

Brazilian Environmental Policy: shared responsibility and dismantling

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Abstract: The article reviews Brazilian environmental policy, observing its central mechanisms, arguing that these are based on a conception of shared responsibility in the care for nature that has recently been undermined. From three approaches of political theory that discuss the problems of coordination of action, deliberation, and environmental justice, we analyze the institutional mechanisms of responsibility as protection, participation, and control, observing their relevance and justification for environmental policy. The article uses empirical documentary data to reflect on the potentials of the environmental policy model in the face of the possible implications of its deformation, concluding that the shared character of responsibility in environmental policy is the central focus of the changes that have been occurring, which puts an important democratic dimension at risk

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Keywords: Environmental policy; environmentalism; environmental problem; Brazil; environmental legislation.

São Paulo. Vol. 27, 2024

Original Article

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/1809-4422asoc0176r4vu27L1OA>



Introduction

The recent and profound changes in Brazilian environmental policy have been analyzed by several authors from the point of view of public policy dismantling (ARAÚJO, 2020; HOCHSTETLER, 2021; CAPELARI *et al.*, 2020). Although the period of Jair Bolsonaro's government is remarkable in this sense, deregulation is not an unprecedented phenomenon (BRONZ *et al.*, 2020). In addition, as Giffoni Pinto and Malerba (2022, 144) point out, the "(anti)environmental policy" undertaken in Brazil also resembles that observed in other countries, such as the United States. However, we observe that, in Brazil, the government led the country to a rapid process of mischaracterization of some aspects of this policy. This is due to Brazilian environmental policy being recognized in several international contexts for its positive qualities, mainly resulting from the advances implemented after the National Environmental Policy in 1981 and the Constitution of 1988 (VIOLA; FRANCHINI, 2017).

The National Environmental Policy (PNMA) was fermented for its institutionalization in the 1980s, defining environmental management instruments, such as licensing (DRUMMOND; BARROS-PLATIAU, 2006). In addition, civil society played an essential role in creating the Green Parliamentary Front, which aimed to draft the part on the environment included in the 1988 Constitution, article 225 (HOCHSTETLER; KECK, 2007). After redemocratization, we had a constitutional chapter that established the environment as a right for all, including future generations, and state institutions responsible for environmental policy in a unified way, such as the Brazilian Institute of the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA). Subsequently, a specific ministry, the Ministry of the Environment (MMA), and, progressively, several collegiate bodies for the elaboration, execution, and supervision of environmental policy were formed.

In addition, this policy has been increasingly gaining new actors and contours that are increasingly open to social participation. Even in the State bodies, their main protagonists were, for a long time, civil society actors recruited by specific programs, many of those linked to international cooperation, such as the Pilot Program to Conserve the Brazilian Rain Forest (PPG7)¹ (LOSEKANN, 2014; ABERS; OLIVEIRA, 2015). In addition, non-state collective actors, such as universities, NGOs, and science-related foundations, among others, have long been involved in the construction and execution of environmental protection policies, such as the Brazilian Foundation for the Conservation of Nature (FBCN), which had "a parastatal character until the 1970s" (ALONSO; COSTA; MACIEL, 2007, p. 155).

This institutional development anchored in society culminated in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (or Eco-92), an event held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, which marked the profusion of environmental perspectives and the entry of new actors and political repertoires (ALONSO; MACIEL, 2010). The context

1 - The program was financed by the seven richest countries and structured 28 projects, including creating a national policy for managing natural resources. For more information on PPG7 see: <https://encr.pw/h2nmo> Accessed on 07/09/2022

of Eco-92 continued the advance of the institutionalization of environmental policy, and from the 2000s onwards, many management councils within this theme were created. Not forgetting that the National Environment Council (CONAMA) was one of the first councils created in Brazil in 1981 (FONSECA; BURSZTYN; MOURA, 2016). The Environmental Crimes Law, established in 1998, has also been a decisive factor in regulating and punishing offenders (MOURA, 2016) and is a fundamental control mechanism. Thus, the institutions created in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s consolidated the sharing of responsibility regarding preservation.

In this article, we discuss the recent changes in environmental policy in Brazil that have altered its characteristics in an unprecedented way regarding the type of accountability that is at stake and the consequences that this change may have for environmental protection. We argue that such changes have had an unprecedented perverse effect: they have undermined the institutional instruments of shared responsibility in environmental protection between public and private entities, increasing the centralization of control under the State while dismantling and/or weakening autarchies that hold this function. To carry out this analysis, we present bibliographic and documentary research supported by the review of the leading Brazilian environmental institutional frameworks and the studies that have been explaining this historical process of Brazilian environmental policy.

We present some central theoretical discussions reflecting environmental policy models and their possible consequences. Those are: the debate on the coordination of collective action, deliberative theories of democracy, and the perspective of environmental justice. Thus, we present the theoretical foundations that justify the importance of our shared responsibility model in environmental policy between the State, society, and individuals. In the second section, we analyze how we can find these theoretical foundations expressed in our institutions, pointing to the elements of protection, participation, and control in environmental policy over time. In the third section, we present the de-structuring process, which intensified in Jair Bolsonaro's government, and its possible consequences, given aspects raised in the theoretical debate. We conclude by pointing to the need to unequivocally recognize the importance of the shared dimension of responsibility for environmental policy as the most viable way to observe, within a democracy, the dimensions of nature protection, pluralism of environmental values, and environmental justice.

1. Environmental policy as a problem of coordination, deliberation, and justice

In political theory, two fundamental approaches problematize environmental issues as challenges for the collective. Those are: the neo-institutionalist perspective, which emphasizes the problems of coordinating collective action arising from the dilemmas of the commons, whose seminal work is by Elinor Ostrom (1990), and the deliberative approach, which introduces environmental issues into the debate on democracy as, moral issues, constructed values (DRYZEK, 2010; SMITH, 2003; BARRY, 1999). These currents synthesize explanatory paths with very different starting points but with very close points of arrival: the involvement of multiple actors in the construction of environmental policy.

From the collective action perspective, the dominant path, paved by economic models and rational choice theory, introduced natural resources as a common good that would imply complex individual and collective dilemmas characterized as action coordination issues. In this approach, the object in question is defined as natural commons without discussing their meanings or incorporating processes of signification from other cultural perspectives. Note that here the construction of the problem is given by two characteristics presupposed in the dilemma of game theory: human beings who wish to use the common resource and the exhaustible nature of it. The issues that arise from this are related to the rival use of the good, which is exhaustible among human beings. It is characterized as an action coordination issue (OSTROM, 2000).

However, from the point of view of discussions on democracy, other issues have been brought on, and the deliberative perspective is among those that have best elaborated on environmental problems (LENZI, 2009). It highlights the problem of the different valuations of the environment as moral issues (Smith, 2003). The environment would be constructed as an element of culture, and the cleavages and social stratifications are inserted in the theoretical scheme in such a way as to perceive that cultures that depend on or value the environment not as a resource but for its existence *per se*, tend to have access difficulties in the public debate. Instead of actions driven by rational calculations and interests, communicative action is understood as a constructor of deliberation (DRYZEK, 2010).

These two perspectives summarize two of the epistemological paths of environmentalism in political theory. In the first of these, we have a path anchored in positive theory without significant ontological discussions. In the second, we have normative discussions about ontological aspects and constructing prescriptions and problematizations. Since it is pluralistic and does not present *a priori* fixed value for the environment, the deliberative approach encompasses the former but does not guarantee environmental protection.

If we start from the deliberative assumption of the constitutive plurality of environmental issues, it becomes evident that desirable politics does not simply imply bringing the environmental to the public debate, since we have many, antagonistic, and asymmetrical values. The deliberative approach is promising since it does not present an approach where nature is a mere resource but leaves the meaning of nature open, which ends up incurring other problems. The main one is that it is too procedural (LENZI, 2009) and, therefore, equally anthropocentric and, potentially, utilitarian regarding nature. Unless one inserts a vision that represents nature as a value into the public arena, it would not necessarily be considered, except for vague fundamental principles, such as the rights of future generations. As Dryzek defines it, ecological democratization means having democratic mechanisms that do not sacrifice ecological values or ecological protection mechanisms that do not sacrifice democratic values (DRYZEK: 1996, 108). However, in short, deliberation *per se* does not guarantee environmental protection. In this sense, the advantage of Ostrom's theory is that it does not remove the scarcity of natural resources from the problematization due to the human values attributed to them.

Nevertheless, another theoretical perspective promising to the debate is environ-

mental justice, in which the problem is reinserted to escape the deliberative democratic impasse (SCHLOSBERG: 1999; 2007). Although the perspective of environmental justice was not born in theory, in social movements, its agenda approximates theories of justice, introducing social inequalities and their repercussions on the distribution of environmental damage into debates on democracy. Thus, it emphasizes that poor, indigenous, and black communities suffer the most from environmental problems. It also builds a critical dialogue with sociological theories of risk (BECK, 1992) that tend to conceive of environmental impacts in a generalist way, emphasizing their global and universal aspect. On the contrary, the environmental justice perspective will say that everyone does not access environmental goods, and environmental damage is more recurrent in marginalized groups (ACSELRAD, 2002). This theorizing, despite bringing many advances to the other debates, especially by introducing the elements of power relations and structural inequalities, assumes an anthropocentric position due to the nature of its concerns.

Recently, the debate on environmental justice has been updated in terms of thinking about climate justice. Thus, it attempts to reintroduce the natural element as a central good to be valued, observing, in continuity with the original argument, that the effects of climate emergencies always fall on the most socially fragile (SCHLOSBERG; COLLINS, 2014).

Different conceptions about the meaning of the environment and the definition of environmental problems have built different theorizations and prescriptions about the best solutions in terms of policies to be undertaken.

The neo-institutionalist theory of Ostrom (2000) prescribed hybrid forms of institutions, with combinations of minor, medium, and large regulations, at multiple scales but all based on dense foundations of local management based on self-government. On the other hand, in the discussions about democracy, the debate bore more fruit between deliberative and the participationist strands that advocated the strengthening of collective decision-making arenas, where environmental problems and solutions could be built from communicative action, with the addition of fundamental clauses that safeguarded future generations and the protection of nature (DRYZEK; PICKERING, 2017). Finally, environmental and climate justice studies have generated proposals for indicators such as environmental equity and various initiatives for measures to protect local communities (FASE; ETTERN, 2011). However, this approach finds the most space in critical theoretical production (RECHTSCHAFFEN; GAUNA; O'NEILL, 2009). When reviewing these theories, it becomes clear that they have only partially solved the problems contemporary societies are going through regarding ecological crises. We propose that a combination of these theories configures a set of promising institutional repertoires, and that these are found in the tradition of our environmental policy. Thus, we interpret our institutional environmental policy framework as a process tensioned by different forces that have resulted in a mosaic of initiatives combining mechanisms that can circumvent some of the theoretical problems presented.

To the theoretical dimensions we gathered, the concept of shared environmental responsibility can also be added, which, as we are proposing, characterizes a complex

arrangement between the State, society and individuals, and public and private entities, where several mechanisms configure the whole environmental policy. This is a more radical proposal of responsiveness, according to Powell (2004; 91), for whom: “Democratic responsiveness is a complex process, a bit like a chain whose links are causally connected.” It is more radical in that we assume that environmental protection involves a non-human actor that will need to be observed, regardless of the preferences of individuals, and by observing the power relations that permeate society’s constructions of preferences.

The shared responsibility character of our policy thus resides on three distinct levels: behavior, decision-making, and institutional control. The first concerns the duty to protect natural resources, which belongs to both the State and individuals. The second concerns the prerogative of discussing the meanings of environmental policy and its design, inserting multiple actors that interact with the environment and the State. The third level comprises the mechanisms of institutional control, whose activation is shared between the State and civil society.

Table 1. The current model of sharing environmental responsibility

Ways of sharing environmental responsibility:		Type of mechanism:
Protection	Environmental services, legal reserves, permanent protection areas, conservation units ² , and environmental licensing ³	Aims to coordinate collective action
Political participation	Management councils, collegiate bodies, and public hearings	Aims to debate the value
Social control	Public civil action and Popular action	Aims to correct justice problems

Source: elaborated by the authors.

In concrete politics, the identification of such theoretical elements is complex and linear. Although theoretical debates guide practical political actions, they are often combined in dynamic arrangements. There are several models of environmental policy regarding the competence and responsibility of nature protection. Some countries have adopted a fully state-focused model, and others have adopted private models where protection is not simply societal but exclusively private. This is different from suggesting that Brazil’s environmental policy is exemplary and that it works perfectly. However, as will be exposed in the next section, these mechanisms result from disputes, tensions, and political arrangements created throughout our history. However, many defects may have constituted our environmental policy’s sharing characteristic.

2 - An example of this type is the Private Natural Heritage Reserve (RPPN). All types of Conservation Units can be consulted at <https://11nk.dev/K194c>.

3 - Environmental Licensing is a complex instrument that can entail levels of participation and control. However, since it is an instrument that regulates in an articulated way the authorization of activities that damage the environment, it can be included in the protection dimension.

2. Shared responsibility: protection, participation, and control

We can think of these mechanisms of Brazilian environmental policy related to the three mechanisms for environmental responsibility sharing presented in Table 1: the legal reserve and other elements, which would be linked to the protection mechanism; the participatory collegiate bodies, linked to the mechanism of political participation; and the legal provisions, such as the public civil action law, functioning as mechanisms of control and coercion. These three mechanisms correspond to different arenas where State and societal actors act in sharing their environmental responsibilities ⁴.

In Brazil, since at least the 1930s, we have adopted the idea that to protect nature, the best model would be sharing the protection between society and the State (MEDEIROS, IRVING; GARAY, 2004). This conception is expressed in different institutions and formulated from different conceptions of nature and environmental problems.

In this sense, the legal reserve, which received this name from the Forest Code of 1965, although the Forest Code of 1934 already established the forest reserve (TREJO; RAMOS, 2020), is a historical and structural milestone of the shared responsibility mechanism in Brazilian environmental legislation. The legal reserve set out, in the 1965 code, a percentage of private property that should be protected according to the State's determinations. The sharing of protection, established via mechanisms such as the legal reserve and the Permanent Preservation Areas (PPA), establishes conservation criteria in private territories used for productive activities. Thus, the responsibility for environmental conservation is shared between the State and the landowners with the percentages of vegetation cover provided as mandatory in rural properties, whether private or public. Decree 23,793/34 required landowners to maintain 25% of the area of their properties with the original forest cover. The objective was to ensure the existence of wood for firewood and charcoal, which were running out due to deforestation, a typical problem of using common resources. On the other hand, the idea of "protective forests", which later became Permanent Preservation Areas (PPAs), already existed (SPAROVEK *et al.*, 2011).

Substantial evidence of this characteristic of shared responsibility emerges in comparison with the forest protection systems of other countries. If we look at the largest agroexporting countries in the world, Argentina, China, Canada, France, Germany, and the United States, Brazil is the only one among them without state compensation for the part of the private territory that is destined for preservation (CHIAVARI; LOPES, 2017).

The normative procedures related to the legal reserve were improved and expanded in subsequent legislations, always in the sense of defending an area necessary for the sustainable use of natural resources, the conservation and rehabilitation of ecological processes, the conservation of biodiversity, and the shelter and protection of native fauna and flora.

4 - Shared responsibility can be thought about in many ways, and we do not aim to present all of them. Here, we will only underline the mechanisms that have persisted throughout our environmental institutions and that are in the process of transformation in recent years.

In addition, the first decade of the 21st century was characterized by the creation of the National System of Conservation Units (SNUC), the National Water Agency (ANA), and the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMbio). Concerning protected areas, the SNUC regulates everything from the creation to the differentiation and the purpose of each space. In this policy, diverse and complex aspects that combine and tension elements of conservation and preservation are included, which would be characterized by defining two types of Conservation Units, those of Full Protection and those of Sustainable Use, with their subdivisions (CREADO; FERREIRA, 2012).

These mechanisms are closer to actions aimed at coordinating collective action since they do not call into question the meanings of nature but rather its protection. Thus, except for the Extractive Reserves (RESEX) and Sustainable Development Reserves (RDS) that potentially open the possibility for shared management, they imply operating rules of strategic rationality based on assumptions of a rational choice. In addition, they consider the environmental problem as a problem of the relationship between excessive use and resource scarcity.

On the other hand, the participation mechanisms are those in which the deliberative space is open to discussions, tension, and the construction of environmental values. Here, the meaning of environmental policy is not given but open to be constructed by the public. It is about more than equating the use versus sustainability of the common resource.

Political participation is understood as one of the most important institutional mechanisms to keep the arenas of signification of nature open. That is, participatory mechanisms precisely constitute ways of confronting and deliberating about the conflicts of signification of nature and the very construction and definition of what are environmental problems (HANNIGAN, 2006). The National Environment Council (CONAMA), in its configuration prior to Decree No. 9,806/19, is one of the leading institutional experiences of a collegiate space where actors interested in environmental policy were found. Created in 1981 by Law 6,938, it has an advisory, deliberative, and normative character. It has representatives from five sectors: federal, state, and municipal agencies, the business sector, and civil society. Its internal structure includes spaces for discussion and dissent, plenary, technical advice, and others. It presents a type of representative participation that combines the representation of people and communities, interests, and discourses, which constitutes, from the point of view of the already highly debated theories of participatory and deliberative democracy, a valuable model (LOSEKANN, 2012).

In addition to CONAMA, other participation mechanisms have been implemented in different municipal, state, and federal segments. Organized as deliberative arenas with formal power and participation of public agencies, private sector agents, and civil society, such as basin committees, an essential example of institutional organizations that translate the participatory management ideals (ABERS, 2009; JACOBI, 2003). In this sense, another important initiative that innovated the mechanisms of environmental political participation was the National Environmental Conferences, which began during Marina Silva's administration and brought a different characteristic from CONAMA since their

objective was, fundamentally, to build a popular base for environmental causes (LOSEKANN, 2012).

Even with this complex structure and multiple opening initiatives, we still had significant problems and major legal challenges for environmental protection. The large infrastructure projects of the Growth Acceleration Program (PAC) were, for the most part, the object of judicial questioning at a dispute unprecedented in our history, involving several Courts and multiple actors tensioned between State and society.

The third mechanism for sharing environmental care that we have identified in our institutional architecture is Public Civil Action (PCA), one of the most relevant instruments in environmental defense and against the violation of human rights caused in large enterprises. This mechanism can correct distortions caused by other mechanisms or in other parts of the environmental policy process that have caused environmental injustices. It is a mechanism for mobilizing the right that is part of the process of civil society participation in environmental policy but with a social control function (LOSEKANN, 2017). The PCA also has the effect of enforcement and provides for something fundamental and powerful, which is the possibility of civil society itself using it, even against the State, since it does not call into question the legality of the act under trial but the damage or potentiality of it to environmental goods. In this sense, it becomes an instrument for an act that causes possible environmental damage, even if supported by a legitimate decision.

What has been observed in Brazil is that the use of public civil action combined with environmental legislation is an essential strategy not only for the defense of nature but also for the defense of the interests of communities that live in systems of subsistence interaction or existential cooperation with nature (LOSEKANN, 2017).

Each way of sharing environmental responsibility leads to a different path. The protection mechanisms present in the notion of environmental services, among others, imply a primarily private character in the sense that they presuppose that a portion of the protection will be the responsibility of those who use the environment as a resource for their particular activity. On the other hand, the forms of political participation and social control have a primarily public character insofar as they concern dimensions of decision-making shared between actors of the State and society, including the economic sectors, but not exclusively. The significant difference between private and public mechanisms is that the former are not open to discussion about the meanings of nature; they are defined by particular interests, whether of protection or destruction. Public mechanisms, however, have an opening for the social construction of the environmental problem, although limited by the conceptions at stake and by rules considered fundamental, such as those of public interest or the future of the next generations.

3. Undermining environmental protection sharing

The New Forest Code of 2012 resulted from many discussions and the target of criticism from environmentalists. Proponents argue in favor of possible legal security.⁵ For producers, whereas many believe that it represents a decrease in environmental protection since it created a kind of amnesty for many offenders and allowed the deforestation of areas that should be protected, according to the Constitution (some of these points were reviewed by the Federal Supreme Court) (SPAROVEK *et al.*, 2011). The entire process of amending and approving the Forest Code was strongly influenced by the political coalition represented by the Agricultural Parliamentary Front, which constitutes an essential base of support for the former president of the republic, Jair Bolsonaro.

Elected with an avowedly anti-environmentalist discourse (SAMPAIO, 2018), Bolsonaro promoted dismantling Brazilian environmental policies (IMAFLORES; ISA, 2020; ECODEBATE, 2022). These actions took place at a frenetic pace, and initiatives that broke with our institutional tradition of sharing environmental protection were observed. Thus, several legislative initiatives aimed to undermine the shared responsibility of the legal reserve and environmental services in general; the councils, with the participation of civil society, were also emptied. However, thanks to the instruments of social control via legal mechanisms, many initiatives have been reversed by the judiciary due to factors such as unconstitutionality, composing a dynamic process of tension.

Some lines of action include several measures taken by the federal government, including support for environmental offenders and persecution of public servants who try to carry out their duties and fight against indigenous and quilombola cultural and territorial rights.

Actions in defense of environmental offenders are frequent, both by impeding routine inspection actions and with normative procedures, such as Decree No. 9,760/2019⁶, which created a procedure for conciliating environmental fines, Normative Instruction No. 20/19, from IBAMA, which regulates negotiation possibilities and reduces the compensations provided for violators in deforestation actions in the Atlantic Forest. The statistical data also makes explicit the less visible orchestrations that hinder enforcement actions. In September 2019, the number of fines fell by 26% compared with the same period of the previous year, with deforestation in the Amazon increasing by 80%. In July 2020, deforestation-related fines were 60% less than in the previous year (ASCEMA, 2021).

Indigenous lands (IL) and quilombola lands have been the target of avid mining and agribusiness interests. Their resumption was defended by the former president, an enthusiast of the military governments, who defended projects for the expansion of mining and agribusiness in the Amazon region and the policies of assimilation of indigenous peoples as they were implemented in Brazil during the military dictatorship (WENZEL,

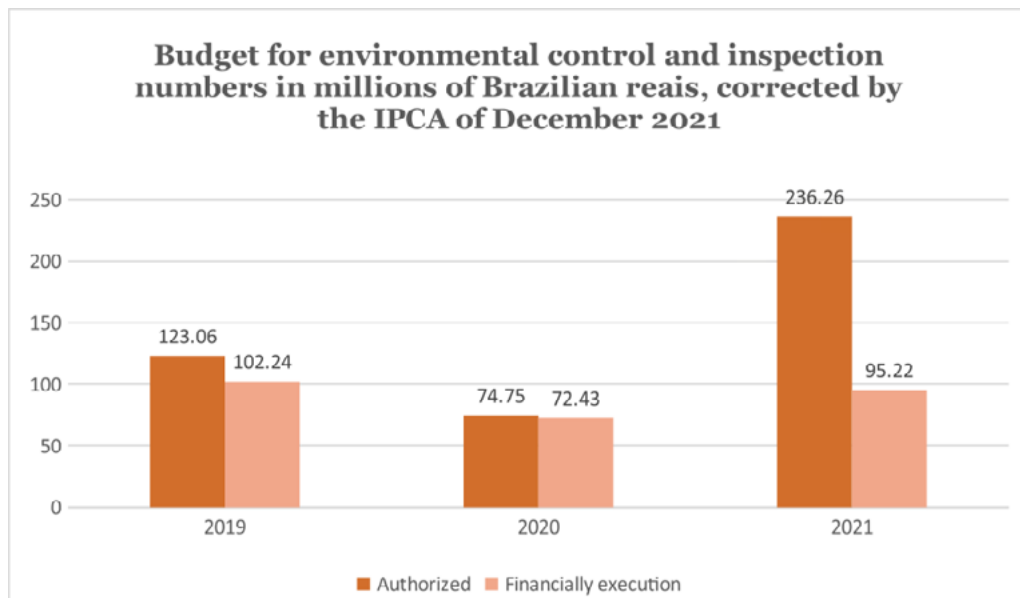
5 - The so-called judicialization of environmental conflicts is a recurrent argument for changing environmental legislation.

6 - These and other normative changes have been altered in a dynamic process, accentuated by the change of government. This article does not intend to offer a closed overview of the normative changes but to expose the interplay of forces that did not end with the change of the executive.

2019; VALENTE, 2019). The Bolsonaro government sent Bill 191/2020 to the Chamber of Deputies, which regulates mining in IL. The presence of miners in Yanomami⁷ Territories were enhanced by the dismantling of FUNAI and environmental agencies and by the former president's declared support (BATISTA; SENRA, 2023).

The Ministry of the Environment (MMA) was the target of a proposal to abolish and downgrade to the level of secretariat subordinate to the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply (MAPA). The proposal even divided agribusiness representatives since the owners, most active as exporters, perceived the measure as a risk of damage to the international image of the agro-export sector and a threat to business (BRAGANÇA, 2018). The MMA was then emptied of its competencies, with the extinction of the Secretariat of Climate Change and Forests; the Brazilian Forest Service (SFB) and the Rural Environmental Registry (CAR) went to MAPA; the National Water Agency (ANA) went to the Ministry of Development, and the command of the MMA was taken over by recognized agribusiness allies (INESC, 2022). According to budget data collected and organized by INESC, the environmental budget has declined over the period. However, with a slight increase in 2021, the executed budget remained below the level of 2019, as shown in the figure below:

Figure 1. Environmental budget from 2019 to 2021



Source: INESC, 2022, p 59, Adapted.

7 - The presence of mining in Yanomami, IL, resulted in a socio-environmental catastrophe classified by many analysts as genocide. This humanitarian crisis gained greater visibility in 2023 after the current government's positioning; more information is at the link: <https://n9.cl/jc8rf>.

In the work for the flexibilization of environmental legislation, proposals have been presented to reduce and weaken the protection standards established by the legal reserve and the PPAs, among others. In principle, the Provisional Measure (PM) 867/2018 only postponed the Environmental Regularization Programs (PRAs) deadline. However, many amendments were made alongside it, which represent essential changes in the much-debated New Forest Code, among them, the drastic reduction of the legal reserve, the granting of new amnesties to environmental fines, and the permission for the implementation of sanitary landfills in Permanent Preservation Areas (PPAs). Going back to our historical tradition of environmental policy, by putting the legal reserve at risk, the government threatens, therefore, one of the principles of our policy, destroying a fundamental mechanism, shared protection.

The mechanisms of participation and transparency have been systematically extinguished or emptied by the Bolsonaro government. Decree 9,806/2019 promoted the dismantling of participatory collegiate bodies, which acted vibrantly, giving effective content to actions of our environmental policy. The CONAMA went from 93 to 23 councilors, and several sectors lost out: the participation of states and municipalities, sectors of the economy, and, above all, civil society was reduced, which, with the decree, fell from 22 seats to 4⁸. Let us consider the diverse and broad attributions of the council. We can already glimpse the paralysis of the sector, in addition to the losses in terms of the democratic construction of public policy. Thus, this government has broken with yet another of the principles of our policy, destabilizing a fundamental mechanism: participation. This decree was revoked by President Lula and invalidated by the Federal Supreme Court (STF). Both initiatives took place in 2023, demonstrating the tension around normative decisions that have continued in other legislative aspects and by the Chamber and the Senate initiatives.

The limitation of the society's participation and the owner's responsibility, restricting the responsibilities of environmental protection in the State while dismantling the control and inspection bodies (some examples are the de-structuring and precariousness of the regulatory and inspection bodies, the prior notice of inspection, the review of environmental protection areas, reserves, and parks) marks the mischaracterization of our environmental policy, which has been agreed upon since its inception by the principle of sharing protection between the State, society, and individuals.

The third aspect of sharing, which we characterize as environmental justice, is being threatened in various ways. However, the main one is materialized in Bill 3729/21, which became known as the Bill of the flexibilization of environmental licensing (OLIVEIRA, 2022). Although the facilitation of licensing results in the detriment of nature protection, we emphasize here the damage regarding the reduction of instruments that serve democratic control. The law promoters' central argument maintains that environmental licensing is bureaucratic and generates legal uncertainty. In the argument presented by Deputy Neri Geller, the judicialization of environmental conflicts is a greater evil that would be fostered by licensing laws by using public civil action.

8 - This decree was suspended in 2021 by the Federal Supreme Court (STF).

The table below shows the institutional changes that occurred during the Bolsonaro government. The current government's team has systematically reformulated these initiatives. However, in addition to presenting an overview of the dismantling initiatives that were implemented in the previous period, the presentation of such initiatives makes it possible to observe claims that are usually reformulated in other normative projects or even represented in the decision-making arenas that are favorable, as has occurred in the Chamber and the Senate.

Table 2. Institutional changes implemented between 2019 and 2021 and their implications for shared responsibility

Institutional act of change	Implication for responsibility sharing
Decree No. 9,806/19 reduces the number of CONAMA board members.	It reduces participation and pluralism since the representation of civil society and traditional peoples is reduced, and the rule of consensual alternation for seats is eliminated.
MMA disallowed direct communication between IBAMA, ICMBio, and the press, demanding that all communication be made through the MMA's communication office, which a military officer has since occupied.	In addition to centralization, the control of information directly affects transparency and social participation.
Decree 9,759/19 extinguishes the Brazilian Forum on Climate Change, the National Plan for the Recovery of Native Vegetation and its respective Commission, the National Biodiversity Commission, and the National Forestry Commission.	It reduces the mechanisms of social participation.
IBAMA's Normative Instruction No. 20/2019 makes vegetation suppression in the Atlantic Forest more flexible, allowing offenders to appeal directly to the superintendent and the president to reduce compensation for illegal deforestation.	It directly affects environmental protection, with the aggravating factor of being about the Atlantic Forest, protected by specific law.
Bill 191/20 authorizes mining, hydrocarbon extraction, and use of water resources for energy generation in Indigenous Lands.	It provides for the permission of the private and predatory use of protected public lands for the use of indigenous peoples, undermining environmental justice.

Institutional act of change	Implication for responsibility sharing
Decree 10,239/2020 transfers the Amazon Council from the MMA to the vice presidency of the republic. The council was now comprised of military personnel, leaving out the governors of the Legal Amazon and civil society.	In addition to barring the participation of states, civil society, environmental agencies, and FUNAI, the council members have a merely advisory role, centralizing decisions in the presidency.

Resolution 494/2020 of the MMA and CONAMA established the possibility of holding a remote hearing for environmental licensing during the pandemic.	It undermines public debate and popular participation in decision-making on high-impact projects.
Bill 3.729/04, approved by the Chamber of Deputies in 2021, makes environmental licensing more flexible and practically extinguished.	It restricts the participation of civil society, ICMBio, FUNAI, and IPHAN. Banks and other financing institutions are no longer co-responsible with the entrepreneur.

Source: elaborated by the authors, with information contained in the bibliographic reference of this article.

According to data from the Environmental Policy Monitor⁹, during the Bolsonaro government, 12,322 acts were published in the environmental area, 1,415 with a significant impact in several ways, which include flexibility, deregulation, privatization, and others. According to the Monitor's classification, the executive promoted 13 acts of flexibilization and 11 of environmental deregulation. However, indeed, what draws the most attention are the 33 acts of institutional reforms, among which are examples of institutional dismantling such as Ordinance No. 419 of May 11, 2020, and Ordinance No. 423 of May 11, 2020, which canceled the operations of IBAMA's advanced environmental protection bases.

Thus, briefly, what we noticed was: i) the dismantling of environmental agencies, characterized by the reduction of funds, persecution, and dismissal of public servants; ii) the emptying and mischaracterization of the environmental agenda, given that the government has openly opposed the environmental agendas and thus failed to propose necessary environmental policies; iii) the transfer of competences and powers to actors exogenous to the environmental agenda, marked by the replacement of public servants by outsourced private services and the militarization of the Amazon region; iv) the infra-legal¹⁰ Action, known by the expression "let the cattle through," said by the then Minister of the Environment, Ricardo Salles, meant a series of acts from the executive that aimed to cover up actions that generated judicialization or controversies in the public sphere; v) the extinction and emptying of participatory collegiate bodies; vi) legislative action with several attempts to change legal frameworks.

We can observe, therefore, changes that alter the central characteristics of our environmental policy, the main one being the sharing of responsibility for environmental care. The main aspects observed point to the reduction of the possibilities of society's participation in various ways, either by the logic of coordinating the use of natural commons or by the logic of deliberation of the meanings attributed to nature. However, in addition to these, we also observe that the justice mechanisms are being strained, although they are more challenging to undermine in a short period. The consequence of this process is a kind of shielding of environmental policy that is restricted to State actors, without

9 - The environmental policy monitor is part of Política por Inteiro, a panel that monitors institutional acts. Available at: <https://arte.folha.uol.com.br/ambiente/monitor-politica-ambiental/#/atos-impactantes> accessed on 07/09/2022.

10 - To learn more about the Bolsonaro government's infra-legal measures in the environmental area, see Oliveira 2022 and INESC's database (2021).

transparency, and highly reduced.

Conclusion

The changes brought about by Jair Bolsonaro's administration profoundly affected the Brazilian environmental policy tradition, undermining the forms of sharing responsibilities. These agendas did not end with the presidential mandate but continued to be tensioned by the actors who represented them. Political participation open to civil society has been undermined, leaving few spaces for participation that have also become disfigured from what they were. This change process has reduced the responsibility of the owner and producer in addition to collegiate decision-making mechanisms. As proposed with the theoretical schemes presented, this brings concrete problems regarding the sustainability of the commons and closes the possibilities of public deliberation on environmental problems by fixing a single meaning to nature, especially the one that sees it as a resource for economic development. As a result, the legitimacy of environmental protection was reduced to the scope of the State, but with an institutional management architecture that was being de-structured, militarized, and closed with the dismantling of the control and inspection bodies. Such a policy created a contradictory model of environmental policy centered on State control to meet the objectives of the declared economic sectors of this political group. Another sequence of acts was inaugurated to amend protective legislation and thus reduce the possible effects of judicial mobilization in environmental conflicts, which can reduce the mechanisms that aim to correct environmental injustices.

Although the Bolsonaro government, the principal agent of this transformation of environmental policy, has failed in its reelection attempt, the impacts of its actions will not be easily barred and, therefore, understanding the deeper meanings of the accelerated changes in such a government is crucial. Continuing the debate on this process is necessary to shed light on reconstruction and improvement efforts and highlight the importance of implementing mechanisms that contribute to making institutions less vulnerable. We seek to emphasize the need to value the character of shared responsibility that has been forged in our environmental policy over time and that allows, from various angles, to build an institutional context more favorable to the care for natural resources in a plural, democratic, and fair way, which becomes evident since these institutions have been the target of attack.

Acknowledgments

We thank the anonymous reviewers for their contributions and the institutions supporting the research. This work results from research with the financial support of the following agencies: Public Notice No. 6 of 2019 PQ CNPq productivity grant, Public Notice No. 4 of 2021/FAPES research fee, and CAPES doctoral scholarship.

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Submitted on: 24/11/2021

Accepted on: 06/12/2023

2024;27:e01764

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Política Ambiental Brasileira: responsabilidade compartilhada e desmantelamento

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Resumo: O artigo revisa a política ambiental brasileira, observando seus mecanismos centrais, sustentando que estes se fundamentam em uma concepção de responsabilidade compartilhada no cuidado da natureza que vem sendo minada recentemente. A partir de três abordagens da teoria política que discutem os problemas de: coordenação da ação, deliberação e justiça ambiental, analisamos os mecanismos institucionais de responsabilidade enquanto proteção, participação e controle, observando a relevância e a justificação destes mesmos para a política ambiental. O artigo utiliza dados empíricos documentais, com o objetivo de refletir sobre os potenciais do modelo de política ambiental frente às implicações possíveis de sua deformação, concluindo que o caráter compartilhado da responsabilidade na política ambiental é o foco central das mudanças que vêm ocorrendo, o que coloca em risco uma importante dimensão democrática.

São Paulo. Vol. 27, 2024

Artigo Original

Palavras-chave: Política ambiental; ambientalismo; problema ambiental; Brasil; legislação ambiental.

Política Ambiental Brasileña: de la protección compartida al desmantelamiento

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Raquel Lucena Paiva

Resumen: El artículo revisa la política ambiental brasileña, observando sus mecanismos centrales, sosteniendo que estos se basan en una concepción de responsabilidad compartida en el cuidado de la naturaleza que ha sido socavada recientemente. A partir de tres enfoques de teoría política que discuten los problemas de: coordinación de la acción, deliberación y justicia ambiental, analizamos los mecanismos institucionales de responsabilidad como protección, participación y control, observando su relevancia y justificación democrática para la política ambiental. El artículo utiliza datos empíricos documentales con el objetivo de reflexionar sobre el potencial del modelo de política ambiental brasileño frente a las posibles implicaciones de su deformación, concluyendo que el carácter compartido de la responsabilidad en la política ambiental es el eje central de los cambios que se han venido produciendo, lo que pone en riesgo una importante dimensión democrática.

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