

## Environmental Rollback and the role of Heresthetic: policy changes and strategic narratives in the case of the Brazilian National System of Conservation Units.

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### **Abstract**

Brazilian policies of protected areas have markedly changed in the past eight years. In addition to the reduced pace of the creation of new areas; the downsizing and the reversion of the protected status of previously created areas has intensified; budgetary allocation to protected area policies has decreased and the focus on the creation of areas of full protection (or indirect use areas) has strengthened. The reasons for these policy changes are here attributed to governmental efforts to maintain a winning-coalition of voters in a context of new political and economic interests. The method used to detect these electoral strategies is narrative and coalition analysis. The ultimate goal, therefore, is to demonstrate how political narratives and the formation of coalitions are strategically pursued by the government in order to accomplish electoral aims in face of a new policy environment.

**Keywords:** Protected Areas Policies; Policy Change; Narrative Analysis; Brazil

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## 1. Introduction

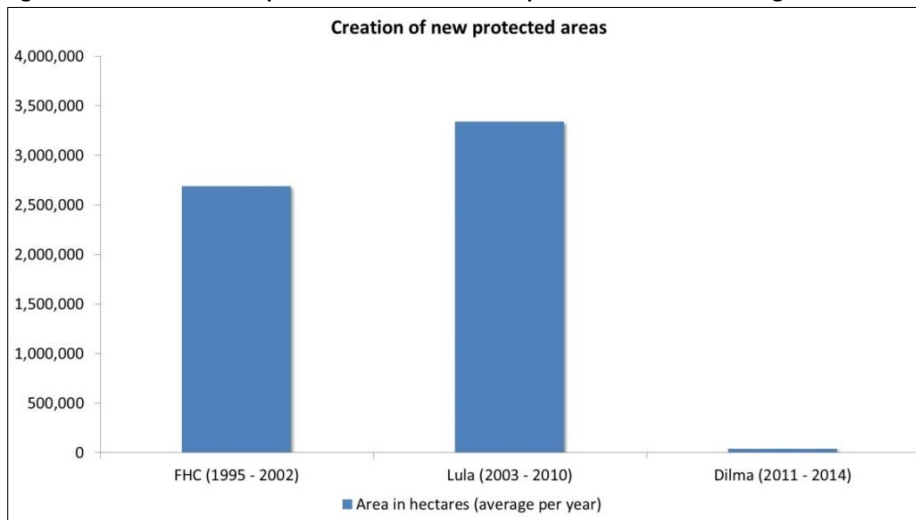
Currently, the main policy for the conservation of biodiversity around the world is the establishment of protected areas. Protected areas exist in nearly 80% of the countries of the world and cover nothing less than 15.4% of the earth's terrestrial and inland water areas, and 3.4% of the oceans (Bensusan, 2014; Juffe-Bignoli et al., 2014). In 2010, the 192 States which are parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CDB) have agreed on the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets which state in among its goals that: *'By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water areas and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscape and seascape.'* (CDB, 2015). The creation of protected areas, therefore, is a world-wide goal which is both central and topical in international environmental debates.

It has been frequently acknowledged, in addition, that the social and political implications of this goal are immense, turning it into a highly politicized issue worth of careful localised consideration (Brechin et al. 2003). Particularly in countries like Brazil, where richness in biodiversity is juxtaposed with a highly unequal distribution of land and traditional peoples' rights, the importance of closely observing the process of creation and establishment of protected areas acquires an even larger magnitude. Brazil is the host of approximately one tenth of all biodiversity in the world - the nation with the highest incidence of species of fauna and flora – and of a remarkable cultural diversity - with 305 different ethnical minorities, speaking around 274 different languages (FUNAI, 2011). It is also a developing country, strongly investing in infra-structure programmes such as the "Acceleration Growth Programme" (PAC in the Portuguese Acronym) which can be in direct opposition to conservation strategies (Castro, 2013).

Adding to the inherent importance of carefully considering this issue in countries like Brazil is the fact that these policies have recently undergone a marked change in direction. While Brazil was consistently creating new protected areas until 2010 - being responsible for the creation of more than 75% of all new protected areas created in the world between 2003 and 2008 - the first mandate of president Dilma Rouseff (2010 – 2014) was characterised by a drastic reduction in this trend (see Figure 1 - Creation of new protected areas in Brazil - presidents' annual averages). In comparison to the administrations of president Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2000), who created 21,5 million hectares of new protected areas during his mandate, and of president Lula (2003 – 2010), who created 26,5 million hectares in total, Dilma, in her first mandate, has added only

about 250 thousand hectares to the total area of Brazilian protected areas. She has, moreover, *downsized* (reduced the legal boundaries of a protected area previously created) or completely reverted the protected area status (an event known as *degazettement*) of approximately 75 thousand of previously created areas for the construction of hydroelectrical dams in the Tapajos river. (ISA, 2014; O Globo, 2014).

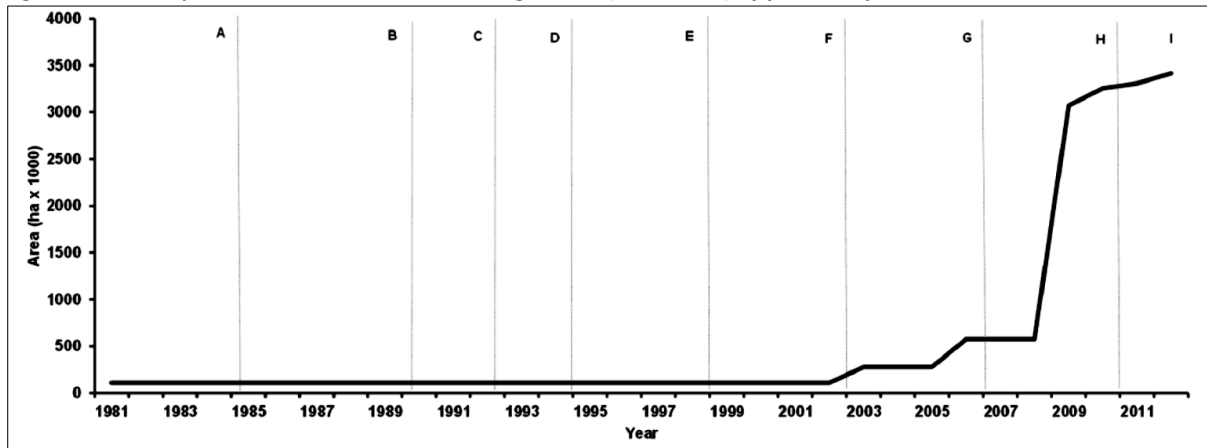
**Figure 1 - Creation of new protected areas in Brazil - presidents' annual average**



Source: Produced by the author with data from InstitutoSocioambiental (2014) and O Globo (2014)

Analysing the historical downsizing and degazettement trend in Brazilian federal protected areas since 1981, Bernard *et al.* (2014) demonstrate that expressive changes occurred since 2008. During the end of the second mandate of President Lula (area H of figure 2) and the beginning of Dilma's mandate (represented by area I), the total of federal protected areas which either totally lost their protected status or were downsized amounts to approximately 3 million hectares. The reasons for the downsizing and degazettement increases after 2008 is attributed by the authors mainly to the increased demand for generation and transmission of electricity in the country, which is projected to increase at least 4.5% until 2020 and is primarily based on hydroelectricity (Bernard, 2014 p. 945).

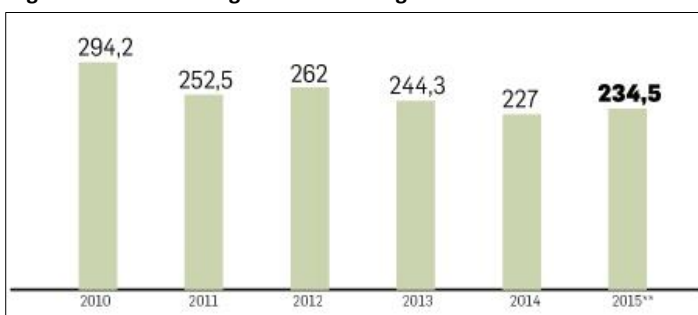
**Figure 2 - Federal protected area downsized and degazetted (cumulative) by presidency**



Source: Bernard et al. 2014 p. 944 ('dashed lines, demarcate presidential terms; A, Figueiredo; B, Sarney; C, Collor; D, Franco; E, Cardoso's first term; F, Cardoso's second term; G, Lula da Silva's first term; H, Lula da Silva's second term; I, Rousseff').

Although one might argue that the efforts previously addressed to the creation of new protected areas have now been transferred to their implementation, there is no evidence that this has been the case. A recent report from the Court of Audit of the Union (2013) has shown that only about 4% of the protected areas legally created have been effectively and fully implemented and despite this fact, financial resources directed towards the implementation of these areas have been decreasing. The budget of Chico Mendes Institute (ICMBio) - the main institution in charge of the implementation of protected areas in Brazil – for the management of protected areas has decreased from 294,2 million Reals in 2010, to an estimated figure of 234,5 million Reals in 2015 – even though there has been an overall increase in the country's total revenue (O Estado de São Paulo, 04/09/2014 – See Figure 2 below). The Court of Audit of the Union (2013 p.47), stressed moreover, that the financial resources dedicated to the implementation of protected areas in Brazil have been clearly insufficient and that although an increase of about 470 million Reals was estimated by the ICMBio itself as the minimum necessary for the actual performance of its duties, this increase did not materialize.

**Figure 3 - ICMBio budget for the management of conservation units in millions of Reals**



\*\*Estimate

Source: ICMBio/Infográfico Estadão, 2014

It can be safely stated, therefore, that protected areas' policies have been shifting away from the limelight of Brazilian government's priorities. Reduced prioritisation has not been, however, the only policy change occurring in this policy area over the past 8 years. There has also been a change in the type of protected areas prioritised by the national government. According to Brazilian National System of Protected Areas (SNUC in the Portuguese acronym), protected areas can be categorised in 12 different types based on their use. These 12 different types can be, however, divided in two larger groups: *areas of sustainable or direct use*, where a controlled human use and presence is allowed, and *areas of full protection or indirect use*, where direct human interference in the ecosystem is not allowed and only low impact activities such as eco-tourism or scientific research are permitted. Although the creation of protected areas of sustainable use has predominated since Brazilian re-democratization in 1986, constituting more than 62.2% of total protected areas in 2010, since this same year the focus has clearly shifted towards the creation of full protection areas. More than 90% of the new protect areas created in Brazil since 2010 are areas of full protection (Firmino & Morais, 2015). Moreover the Minister of Environment Izabella Teixeira openly acknowledged in an interview to the website O Eco, on 18/12/2014, that she deliberately asked for more focus to be given to areas of full protection due to the fact that other more general governmental social policies (addressed to the entire population) are already benefiting traditional and indigenous communities.

There are, therefore, two interesting policy changes which occurred in Brazilian Protected Areas policy sector over the past 8 years: first, there was an overall reduction in its prioritisation and second, a renewed focus on the creation of areas of full protection. These two trends are occurring despite renewed international commitments for the creation and implementation of more protected areas – embodied in the 2010 Aichi Targets – and despite the historically conquered emphasis on participation and sustainable use of protected areas by traditional communities embodied by the SNUC law of 2000. The questions that unsurprisingly puzzles the observer and are tackled in this paper are, therefore, *why and how the Brazilian government so markedly changed its policies of protected areas in the past 8 years, in opposition to international commitments recently assumed and historically and legally grounded minority demands?* In very brief terms, my answer to this question is that these changes were motivated by political and economic changes of the policy environment and were only made possible by a strategic re-alignment of the executive government with what I here call the 'preservationist' coalition. This 'preservationist coalition' – unified by the argument about the necessity and higher ecological value of areas of full protection for the conservation of biodiversity - has been historically opposed in Brazil by the 'socio-environmental coalition' – a group which strongly defends the rights and environmental advantages of traditional and indigenous communities to remain within the borders of protected areas. The method through which I will demonstrate this re-alignment is the analysis of current political narratives in relation to the historical backdrop of narratives and coalition disputes about protected areas happening in Brazil since 1876. Narratives, are, therefore,

understood here as ‘the visible outcome of political strategizing’ (McBeth et al., 2007 p.88) and analysed as heresthetic devices (McLean 2001).

## 2. Theoretical framework

The theoretical perspective through which I analyse the abovementioned question is a *Rational Choice* approach. I will assume, therefore, that politicians are self-interested rational agents acting - mainly through the formation of coalitions - in the pursuit of votes. According to the seminal work of Barke & Riker (1982), politicians are after re-election and their attitudes are motivated by the search of a winning coalition of voters. Voters’ preferences are complex and the ordering of political values and tastes that determine electoral choices is rarely identical among individuals. This fact creates a problem for politicians who have to align their policies to the preferences of a winning coalition of voters - usually to a majority in majoritarian electoral systems such as the Brazilian presidential one. Barke & Riker (1982) conclude that politicians aim to satisfy values and tastes which are sufficiently high on voters ordering of priorities by creating a ‘platform’ or ‘set of policies’ in which each ‘plank’ satisfies some voters and the whole platform satisfies a ‘winning coalition’. Inspired by their work, McLean (2001) introduces the concept of ‘political dimension’ which ‘is a way of organising opinions’.

There are many dimensions historically used to bundle policies together with some sort of coherence. There is, for example, the ‘Left-Right stance’ based mainly on governmental spending and taxation (McLean, 2001). A left-wing policy tends to give priority to high spending and taxation while a right –wing orientation often supports less taxes and spending. Moreover, some issues such as defence, security and stimulus to private initiative have traditionally been associated with a right-wing perspective, while the left-wing tradition has commonly supported more social spending, health and overseas aid. Although the left-right dimension of politics commonly predominate in electoral disputes (providing a reliable unidimensional frame for political choices) at some particular historical moments, new issues can become highly ranked in voters preferences orderings causing choices to become multidimensional. One of the examples provided by McLean (2001) is that of ‘National Revolutions’, which make society to polarise along the dimension of those favourable and those against separatist claims. Religion and environmental concerns, in addition, can also become cases of relevant political dimension in specific times.

Hence, based on Riker’s (1986) corollary that the conditions for political success depend on the correct manipulation of dimensions, I’ll guide my analysis by the maxim that politicians’ choices can be explained as an issue of *manipulation of dimensions for the attainment of a winning coalition of voters* and that this manipulation occurs mainly through the strategic use of narratives.

According to Radaelli (1999 p. 677), however, ‘policy narratives should be situated within the dynamics of the policy environment’ as they do not operate in a political vacuum. For this reason the method through which I operationalised this research also makes use of historical analysis in order to better situate actors’ strategies, perceptions, preferences and evaluations.

It is important to remark, moreover, that although narrative analysis’ approaches are often based on the epistemological notion that narratives constitute reality and that interests are intersubjectively formed through narratives (or discourses), this analysis will distance itself from this view and be grounded on the notion that *interests actually predate and constitute narratives*. It is believed therefore, that this epistemological divergence does not hinder the use of narrative analysis for the analysis of political strategies.

### **3. The history of Brazilian narratives about protected areas**

The aim of this section is to describe, through the analysis of documents, one online video, secondary literature and interviews, the different narratives that have characterised the Brazilian debate about protected areas since its inception. Although the central focus of this chapter is on the nature of this debate and policy implementation in the past 8 years, it is believed that the description of the historical polarisations and debates will help to contextualise and evince the distinctive character of more recent political developments.

The beginning of the debates about protected areas in Brazil can be located back in 1876 when André Rebouças - a political counsellor during the imperial period - published a study analysing the results of the creation of the Yellowstone National Park in the United States and recommending the creation of two parks in Brazil. His recommendation, although not initially implemented, kick-started a debate which culminated in the 1930s, with the creation of the first three Brazilian national parks – *Itatiaia*, *Serra dos Orgaos* and *Iguacu* - in the states of Rio de Janeiro and Parana.

After three decades of relative little importance of the theme, technicians of the government were invited by the American aid agency USAID, in 1965, for a training on “Forestry Leadership”. As indicated by the training reports, these technicians came back to Brazil with a clear orientation towards the distinction between areas of ‘indirect use’ and areas of ‘direct use’ and a clear bias towards the former (Barreto Filho, 2014). Between 1959 and 1960, 13 new parks (areas of full protection or indirect use) were created in Brazil.

In 1979 the creation of protected areas assumed a more strategic and organised role when a scientific study about the conservation of the Amazon forest was published and the political consolidation of the theme occurred with the formulation of a Plan for a System of Conservation

Units in Brazil (Barreto Filho, 2014; Mercadante, 2001; Ramos, 2014). This Plan was conceived within the context of the military regime (1964-1986), and was part of a centralizing administration perspective intended mainly at the 'colonization' of unpopulated regions for purposes of national security and economic development (Kolk, 1998). Consequently, although the decades of the 1970s and 1980s were characterised by the extensive creation of new protected areas, traditional and indigenous people's protection was not among the main priorities of the government. The facility with which new parks were created at that time are frequently associated with their authoritarian imposition and disregard for local communities rights which were frequently expelled from their lands without debate or compensation (Interview with a member of the ISA – *Instituto Socioambiental*, 28/10/14, Brasília). This authoritarian attitude towards the creation of new protected areas was favoured and favoured the preservationist group – a group of biologists and ecologists of conservation who advanced the need to isolate those ecosystems from human interference.

The impacts caused by these initial developments of Brazilian Protected Area policies on traditional and indigenous communities were, as a consequence, enormous. The disrespect to the rights of these groups which occurred during the military period has moulded the debate that has dominated this political field over the years that followed re-democratization (1986), when social movements regained freedom of mobilisation and speech. The strong reaction from civil society was organised in what is frequently referred to as the Brazilian 'socio-environmental movement', a group which strongly opposed the authoritarian and human-excluding methods for the creation of protected areas and defended the importance of traditional and indigenous communities to remain in their territories for the conservation of biodiversity. Articulating the main arguments of this coalition, which is still strongly present nowadays, a representative of the NGO *Instituto Socioambiental* (Socioenvironmental Institute) observes:

*'The units of direct use are considered less valuable by preservationists. For them, the only thing that counts are units of indirect use, which is a enormous foolishness. First because several of these communities [which live in the protected areas] are bound to ecological and evolutionary processes that maintain and generate biodiversity. Therefore, if the intention is the protection of a landscape (scenery), this landscape cannot be understood as a picture - something frozen - but should be understood as something that changes over time. The use people make of this landscape is part of this process. Additionally, due to capacity constraints of the government to provide these areas with people [public servants] and monitoring structure, it is always better to have these communities as allies, because they can help in the conservation process. I mean, even if use a utilitarian reasoning it is better to maintain those peoples in their territories.'* (Interview, Brasilia, 28/10/14)

On the other side of this debate, and therefore strongly opposing this view – Maria Tereza Jorge Padua – a biologist and one of the public figures directly involved in the elaboration of the initial 1979 Plan for a System of Conservation Units, strongly criticized subsequent alterations made to the plan in order to strengthen conservation units of direct use and favour traditional communities. Referring to the changes to her initial plan as ‘distortions’, Padua highlights the main arguments of the preservationist coalition:

*‘This distortion assumes that one has to meet the needs of the traditional populations living near or within these protected areas. This view is philosophically and conceptually flawed because the substitute [of the plan] should be concerned essentially with the preservation of portions of the natural heritage - which is its main goal - and not with solutions of national social problems that must be solved by other mechanisms and opportunities, even if it sometimes means a loss at the local level, painful for some local populations. One has to think of humanity as a whole.’ (Pádua, 1997. Translated by the author)*

This intense polarisation among what I call the *preservationist* and *socio-environmentalist coalitions* certainly represented the main dimension of the debate over protected areas in Brazil after the 1986’s re-democratization until the 2000, when the SNUC law, establishing the National System of Conservation Units, was approved (Mercadante, 2001). The SNUC law (Law 9.985 from 18/07/2000), incorporated – to some extent - the views of both sides of the debate by establishing 12 different categories of protected areas, divided amongst those which allowed direct use and those which did not. Social groups such as rubber tappers, riparian and coastal communities were allowed, through the SNUC, to live in protected areas – which facilitated the process of land tenure regularisation over their lands and the avoidance of their exploitation by other, usually large, land owners (Castro, 2012). This link between agrarian reform activism and the agenda of biodiversity conservation was wisely and largely used both by the agrarian activists themselves, who established convenient coalitions with national and international environmental organisations to gain visibility and resources - and by the Workers’ Party (PT) – which, at least in the state of Acre – in the Brazilian Amazon, was able to win several elections by allegedly supporting the rights of the ‘peoples of the forest’ (Interview with a ICMBio employee who had previously worked in Acre, Brasília, 12/11/14).

It was therefore the strategic association between narratives of the traditional left – which advanced agrarian reform and the strengthening of worker’s rights – with a discourse of environmental conservation and protection of the Amazonian forest (extremely valued internationally) that gave rise to the socioenvironmentalist coalition. The historical leader of this movement was Chico Mendes – a rubber tapper from Acre (in the Amazon forest) who strongly opposed the exploitation of his community by ‘rubber capitalists’ (*seringalistas*) who used to keep

rubber tappers under a strict work regime. Mendes' allied to the Workers' Party in the 80s - when his political goals were framed as a struggle of rural workers for agrarian reform. Later, being portrayed by international NGO's as a 'defender of the Amazon forest' his movement was strategically associated with the agenda of environmental conservation. In a speech proffered during Chico Mendes' funeral, in 1988, by Lula – the former president of Brazil (2003-2011) and Leader of the Workers Party – this strategic link made by Mendes between the demands of the left and those from environmentalists is clearly described:

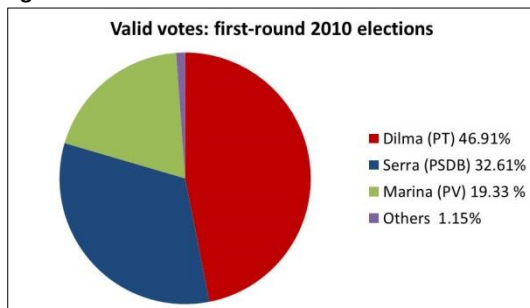
*'He [Mendes] was able to associate the cause for the right to work and the right to live of the workers of this state [Acre] and this region, with a struggle for environmental defence. Why? Because for workers who live here, preserving the environment of the Amazonian region, preserving trees, preserving the brazil nut trees, preserving the rubber trees is actually to preserve the rights of each child of this region to have food. Because cattle brings wealth to the cattle owner, but brings no meat to the comrades who work here. And what did Mendes want? He simply wanted that they left the forest - which is a survival instrument of thousands of workers - alone.'* (Lula, 23/12/1988 – speech proffered during Mendes' funeral available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uwWfxLTztj8> Accessed on: June 2015)

With the strengthening of the socioenvironmentalist coalition since the 80's, demanding both the respect for traditional communities and environmental conservation, SNUC was published in the 2000 including several of the demands of this coalition. Additionally, in 2003, Lula (PT) was elected the president of Brazil, appointing Marina Silva – a close follower and disciple of Chico Mendes – as his Minister of Environment. At this point, socioenvironmentalist priorities and narratives came to the centre of the executive government and a decade of prioritisation of participation and creation of areas of sustainable use followed. Therefore, in the aftermaths of the publication of the SNUC (2000) until 2008, when Silva left her position of Environmental Minister and the Workers' Party, socioenvironmentalist arguments were successfully used by the Workers' Party to mobilise a stronger coalition of voters, particularly in the North of Brazil. At that time, therefore, environmentalism was a new political dimension – which although different from the traditional left-right one - was welcomed and used by president Lula to amplify his coalition of voters.

What differentiates that historical moment from the current one (since 2008), and the reason why the Workers' Party can no longer rely on socioenvironmentalist narratives to win votes is both a new configuration of influential economic interests (which I will explain in the next section) and the fact that Marina Silva - and the whole group of socioenvironmentalists which identify themselves with her leadership – moved to the Workers' Party opposition. As Silva's political movement became progressively closer to environmental demands and the Workers Party became progressively closer to emerging economic groups such as agri-business and infra-structure

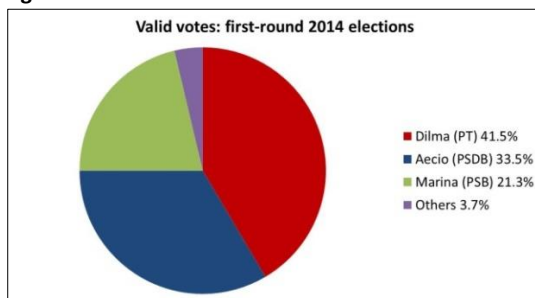
construction companies, severe conflicts emerged within the centre of the government. The ultimate rupture occurred when Marina Silva renounced from her position of Lula’s Minister of Environment, due to conflicts over the licensing of the construction of a Hydroelectric Power Plant in the Madeira River – in the Amazon forest. Later, Silva became a direct political opponent of the Worker’s Party, running for the presidency in two consecutive election (2010 and 2014). In the past two elections Silva stood out as an important threat to the usual bi-partisan stability of Brazilian politics, conquering 19.33% of the votes in the first round of 2010 presidential elections – when she represented the Green Party (PV), and 21.3% of the votes in the first round of 2014 elections – when she run for the Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB) (See Figure 4 - First round 2010 elections and Figure 5 - First round 2014 elections).

**Figure 4 - First round 2010 elections**



Source: Datafolha, 2015

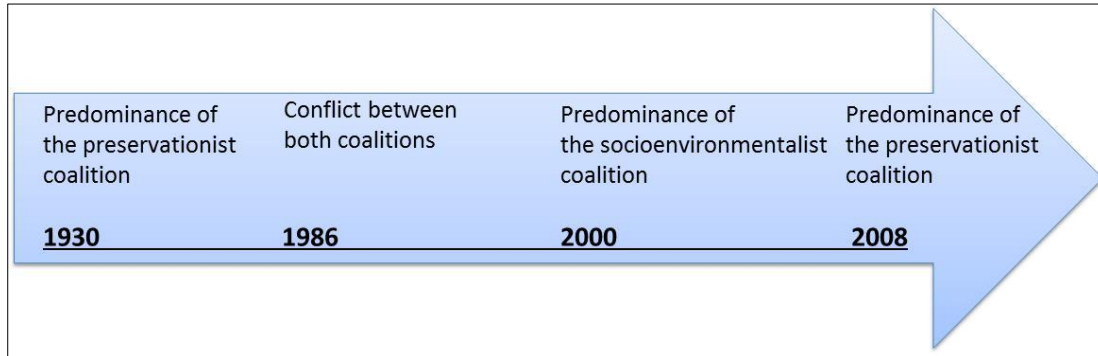
**Figure 5 - First round 2014 elections**



Source: Datafolha, 2015

The immediate consequences of Silva’s rupture with the Workers’ Party and of the rising influence of specific economic interest in the country were both the reduced prioritisation of protected areas’ policies and a re-alignment of the executive government with the preservationist coalition, represented by public servants who had long been ostracized within the government. A summary of the different coalitions which predominated in each historical period as described in this section is provided below (figure 6) and the next section provides more details and analysis of the recent period.

**Figure 6 - Timeline of the dominant perspectives in the debate over protected areas in Brazil**



Source: Produced by the author

#### **4. Changes in the Brazilian policy environment and associated strategic narratives since 2008**

Following the premise that disturbances in the policy environment are necessary to stimulate policy changes, two crucial recent changes in the Brazilian policy environment were identified as crucial variables in the explanation of recent changes in protected areas policies. The first, as already mentioned, has a political nature as is related to the 2008 rupture of the previous minister of environment Marina Silva, a well-established leader of the socio-environmentalist coalition - with the Workers' Party and her presidential candidacy in opposing parties during 2010 and 2014 elections. The second is the emergence of new economic powers, such as construction and agribusiness industries, as relevant campaign contributors, legislative lobbyists and crucial partners of the government since Dilma (also from the Worker's Party) assumed the presidency in 2010. Both of these changes in the environment of protected areas policies motivated a distancing of the executive government from the socioenvironmental coalition and a re-alignment with the preservationist group.

This re-alignment can be clearly observed through the content analysis of 11 semi-structure interviews pursued between September 2014 and April 2015 in Brasilia and London - 7 of which with Brazilian public servants, 3 with representatives of the civil society involved with Brazilian protected area policies and one with a representative of FIESPAgro – an entity for the representation of Agro-industry. Without exception all interviewees, including the current Minister of Environment - Izabella Teixeira - strongly stressed the differences between the current policies and those adopted by Silva. The interpretation of these contrasts as positive or negative, as expected, clearly diverged among interviewees and was used for the identification both of the existence of two coalitions and of the specific coalition supported by each interviewee. The representative of the agro-industry sector, the Minister of Environment herself and a top rank official of the Ministry of Environment assessed these changes as positive, stressing the argument

that the reduction in the pace of creation of new protected areas arises from a more careful attitude towards the avoidance of land conflicts and the effective implementation of new protected areas. As the Minister Izabella Teixeira observes:

*'The conflicts which were left behind by the creation of protected areas are immense. Now we began to create only areas in relation to which we can solve conflicts and that are qualitative, I mean, areas which will be owned by the National State.'* (Interview, Izabella Teixeira. Brasília, 30/10/2014).

In another passage, Teixeira strategically describes the kinds of conflicts generated in the previous administrations as now being avoided and the importance of avoiding these conflicts in order not reproduce the attitudes of the Silva's administration (which are seen to have generated several problems for the future administrations):

*'Many conflicts.... Co-existing land ownership, they have created protected areas even if the energy sector was saying that they were going to build a hydroelectric power plant in the same area, they also ignored rural settlements. They [referring to Marina's administration] used to establish a new area and that was it. That's why they are called the 'prank ministry'. You put the area on paper and that was it. The next administration will have to deal with it'* (Interview, Izabella Teixeira. Brasília, 30/10/2014).

Although one public servant was more neutral in her evaluation of the current direction of protected areas policies and recognised the need to avoid conflicts but also to dedicate more efforts to the creation of new protected areas, the 3 other public servants interviewed<sup>1</sup> and the three representatives of the civil society characterised the recent changes in terms of the reduced pace of creation of new protected areas and the reduced focus on the participation of indigenous and traditional communities as something negative. The majority of them recognised conflicts over land, but demonstrated dissatisfaction about the current government's attitude to avoid and not to tackle such conflicts. One of the interviewees, for example, expressed the view that the creation of new areas is crucial to avoid environmental degradation before it is too late:

*... 'If we don't expand the system [of protected areas] now, when will we? If we don't create protected areas now they will soon be degraded, and then what? Will we create protected degraded areas? No, we won't.'* (Interview, member of the Ministry of Environment. Brasília, 02/10/14)

Another interviewee has portrayed the stronger focus of the government on the creation of full protection areas as a strategy to silence environmentalists and human rights activists' opposition to infrastructure development projects. She explains:

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<sup>1</sup> One is a former member of FUNAI (the National Foundation of Indigenous Peoples), one works in the Instituto Chico Mendes (the institution in charge of the implementation of protected area policies) and one is a legal advisor of the National Congress.

*'Nowadays the creation of protected areas often functions as a 'shut up' for [the opponents of the] development process. When we claim that we don't want Belo Monte [a hydroelectrical power plant being built in the Amazonia] and so on, they look and say, ah ok, so let's create a protected area here on corner, so you can stay here playing on your playground and we will focus on what is serious, which is the country's development. But it has a condition, that you don't bother us anymore, stay in your playground and don't come here with the adults, okay?' (Interview, member of Instituto Socioambiental – 28/10/2014)*

There is therefore a marked divergence of interpretations in terms of the positive or negative character of recent policy changes in the sector of protected areas, which points to the existence of two diverging coalitions. Additionally, as demonstrated in the citation of the member of the *Instituto Socioambiental* (above), the approximation of the executive government to the preservationist coalition, is often depicted by members of the socioenvironmentalist coalition as motivated by concentrated economic interests. According to this argument, a preservationist view of protected areas necessarily advances a more hierarchical, centralized and strictly controllable territorial management perspective – and represents a strategic movement of the government in order to guarantee that land conflicts with economic interests such as agribusiness or hydroelectrical production can be solved in an easier and faster manner. As observed by a geographer and employee of ICMBio both the preservationist perspective of closing parks for environmental conservation and views advancing economic development despite environmental and human rights losses share the same 'top-down assumptions' about the administration of the territory, which makes them compatible and even complementary:

*'If you build an hydroelectric power plant, an industry, or a protected area, we understand that the configuration of the territory comes from outside the territory, who defines everything are other agreements and other actors who are not involved with that territory. So, when someone create a Belo Monte [hydroelectrical power plant], it is not a necessity of the territory where it is created but a necessity of other economic projects, right? ... So what I sustain in that, from the point of view of those who configure the territory it doesn't matter whether an industry, or a hydroelectric power plan or an area of full protection is created. The preservation point of view also obeys international agreements, the CBD and all these policies that come from the top such as the dams. So, these are projects that do not dialogue with the territory and expropriate populations. Thus, even if it is a conservation project – very cute and cool – the territorial planning point of view is the same process. The process that creates units and establishing hydropower plants is the same.' (ICMBio employee, interview, 12/11/2014)*

In an attempt to quantify the actual changes in the influence of these two specific economic sectors (agribusiness and infra-structure construction) in Brazilian policies in order to assess their actual impact, very elucidating results were obtained. An analysis of the 5 largest

campaign donors to the winning presidents since 2002 reveals that the amount donated by agribusinesses and infra-structure construction companies - both of which have interests directly opposed to the creation of new protected and to the protection of indigenous and traditional communities occupying strategic areas – drastically increased. In 2002, the main donors to Lula’s campaign were either from consumer goods or banking industries (see Table 1 - Top 5 donors to Lula’s campaign - 2002) In 2010, during Dilma’s first election, this situation markedly changed with four construction companies and one meat producer (JBS) amongst the top 5 donors. In 2014, the meat producer and three construction companies continued to lead the donors’ list and the amount donated by these 5 top contributors was nearly multiplied by 10 in comparison to 2002. This fact demonstrates not only the continuation of these sectors’ influence in 2014 but also its increased importance of campaign donations in Brazilian politics.

**Table 1 - Top 5 donors to Lula’s campaign - 2002**

Company’s Name	Sector	Industry	Sub-Industry	Donation in Reals
Cia de Tecidos Norte de Minas	Consumer Discretionary	Apparel & Textile Products	Textile Products	R\$ 2.060.625,00
Banespa S/A	Financials	Banking	Banks	R\$ 1.400.000,00
Recofarma Industria do Amazonas LTDA (The Coca Cola Company)	Consumer Staples	Consumer Products	Beverages	R\$ 1.000.000,00
Js Administracao de Recursos S/A	Financials	Banking	Banks	R\$ 1.000.000,00
Banco Abn Amro Real S/A	Financials	Banking	Banks	R\$ 650.000,00

Source: Transparencia Brasil <http://www.asclaras.org.br>

**Table 2 - Top 5 donors to Lula’s campaign - 2006**

Company’s Name	Sector	Industry	Sub-industry	Donations in Reals
Sucocitrico Cutrale LTDA	Consumer Staples	Consumer Products	Agricultural Producers	R\$ 4.000.000,00
Itau Unibanco S.A.	Financials	Banking	Diversified Banks	R\$ 3.500.000,00
Gerdau Acos Longos S.A.	Materials	Iron & Steel	Steel Producers	R\$ 3.100.000,00
Jbs S/A	Consumer Staples	Consumer Products	Agricultural Producers	R\$ 2.502.000,00
Banco Alvorada S.A.	Financials	Banking	Banks	R\$ 2.500.000,00

Source: Transparencia Brasil <http://www.asclaras.org.br>

**Table 3 - Top 5 donors to Dilma’s campaign - 2010**

Company’s Name	Sector	Industry	Sub-industry	Donation in Reals
Andrade Gutierrez S/A	Industrials	Engineering & Construction	Infrastructure Construction	R\$ 15.700.000,00
Construcoes e Comercio Camargo Correa S/A	Industrials	Engineering & Construction	Infrastructure Construction	R\$ 13.000.000,00
Jbs S/A	Consumer Staples	Consumer Products	Agricultural Producers	R\$ 12.000.000,00
Construtora Queiroz Galvao S/A	Industrials	Engineering & Construction	Infrastructure Construction	R\$ 7.880.000,00
OAS S/A	Industrials	Engineering & Construction	Engineering Services	R\$ 7.400.000,00

Source: Transparencia Brasil <http://www.asclaras.org.br>

**Table 4 - Top 5 donors to Dilma’s campaign - 2014**

Company	Sector	Industry	Sub-industry	Donation in Reals
JBS S/A	Consumer Staples	Consumer Products	Agricultural Producers	R\$ 20,000,000.00

OAS S/A	Industrials	Engineering & Construction	Engineering Services	R\$ 20,000,000.00
Andrade Gutierrez S/A	Industrials	Engineering & Construction	Infrastructure Construction	R\$ 11,000,000.00
Odebrecht	Industrials	Engineering & Construction	Infrastructure Construction	R\$ 8,100,000.00
Banco BTG Pactual S/A	Financials	Institutional Financial Svcs	Institutional Brokerage	R\$ 6,500,000.00

Source: Folha de Sao Paulo, <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2014/09/1519452-maior-doador-de-campanhas-concentra-repasses-a-governistas.shtml>

Secondly, there is certainly need to consider the lobbies to the legislative power due to the fact that since the government of president Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995 – 2002), ‘coalitional presidentialism’ (*presidencialismo de coalizão*) - a system of executive-legislative power sharing arrangements in which the executive provides favours and political positions to the legislative in exchange for political support – has strongly determined Brazilian politics (Abranches, 1988; Power, 2014). Thus, lobbies of the legislative power are also relevant for executive decisions. The fact that 23.4% of the Deputies’ Chamber and 16% of the National Senate were considered by the Agricultural Parliamentary Front in 2013 as part of a group which explicitly defends the interests of agribusiness - and other 18% of the Deputies (composing around 41% of the total deputies – the largest organised group within the National Congress) were found to be sympathetic to the demands of this group - certainly influences the direction of policies (BBC Brasil, 2012). Moreover, four of the largest infrastructure construction companies operating in Brazil were recently involved in a huge corruption scandal (known as ‘petrolão’) in the beginning of 2015, which revealed more than 10 billion reais in money laundering and un-declared money transfers to several members of the National Congress and the executive government. In face of these facts, the political influence and relevance of agribusiness and infra-structure construction interests in the recent trend of downsizing and degazettement of protected areas is hardly deniable and, particularly in what refers to infra-structure construction companies, it has already been systematically assessed as crucial motivating force (Bernard *et al*, 2014).

The influence of these economic interests in the distancing of the government from socioenvironmentalist claims of indigenous and traditional peoples’ participation and protection can be clearly perceived through the analysis of the narratives of President Dilma in relation to the construction of hydroelectrical dams. Dilma strategically omits the environmental and traditional population costs associated with the construction of more than 60 new hydroelectrical power plants in the Amazon forest and constantly emphasises their diffused benefits in terms of poverty alleviation and the economic inclusion of lower classes of the north. Therefore, the narrative strategy which the executive government adopted to support these interests without losing its winning coalition of voters was the avoidance of the environmental and cultural dimension of the debate about the construction of dams and the strategic focus on its benefits of economic inclusion

of lower classes and economic development arising from the increased generation and access to electricity.

Thus, the way in which the government was able to abandon socioenvironmentalist claims and minimise its electoral effects was the opposition of criticisms about environmental mismanagement and traditional people's rights disregard with a story of economic inclusion and the ascension of a new middle class. This strategy can be clearly perceived in the following speech proffered by the president during the inauguration of the Santo Antonio Dam in the state of Rondonia in 2011. As it can be observed, her discourse advances a position according to which economic inclusion is a direct consequence of mega-infrastructure projects for the generation of electricity. She defends the generation of hydro-electrical power as the most sustainable alternative disregarding solar and wind energy as unsuitable alternatives. Finally, it was noticed in the analysis of the entire speech that she completely omitted any reference to the huge costs of the project to local traditional communities.

*We had stopped investing in large hydroelectric power plants in Brazil and recently resumed. Santo Antonio and Jirau reflect, precisely, a moment in Brazil when we restarted to think about our development and to see that this development is not any type of development but a development that will lead to economic growth, our gross domestic product will grow. But it is also a development that is based on the view that we have to create jobs in Brazil, that we have to have a strong economy in Brazil, and that this process will only be truly great and consistent if it includes the Brazilian population in the share of its fruits. We can say that, in the past, Brazil has grown, it is true, but Brazil has grown very unevenly. Many people were very poor and few people were very rich. We want a different kind of development. And it is from this type of development that this project is a result, it is a project in which we promoted development generating employment and distributing income. Our country today is different from the past, and it is different also from countries like ours, such as China, India, Russia, the so-called BRICS. We are different because we are a country where growth has been accompanied by a significant improvement in income distribution. For you to have a better idea the latest data from the Getulio Vargas Foundation, show that Brazil had 39.5 million people reaching the middle class. So we can have an idea, it means that from 2003 to May 2011, an entire Argentina in Brazil reached the middle class, because Argentina has 41 million inhabitants, then raise 39.5 million increase is almost an Argentine, or 2 Chiles and half or so. This is very important and Santo Antonio has everything to do with it, because a project of this dimension is a work that will ensure energy for our country to continue growing and including people.'*

...

*'We are generating hydropower and decreasing - not only in this particular unit - the impact on the environment, but we are reducing the impact on the environment throughout the entire Brazil when we generate hydropower here, because we are not using thermal energy... Both solar and wind power are still complementary energies, they do not guarantee the country's development, social inclusion and sustainability, they do not support the*

*energy production, they are complementary. Brazil wants to have a renewable matrix, Santo Antonio will be combined with wind power, will allow more of wind energy in our headquarters and more solar energy. Santo Antonio will prevent the use thermal energy. Santo Antonio is an unequivocal Brazilian commitment to the environment and sustainable development' (Dilma Rousseff, 05/07/2011 - speech available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=myYUyKz-j10> . Translation and emphasis by the author)*

Hence, by repetitively framing hydroelectrical power plant construction as issues of economic development and/or lower classes social inclusion - the 'signature initiatives' of the PT's government - Dilma applies heresthetic – or the 'art of political manipulation' (Riker, 1986) - in order to avoid the criticisms of the socioenvironmentalist coalition and maintain her winning coalition of voters. The practical consequences of adopting this political strategy, however, have been environmental policies and regulations which can be easily - and have been recurrently - described as an 'environmental rollback', not to mention several occurrences of disrespect to the rights of traditional and indigenous populations.

## **5. Conclusion**

In this chapter I intended to explain changes in the course of Brazilian protected areas policies through the analysis of changes in the coalition supported by the executive government. The re-alignment of the government with the 'preservationist coalition' and its distancing from the 'socioenvironmentalist group' in the past 8 years has been found to be motivated by two important variables related to the broader Brazilian policy environment: the first, was the rupture and political re-positioning of Marina Silva against the Worker's Party and the second was the emergence and increased political influence of infra-structure construction and agribusiness interests. Narrative analysis was used to testify the existence of two opposing coalitions, to identify its main arguments and to point to the strategies of the government in order to maintain its winning coalition of voters in face of such a conflictive context.

It is expected, in this manner, that the puzzle of *why and how the Brazilian government so markedly changed its policies of protected areas in the past 8 years, in opposition to international commitments and historically and legally grounded minority rights' demands*, was satisfactorily answered. In other words, the answer to the question of why and how the Brazilian government could practically stop creating new protected areas, diminish the resources aimed at their implementation and directly avoid traditional and indigenous community claims in the creation of new ones has a lot to do with a new policy environment and to the strategic use of political narratives. Accusations of environmental mismanagement and of disregard towards traditional

peoples' rights were opposed through narratives about the importance of eliminating economic inequality.

Finally, it is interesting and unsettling to remark, that the heresthetic moves I described here also moved Brazilian protected area policies closer to a very authoritarian and 'top-down' approach already adopted during the military regime. A regime which was, moreover, one against which Dilma herself fiercely fought, being imprisoned and tortured as a result. Whether or not the president will be caught in her own trap or will manage to keep formulating effective political narratives to maintain a winning coalition of voters is a question to which only the next four years will be able to respond.

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