

## REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES IN BRAZIL: An Analysis of PNDR and PNOT

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### ABSTRACT

The year 2024 marks the resumption of Regional Development Policies. At the beginning of that year, the National Regional Development Policy (PNDR) and the National Territorial Planning Policy (PNOT) were reactivated by the current government (2023/2026). Given the relevance of this action, this article aims to analyze the PNDR and the PNOT, seeking to study their trajectories, objectives, advances, similarities and differences. The article is analytical-descriptive and qualitative in nature. In order to answer the questions raised, a documentary analysis was carried out of the Decrees that instituted the policies and a literature review of articles, theses and dissertations that have worked on this subject, there was also an open interview with the Director of the Department of Regional Development Policies and Territorial Planning. In order to analyze the data, a number of analytical categories were considered to underpin the discussion, namely: territory, reduction of inequalities, sustainable development, regional development, advances and setbacks in public policies. It was observed that the policies aim to promote more balanced and sustainable development, seeking to take into account the particularities of each region of the country. However, it is difficult to move towards broader and more cohesive planning of the whole territory at its various scales, identifying gaps in planning and limitations of existing instruments. It was concluded that although there has been progress in this area in recent years, there are still significant challenges that need to be overcome. Taking a critical look at the PNDR and PNOT is essential in order to identify their limitations and look for ways to improve them.

**Keywords:** regional development; territorial development; public policies; territory.

### POLÍTICAS DE DESENVOLVIMENTO REGIONAL NO BRASIL: UMA ANÁLISE DA PNDR E DA PNOT

### RESUMO

O ano de 2024 marca a retomada das Políticas de Desenvolvimento Regional. No início do referido ano, a Política Nacional de Desenvolvimento Regional (PNDR) e a Política Nacional de Ordenamento do Territorial (PNOT) foram reativadas pelo governo em exercício (2023/2026). Em virtude da relevância dessa ação, este artigo objetiva analisar a PNDR e a PNOT, buscando estudar suas trajetórias, objetivos, avanços, similaridades e diferenças. O artigo caracteriza-se por ser analítico-descritivo, de natureza qualitativa. Para responder aos questionamentos levantados foi realizada análise documental dos decretos que instituíram as políticas e revisão de literatura de artigos, teses e dissertações que trabalharam com esta temática, além de entrevista aberta com o diretor do Departamento de Políticas de Desenvolvimento Regional e Ordenamento Territorial. Para a análise dos dados, foram consideradas algumas categorias analíticas que embasaram a discussão, a saber: território, redução das desigualdades, desenvolvimento sustentável, desenvolvimento regional, avanços e retrocessos de políticas públicas. Observou-se que as políticas visam a promover um desenvolvimento mais equilibrado e sustentável, buscando considerar as particularidades de cada região do país. Há, no entanto, dificuldade de avançar para um planejamento mais amplo e coeso de todo o território em suas várias escalas, identificando lacunas de planejamento e limitações dos instrumentos existentes. Concluiu-se que, embora tenham ocorrido avanços nessa área nos últimos anos, ainda existem desafios significativos que precisam ser superados. Olhar criticamente para a PNDR e a PNOT é essencial para identificar suas limitações e buscar maneiras de melhorá-las.

**Palavras-chave:** desenvolvimento regional; desenvolvimento territorial; políticas públicas; território.

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## INTRODUCTION

In February 2024, the federal government set up the Interministerial Working Group that will draw up the new proposal for the National Territorial Planning Policy (PNOT). The PNOT aims to stimulate the rational and sustainable use and occupation of Brazilian territory, based on a more equal distribution of the population and productive activities, valuing the economic potential and socio-cultural diversity of Brazilian regions and reducing inter- and intra-regional disparities and inequalities.

In addition, in March 2024, Decree nº 11,962 was signed, updating the National Regional Development Policy (PNDR). The aim of the PNDR is to reduce intra-regional and inter-regional economic and social inequalities by creating development opportunities that result in sustainable economic growth, income generation and improved quality of life for the population.

In order to understand the relevance of resuming the aforementioned policies, it is necessary to reflect on their trajectories, their objectives and the progress they have made over the years; their similarities and differences and to study future possibilities based on the lessons learned throughout the processes.

The article is analytical-descriptive and qualitative in nature. In order to answer the questions raised, a documentary analysis was carried out of the decrees that instituted the policies and a literature review of articles, theses and dissertations that addressed this issue. In order to analyze the data, some of the analytical categories that underpinned the discussion will be considered, namely: territory, reduction of inequalities, sustainable development, regional development, advances and setbacks in public policies.

The article is divided into three sections, in addition to this introduction and the final considerations. The first section presents a history of the PNDR and the PNOT. The second takes a closer look at the policies, presenting their similarities, differences, advances and setbacks. The third section discusses future possibilities and the challenges to be faced.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND THE NATIONAL SPATIAL PLANNING POLICY

Regional development planning in Brazil is still in its infancy. Since the 1930s, the state has intervened in the economy, promoting industrialization to replace imports. In the 1950s, industrialization gained momentum and investments were centralized in the already industrialized regions, following Perroux's growth poles, but this industrial development showed the socio-economic inequalities of the regions.

Institutions for planning regional development were created as early as the 1940s, such as the Superintendence of the Plan for the Economic Valorization of the Amazon (SPVEA) and the National Department for Works Against Droughts (DNOCS). In the 1950s, the Northeast Bank of Brazil (BNB) and the National Bank for Economic Development (BNDE) were created. In general, these institutions acted in isolation, without clearly defined objectives, subordinated to local political interests (Mendes; Matteo, 2011) and did not reduce the socio-economic inequality of the regions.

At the end of the 1960s, the Northeast Development Working Group (GTDN) was set up, coordinated by Celso Furtado, and resulted in the establishment of the Northeast Development Superintendency (Sudene), one of the first actions to combat the distortions of unequal growth in Brazil, with an emphasis on regional development (Mendes; Matteo, 2011).

With the military coup of 1964, development planning institutions were centralized, resulting in overlapping, uncoordinated and contradictory bodies. In addition to the existing bodies, the Superintendence for the Development of the Amazon (Sudam), the Bank of the Amazon (Basa), the Superintendence for the Manaus Free Trade Zone (Suframa), the Superintendence for the Development of the Southern Region (Sudesul) and the Superintendence for the Development of the Central-Western Region (Sudeco) were added.

In turn, the military government's national development plans focused on fighting inflation, creating infrastructure and industrialization, reducing concerns about regional development to a secondary level. It is also important to mention, in the 1980s, policies such as the Export Corridors which, by favoring foreign trade, did little for the economies located between the origin and destination of the corridors, concentrating economic growth at the extremities. The Growth Hubs Policy (Polonordeste, Polocentro, Poloamazônia) generated diseconomies of scale, causing problems in the social and environmental areas (Abbas, 2003).

In the process of the country's redemocratization, embodied in the Federal Constitution of 1988 and the various debates and institutional structures that preceded and succeeded it, the loss of importance of national and regional planning is evident. This occurred in a context of growing decentralization, disarticulation of the federal planning system and loss of technical and institutional capacity that encompassed all national governments during the late 20th century (Resende, 2009). In addition, planning came to be questioned on both the left and the right. Piquet and Ribeiro (2008) note that, as early as the 1970s, left-wing intellectuals considered planning to be a state intervention at the service of the market, of capital, while in the 1980s, this criticism came from the liberal sectors, who felt that planning was not serving these interests and felt that the state should "support capital accumulation as directly as possible, eliminating rules, reducing legal requirements, offering tax incentives, guaranteeing security for investments and increasing the fluidity of the territory" (Piquet; Ribeiro, 2008, p. 56).

At the same time, the Federal Constitution itself brought with it some difficulties for these planning scales, by giving autonomy back to states and municipalities, without structuring a logic of interfederative cooperation for planning, resulting in difficulties for building a cohesive nation project (Costa, 2018).

This situation began to change towards the end of the second term of Fernando Henrique Cardoso's government (1998-2002), with the first proposals to think again about a development project for the country, through the Brazil in Action Program, which sought to structure itself, at that time, along axes of integration and development. However, it was in the period between 2003 and 2006, during Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's first term in office, that permanent structures for large-scale planning once again took center stage politically and institutionally.

The National Regional Development Policy (PNDR) and the National Spatial Planning Policy (PNOT) are two important public policies created during this period, which have been debated and formulated again in recent years. They have led to a shift in regional policies. Until 2003, the emphasis was on the winning regions (Benko; Lipietz, 1994), which were already

industrialized, and on promoting large infrastructures. From that year onwards, and from the PNDR and PNOT, the focus has been on the losing regions, the interior, less industrialized and socioeconomically vulnerable.

In order to understand the relevance of these policies, it is necessary to reflect on the trajectory of these two policies, their objectives and the progress made over the years, as well as to identify the similarities between them.

## NATIONAL REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Tania Bacelar de Araújo started the discussion on the need, possibility and relevance of formulating and instituting a National Regional Development Policy in Brazil in the 90s. In 2024 it will be 20 years since the launch of the first proposal for the National Regional Development Policy (PNDR), drawn up by the then Ministry of National Integration (MI), which was institutionalized in 2007 by Federal Decree nº 6,047.

The PNDR can be divided into three phases: PNDR I, which was in force between 2003 and 2011; a new version, called PNDR II, which was in force from 2012 and included improvements from the previous experience (Resende *et al.*, 2015). There is still a third phase starting in 2019, which can be considered the third - PNDR III. Currently, for Adriana Melo, National Secretary for Regional and Territorial Development Policies, the new policy brings sustainability as a differential and pillar for regional development. “A crucial aspect of this new policy is sustainability, which has emerged as a fundamental principle for regional development. Although it is incorporated into the design of our initiatives, sustainability is intrinsically linked to territorial resilience, climate change and sustainable and inclusive production processes,” said the secretary (Brasil, 2024).

The PNDR was updated in 2019 by Federal Decree nº 9,810. The first revision was based on the content discussed and matured during the First National Conference on Regional Development, held in 2013, and in Working Groups created in 2018. The new update aims to meet the suggestions for improvements made by the Federal Court of Auditors (TCU) in a report in 2022. One of these is to systematically and consistently track, monitor and evaluate the application of resources and their impacts. In 2023, the Ministry of Integration and Regional Development held a public consultation to resume channels for dialog with Brazilian society and gather contributions for the revision of the National Regional Development Policy (Brasil, 2024a).

Decree nº 9.810 establishes that the PNDR is based on the planned and articulated mobilization of federal, state, district and municipal action, both public and private, through which programs and investments by the Union and the federative entities stimulate and support development processes. The PNDR Collegiate has more than 15 bodies, in addition to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) and the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) as permanent entities, and is coordinated by the Ministry of Integration and Regional Development (MIDR) (Brasil, 2024d).

As the PNDR was launched in 2003 by the Ministry of Integration, but the policy was only institutionalized in 2007 by Decree nº 6.047/2007 (Brasil, 2007), it can be observed, based on Coelho (2017, p. 1), that “the rhetorical and normative advance of the regional issue was not

accompanied by an evolution of the concrete means of intervention in this area in terms of public policies”. Initially, the PNDR had two main objectives: I) to reduce regional inequalities and II) to activate the development potential of Brazilian regions, acting in territories that are of less interest to market agents, valuing local diversities. In other words, the aim was to reverse the trajectory of regional inequalities and exploit the endogenous potential of Brazil’s diverse regional base (Resende *et al.*, 2015). Resende *et al.* (2015) also point out that two other points were very important in the PNDR proposal: I) the creation of the National Regional Development Fund (FNDR), which would allow the policy to count on a greater source of resources capable of financing territories beyond the traditionally supported macroregions, as well as having non-reimbursable resources to support strategic actions and II) the creation of the National Integration and Regional Development Policy Chamber, which had a crucial role in coordinating and articulating sectoral policies in less developed territories.

The PNDR adopted a multi-scale approach to regional inequalities. In this sense, it was an advance on the traditional view, which summarized the Brazilian regional problem as the relative backwardness of the North and Northeast macroregions. It also advanced by defining a typology to understand the problem of inequalities, but it did not detail planning instruments that could lead to its objectives and the links necessary to achieve them, emphasizing that Macro and Mesoregional Development Plans would be drawn up and new regional development agencies created, which never came to fruition.

The 1st National Conference on Regional Development (1st CNDR), held in 2012, defined the principles and guidelines for the reformulation of PNDR II. It is worth noting that the participatory process of the CNDR included two preparatory stages: state and Federal District conferences and five macroregional conferences.

The New National Regional Development Policy, or PNDR II, was the result of the understanding that its original proposal failed to achieve the *status of* a state policy. It would be necessary to build a political and federative consensus to deal with the regional issue, as Alves and Rocha Neto (2014) point out. PNDR II has four main objectives: inter-regional income convergence; regional competitiveness and job and income generation; adding value and economic diversification and building a network of polycentric cities. The proposal reaffirms the need to create a National Regional Development System (SNDR), with collegiate bodies established at the three levels of the Federation and the viability of the National Regional Development Fund (FNDR) to finance actions to stimulate the productive structuring of regional economies (Coelho, 2017).

As a result, PNDR II defined as priority areas all the areas covered by the Northeast Development Superintendence (Sudene), the Amazon Development Superintendence (Sudam) and the Midwest Development Superintendence (Sudeco), as well as some areas located in the South and Southeast, as long as they were classified as medium and low-income. It also defined that the National Regional Development System would be set up through the various planning instruments that already exist at different scales, based on a multi-scalar governance system, made up of: National Council for Regional Development, National Chamber for the Integration of Territorial Policies, Macroregional Agencies and Councils, State Councils and Sub-Regional Bodies. The definition of roles and the relationship between the scales and their instruments were once again superficial, with little capacity to effectively form an integrated national system.

With regard to financing regional development, which has always been a major challenge for the policy, it is possible to point to various instruments used by the federal entities. At the federal level, the PNDR instruments are as follows: Constitutional Financing Fund for the North (FNO), Constitutional Financing Fund for the Northeast (FNE), Constitutional Financing Fund for the Midwest (FCO), Amazon Development Fund (FDA), Northeast Development Fund (FDNE) and Midwest Development Fund (FDCO). The Amazon Investment Fund (Finam) and the Northeast Investment Fund (Finor) are still in operation, where the funds originate from the application of part of corporate income tax and are earmarked for relevant regional development projects (Resende *et al.*, 2015).

The availability of resources for regional policies in Brazil cannot be overlooked. It is important to note, however, that the instruments used, such as constitutional funds, development funds and tax incentives, were created before the National Regional Development Policy (PNDR) was drawn up and have practically zero adherence to this policy. In other words, these instruments are used to serve sectoral interests that seek to take advantage of the benefits offered in terms of credit and tax breaks. They are not integrated into an effective regional development policy, let alone a national development project. It is therefore necessary to rethink these instruments so that they are truly aligned with the objectives of the PNDR and contribute to the balanced development of the country (Coelho, 2017). An important advance was made in the Tax Reform (EC. 132), which established the FNDR, in accordance with the objectives of the PNDR, aimed at the States and the Federal District to support studies, projects, infrastructure works; the promotion of activities with the potential to generate jobs and income and the promotion of scientific, technological and innovation development actions.

Thus, alongside the increase in resources for the traditional instruments of Brazilian regional policy, it is necessary to accompany the establishment of the FNDR, which should make it possible to finance territories beyond the traditionally supported macro-regions, as well as having non-reimbursable resources to support strategic actions. It will probably be a challenge to agree on the distribution of these resources within the federal pact and against a backdrop of budget restrictions.

The National Regional Development Fund (FNDR) was nothing more than a proposal made unfeasible by the lack of a Tax Reform that would redefine the Brazilian federative pact. The failure to set up the FNDR was considered by many experts to be the main obstacle to implementing the PNDR and making it an effective state policy covering the entire territory.

Another relevant issue is the typology of territories, an important criterion for eligibility and the establishment of regional development policies. According to Macedo and Porto (2018), it is necessary to establish a multi-scalar typology that takes into account different geographical areas, such as local, regional and national. In addition, it is essential to create a greater diversity of regional development indicators. This will allow for a more in-depth understanding of the productive and innovative structures and dynamics of the different territorial spaces in Brazil. It is important to emphasize that the National Regional Development Policy (PNDR) values the local scale as the basis for adopting concrete policies. It recognizes local attributes as key elements of territorial diversity and promoters of the development process in each region, although the PNDR also recognizes that there is no single scale for regional development policies (Macedo; Porto, 2018).

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In addition, according to Macedo and Porto (2018), the PNDR's lack of effectiveness in Brazil's regional dynamics was due to the absence of coordination between the three levels of government, the lack of coordination between ministries, the failure of subnational governments to assimilate the policy and the absence of a national development project.

PNDR III, according to João Mendes da Rocha Neto, director of the Department of Regional Development Policies and Territorial Planning, "will present a program for each of the four main objectives. At the moment, only one of the four programs has already been designed, that of the Intermediating Cities".

The next section will present and discuss the National Spatial Planning Policy (PNOT).

## NATIONAL SPATIAL PLANNING POLICY

The drafting of the National Territorial Planning Policy (PNOT) began in 1999 and went through a first cycle of studies that lasted until 2008, however, the first attempt to introduce the PNOT in its most comprehensive form, which began in 2003, was abandoned in 2009 and was not continued. It should be noted that there have been other territorial development initiatives in the country since the 2000s: the National Program for the Sustainable Development of Rural Territories (PRONAT) (2003 to 2008) and the Citizenship Territories Program (2008 a 2017)<sup>6</sup>. These experiences originated in the debate on the territorial approach to rural development, which gained momentum in the mid-1990s, questioning years of rural development strategies that concentrated wealth, deepened inequalities and degraded natural resources. The emergence of the territorial approach was favored by political and administrative decentralization, with the emergence of demands for greater participation by social actors in public action. In 2003, these debates took shape in the formulation of a policy for the development of rural territories under the responsibility of the Ministry of Agrarian Development. The National Program for the Sustainable Development of Rural Territories (PRONAT) was quickly adopted in the different Brazilian regions, as well as a brief appropriation of territorial rhetoric by local actors and public managers (Favareto, 2009). In 2007, this program served as the basis for designing the Territories of Citizenship Program, which was intended to respond to the government's social agenda in the poorest rural territories, promoting a better articulation of its actions (Valencia et al., 2018).

Thus, although the PNOT has not remained in focus, other territorial development experiences have been tested and their mistakes and successes can be taken into account when resuming the policy. Recently, throughout 2020 and 2021, some attempts were made to resume the PNOT process, however adverse conditions led to the reduction of these efforts to just one pilot project in a specific area. The PNOT pilot should have been carried out in the Transamazon, but until 2024 it didn't get off the ground. This year, after the creation of the inter-ministerial group to reactivate the PNOT, a Territorial Planning Plan will be carried out, at the request of the President of the Republic, in Rio Grande do Sul, due to the climate disaster in May 2024.

<sup>6</sup> "If one considers it as a guiding date for the adoption of regional policies in Brazil - in an explicit and coordinated manner within the federal government - the mid-1950s is already following a path in Brazil that has been maintained over six decades. This is not a short time for a country in which public policies come and go at the whim of economic and political conjectures" (Monteiro Neto *et al.*, 2017, p. 38).

These obstacles may have been caused by various factors, such as political changes or difficulties in creating the guidelines proposed by the PNOT. The lack of continuity in this process could represent a challenge for Brazilian spatial planning and its national policy. The discussion around the National Territorial Planning Policy (PNOT) is of paramount importance for the academic debate and for the search for solutions to Brazil's unresolved territorial conflicts. It is necessary to highlight the intra-governmental obstacles that have limited the effectiveness of the PNOT so far. The lack of coordination between the various government bodies involved in establishing this policy has hampered its operationalization and hindered the resolution of existing territorial conflicts. Given this scenario, it is important to revisit the discussions surrounding the PNOT, analyze its trajectory so far and highlight the lessons learned throughout the process. This will allow us to assess its failures and successes, as well as identify opportunities for its resumption post-2022 (Alves, 2023).

It is important to note, however, that the PNOT has not yet been effectively introduced. Both the initial attempts at the beginning of the 21st century and the recent efforts to get it back on track are only phases in the drafting and discussion of the national policy. Defining the PNOT is a complex challenge, as it involves various dimensions and aspects of territorial development. Furthermore, it is crucial to consider the importance of this policy as an instrument for promoting economic growth, social justice and sustainable development. In this context, although previous attempts have been abandoned or forgotten over the years, it is hoped that the recent revival will demonstrate a renewed commitment to land use planning in Brazil. The effective establishment of the PNOT could bring significant benefits to the country in terms of urban and territorial planning suited to present and future needs (Alves, 2023)

For Alves (2023), the debates that led to the PNOT were embryonic and the studies and subsidiary documents produced in 2006 were underestimated. However, these debates and the official documents produced in the process of drafting them (MI, 2003, 2005; MI/CDS-UnB, 2006) can still be considered benchmarks for a broad diagnosis of land use planning in Brazil and for launching a new approach: 1) on the national territory as a whole; 2) on various and dispersed public policies and 3) on the relevant legislation, which is still disjointed, overlapping and/or conflicting. The abandonment of the PNOT, in other words, its Bill of Law in 2009, is a well-known fact, but "the reasons for its abandonment are interpreted in various ways, with various theoretical, methodological, operational and, above all, political limitations being pointed out, which together culminated in consecutive obstacles to a PNOT for Brazil" (Alves, 2023).

This raises questions about the lack of commitment and political will to institute the PNOT in the government of the incumbent president from 2019 to 2022. The lack of adequate discussion with society is also worrying, as a national policy of this size should be widely debated and involve the participation of the various sectors involved. The stalling of the PNOT Bill with no feedback from the Civil House showed a lack of interest on the part of the government in moving forward with this agenda. The silence on the subject indicates that the national policy was abandoned without any challenge or opposition. These facts reveal a postponement and disregard for the establishment of the PNOT, which represents a step backwards in the country's territorial planning.

There needs to be a real commitment on the part of the authorities to overcome these obstacles and finally put into practice a national policy that is so important for the sustainable



and balanced development of Brazilian territory. According to Alves (2023), the PNOT has been postponed while other priorities have taken over. The author goes further, pointing out that this situation also feeds and is fed by an imprecision in the terms “territorial” and “territorial planning” in the various policies of the Ministries, a “persistent nebula and, it seems, convenient [...] national policy among the countless inert ones in the Brazilian legislative apparatus” (Alves, 2023). Despite the accuracy of this critical view, permanence, even as an idea, can be considered important in order to maintain some memory of its process among Ministry technicians.

This is what happens at the beginning of 2020, when the prospect of a PNOT reappears on the official agenda, and from then until the end of the year with a certain frequency, but with a new purpose, this time also on the initiative of the technicians involved, aimed at avoiding past mistakes, protecting as much of the Legal Amazon as possible and fostering governance. The idea emerged in the form of a Territorial Planning Plan, later an aggregator of specific plans, such as the Trans-Amazonian Margin, which was therefore different from previous attempts and quite small, especially when compared to the pioneering initiative of 2003 (Alves, 2023).

This analysis shows that, despite attempts to revive the PNOT in recent years, these initiatives have been frustrated and have failed to prosper. Even with a more dialogued and feasible approach, the lack of collaborators and supporters limited the progress of the proposal. The previous attempt focused on reducing the damage caused by the paving of the BR-319 and 163 highways in the Legal Amazon. There were significant advances in the articulation and governance of the project in this specific context, however, even with this thematic delimitation, the proposal failed to make progress. This shows that reducing the scope of the PNOT to specific plans in order to make it viable has not been effective (Alves, 2023).

Until the initiative to create the Interministerial Group in 2024, the PNOT had been poorly developed, making it difficult to analyze which elements limit its performance. The decree of February 14, 2024 established the Interministerial Working Group to prepare the proposal for the National Planning Policy, which is responsible for technical advice and interministerial coordination within the Ministry of Integration and Regional Development. According to João Mendes da Rocha Neto, Director of Regional Development Policies and Territorial Planning at the MIDR, there are many studies produced up until 2008 that need to be updated. This includes studies on transportation and energy infrastructure, indigenous lands, conservation areas, quilombola peoples and communities. The intention is to work on important elements for dialog with civil society, such as water resources, agricultural land for traditional peoples and cultural preservation (Brasil, 2024b).

According to Mendes, around 60% to 70% of the studies have already been completed. There is enough time to hold consultations with civil society, state and municipal governments and academics over the next two years before the final presentation to President Lula. This initiative shows a renewed effort to advance the adoption of the PNOT in Brazil. Collaborative work between different government bodies and consultations with society could be key to overcoming the challenges previously faced in taking up this important national policy (Brasil, 2024b).

As stated in an interview with João Mendes da Rocha Neto, the action to be carried out in 2024 is the Territorial Planning Plan that will be carried out in Rio Grande do Sul, lasting around 12 months. This was demanded by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva as a result of the climate disaster.

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## A CLOSER LOOK AT THE PNDR AND THE PNOT

The PNDR was created with the aim of promoting the balanced and integrated development of the country's different regions. Its main objective is to reduce regional inequalities, stimulating economic growth in less developed areas and improving the population's quality of life.

Over the years, the PNDR has made progress on some themes. There have been measures such as tax incentives to attract investment to less developed regions and professional training programs, which have contributed to economic growth in certain regions. In 2018, in response to criticism from the Federal Court of Auditors (TCU), three working groups were set up at the Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA) in 2018, as mentioned above, to assess the institution of the policy in general and issues relating to funding and the application of resources (Monteiro Neto; Pêgo Filho, 2019). Although in this process, in association with the debates held throughout that decade, there were changes to the decree establishing the PNDR, in 2022, the policy was on the TCU's "high risk" list (Brazil, 2022). The agency assessed the persistence of regional inequalities and the low efficiency resulting from the design of the PNDR, pointing out, among other things, that 80% of the resources allocated to states and municipalities were appropriated by entities with a high level of socio-economic development.

These processes show the difficulties in creating regionally explicit policies, especially those of an anti-cyclical nature, such as the PNDR, but they also expose the successive attempts and course corrections, even at times that are not very conducive to progress, such as the period between 2019 and 2022. Moreover, it is precisely the political and economic instability, which began in 2016 and worsened in 2019, that Rocha Neto (2024) sees as the main reason for the TCU's assessments; the author also incorporates into his analysis the recommendations of the controlling body for thinking about the new phase of the policy: a necessary adjustment between development strategies, resources and deadlines, articulated planning of funding sources and, finally, the structuring of a monitoring and evaluation system.

The PNOT, on the other hand, has an even more uncertain history in its quest to organize the national territory through territorial planning, remaining as an idea, but without any progress in the elaboration and institution. As with the PNDR, there are also important perspectives in the PNOT, given its main objective of ensuring the sustainable use of geographical space, guaranteeing a good relationship between nature and society, with justice, at various scales. The creation of legal instruments that regulate land use planning has led to better management of natural resources and pointed to some efficiency gains in urban planning, but the privilege for local scales and the municipal level is a major barrier, as is the lack of sectoral and inter-level articulation, themes that need to be addressed in its new debate. Thus, an important similarity between these policies and their progress is their concern with regional issues and the territorial approach. Both aim to promote more balanced and sustainable development, taking into account the particularities of each region of the country.

The challenges go further: the scarcity of financial resources, the lack of integration between different government sectors and bureaucracy are some of the obstacles that need to be overcome so that these policies can be established and reach their full potential.

Other limits and constraints must be considered in order to qualify the process of creating public policies (Deponti, 2021, verbal information), such as:

- a. the Brazilian territory is very diverse and, even with all the changes over the years, policies do not take account of this diversity;
- b. the degree of social effectiveness of the policy also depends on the territorial actors, who are very different depending on the region and who have different power relations and capacity for agency;
- c. the theoretical and conceptual bases of the policies are very far removed from the policy in practice, and there is often a disconnect between these issues;
- d. although rural-urban relations have advanced, they are still sometimes presented as antagonistic phenomena, in other words, as if there were a dichotomy between rural and urban, with the reading of rural as backward and urban as modern persisting, something that should have been overcome. This anachronism leads to a lack of flexibility and creativity in intervention mechanisms;
- e. lack of organization within the governments themselves at the different levels, the sectors don't talk to each other, don't dialogue, don't draw up joint action strategies, and both policies haven't yet focused on solving this issue by not structuring intersectoral and multilevel governance, taking into account the various policies and instruments that already exist;
- f. this fact is compounded by the difficulty of continuing the policy without the action of the mediators: if there is no emphasis on transforming the actors of the territory into territorial collective actors, they will not be able to articulate themselves to the policy with enough autonomy to go it alone.

## CHALLENGES AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

As for future possibilities and lessons learned, it is essential that there is greater investment in infrastructure in less developed regions, as well as greater coordination between the various actors involved in the policy creation process.

One of the possibilities would be to build a territorial collective actor. The new development strategies need to provide these actors with the capacity, power and resources to carry out a development program, even after the mediators have been removed. Another challenge is to promote the construction of territorial projects that overcome the sectoral vision and integrate into their proposals actions that allow them to achieve a vision of the future built collectively by coalitions of actors representing the diverse and, generally, conflicting interests that arise in the diversity of territories. On the other hand, exchanging experiences with other countries in the region can help us learn how other places have overcome the many challenges of territorial planning and the coordination and articulation of public policies.

In addition, it is necessary for policies to advance in governance strategies, coordination and articulation of sectoral or territorial planning and management instruments, at the various levels of government, because it is important to note that there is no lack of policies, programs and projects that have relevant impacts on the territories, but there is a great disconnect between them. Both the policies dealt with here, in their specificities, could define forms of

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cooperation. In particular, a National Territorial Planning Policy needs to create a regulatory framework that directs integration between the various territorial planning instruments, observing and resolving overlaps and gaps, and between these and budgetary instruments, to enable cohesion in planning to lead to territorial cohesion, especially considering the formation of territorial collective actors in a diverse and unequal set of territories.

There are also other approaches that can make important contributions to a new territorial development project. The notion of a *fundamental economy* is a recent proposal for social innovation models based on the specificities of territories (territorial assets and resources) that promote innovation and territorial development (Coenen; Morgan, 2020). This proposal, which differs from conventional models focused primarily on the cutting-edge technologies of the knowledge economy, focuses on sectors that are essential for society in general, such as health, education, services for the elderly, agri-food or energy. This economy is geared towards the social (collective) consumption of essential goods and services through public policies that are inclusive and sustainable (Tartaruga; Sperotto, 2023). One of the main advantages of this perspective is its relevance to depressed regions or those with low socio-economic development (Henderson; Morgan; Delbridge, 2024). Another relevant aspect of the proposal is its assumption of citizen participation in the construction of policies, since the sectors considered are spatially and cognitively close to the daily lives and experiences of citizens. For this reason, we can apply *experimental governance* in this context, which is precisely a type of governance that presupposes the direct participation of ordinary people in the creation, discussion and, therefore, experimentation of efficient and innovative solutions for the respective territory (Morgan, 2018).

In terms of the research agenda, the following questions stand out for both Brazil and Latin America: (i) how to tackle the dismantling of regional/territorial development policies and the reduction in resources in the face of the need to build and strengthen territorial collective actors? (ii) how to strengthen the empowerment capacities of territorial actors so that they are better able to influence management processes in their territories, becoming protagonists?<sup>7</sup>

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

It can be concluded that there is a lack of coordination in the implementation of regional policies, resulting in fragmented and ineffective actions. One aspect that deserves attention is the lack of integration between the different government bodies responsible for setting up the PNDR and strengthening the mechanisms for social participation to ensure greater legitimacy in the decisions taken.

Another relevant point concerns the PNOT, whose main objective is to guide territorial planning with a view to the sustainable use of natural resources and improving people's quality of life. Although progress has been made in this area in recent years, there are still significant challenges that need to be overcome. One problem in the PNOT is moving towards a broader and more cohesive planning of the entire territory at its various scales, identifying planning gaps and limitations of existing instruments. There is an inadequate process of land occupation,

<sup>7</sup> See contribution to the debate on this topic in Dallabrida *et al.* (2022).

resulting in problems such as lack of infrastructure, urban congestion and environmental degradation. It is necessary to strengthen institutional capacity and invest in qualified human resources to ensure that the established goals are met.

Taking a critical look at the PNDR and PNOT is essential in order to identify their limitations and look for ways to improve them. To do this, it is necessary to promote greater integration between the government bodies responsible for implementing regional and sectoral policies, strengthen mechanisms for social participation and ensure the construction of a territorial planning system that can lead to more sustainable and fair practices. With a critical eye, more efficient and inclusive policies can be built that truly contribute to Brazil's regional development.

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