad was constructed based on some harmonization with Brazil's foreign policy. Nevertheless, what we observed in the 2019 episodes described here is the rupture of that trajectory.

What to expect? Paradiplomacy and Federalism under the government of Jair Bolsonaro
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Subnational governments in Brazil, represented by states and municipalities, have been active in international relations since the 1990s (PRADO, 2018; JUNQUEIRA, 2017; RODRIGUES, 2008). Also known as paradiplomacy, the international action of subnational governments has played an important role in fostering the sustainable development agenda amidst Brazilian local leaders and the SDGs helped framing their discourse (MAUAD, 2019).

The concept of paradiplomacy is usually used by the literature to designate cooperative and collaborative activities among subnational and national governments (MICHELMANN E SOLDATOS, 1999). In a different direction, breaking the cooperation dynamic understood by

paradiplomacy, when subnational governments seek the separation and independence of their central power, these actions are then catalogued as protodiplomacy (DUCHACEK, 1990). However, the reality is more complex than those concepts are able to grasp. In a gray area that still needs further analytical and conceptual deepening (PRADO, 2018) the state actions generate tensions and constraints on the national government (FRY, 1998; DENNING E MCCALL, 2000) putting in check the interpretation that the conduct of foreign policy is restricted to States.

This debate has gained special attention due to the interconnection with Federalism since it began to be included in the paradiplomacy literature as a research subject by American scholars in the 1980s (KUZNETSOV, 2015). Ron Watts (2002) says that the federalism system “[...] provides a technique of constitutional organization that permits action by a shared government for certain common purposes, together with autonomous action by constituent units of government for purposes that relate to maintaining their distinctiveness [...]”. This concurrence between centralization and decentralization of powers in many countries like the United States, Canada, Argentina, Germany, Belgium, and Mexico became a reasonable arena for paradiplomatic actions.

In Brazil, the Federalism system was consolidated by the redemocratization process, marked by a new constitution promulgated in 1988. The changes in the political structures established by the constitution brought new directions to paradiplomacy. For example, Article 18 of the Constitution ensured that federated states and municipalities were empowered because they were upgraded to be considered as federal bodies, resulting in more autonomy. Onwards, we can observe a period of intense development of Brazilian paradiplomacy, divided into double terms. First, in the 1990s and 2000s, the central government stimulated the paradiplomacy’s institutionalization through the creation of some bureaucracies such as Assessoria de Relações Federativas (ARF) and Subchefia de Assuntos Federativos (SAF), both controlled by the federal government, respectively under the Foreign Affairs Ministry and the Presidency (MIKLOS, 2011). And secondly, states and municipalities autonomously developed their own bureaucratic and technical bureaucracies dedicated to international relations.

In the case of Brazilian governors, even the search for the recovery of the Amazon Fund that could be considered a paradiplomatic action represents a position contrary to the federal government that refuses to resume negotiations with donor countries, highlighting the need for the literature to explore the gray area between paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy.

Contrary to the position adopted by the national government, Brazilian governors⁵ maintained a significant engagement in environmental issues with participation in COP25 in Madrid (IN TIME, 2019; IMC, 2019) presenting their proposals for sustainable development.

The domestic political conflict was evident in Madrid during COP25. The government of Pará presented the project “Amazônia Agora” (BARBALHO, 2019) and the government of Amapá presented the platform for remuneration for environmental services, the program

5. Governors who attended the meeting: Wanderlei Barbosa (Tocantins), Wilson Lima (Amazonas), Paulo Câmara (Pernambuco); Waldez Góes (Amapá) and Gladson Cameli (Acre). Also attending the meeting were Senator Randolfe Rodrigues and deputies Claudia Lelis (Tocantins), Olyntho Neto (Tocantins) and Rodrigo Agostinho (São Paulo) (BARBOSA, 2019; CÂMARA, 2019; EM TEMPO, 2019).

called Green Treasury (GÓES, 2019). Parallel meetings were held to seek the possibility of donations and investments with countries such as Norway and Germany (NEXO JORNAL, 2019). During the meeting, the president of the Legal Amazon Consortium, Waldez Góes, sought to present efforts to build a unified positioning of Brazil at COP25.

At that time, the governor cited the position of the president of the Senate, Davi Alcolumbre, stressing that the support of the Brazilian congress would be consolidated in a document with a unified position at COP25 during a meeting at the Brazilian Embassy in Madrid.

However, it is possible to identify a critical position towards the federal government by Brazilian governors and the congressperson. In mentioning the preparatory meeting for COP25, the governor of Pernambuco, Paulo Câmara, reaffirmed the state's commitment to the Paris Agreement and argued that "Closing your eyes and denying scientific data will not make the problem go away. We need to recognize reality and face what is there" (CÂMARA, 2019). There was no need to say the name of the president so everyone present knew that Câmara was directing his criticisms to the negationist position regarding climate change showcased by Bolsonaro and his ministers of Environment and Foreign Affairs.

Also during COP25 Governor Waldez Góes met with Norway's Minister of Climate and Environment to discuss the Amazon Fund and the Amazon Consortium (GÓES, 2019) alongside Senator Randolfe Rodrigues who spared no criticism of the federal government. From an opposing party, the senator is known for his opposition to the government of Jair Bolsonaro. During the meeting, the senator reaffirmed his opposition to the government, denounced the murder of two Indigenous Guajajara in Maranhão and criticized the speech of Environment Minister Ricardo Salles (RODRIGUES, 2019). In criticizing Salles, the senator stated in a post on a social media: "Ricardo Salles spoke at the height of his capacity at # COP25: none! (RODRIGUES, 2019). In addition to being the shortest participation of a government representative, he did not present any project or even an idea of how to end the environmental devastation represented by the Bolsonaro government" (RODRIGUES, 2019). It was not just the governors who met with potential donors. Deputy Rodrigo Agostinho also held meetings to discuss expanding investments from Germany to the region. On that occasion, he and Senator Randolfe Rodrigues met with the German Ministry of Environment to discuss investment possibilities for Brazil (RODRIGUES, 2019).

The Brazilian fragmentation was very evident during COP25. Many governors also attended a meeting organized by "The governor's Climate & Forests Task Force" (GCF). Created in 2008 by nine governors of Brazil, governors of Indonesia and with the support of the UN, the organization is the largest subnational collaboration network of states and provinces with the goal to foster environmental protection and reduce deforestation. The GCF Task Force was designed to advance jurisdictional approaches to low-emissions development and Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD +) (GCF

Task Force, 2020). The network currently includes jurisdictions in ten countries: Brazil, Colombia, Indonesia, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Peru, Spain, and the United States.

Another meeting at the COP25 gathered the governors of Brazil, Indonesia, Peru, and Mexico to discuss the possibilities of support for the implementation of solutions on environmental issues with the Norwegian Minister for Climate and Environment. Also present were the Tropical Forest Alliance, and the GCF Task Force Global Committee for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (GCF Task Force, 2019). According to Governor Helder Barbalho, the meetings with the GCF enabled the debate on sustainable development in the Amazon, ecological zoning, and land regularization (BARBALHO, 2019).

The facts and cases reported above represent the strengthening of the voice of subnational governments as opposed to central concerns. According to Rodrigues (2019), the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs gave a new meaning to the “global-local” relations that leveraged subnational actions in line with the federal government and even with Itamaraty. However, this dynamic seems to be changing and the soft and bland paradiplomacy ends up giving way to a hard and aggressive one.

Speaking volumes to our argument, the Minister of Environment, Ricardo Salles, rejected signing the letter articulated by governors and parliamentarians who defended the priority for states in the transfer of funds negotiated at COP-25 (NEXO JORNAL, 2019). The conduct of the federal government and subnational governments on environmental issues seems increasingly distant. As highlighted by Ana Toni, executive director of the Instituto Clima e Sociedade who participated in the Conference: “the role that used to come from the government has now been transferred to subnational actors, civil society, governors, mayors, the private sector” (NEXO JORNAL, 2019).

Given the lack of leadership in the conduct of Brazilian foreign policy in this theme, with the adoption of contradictory, ideological and negationist positions, we can anticipate a greater role of subnational actors followed by more tension between these spheres of power (PRADO E JUNQUEIRA, 2020).

The engagement of Brazilian states with the formation of coalitions, as opposed to national foreign policy, brings approximations with the North American case. The North American federalist model has specificities that allow greater autonomy for states and has historically been characterized by a model marked by cooperation and conflict in intergovernmental relations between the federal government and subnational actors. On the environmental theme, there is a strong performance of American states, mostly Democrats, with the formation of state coalitions committed to the Paris Agreement and the sustainable development agenda in clear conflict with a conduct adopted by the Donald Trump administration (PRADO; LOPES, 2019). Although the Brazilian institutional design is distinct from the North American, it is possible to identify elements that point to a more conflictual federalism between the federal government and subnational actors during the Jair Bolsonaro government.

Final remarks

This research sought to analyze the conflict between Brazilian sub-national governments and the federal government during the year 2019 regarding the sustainable development agenda, with emphasis on the SDGs and specifically on the environmental axis. With this perspective, we could observe that Brazilian states have been gaining greater prominence in the defense of the sustainable development agenda boosted by the creation of new articulations, such as the Northeast and the Legal Amazon Consortia. These governance arrangements reaffirm a more active, reactive and opposition stance on the federal government's stance, which in 2019 created friction with traditional international partners.

Under Jair Bolsonaro's administration, governors have adopted greater activism in this theme, generating the tensions observed throughout this research, challenging the limits of traditional concepts of paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy, imposing a new reading of Brazilian federalism. Among the main tensions, we can highlight the divergence of positions adopted by the states and the president in the face of the suspension of the Amazon Fund and the performance of these two spheres of power in the multilateral sphere, both at the UN Climate Conference and at COP25. The Northeast and Amazon Consortia have been gaining a prominent role in these articulations by bringing a propositional agenda at climate conferences and seeking greater dialogue with countries that have received intense criticism from the federal government, such as Germany, Norway, and France. The result is an international image of a fragmented Brazil.

In the scenario of domestic conflict exposed internationally, there is an important political partisan character that cannot be ignored. As Clementino (2019) analyzes, all the governors that joined the Northeast Consortium are part of Bolsonaro's opposition, which contributes to the creation of new spaces of dispute both domestically and internationally. As Rodrigues (2019) highlights, the Legal Amazon Consortium can also be framed as a new dynamic of relative opposition to the federal government guidelines. For example, in February 2020, the federal government proposed the creation, by presidential decree, of the new National Council of the Legal Amazon. In the decree, the president excluded the governors of the region from the initiative. As a response, the president of the Legal Amazon Consortium, Waldez Góes, reacted to the federal government's decision by arguing that the Council's methodology should consider local actors and civil society (UOL, 2020). In this sense, there are elements that point to a clash due to the political-party polarization. In line with the hypothesis raised by Schiavon (2010) when analyzing the involvement of Mexican subnational governments, we observe that there is a greater role for federative entities whose governor's party differs from the president due to divergences of interests and preferences.

Finally, this Bolsonaro's government decision is linked to the need to respond to criticisms regarding the absence of concrete measures to tackle deforestation and the fires in the Amazon, but it also represents an attempt to empty the role of state Consortia as well as to reduce the par-

ticipation of governors in themes concerning sustainable development. It is a desperate measure to attempt to recentralize the decisions and the power under the federal government, once again challenging the decentralized federalism established by the 1988 constitution.

Jair Bolsonaro's attempt to dismiss the role of the Consortium of the Legal Amazon by excluding governors from the National Council, as well as to oppose to the policies adopted by the Northeast Consortium, exposes the tendency to greater conflict amidst both levels of government and, at the same time, reinforces the relevance among these governors that occupies an increasingly important political space. In this sense, the year 2019 may be marked as the one that the historical of paradiplomacy created by the decentralization of the 1988 constitution shifted from cooperation to conflict between the federal government and sub-national governments, inaugurating a new dynamic that demands more observation and analysis as the traditional concepts seem to fall short to explain this new and more complex political scenario.

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