

# Dismantling of the Brazilian environmental policy

## *Desmantelamento da política ambiental brasileira*

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## ARTICLE – DOSSIER

Brazilian socio-environmental policy has advanced considerably in the last 30 years. Since the 1970s, legislation and frameworks for the forest (DRUMMOND *et al.*, 2009), water resources (PAGNOCCHESCHI, 2016), climate (BURSZTYN, M.; BURSZTYN, M. A., 2016), indigenous peoples (MARÉS, 2018), family farming (SABOURIN *et al.*, 2020), and for a structuring environmental agenda in the country (FELDMANN, 2018), have been observed.

Around the world, environmental policy is characterized by inherent conflict with economic sectors over access to natural resources (DRYZEK, 1992; SHAHAR, 2019). In Brazil, the trajectory of socio-environmental policies has also been marked by conflicts with political and economic groups (DRUMMOND *et al.*, 2022) that influence their formulation, consolidation, and change.

During the 2010s, Brazil underwent major political and economic transformations that culminated in the rise of conservative groups and the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff in 2016. In 2018 this swing of the country to the right reached its peak with the election of candidate Jair Bolsonaro. These governmental changes paved the way for the weakening or dismantling of several social, rural, health, education, and environmental policies. A common characteristic of most of the policies targeted by this process was their creation during the democratization period of the country and their consolidation during the governments of the Workers' Party, particularly during the terms of Lula da Silva (2003-2006; 2007-2010).

Conceived as a type of change that reduces the number of policies or policy instruments and/or decreases their intensity, policy dismantling can modify fundamental elements of a policy or the capacity to implement and oversee it (BAUER *et al.*, 2012). Based on a cost-benefit approach,

most case studies that applied Bauer's analytical framework showed discrete dismantling forms. This framework assumes that the political costs of dismantling are inherently unpopular; therefore, these costs can be reduced if policymakers can avoid, divert, or reduce their responsibility for a given policy change. In the Brazilian case, instead of discrete strategies, the dismantling process has taken place in an open manner and has become a particularity of the Bolsonaro government. Moreover, populist delegitimization narratives have been important factors in this large-scale dismantling process (MILHORANCE, 2022).

In this context, this special issue sought to update the literature on dismantling from a focus on the Brazilian case and analyzed empirical cases of environmental policy at both national and territorial levels.

Six papers will be presented: Neves produced the opening paper of the Dossier. It aims to analyze, from a historical perspective, the construction of Brazilian environmental policies and the recent abrupt changes that occurred under the management of the Bolsonaro government. It presented an important reflection on how these changes can be interpreted as deliberate strategies to dismantle public policies. In a panoramic way, the article helps us understand the extent and how the dismantling of Brazilian environmental policy is operationalized.

The second article, produced by Bonelli *et al.*, examined, from the perception of street-level bureaucrats, the effects of President Bolsonaro's administration on the environmental analysts who conduct the policy of prevention and control of deforestation in the Legal Amazon. The article is an important contribution to understanding the patterns of conduct and the effects of dismantling on the public agents who formulate and implement socio-environmental policies in Brazil.

Along the same lines as the previous article, the one produced by Moulin reflected on the bureaucratic capacity and identity of the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Natural Resources - Ibama through a qualitative analysis of the public tenders by the agency in the years 2002, 2005, 2009, 2013, and 2021. The article concludes that the radical change in the profile of the environmental agents recruited in the agency's last civil service exam held in 2021 represented an attempt by the Bolsonaro government to hire environmental analysts who are more aligned with the expectations of its agenda and with competencies that are largely different from those outlined for the previous exams.

The article by Coudel *et al.* brings up a debate about dismantling the pesticide control policy. Based on data from interviews, participant observation and focus groups, it was demonstrated how the conduction of a favourable position for the use of pesticides by the federal government reached the local scale being highly disseminated and collaborating to produce the invisibility of the negative impacts of its use. The dismantling of democratic spaces and the intimidation of small farmers were the strategies discussed in the article.

The article by Silva aims to present the political and institutional aspects that contribute or do not contribute to the funding of biodiversity policies under the federal government from 2000 to 2019. They apply the Biofin - Biodiversity Finance Plan methodology in the political and institutional dimensions. They demonstrate the complexity of the production of biodiversity policy in Brazil. In the end, they bring an interesting conclusion. In 2019 with signs of continuity in the Brazilian biodiversity policy, the participation reduction and social engagement, the loss of participation of the Ministry of Environment in conducting this policy and a loosening of the command and control instruments were linked to it.

The article by Canal and Verдум, which concludes this Dossier, aims to report and explore the various difficulties of implementing environmental health actions in the perception of a multidisciplinary environmental health team from a municipality in southern Brazil. They highlighted, through interviews, the loss of professional knowledge conducted by environmental health surveillance agents.

Such lost knowledge was configured as an element that composed the dismantling of environmental policies in the Bolsonaro government.

We hope this Dossier can contribute to deepening the theoretical, methodological and empirical debate of dismantling environmental policies in Brazil.

Enjoy your reading!

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