

CLIMATE CHANGE, SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND INSTITUTIONS AT LOCAL LEVEL IN BRAZIL.

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Abstract:

JUSTIFICATION

Since the inclusion of climate change issues in national governments and international organizations agenda they proved more challenging than ever, forcing the review of institutional and organizational arrangements adopted by nations to address them. Climate change policies involve multiple stakeholders and constituencies. Yet the state is a primary institution and the main actor in policy strategies. The role of subnational governments in climate change policies is scarcely analyzed, specially at local level. In Brazil, local governments have an important position in the national institutional matrix with equal responsibilities as the states and the federal government. Some important municipalities have already established new policies for contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation. The diversity of urban profiles in Brazil requires adequate approaches to identify different potential roles to address climate change issues.

RESEARCH PROBLEM The starting point of this research is the local governments involvement in environmental responsibility established in the environmental legislation of 1981 and confirmed by the Brazilian 1988 Constitution. The question is whether municipalities can build institutions and organizations to face up their environmental mandate, specially to address climate change issues and contribute to national climate change policy and governance.

Brazilian environmental system encompasses all federal, state and municipal entities in environmental protection. Its environmental matrix has solid institutional foundations. However, it is still undefined crucial issues such as the distribution of responsibilities among federal entities and a regular source of funding for environmental action. In this context, there is a contradiction between institutional strength and organizational weaknesses at all levels of administration and government. Recent data on environmental public expenditures show a surprising situation regarding municipal performance. Over the period 2004-2009 municipalities have been responsible for 23% of total state public spending in environmental management: municipal response to pressures and rules of environmental national institutions is more important than expected. Local climate change policies are supported by local institutional environmental framework but uses also other sectoral policies tools. The main goal of this paper is to assess the extent to which local governments can contribute to climate change policies, in light of the municipal institutional and organizational arrangements.

METHODOLOGY The methodology consists of two-step procedures. First I will undertake an institutional analysis on the role Brazilian local governments can play in national climate change policy. The second step consists of an exploratory analysis of the evolution of local governmental organizations and capacities set up to deal with the environmental mandate and climate change issues. Making use of an institutional approach, state organizations processes and structures are considered valuable indicators of the institutionalization of environmental policy. I will use a theoretical model of

organizational capacities for environmental policy, adapted for climate change issues, and will develop a statistical analysis on the evolution of mobilized resources during the period 2002-2009. Official available information (IBGE/MUNIC, STN) covers at least 90% of the total universe of 5564 municipalities. The analysis will use a set of indicators on organization structures, participatory bodies, bureaucracy, regulatory capacity, cooperative mechanisms and expenditures. I will use special methods for analysing categorical data and assembling municipalities based on common characteristics, analysing their resources and capacities for developing local climate change policies. I will seek to understand the role the municipalities currently play in the institutional national framework analysing the evolution of their organizational capacities in light of institutional features, considering context variables in order to qualify the findings vis-à-vis the huge diversity of situations that characterise municipal universe. Based on this results I will assess the extent to which they can contribute to the national climate change policy.

EXPECTED RESULTS. I will shed new light on the municipal organizational capacity in providing local climate change policies through quantitative indicators, as well as classifying municipalities according to similar performance.