

# T02W04 / Policy and capacity dismantling in the context of democratic backsliding

**Topic :** T02 / Comparative Public Policy

**Chair :** Michelle Morais de Sa e Silva (The University of Oklahoma)

**Second Chair :** Alexandre Gomide (National School of Public Administration (ENAP))

## CALL FOR PAPERS

In the last decade, elected populists and illiberal politicians have been contesting democracy and political pluralism. In this regard, scholars have claimed that some countries live in a context of democratic regress or backsliding (Haggard and Kaufman, 2021). This workshop aims to address the effects of this context in the functioning of state institutions, particularly on state capacity and on the continuity of public policies, allowing for the consolidation of a new body of literature that can provide a conceptual and analytical framework.

In a recent publication, Bauer et al. (2021) were the first to look at the deleterious impact of illiberal populists not only on democracy, but also on the constitutive (and often taken-for-granted) foundations of the state. This workshop proposal seeks to add to this critical discussion, looking within public administration and examining the specific consequences of democratic backsliding for state capacity and public policies.

We invite scholars who have been dedicated to examining policy and capacity dismantling in countries that have experienced the rise to power of illiberal populists to present research papers. Proposed papers, preferably of an empirical nature, can use different methodological and theoretical approaches.

The following questions will be of relevance to workshop papers and discussions:

1. What has been the nature of policy change in contexts of democratic backsliding?
2. Do backsliders consistently resort to policy and capacity dismantling? Are policy and capacity dismantling a defining feature of democratic backsliding?
3. Does policy dismantling occur under distinct drivers, and does it produce particular effects in situations of democratic backsliding?
4. Do democratic backsliders produce new policies while they dismantle old ones?
5. In dismantling policies, what impact is created on the institutions once responsible for implementing them and on state capacity?
6. What is the role of public bureaucracies on observed policy resilience or dismantling?
7. What are the conditions and causal mechanisms that characterize policy and capacity dismantling in the context of democratic backsliding?
8. Are there common patterns that can be identified across different countries?

Main Topics:

- Democratic backsliding
- Institutional resilience
- Policy change
- Policy dismantling
- Public Bureaucracy
- State policy capacity

## ABSTRACT

In the last decade, elected populists and illiberal politicians have been contesting democracy and political pluralism. In this regard, scholars have claimed that some countries live in a context of democratic regress or backsliding (Haggard and Kaufman, 2021). The proposed workshop aims to address the effects of this context in the functioning of state institutions, particularly on state capacity and the continuity of public

policies – especially those related to civil liberties, minorities and human rights, the environment, social inequality and related fields. In countries where state bureaucratic and organizational capacity has been a condition for promoting socio-economic development, capacity dismantling emerges both as a possible cause and a possible consequence of policy dismantling. Workshop participants will be invited to address the following questions: What has been the nature of policy change in contexts of democratic backsliding? Are policy and capacity dismantling a defining feature of democratic regress? Does policy dismantling occur under distinct drivers, and does it produce particular effects in situations of democratic backsliding? What impact has been observed on the state institutions once responsible for implementing dismantled policies? Under the stress of seeing policies being dismantled, how do bureaucrats react? Are there common patterns that can be identified across different countries? The empirical studies presented in the workshop are to be gathered around the concepts of policy dismantling (Bauer et al., 2012), institutional resilience (Pierson, 2006), institutional change (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010), state and policy capacity (Centeno et al., 2017; Wu, Ramesh, and Howlett, 2018), and bureaucratic reactions (Bauer et al., 2021). It is hoped that the ensemble of papers will allow for the consolidation of a new body of literature that can provide a conceptual and analytical framework for those addressing policy and capacity dismantling in the context of democratic backsliding.

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**Chair :** Michelle Morais de Sa e Silva (The University of Oklahoma)

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## Session 1

Tuesday, June 28th 10:00 to 12:00 (C208)

### Discussants

Michelle Morais de Sa e Silva (The University of Oklahoma)

Alexandre Gomide (National School of Public Administration (ENAP))

### Democratic Backsliding and the Policy Agenda: Losing Capacity for the Future

B. Guy Peters (University of Pittsburgh)

Even in the best of times there is a “democratic myopia” (MacKenzie, 2020) that tends to make governments unwilling to consider the longer term problems confronting their societies. Crumbling infrastructure, underfunded public pensions and inattention to climate change are but three examples, albeit three very significant examples, of the effects of this myopia. The reasons for the lack of interest in longer term policy issues is somewhat obvious. Politicians need to be elected or re-elected sometime in the next few years, and therefore see no electoral payoff in programs that cost money now, but only yield benefits in the future.

Democratic backsliding and populist politics are tending to exacerbate the tendency toward democratic myopia. Populist politicians, to the extent they are interested in policy rather than just symbolic actions, are interested in providing benefits to their supporters in the form of jobs (not environmental policies), and immediate cash transfers (not long-term pension security). Further, populist politics tends to denigrate expertise, and the civil servants in government who personify that expertise, and therefore sideline or replace the civil servants.

This paper will explore the effects of democratic backsliding on the capacity to make long-term policy, and consider options for improving that capacity.

### Dismantling strategies and resistance tactics in Brazilian environmental agencies: changes in Ibama's organizational structure and culture from 2004 to 2020

Carolina Stange Azevedo Moulin (Universidade de São Paulo)

Although huge advancements have been made by the literature on policy dismantling since Bauer and Knill's seminal article (2014) most contributions have focused on *policy instruments* (cf. Pollex and Lenschow, 2020; Menezes and Barbosa Jr., 2021). The “cutting, diminution or removal of existing policy” (Jordan et al. 2013: 795) from an *organizational* perspective, that is, analytically prioritizing the agencies responsible for implementing the policy instruments subject of dismantling, has received less attention. Exceptions are Silva (2021), whose recent article surveyed members of the Brazilian federal bureaucracy, and Burns and Giessen (2016), who investigated the weakening of forest bureaucracies in Argentina. This empirical study focuses on the case of Ibama, a federal agency also dubbed “Brazil's environmental police” for its central role in anti-deforestation operations and other key policy competencies. The research questions driving the paper are: (1) How did Ibama's organizational structure and culture change from 2004 to 2020? (2) Which of these changes reflect democratic policy change and which ones result from authoritarian policy dismantling? (3) What strategies were employed to dismantle Ibama, by which authorities, and with what objectives? (4) In which resistance tactics against dismantling did Ibama's servants engage? (5) What contextual factors of Brazil's New Republic (1988-) have enabled the identified dismantling strategies and resistance tactics performed in Ibama? The chosen timeframe (2004-2020)

mirrors the implementation of PPCDAm, widely considered Brazil's most important anti-deforestation policy.

My conceptual framework pivots on organizational *structure* and *culture* as a useful distinction to dissect an agency's material and immaterial dimensions. I define structure as the set of tools available to an agency to intervene in reality, encompassing *authority* (set of rules that give concretion to the agency's purpose); *nodality* (channels for exchanging information); *treasure* (money and other resources); and *background* (repertoire of practices and capacities shared by the agency's members in the form of technical knowledge). I define culture as the set of common interests and values in which the agency's participants are socialized. For operationalizing culture, I distinguish between *events* (landmarks in the organization's history); *schemes* (images, dictums, or figures deemed exemplar by the agents); *assumptions* (underlying presuppositions and frames of thought); and *individual background* (educational, professional and socioeconomic). The changes identified during different political cycles will then be analyzed under the rubrics of dismantling strategies and resistance tactics, thus interpreting the empirical findings in connection with the most heated debates on the emergent research field on policy dismantling in contexts of democratic backsliding. The data collection techniques encompass documental research and semistructured interviews. The following documents are used as sources, *inter alia*: (i) statutes and executive orders concerning Ibama's competency of deforestation inspection; (ii) yearly budgets; (iii) rules governing admission examinations (*editais de concurso público*); and (iv) open letters and dissertations written by employees. This proposition contributes to the purpose of the workshop by developing an analytical framework to study the impact of policy dismantling processes on the structure and culture of state agencies and producing new insights into strategies of policy dismantling and resistance tactics in Brazil.

I would like to present on-site.

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BURNS, Sarah; GIESSEN, Lukas. Dismantling Comprehensive Forest Bureaucracies: Direct Access, the World Bank, Agricultural Interests, and Neoliberal Administrative Reform of Forest Policy in Argentina, *Society & Natural Resources* (2016) 29:4, 493-508.

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MENEZES, Roberto; BARBOSA JR., Ricardo. Environmental governance under Bolsonaro: dismantling institutions, curtailing participation, delegitimising opposition, *Z Vgl Polit Wiss* (2021) 15:229–247.

POLLEX, Jan; LENSCHOW, Andrea. Many faces of dismantling: hiding policy change in non-legislative acts in EU environmental policy, *Journal of European Public Policy* (2020) 27:1, 20-40.

SILVA, Michelle Morais de Sá e. Beyond ordinary policy change: Authoritarian policy dismantling in Brazil (Preprint published in Scielo, 2021).

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## Session 2

Tuesday, June 28th 14:00 to 17:00 (C208)

### Discussants

Alexandre Gomide (National School of Public Administration (ENAP))

Michelle Morais de Sa e Silva (The University of Oklahoma)

### Democratic public action in times of crisis: examining the robustness of Brazil's socio-environmental policies

Carolina Milhorange (CIRAD)

Marina Lazarotto de Andrade (Universidade de Brasília)

Jean-Francois LE COQ (CIRAD - CIAT)

Eric Sabourin (CIRAD & University of Brasilia)

Since mid-2010, Brazil underwent important economic and political changes, and the country has regressed in terms of several public policies. However, this process featured a compelling and systemic approach since the beginning of the far-right Bolsonaro's administration in 2018. Several internationally renowned policies in distinct fields, such as food and nutritional security, poverty reduction, territorial development, and deforestation control, have been targeted (Milhorange, 2018; Sabourin, Grisa, et al., 2020; Sabourin & Grisa, 2018). Although some dismantling stages partially originate from initially obscured choices and reduction in public spending during the tenure of Workers' Party President Rousseff, it has now become a fundamental government strategy. A common feature of most policies targeted by this process is their embeddedness in a broader democratic politico-institutional framework consolidated during the Workers' Party governments, particularly during Lula da Silva's mandates (2003-2006; 2007-2010).

Notably, the establishment of citizenship participation mechanisms for the design, implementation, and monitoring of public policies has been a mark of several interventions during the country's democratization process since the late 1980s. Characterized by distinct degrees and outcomes, several social, food and nutritional security, and environmental policies have gradually become an object of accountability in consultative forums. Moreover, an increased coordination between federal and subnational institutions marked the country's democratic policy-making. Nevertheless, drawing on an authoritarian project, Bolsonaro administration extinguished most of the participatory stances while others have been weakened or the involvement of civil society members has been limited. Such change initially relied on the argument of reducing public spending associated with the functioning of participatory forums, justified by the effects of the economic crisis. This administration also worked on the centralization of decision-making and policy implementation, excluding governors and mayors from the policy process.

This movement then acquired more visible features and an active interest in reviewing the goals of public policies, which reflected the renewed articulation of conservative coalitions tied together by populist rhetoric and anti-corruption narratives. Hence, the dismantling of such instruments currently reflects a major change in policy goals and the consolidation of Brazilian democratic institutions. This shift in national politics has been followed by an increasing interest by scholars and analysts, and there is growing literature in the field (Barcelos, 2020; Barbosa et al., 2021; Fernandes et al., 2017; Granemann, 2016; Macambira, 2020; Sabourin, Craviotti, et al., 2020; Sabourin, Grisa, et al., 2020). However, most studies focus on specific sectors and analyze the stages and strategies of policy dismantling. The robustness of specific policies and the resilience of Brazil's democratic instruments and institutions have been understudied, except for an emerging literature concerned with the role of public bureaucracies (Lotta & Silveira, 2021; Morais de Sa e

Silva, 2021, 2020).

Therefore, this study questions the nature of policy change in the context of democratic backsliding in Brazil, and analyzes the factors of robustness of socio-environmental policies being dismantled. Drawing on a review of the emerging literature on the Brazilian case, semi-structured interviews, and documentary analysis, it examines the relevance of participatory instruments in responding to illiberal policy change and other types of crises such as climate and covid-19. Owing to the involvement of civil society actors in the design and implementation of the instruments analyzed here, we shed light on the role of actors beyond the state bureaucracy. Three empirical cases studies are analyzed: first, water governance in the Sao Francisco basin; second, forest fires management in the Amazon region; and third, agroecology food support. The dismantling of key participatory instances is addressed in the three cases. The study engages with political sociology and historical institutionalism literatures to analyze the determinants and limits of policy robustness in light of the political shift and external crisis. This is part of an ongoing effort to understand the consequences and breadth of policy and institutional changes observed in Brazil since the arrival of far-right political groups for the presidency.

### **Regulatory interactions between transnational sustainability governance and domestic politics in a context of policy dismantling: The case of soy and beef from Brazil**

Almut Schilling-Vacaflor (University of Osnabrück)

Benedetta Cotta (Università Cà Foscari Venezia)

Andrea Lenschow (Universität Osnabrück)

Maria-Therese Gustafsson (Department of Political Science, Stockholm University)

The scholarly debate increasingly emphasizes the close inter-relations between transnational governance and domestic politics. In this contribution we aim to connect literature on policy dismantling with literature on the regulatory interactions between transnational supply chain governance and domestic politics. To do so, we will focus on the case of Brazil, where both state capacity and public policies in the ambits of environmental and human rights protection have been dismantled in the past few years and more clearly under the presidency of Jair Bolsonaro. After giving an overview of processes of policy dismantling and their consequences for state capacity and public policies in Brazil, we will analyze how these domestic processes intersect with and shape sustainability governance initiatives in the global trade with soy and beef.

Based on our findings we discuss how transnational supply chain governance, which has often been presented as a solution that can compensate for the shortcomings of domestic policies, tends to be undermined by processes of policy dismantling. More concretely, we will focus on deforestation policies and policies to respect and protect the rights of indigenous and traditional communities, rural workers and family farmers to land, water and livelihoods. In broader terms, we aim to contribute to previous literature by distinguishing between different ways of how private (e.g., certification, zero-deforestation commitments), public (e.g., mandatory due diligence laws) and hybrid (e.g., resource-centered landscape approaches) transnational governance initiatives interact with and are influenced by domestic politics. Furthermore, our study explores to what extent transnational rules can contribute to support and empower civil society and state actors in Brazil that have pushed for stringent and enforceable environmental and human rights policies, thereby potentially constraining further policy dismantling.

The empirical analysis presented here is based on a triangulation of different data sources, including a systematic analysis of a broad range of Brazilian and international policy documents and findings from semi-structured interviews with state, civil society and private actors in Brazil and Europe conducted between 2017 and 2022. In the discussion section, we reflect upon the broader implications of our findings, especially with regard to the question of how adverse human rights and environmental impacts associated with globalized economic sectors are addressed by inter-related transnational and domestic governance arrangements and more particularly on the influence of policy dismantling processes on regulatory interactions.

### **Getting out without getting in: marginalization of climate change problem in the context of brazilian political crisis**

Livia Kalil (Université Sorbonne-Nouvelle (Paris III))

This paper aims to analyze the influences and disruptions caused by the Brazilian political crisis, on public action for climate change at the federal government level, taking as a starting point of this possible backsliding in the 2014 presidential elections. Does, it seeks to understand how political reconfigurations

and power games have led to a marginalization of the climate emergency issue, which previously occupied an increased place in the composition of the public agenda (at least that of international positioning), and even to a dismantling of existing public policies and thus to the weakening of these policies as a result of governmental and electoral changes. To this end, texts of climate change policies (laws, decrees, ministerial orders, etc.), particularly the 2009 National Climate Change Policy and some of its instruments, as well as the public statements of politicians who have entered or are currently entering the federal executive branch, i.e. presidents and ministers have been analyzed. What we have observed from the case of climate change policies at the Brazilian federal level, although some of them have been institutionalized by law, is that they are not part of a solidified state policy and are subject to governmental transformations, political dynamics, different crises, as well as to elections and the formation of the ministerial framework. These changes can have a direct impact on the continuity of these programs, particularly in the deployment of resources (budget) for their operation or, even more directly, through legislative action. The government elected in 2018 with the promise of "ending environmental activism and abolishing the Ministry of the Environment" thus deepened the dismantling of the Brazilian state's socio-environmental protection structures in 2020. The backtracking has not been greater, as the Bolsonaro management has been resisted by environmental activism from civil society, nongovernmental organizations and also the international community (VALE et al., 2021)

**Key words:** political crisis, governmental change, policy dismantling, climate change.

\*I consider presenting **on site**.

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## Session 3

Wednesday, June 29th 09:00 to 12:00 (C208)

### Discussants

Michelle Morais de Sa e Silva (The University of Oklahoma)

Alexandre Gomide (National School of Public Administration (ENAP))

### Political Economic Sources of Policy Non-design, Decay in Organisational Policy Capacity and Crisis Management Failure

Mehmet Kerem Coban (SOAS, University of London)

The literature on policy non-design tends to ignore the political economic drivers. Additionally, we know less about the linkages between policy non-design and crisis management. Relying on an analysis of primary documents and media reports, the paper links the political economy of non-design and crisis management with a study of the Turkish context during the currency crisis since 2018 and Covid-19 crisis. The paper sheds light on how and why non-design in these two crises persist. The paper argues that the authoritarian government's haphazard, non-design response to the two crises originates from its symbiotic relationship with the non-financial firms. The paper highlights how and why the executive dominates bureaucracy, dismantles existing policies, and triggers decay in organisational policy capacity through non-design.

### (Virtual) Social policy for the poorest in times of democratic backsliding in Brazil: politicization, polarization and policy changes under Bolsonaro

Carla Tomazini (University of Warwick)

A growing research agenda seek to examine the potentially public policies effects on political structures, especially based on E.E. Schattschneider argument that 'new policies create a new politics'. Pierson and Hacker (2014) draw attention to the fact that the dominant Downsian paradigm does not pay sufficient attention to public policies and has been contradicted by two facts: the increase of partisan polarization (with the right moving to the right of the political spectrum) and the increase in social inequalities.

This paper examines the structuring effects a social policy in Brazil (Bolsa Família and Renda Brasil) on an important political change (the impeachment that occurred in Brazil in 2016) and the changes in the program occurring under the Bolsonaro government.

If, on the one hand, Bolsa Família had benefited from a 'shield' of the federal state bureaucrats who kept the program away from particularistic and clientelistic demands; on the other hand, the results show that it has contributed to polarizing and politicizing the political scenario. In spite of the fact that Bolsa Família remained an international reference for social assistance policies, during a period of democratic backsliding, political forces seem to try to the modify Bolsa Família in a gradual and subversive manner (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010). The analysis was based on a triangulation of data from interviews, journal sources and official document analysis.



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## Session 4

Wednesday, June 29th 14:00 to 17:00 (C208)

### Discussants

Michael Bauer

### Action and Reaction: how bureaucrats cope with different forms of political oppression

GABRIELA LOTTA (Getulio Vargas Foundation)

Michelle Fernandez (Universidade de Brasília)

Mariana Costa Silveira (Fundação Getúlio Vargas)

Scholars have widely discussed the tensions and conflicts between politicians and bureaucrats during the 20th century (Weber 1954, Rockman et al., 1981). This literature usually analyzed the different forms of political control or the practices and behaviors enacted by bureaucrats under a democratic context (Hirshman, 1970; Brehm & Gates, 1999; Lipsky, 2010; Gofen, 2014; Tummers et al., 2015; Cooper, 2018). More recently, scholars began to show how these phenomena occur under contexts of democratic and institutional weakness, both under democratic backsliding and populist regimes (Bauer and Becker, 2020; Moynihan, 2021; Bauer et al., 2021; Peters and Pierre, 2020). Authors show that, under these contexts, politicians develop different strategies to gain their loyalty (Hajnal and Boda, 2014, 2021); sidelining (Bauer and Becker, 2020), or empowering them (Peters and Pierre, 2020).

Although all these studies advanced in understanding forms of political control and bureaucratic actions, they usually observe these phenomena as static ones. Concepts as shirking, sabotage, exit, voice, guerrilla, among others, appear as unilateral decisions made by bureaucrats aimed to achieve their individual or collective objectives (e.g., Guedes-Neto and Peters 2021; Brehm and Gates 1996; Golden 1992; Olsson 2016; Ingber 2018; O'Leary 2017). However, we consider here that bureaucratic actions may be a reaction to forms of political control and that forms of political control may be a response to bureaucratic actions. Therefore, we still miss a theoretical framework showing how this relational and dynamic process happens. In this paper, we aim to contribute to the literature by analyzing the relational dimension and learning process behind the forms of political control and bureaucratic reactions. Empirically, we examine the Brazilian case of politicians and bureaucrats under Bolsonaro's government, considered a context in which political control turns into new authoritarian forms, intending to dismantle institutions and policies. The question that guides our analysis is: how does the dynamic between political control and bureaucratic reactions occur in contexts of democratic backsliding?

The analysis draws on data collected between December 2020 and July 2021 in 14 different organizations from the Brazilian federal government's social, economic, environmental, and planning areas. Data were collected using an online survey with 1,147 responses and 154 interviews with mid-level bureaucrats.

Findings suggest that the forms of political control and bureaucratic reaction vary considering the measures used (formal or informal) and the scale of action (individual or collective). Based on this variation, we propose a political and bureaucratic reaction typology: 1. Formal and individual; 2. Informal and individual; 3. Formal and collective; 4. Informal and Collective. At the same time, these different types of political control are materialized through various strategies, such as physical oppression, oppression over routines, moral oppression, and silencing.

On the other side, bureaucrats respond to the different forms of political control, developing various types of strategies. These strategies are constructed as a response to the forms of political control and, therefore, may also vary in the measures used and the scale of actions. We propose a typology of four types of

reactions: 1. Sabotage; 2. Resistance; 3. Survival; 4. Exit.

The findings suggest that political control and bureaucratic resistance is a dynamic that involves interactions and the learning process over time. As both politicians and bureaucrats interact, learn and adapt the actions and reactions to previous experiences, it is possible to identify changes in the actors' strategies. Our research contributes to the debate on democratic backsliding, populism, and public administration, proposing different analytical dimensions to understanding the dynamics behind the relations between authoritarian governments and public administration.

## **The Bureaucracy under Authoritarian Rule: Economic Policymaking and the Civil Service in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany**

Kutsal Yesilkagit (Leiden University)

Johan Christensen (Leiden University)

In developed and developing countries with democratic regimes, we find elected politicians with populist and authoritarian programs seizing power of the state. To successfully establish their new rule, however, populist governments need to establish a *modus operandi* with the bureaucracy. The question is how will populist regimes try to secure the support of the civil service to their cause? In a similar vein, we ask how will the bureaucracy respond to a populist and potentially authoritarian seizure of power? To answer these questions, we conduct a comparative study of democratic backsliding and the bureaucracy in Germany and Italy during the inter-war period. Anchored within theories of political-administrative relationships and employing an historical sociological approach, we examine in this paper the fascist and national-socialist ascendancy to power and the resulting effects on the balance between politics and bureaucracy.

This general question will be examined by studying the case of economic policymaking in Italy, before and after 1922, and in Germany, before and after 1933. The paper will examine how in both countries, which were politically and economically devastated by World War I and had experienced a fundamental regime change, politicians employed state capacities to rebuild their states and economies. Inspired and driven by Keynesian economic thinking, politicians were determined to build a modern economically powerful state with large industrial sectors that would enable the countries to regain military prowess during the post-WWI years. Our interest is to study more closely how the bureaucracy, in Italy after 1922 and in Germany after 1933, responded to the radical changes in political leadership. More specifically, for both Germany and Italy, we aim to trace how the civil service with strong monarchical allegiances could adapt itself to newly imposed political-administrative bargains by the fascist and national-socialists, respectively.

### **General references**

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Cecco, Marcello (2020) *Keynes and Italian Economics*. In Hall, Peter A. *The political power of economic ideas*. Princeton University Press, Chapter 8.

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## **(Virtual) Populism and Dismantling of State Capabilities in the Brazilian Environmental Sector**

Ana Pereira (Universidade de Brasília)

LEILA MORAIS (University of Brasilia)

Marta Salomon (Universidade de Brasília)

Marilia Oliveira (University of Brasilia)

The election of authoritarian populist leaders in recent years has spurred extensive research on the impacts of these governments on democratic stability (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018). However, there are still few investigations about the effects of authoritarian populist governments on public administration (Bauer, Peters et al. 2021). Recent studies indicate that, despite being successful in electoral terms, populist governments face great difficulty in governing (Peters and Pierre 2019). This is due to the anti-establishment characteristic of these governments, which place the bureaucracy in an antagonistic logic when considering it with suspicion and averse to the new political agenda (Muno and Briceño 2021). In this scenario, populist governments tend to capture, reform, dismantle and sabotage public administration (Bauer and Becker 2020).

This research seeks to contribute to this debate with an in-depth case study of the Brazilian environmental

policy to control illegal deforestation in the Amazon (Amazônia Legal) during the Bolsonaro government (2019-2022). Specifically, we intend to answer the following question: how do authoritarian and anti-pluralist populist governments produce high levels of illegal environmental deforestation? In the Brazilian case, the emphasis on this policy is relevant: since 2019 deforestation rates in the Amazon have reached alarming levels, which has led some experts to call the phenomenon a “death spiral” (Springs 2021). ??Deforestation is the main driver of greenhouse gas emissions in Brazil. Controlling deforestation is therefore the country's main challenge in response to international emission reduction targets. In addition, as pointed out by Menezes and Barbosa (2021), there is a gap in current scientific production on the impacts of authoritarian right-wing populism on environmental governance in the global south.

To answer our research question, we focus on the deforestation inspection policy carried out by the federal government. Inspection encompasses preventive, monitoring, warning, punitive and corrective measures (Schmitt and Scardua 2015). It represents the main command and control instrument of the Brazilian environmental policy to contain deforestation.

To operationalize our research question, we mobilized a theory-testing Process-Tracing (PT), which is a within case study method used to produce in-depth inferences about the presence of a causal mechanism that links a cause to an outcome (Beach and Pedersen 2016). The outcome that we investigate is the increase in illegal deforestation in lands under the domain of the Union, located in the Amazon. The cause identified is the election of authoritarian, anti-pluralist, and far-right populist governments. Environmental deforestation is an extremely complex and multicausal phenomenon, not exclusive to authoritarian populist governments. However, although still in its infancy, some studies have already linked the worsening of environmental indicators with the election of populist far-right governments (Fortchtnr, 2019; Zuk and Szulecki, 2020). This cause triggers a three-part causal mechanism (MC): discourse, dismantling and reduction of the policy output. We combined three theory approaches to hypothesize the MC: state capacity, policy dismantling, and populism. In order to test our hypothesis, we conduct interviews and document analysis.

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## Session 5

Thursday, June 30th 09:00 to 12:00 (C208)

### Discussants

Alexandre Gomide (National School of Public Administration (ENAP))

Michelle Morais de Sa e Silva (The University of Oklahoma)

### (Virtual) Dismantling science and technology in Mexico

Wietse de Vries (Benemerita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla)

Elected in 2018, the populist government in Mexico announced a reform of the relationship between the State and civil society; a reform baptized as the 4th transformation (4T). However, instead of proposing something radically new, the central strategy for the 4T has been policy dismantling. The main aim of the present government is to actively seek to terminate all public policies from the past three decades, condemning them as neo-liberal.

The strategy of policy dismantling considers two components: first, an overhaul of the bureaucracy, second, a financial austerity plan.

The remodeling of the bureaucracy combines changes in the legislation and rules of the game, overall staff turnover, and the replacement of crucial actors and beneficiaries. The objective is not to make the bureaucracy and public policies more efficient or cost-effective but rather to build a new clientele and supporter base for future elections. It seeks to remake the bureaucracy so that it is at the government's service and to exclude past actors and implementers from decision-making and political or financial benefits.

The second component reduces overall public funding but also alters the allocation rules. Several resources are now allocated directly from the executive to beneficiaries, bypassing traditional mediators and modifying policy implementation. It means that allocation no longer follows the conventional public policy process where societal actors submit funding proposals, which are revised, funded, audited, and evaluated by the bureaucracy. Instead, the government defines its priorities and funds, operates, and evaluates them.

While this takes place in all societal sectors, this paper focuses on the changes occurring in higher education, science, and technology. Here, the National Council for Science and Technology, together with the Undersecretary for Higher Education, have modified legislation, reoriented or cut funding, dismantled policies, excluded or prosecuted researchers, and put an end to participatory decision-making. The new official discourse is that education and science should benefit "the people," prioritize national interests, and foster sovereignty. International collaboration and funding or partnerships with private enterprises are deemed undesirable.

These changes would put the federal government (or rather, the executive) in complete control, exclude all private or foreign actors, and put the future capacity of higher education and scientific research at risk. Thus, democratic backsliding seems to produce sector-specific forms of policy and capacity dismantling, but with a common thread to increase executive authority over all sectors of society, no matter the consequences.

## **The Deconstruction of Environmental Policy and the Freezing of Bureaucratic Capacities in Brazil**

Francesco Bonelli (Universidade Federal da Bahia / Instituto Federal da Bahia)

Antonio Sergio Araújo Fernandes (Federal University of Bahia, Brazil)

Suely Araújo (University of Brasília)

This work analyzes street-level bureaucrats' action in the implementation of environmental policy in Brazil, taking as case studies the IBAMA inspectors and ICMBio agents, before and after the beginning of President Bolsonaro's term. A theoretical model was developed that integrates three different analytical dimensions of street-level bureaucrats' action: the institutional, the individual and the relational dimension. Based on this, a case-oriented investigation was carried out, where significant cases were selected to illustrate the two different profiles of environmental agents (cross-case analysis). Thus, through semi-structured and in-depth interviews, the testimonies of 28 street-level bureaucrats from the two mentioned institutions were collected, in addition to the examination of relevant norms and documents. The information obtained was analyzed using Systematic Content Analysis (SCA). The SCA contemplated the codification of texts, the analysis of its contents and the statistical analysis of the codifications systematized according to the indicators of the theoretical model. From this, the meanings posed by the interlocutors were compared across different cases and corroborated through documentary analysis. In addition, a cross-time survey was conducted on the institutional changes that occurred before and after the Bolsonaro government. The results of the paper show comparatively between IBAMA inspectors and ICMBio agents what are the elements that define the street-level bureaucrats' action in Brazilian environmental policy and how they are articulated, with their peculiarities in each of the institutions. The changes undertaken by the Bolsonaro administration currently in power have led, in just three years, to the freezing of bureaucratic capacities, the weakening of institutions and the deconstruction of environmental governance in Brazil. From these results, the work concludes that, in order to ensure the enforcement of environmental preservation within the national and international regulatory frameworks, Brazilian environmental policy needs to be not only constitutionally defined, but fully regulated along the lines of the Federal Constitution, regardless of the particular interests of the government in power at the time.

**Keywords:** Implementation of Environmental Policy. Street-level Bureaucrats' Capacities. Deconstruction of Brazilian Institutions.

**Note:** the authors consider presenting on-site.

## **Authoritarian Populism and bureaucratic frictions: lessons from Bolsonarism**

Alketa Peci (Getulio Vargas Foundation, Brazil)

Populism frames politics as an existential conflict between different social groups: insiders or "true people" on one hand and "corrupts elites" on the other (Mudde 2004; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2014). Populist politics differ on the criteria of classification of "true people" versus "elites", but they share contentious policymaking as a dominant form of politics. While research advances on the role of populism on democratic backsliding, studies about the relation of populism with public bureaucracies are still scarce.

Contentious populist politics clash, however, with the ideal view of bureaucracy as a neutral administrative system rooted on rational-legal authority, leading to inevitable friction. The vision of a neutral and value-free bureaucrat is a myth that doesn't correspond to a more realistic view of bureaucracies as political institutions on their own, with distinctive values, discretion and power distribution (Meier et al. 2019). But how do populist governments approach public bureaucracies?

We answer these questions by reflecting on the rise of Bolsonarism as a specific form of authoritarian populist government in the Brazilian context. We define Bolsonarism as an "anti-system", "anti-PT (Partido dos Trabalhadores – Workers' Party) & anti-left" and "neoconservative" populism (Solano 2020). Bolsonaro's "strategy of governing" (Roberts 2020) builds on a broader coalition that combines neoconservatism in the social sphere with a market-oriented economic approach and a high presence of the military, well known for their political conservatism, corporatist and nationalistic approach to economy (Garcia 2019).

Policy antagonism is at the center of Bolsonarism with obvious implications for a strong Weberian-based bureaucracy in place. Different from other Latin American countries, Brazil, particularly at the federal level, is marked by a strong, merit-based and competitively recruited public bureaucracy that co-exists with segments influenced by political patronage (Praça et al. 2021). Yet Brazilian bureaucracies are also shaped by internal inequality and heterogeneity, with some segments (e.g. military) in clear consonance with parts

of the Bolsonaro`s agenda. Guided by the assumption that bureaucratic heterogeneity and inequality create the basis for bureaucratic cooption in the context of Bolsonarism, we reflect on how Bolsonarism does approach different segments of Brazilian bureaucracy?

Exploring documental and bibliographical resources, we observe, aligned with previous studies on the relation of bureaucracy with populism, that hiring loyalists at the expense of expertise (Müller 2017; Peters and Pierre 2019; Moynihan and Roberts 2021), followed by an attempt to discretionarily reassign institutional priorities and public resources (Bauer and Becker 2020; Bauer et al. 2021; Dussauge-Laguna 2021; Dussauge-Laguna and Aguiar 2021) are the preferential strategy of Bolsonarism in government. In addition, we identify three strategies of bureaucratic positioning and response to Bolsonarism`s divisive politics: structural coalition, conjunctural coalition and resistance. Finally, we defend an understanding of Bolsonarism as an ideology of divisive governing that, empowered by the prerogatives of a strong presidentialism, nurtures divisive bureaucracies, but is also fueled by the preexisting divisions that shape a heterogeneous and unequal bureaucratic system.

# T02W04 / Policy and capacity dismantling in the context of democratic backsliding

**Chair :** Michelle Morais de Sa e Silva (The University of Oklahoma)

**Second Chair :** Alexandre Gomide (National School of Public Administration (ENAP))

## Session 6

Thursday, June 30th 14:00 to 16:00 (C208)

### **(Virtual) Demobilizing the state's analytical capacity in the Brazilian context of democratic backsliding**

Natalia Koga (Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA) and ENAP)

Pedro Palotti (National School of Public Administration - ENAP)

This paper aims to shed light on the possible implications of demobilization processes around a particular dimension of political capacity – analytical capacity - in the phenomenon of democratic backsliding. Understanding the analytical capacity of the state as the set of skills, resources and flows developed within public agencies in order to provide and produce information and knowledge relevant to policymaking, this paper analyses how this dimension of capacity can be subjected to different processes that lead to its diminishment, such as discontinuation of informational tools, delegitimization of advice systems and consultation culture and disregard of bureaucrats' policy advices.

This investigation looks at recent data and findings from empirical case studies produced for a project carried out by the Institute of Applied Economic Research (Ipea) to examine the uses and non-uses of evidence in the Brazilian policies. The radiography traced by the project concluded that, in general, the Brazilian State has a reasonably high level of accumulated analytical capacity amongst the bureaucrats, however organizational analytical capacity varies greatly according to policy sectors and types of organizations (Koga et al., 2020; Palotti et al., 2021). In this paper, we seek to advance in examining two additional aspects related to the demobilization of capacities and its possible relationship with democracy backsliding: 1) the dynamic between supply and demand for the analytical capacity (Howlett, 2015) and 2) the tensions between the different dimensions of capacity (analytical, operational and political) (Glesson et al, 2011; Wu et al., 2015).

Inspired by Bauer and Knill (2012)'s framework on policy dismantling we argue that policy capacities can be seen as structural contextual conditions to policy change (in both directions) available to be mobilized by the government of the day. In this sense, as Pattyn and Brans (2015) concluded, investing in improving the demand side for analytical capacity seems to be more crucial than the development of the supply side. In states where the analytical infra-structure and governance are not broadly and well established, an illiberal populist government can easily ignore the existing capacity accumulated only in the individual level of bureaucrats or dispersed in some organizations. In addition, it is also relevant to consider, as showed by Glesson et al. (2011), that there are tensions between the development and mobilization of the different dimensions of capacity. Governments, for instance, can always decide to withdraw resources from public research institutes or training of bureaucrats to redirect them to initiatives to improve management efficiency. In other words, can claim that is more useful and fast to improve administrative capacity instead of analytical capacity.

Taking into account the literature in the field, this paper aims to contribute to the debate in the workshop by means of proposing an analytical framework that depicts dynamics and types of analytical capacity dismantling found in the examination of the empirical cases. The cases were mainly in the environment and health fields, which were knowingly sectors of policy dismantling in the recent years in Brazil. The participation of the authors will most probably be online.

## **Policy and capacity dismantling in the context of democratic backsliding: a proposed framework of analysis.**

Michelle Morais de Sa e Silva (The University of Oklahoma)

Alexandre Gomide (National School of Public Administration (ENAP))

The occurrence of policy and capacity dismantling in contexts of democratic backsliding has called the attention of policy scholars working in countries as diverse as Brazil, Mexico, India, Hungary, Poland, and the United States. However, moving forward, the policy dismantling scholarship faces the challenge of developing theory that simultaneously builds on and goes beyond the extensive number of case studies that have been produced, in a timely manner, by scholars in various policy fields and across different countries.

This paper will make a first attempt at proposing an analytical framework that draws comparative insights from the growing literature so far produced on policy and capacity dismantling. In a second and post-workshop iteration of the paper, it is expected that the framework will benefit from the data and analysis presented by other workshop authors. Some of the questions that will guide the paper include:

**Conceptualization:** How can policy dismantling be understood within the broader literature on policy change? How does policy dismantling relate to capacity dismantling?

**Features:** What features are exclusive to policy and capacity dismantling occurring in contexts of democratic backsliding?

**Agents:** Who are the agents performing policy and capacity dismantling? Who are the agents resisting it?

**Arenas:** What are the most common arenas for policy and capacity dismantling in contexts of democratic backsliding?

**Instruments:** What have been the most common instruments and strategies utilized for policy and capacity dismantling?

**Implications:** What are the implications of policy and capacity dismantling for future policymaking?

The paper authors have been working on an edited volume on policy dismantling in Brazil. An important part of the literature review and data will come from that work, but authors will also search for and include literature that has been published outside of the Brazil context.