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# A changing role in global climate governance: São Paulo mixing its climate and international policies

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## Abstract

Cities have been playing an important role in global climate governance for the last two decades, providing climate responses such as mitigation and adaptation policies. The city of São Paulo has positioned itself as one of the “new leaders” combining climate responses with an active international strategy. We analyze the role of São Paulo in global climate governance by crossing its climate and its international agendas from 2005 to 2018. The results demonstrate that São Paulo performed a leadership role during the phase of designing and adopting climate responses, but failed to sustain this position during the implementation phase.

**Keywords:** Paradiplomacy; Global Climate Governance; Latin America; São Paulo; Brazil; Climate Change.

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## Introduction

While Brazil has played a heterogeneous role in global environmental governance in the last decade, we ask what role its most populated city, São Paulo, has played in global climate governance from 2005 to 2018? We present a historical analysis of São Paulo’s climate responses and how its role changed over the last decade, a development which has been conditioned by variations in the executive power as well as by its international politics.

The International Relations literature (Hochstetler and Milkoreit 2015; Vieira 2013; Viola and Basso 2016; Viola and Franchini 2016, 2018) has made some incursions to tackle Brazil’s position in the international system and its contributions to mitigate climate change, but some questions regarding the country’s major cities remain. Intending to contribute to the debate, this paper analyzes the case of São Paulo. Although the majority of

Brazil's GHG emissions are related to deforestation, the emissions from the transportation sector – mainly an urban issue – cannot be ignored as they tend to increase. To curb them, Brazil will have to address climate change at the local level, cooperating with its cities. Therefore, in a country with 84% of its population living in urban areas (IBGE 2015), cities cannot be ignored. In that sense, São Paulo with a metropolitan population of more than 21 million people is an important case to be studied.

Climate change is often portrayed as an independent agenda, disconnected from other public policies, but this can be misleading. In the case of São Paulo, we found that to understand the city's climate responses, it was important to also focus on its international strategy. This is mainly for two reasons. First, the climate change agenda was introduced to the local administration by its international secretary (SMRI in its Portuguese acronym) and is fostered by transnational municipal networks (TMNs), like ICLEI and C40 (Setzer et al. 2015a; Macedo and Jacobi 2019; Di Giulio et al. 2017; Barbi and Macedo 2019). Second, when we analyze a relatively long period (2005-2018), we can observe how the climate responses are diluted and even put on hold while the international strategy to place São Paulo among the cities considered as “global climate leaders” persists as a narrative. Therefore, we argue that São Paulo's climate responses are not strictly climate responses *per se*; they are also – or perhaps even exclusively – international relations policies. To explain this argument, this paper analyzes both policies historically, focusing on two phases: the first concerns the design and adoption of climate responses, while the subsequent relates to implementation, while also exploring interpretations of the international dynamics regarding global climate governance.

Drawing on Bulkeley and Betsill's (2013) categorization of climate responses in two phases, we localize São Paulo's climate responses within the second wave, meaning that the city's actions are immersed in a broad picture of local governments from the South responding to climate change challenges in the early 2000s. The climate responses tracked in this study refer to the climate commitments assumed by the municipal government internationally via its participation in TMNs, its climate law, and the local climate policy proposals that followed. We consider the reduction of GHG emissions as being central to a successful local climate policy, even though a climate policy is more complex and aggregates other actions, including those responsible for building resilient infrastructure and promoting adaptation. In that sense, a local climate policy may be designed and proposed in order to comply with international commitments. However, its implementation process is subject to local structural and political factors, affecting its outcomes and afterward its international reports.

We choose to focus on the period from 2005-2018 because it encompasses important landmarks, like the foundation of C40 in 2005, the enactment of the climate law in 2009, and the following period of its implementation. Also, this timeframe provides the opportunity to observe four different executive administrations, from different political parties: José Serra (2005-2006, PSDB), Gilberto Kassab (2006-2012, PFL, DEM, PSD), Fernando Haddad (2013-2016, PT) and João Doria (2017-2018, PSDB). We can identify a continuation from Serra to Kassab with the

maintenance of Eduardo Jorge as environmental secretary. Then a rupture with Haddad, who did not demonstrate sensibility towards climatic issues, nor towards the international relations agenda, having changed its environment secretary almost every year, totalizing four different nominations (Back 2016; Setzer et al. 2015b; Macedo 2017). Regarding the Doria administration, although we can point the nomination of an environment secretary who was well-known for his climate commitment (Gilberto Natalini) and the approval of a law that finally modifies the 2009 climate law, there were no major events to draw any comprehensive conclusion concerning his term.

This analysis is based on a review of publicly available government documents (e.g., the 2009 climate law, GHG emissions reports, and the international relations strategy), as well as papers published by international organizations such as the C40 and ICLEI, and works from academics that were involved in the political process (Macedo 2017; Macedo and Jacobi 2019; Maluf Filho 2012; Furriela 2011). These data were systematically analyzed to create a historical narrative documenting São Paulo's climate response, and the international relations forces shaping this trajectory.

## São Paulo as a global city

The International Relations literature and related fields have been exploring the link between cities and climate change for at least twenty years (Bulkeley and Betsill 2003; Betsill and Bulkeley 2006; Setzer 2015; Betsill 2001; The World Bank 2010; Hughes 2016; Bulkeley and Newell 2010), providing explanations of why cities engage in transnational climate networks, why they adopt voluntary mitigation targets, and how they configure global climate governance as important actors, committed and capable to address climate change. One factor that has largely been overlooked and which we believe can explain some cases – like São Paulo – is that climate responses may be generated from the configuration as a “global city.”

A global city can be classified and understood from different optics, from its economic development, its population size, but most of all from its connection with the global. Although there are various studies, including several by international consulting firms, that perform global city rankings, we adopt the concept that a global city is one that is capable of surpassing its local, regional and national context and connecting with global flows of people, money, and ideas (Amen et al. 2011; Sassen 2015; Lee 2013). Furthermore, acknowledging the global character of São Paulo means that the international level is a relevant sphere for its policymakers and that it may influence policy decision and implementation processes at the local level. Consequently, the idea underlying global cities conveys a perception of the dynamics of the international system that assumes the existence of multilevel global governance. These cities do more than just engage in international relations; they are agents in global climate governance, meaning that they have the capacity to influence the dynamics of world politics (Betsill et al., in press).

Based on these criteria, we view São Paulo as a global city that is connected with the international community independently from its national state, exceeding its local and national limitations. We contend that this is an important factor in explaining why São Paulo took up the issue of climate change, how it positioned the city in global climate governance as an important actor around 2009 with the approval of its climate law, and how the implementation processes unfolded while the international discourse remained unchanged.

Although São Paulo had an international presence from the moment when it became the center for coffee export in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was only in 2001 that the city added an International Relations Secretary (SMRI) to its institutional framework. It was the first one of its kind in Brazil, sparking national debate and a research agenda regarding the international relations of subnational units (Marcovitch and Dallari 2014; Prado 2018). Although its institutionalization provided legal grounds for São Paulo's international actions, it did not guarantee a linear trajectory, being subject to changing political preferences at every electoral cycle, like all the other municipal policies.

During the Serra (2005-2006) and Kassab (2006-2012) administrations, the SMRI applied a global and economic focus in its activities, connected with global trends and pushed an image of a modern and connected São Paulo, very much aligned with their political parties' image. During their terms, the international relations strategy focused on city networks that present a global perspective on climate change, particularly the C40 and the ICLEI, in detriment of others like United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and Metropolis (Rosa 2014). São Paulo also sought to project its global city identity by applying to host the Expo 2020, building on the fact that it had been awarded some of the FIFA World Cup games in 2014, and hoped this would enhance the city's international reputation, as was the case for Rio de Janeiro when it hosted the 2016 Summer Olympics. Mayor Kassab prepared the application, but the continuation of the process was managed by the following administration, which had different perspectives and different international connections. Ultimately, São Paulo lost to Dubai.

When mayor Haddad (2013-2016) took office, coming from a leftist party (PT), different from the previous administrations, but aligned with the federal government, he changed the institutional structures of SMRI. It incorporated the coordination of the city's relations with federal entities and mostly to the federal government, changing its nomenclature to accommodate these new responsibilities (SMRI became *Secretaria Municipal de Relações Internacionais e Federativas* – SMRIF). This institutional adjustment demonstrates the perspective of the new municipal administration, that did not perceive international relations as a priority. Therefore, in this mandate, the city would be more focused on its national and regional context.

Moreover, the SMRIF changed its focus to a more regional approach, prioritizing an active involvement within Latin American city networks like Mercociudades and holding back on its participation in global climate initiatives like the C40 and the ICLEI, however, without abandoning the discourse of a climate leader. This shift can be understood as being linked to the ideological perspective of the mayor and the SMRIF Secretary: both had a more contested view of the

international system and were more aligned with a peripheral perspective than a global one (Rosa 2014; Prado 2018; Macedo 2017). To exemplify, São Paulo did not attend any international events related to environmental issues in 2013 (Rosa 2014).

After an administration marked by a leftist perspective and aligned with the federal government, mayor João Doria (PSDB) assumed the municipal government in 2017 with a different proposal, which was global and neoliberal. However, he only stayed fifteen months in office, leaving to run for governor. In his short term, Doria intended to sell the idea of São Paulo as a global city in his many international missions to attract foreign investments. One would expect that this administration would make the C40 a priority because the network profile is aligned with the mayor, and because Doria previously has expressed his admiration for Michael Bloomberg. However, during his short term, there was no significant progress in the municipal climate agenda.

## The role of international politics in designing and adopting São Paulo's climate responses

São Paulo's active engagement with global climate governance began in 2003 when the city affiliated itself with the ICLEI campaign, Cities for Climate Protection (CCP), even though it had already been an ICLEI member since 1991 (Macedo 2017). From this affiliation, São Paulo assumed its first international climate commitment, which included the 5 milestones established by the ICLEI. The ICLEI CCP campaign was important to São Paulo's climate response, although the city was aware of climate issues even before joining the ICLEI campaign. However, it is undeniable that the international commitments adopted by CCP pushed São Paulo forward, leading to future initiatives such as its climate law in 2009 (Macedo and Jacobi 2019).

The engagement of São Paulo with TMNs such as the ICLEI and the C40 was crucial for the city to assume international and local commitments to reduce GHG emissions (Macedo and Jacobi 2019; Setzer et al. 2015a). The process of designing and adopting climate change responses is concentrated between 2005 and 2011, culminating in 2009 with the approval of the climate law. In 2005, the initial Municipal Committee on Climate Change and Sustainable Ecoeconomy (*Comitê Municipal sobre Mudanças Climáticas e Ecoeconomia Sustentável*) was established, coordinated under the Municipal Green and Environmental Secretary (SMVMA). The committee was later replaced by one specified in the climate law, the Municipal Committee on Climate Change and Ecoeconomy (Furriela 2011). The main aim of the Committee is to provide support for the implementation of the climate law, but it only has an advisory mandate, so its decisions are limited to recommendations. The Committee is composed of other municipal secretaries and members of civil society organizations, including the ICLEI and Greenpeace, but as can be noted in the minutes of its meetings, representatives from organizations not officially listed could also attend its meeting and influence the process, as it was the case of representatives of other international organizations such as the Clinton Foundation and the C40.



The São Paulo Climate Law was the first to be approved in a major city in Brazil and Latin America, anticipating the national law by six months. Sanctioned on July 5<sup>th</sup> 2009, Municipal Law 14,933 established a mandatory reduction of 30% of GHG emissions by 2012 (based on a 2005 inventory, with 2003 as the baseline year) and the need to publish an inventory every five years (Prefeitura Municipal de São Paulo 2009). In comparison, the Brazilian law was ratified on December 29<sup>th</sup> 2009 and set a voluntary target of GHG emission reduction of 36,1% and 38,9% by 2020, having 2020 emissions projected as the base (Setzer 2013). It is important to note that within the Brazilian political and legal structure, a policy can be established by law and thereafter periodically revised through decrees or other laws.

The debate around the creation of a climate law for São Paulo is said to have started in 2005, when the secretary for Environment, Eduardo Jorge, began consultations with specialists on the matter. But it was only after mayor Kassab attended the C40 Summit in New York, in 2007, that the idea began to gain substance; Biderman 2011). On that occasion, Kassab committed to launching public policies to address climate change challenges, and when he got back to São Paulo, he provided greater support for the climate law project that was being developed by Eduardo Jorge in partnership with representatives from ICLEI and EAESP-FGV (Sustainability Studies Center), with support from the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) and some specialized researchers and city council members. The process took more than a year to be completed, and then Kassab sent the law project to the legislative power, which approved it unanimously (Furriela 2011). Therefore, the creation of the climate change law in São Paulo was a process that can be seen as unorthodox, since its draft did not emerge from the Legislature, but was commissioned by the mayor to a University group in partnership with the ICLEI and UNEP.

The law's objectives clearly state that it is a reaction to the international community when it cites the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It makes direct reference to international norms and principles, embracing those as its own as well and incorporating them into the objective of the law. The document states that its objective is to contribute to the UNFCCC to help it achieve its goals in stabilizing the concentration of GHG to avoid dangerous anthropic interference (Prefeitura Municipal de São Paulo 2009, Título II, Art. 4º, p.5).

The law played a key role in establishing the municipality's climate change policy by setting its mitigation goals. The goals for the years following the first commitment period (ending in 2012) would have to be set by a new legal instrument two years before the deadline. This meant that the second emissions reduction goal would have to have been set in 2010, only one year after the adoption of the climate law, – something that had never happened before. Also following the law, a new GHG inventory should have been conducted and published every five years, using the accepted international methodology. The resources meant to finance it would come from the Special Environment and Sustainable Development Fund (*Fundo Especial de Meio Ambiente e Desenvolvimento Sustentável* – FEMA). The first was published in 2005 and the following should have been published in 2010 and 2015, but this never happened.

The São Paulo climate policy established in 2009 is an ambitious one, but its grand proposal – and recently its strongest controversy – is probably the article 50. The latter demanded that the public transportation fleet should have reduced fossil fuel use by 10% every year from 2009, thus using renewable fuels in the whole fleet of municipal buses by 2018. However, there was not enough coordination between SMVMA and the Transportation Secretary to implement the climate law and to push the private transportation sector to do so (Macedo 2017). The law was ignored, and only after a legal warning was it mentioned in the bidding to buy new vehicles. Even so, it was later ignored. One of the reasons for this is the amount of investments and the power politics involved. So, when in 2018 the deadline to change the public transportation fleet to a less polluting one approached, and the municipal government had not complied with what was established in the 2009 climate law, it had to approve a legal instrument to redefine new deadlines. That was when Law 16,802 (January 18, 2018) was approved, modifying Law 14,933. The 2009 goal, if implemented fully, would have had a tremendous impact on São Paulo's GHG emissions and on air quality, nevertheless, it was not put into practice.

The 2009 climate law promised a transformation in the way São Paulo does its planning, its purchase of goods, its investments, and its education, and can therefore be seen – from a distance – as a revolutionary law. However, the political, economic, and institutional contexts within which São Paulo was and still is immersed, alerts to its excessive proposals to transform so many aspects of the city. The climate policy is audacious in a scenario that does not provide any incentives for this. How was the law going to be put into practice when there were no signs of material conditions to do so? These questions need to be raised if we want to understand the process through which the law was approved as well as its implementation. What point, or what image were they trying to reach? Did São Paulo perceive an urgency to showcase itself as a global city aligned with international trends, such as the one to fight climate change, thus doing this via its climate law?

The climate law is too extensive, covering many sectorial policies such as energy, buildings, health, and transportation, which exposes the transversal characteristic of climate change. Nevertheless, it ignores the lack of human, financial, institutional, and political resources to implement it. One example is that for buildings and waste management modifications stipulated within the climate law, it would require many inspections to monitor the implementation of the standards proposed by it, – something that is not feasible due to the lack of personnel. Therefore, in this context of a fragile rule of law, private actors rely on the incapacity of the municipal government to inspect their activities to maintain their practices that do not consider climate change factors.

Furthermore, the guidelines for the action plan of the city of São Paulo for mitigation and adaptation to climate change was a document released just before the 2011 C40 Summit in São Paulo which contains generic recommendations regarding the implementation of the climate policy. There is no provision of resources required for the climate actions to be implemented, nor any timeframes to comply with. Therefore, although we considered it here as a climate policy



response, it had little connections to the policies that were being deployed on the ground, and we find that the document never was acknowledged by political leaders and people working in the secretaries as a document that should be rigorously followed. In the end, it is referred to more as an international relations policy response than as one directed at the municipality.

More broadly, the affiliation to the ICLEI CCP campaign in 2003 and to the C40 in 2005 became significant in fomenting climate actions in the city. Nevertheless, the participation of the city in these networks varies greatly over the period of our study. The engagement with ICLEI tends to be more linear, after the installation of its office in São Paulo, although it is not very demanding, and nor does it require great engagement in the sense of reporting its climate actions. The Cities for Climate Protection campaign had the role of fostering the development by São Paulo of its first GHG emissions report, but after complying with its five milestones, the city did not appear as a protagonist. ICLEI later signed a cooperation agreement with the municipal government in order to foster the adoption of sustainable patterns for its public procurement (Macedo 2017; Furriela 2011).

The disconnection of São Paulo to its international climate commitments became explicit during Haddad's term. São Paulo not only paralyzed its climate policies, but it also distanced itself from transnational climate networks such as the ICLEI and C40. Nevertheless, this coincides with the period when these networks began developing reporting platforms such as ICLEI's "Carbonn" and C40's CDP. These platforms required that the city report its climate action plans, and São Paulo did concede to doing so, though in a rather uncommitted manner, stimulated mostly by maintaining its international image as a climate pioneer. As Macedo (2017) points out, São Paulo only reported to CDP to receive a prize from C40:

Between 2013 and 2016, when reporting initiatives began, São Paulo was no more de facto involved in climate networks. As a member of the C40 network by default, however, it submitted the report to the C40 so that it could receive the Bloomberg Philanthropy City Challenge Award for innovative ideas for municipal management in 2015; the initiative requires that the candidate is up to date with commitments to the C40.<sup>1</sup>

In that sense, we can see how the C40 network had a great impact on pushing the climate agenda forward in São Paulo. The C40 Summit hosted by São Paulo in 2011 encouraged the city to publish its "City of São Paulo guidelines for the mitigation and adaptation to climate change action plan." Finally, we suggest that the climate law and the guidelines were targeting the international community. At least from 2005 to 2013, and during Doria's term, São Paulo perceived itself as a global city and because of that, it thought it should actively take part in the

<sup>1</sup> Translated from the original in Portuguese: "Entre 2013 e 2016, quando começaram as iniciativas de reporte, São Paulo não participava mais de fato das redes de clima. Como ainda era membro da rede da C40 por 'default', porém, apresentou o relatório à C40, de modo a poder receber em 2015 o prêmio Desafio das Cidades da Bloomberg Philantropies, para ideias inovadoras de gestão municipal; a iniciativa requer que a candidata esteja em dia com os compromissos junto à C40" (Macedo 2017, 148).

leading global debates, and climate change was presented as the most prominent one. It was not that São Paulo was specifically targeting the climate agenda because of its importance, but rather because it provided the greatest international visibility to the city.

## The reality of implementation and a move away from being a climate pioneer

The period from 2005 to 2012 highlighted here is marked by active climate policies, resulting in responses to climate change and an international projection regarding environmental issues, justifying the “climate pioneer” discourse. This conclusion is also present in other works (Setzer et al. 2015a; Back 2016; Macedo and Jacobi 2019; Barbi and Macedo 2019). The subsequent period, from 2013-2018, that includes Fernando Haddad’s government and the short term of João Doria is noticeable for its retraction from the climate agenda, both locally and globally. Although Back (2016) points out that there were some improvements in the urban development agenda that may be valued for future climate actions, they were never articulated in combination with local climate responses. Moreover, Haddad demonstrated a weak interest in the climate agenda and even when other policies addressed climate issues, they were not framed as such, demonstrating an underappreciation of the problem and the low awareness of São Paulo’s inhabitants of the importance of environmental matters. For example, his administration was ready to announce the creation of bicycle lanes and bus corridors as improvements to the mobility policy, but never linked it to the climate policy, ignoring its contribution to mitigation and adaptation.

Therefore, what Back (2016) calls “discursive disarticulations”<sup>2</sup> we understand as local framing, and the fact that the urban policies developed under the Haddad’s administration were not also framed as climate policies points to more than just a choice of words; it is a political choice. Furthermore, the nomination of an environmental secretary and then the constant changes in its command indicates a perception about a lack of importance of the climate agenda. Ultimately, this political choice can be observed in the outcomes of the climate policy by the end of his term, resulting in the suspension of the vehicle inspection program, an increase in GHG emissions, no substitution of old buses running on diesel for new ones using cleaner fuels, and no new GHG inventory. Therefore, during 2013-2016 the impact of the mayor’s political view and perception of climate change on the implementation process of the climate policy was greater than any other factor.

Haddad had an advantage compared to the previous mayors: he was from the same political party as the President of Brazil, and typically this situation means more access to financial resources, possibly leading to an administration that can deliver more positive results. Nevertheless, that was not the case. Even though Haddad and Rousseff had a close relationship, the period was

<sup>2</sup> Free translation from “desarticulações discursivas”

not favorable to either of them, and campaign promises made by Haddad that were dependent upon the support of the Federal government mostly fell short. Some were related to the mobility policy and could have had a positive impact on the climate policy, such as the bus rapid transit (BRT) corridors: the building of 150km of corridors was promised with federal revenues that never went to São Paulo. Instead, only 42 km of BRT corridors were delivered and 423 km of exclusive bus lanes<sup>3</sup> were built. These are less expensive but also less efficient in mitigating GHG emissions. It is still much more than the previous administration, that did not deliver a single km of BRT and only 11km of exclusive bus lanes.<sup>4</sup> Also, regarding the mobility sector, the Haddad administration built 400 km of bicycle lanes, something that was unthinkable before – mayor Kassab delivered only 18km during his entire administration<sup>5</sup> – alternating the flux of many streets in the city and galvanizing the opposition of more conservative social segments.<sup>6</sup> However, similarly to the exclusive bus lanes and the BRT, the significant increase in bicycle lanes was never framed as a climate policy.

It is interesting to note that the local framing given to policies also can be shaped by the influence of international actors. As Back (2016) emphasized in the analysis of the 2005-2012 energy policy report, even though the retrofit change in the lightning grid of São Paulo had no significant impact on the total GHG emissions, since its energy comes mostly from hydropower, it was presented as a climate change policy improvement, following the outline of ICLEI and C40, and demonstrating that the Kassab administration was willing to frame any possible policy as a climate policy in order to sustain its international image.

In this regard, the climate policy undertaken during the 2005-2012 period was highly influenced by international agents focused on mitigation actions resulting in a depreciation of the adaptation actions. This demonstrates how the international debate regarding climate change, – including the national debate and the one led by UNFCCC, focused on the reduction of global GHG emissions, – had an impact on the local framing of São Paulo's climate policy. Consequently, even if a municipal policy had the potential to mitigate or promote adaptation to climate change, if it had not been explicit or if it had not been on international organizations' agenda, probably, São Paulo would not have framed it as a climate policy. This certainly highlights the impact of these organizations on the policy design, but also suggests the low sensitivity to or even unfamiliarity with climate change issues from the administration, its technicians, and its constituencies.

Studies (Back 2016; Di Giulio et al. 2017) suggest that São Paulo's climate policy is not well connected with the other important urban policies such as urban planning, housing, mobility, etc.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/cotidiano/2016/12/1844359-haddad-encerra-mandato-com-so-metade-das-promessas-cumpridas.shtml> Accessed: August 28, 2017

<sup>4</sup> <https://vejasp.abril.com.br/cidades/a-cidade-que-kassab-nos-entrega/> Accessed: August 28, 2017

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ciclocidade.org.br/65-noticias/clipping/299-kassab-entrega- apenas-45-km-de-ciclovias-por-ano> Accessed: August 28, 2017

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/05/world/americas/mayor-fernando-haddad-of-sao-paulo-strives-to-ease-gridlock.html> Accessed: March 16, 2016.

Our analysis also leads to this conclusion even though our focus was not to look into all the other sectorial policies. Nonetheless, our point is that the only area with which the climate policy of São Paulo was intensively connected, was the international relations policy. And this connection was crucial for the first moment of climate responses from the city but was not observed during the following implementation period.

Regardless of this mitigation perspective, São Paulo was not able to reduce its GHG emissions. In fact, they increased, as can be observed in the table below:

**Figure 1. São Paulo's total emissions from 2003 to 2011**

Sector	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
	(GgCO <sub>2</sub> e)								
Energy	12,911	13,065	12,689	12,544	13,114	13,860	12,384	13,642	13,990
Waste	2,199	2,260	2,335	2,474	2,658	2,307	2,363	2,445	2,440
Total	15,110	15,325	15,025	15,018	15,772	16,167	14,748	16,087	16,430

Source: Instituto Ekos Brasil 2013

The dissonance between São Paulo's discourse and its climate actions is so great that in the GHG inventory published in 2013, which is the one that recognizes the increase in the city's emissions, the opening letter written by the Environment Secretary states that the city is an international reference because it was a pioneer in publishing its first GHG inventory in 2005, and because of the approval of the first climate law in 2009 (Instituto Ekos Brasil 2013). That demonstrates a low commitment to climate policies, but also exposes the low quality of institutions and a distorted perspective of reality.

The discourse that São Paulo was a "climate leader," – developed mainly because of the climate law's approval, – continued to resonate much later than 2009, including after it was already known that the city would not be able to comply with the mitigation targets. Finally, this also displays the disconnection of the climate leader discourse and the materiality of mitigating and adapting to climate change. Therefore, we question: can a city be a climate leader without really reducing GHG emissions and foster resilience? As São Paulo began to progressively lose international recognition on the climate agenda with the introduction of international reporting platforms – such as Carbons, CDP and NAZCA – and its retraction from C40 initiatives, we found that this discourse has an expiration date if it is not based on effective domestic climate policies (Mauad 2018).

Although São Paulo is one of the founders of C40 as the city joined the network in 2005, its participation in international affairs, including climate change, has been irregular since 2013. The city has been involved in the global dialogue on climate change since it reached the international

agenda, and we found that these transnational governance arrangements had a decisive impact on the fostering of climate responses in São Paulo, but almost none during its implementation phase (Setzer et al. 2015b; Macedo and Jacobi 2019).

During the first period of climate responses, from 2005 to 2012, the leadership of the environment secretary, Eduardo Jorge, was key. He is well known for his lifelong commitments to the agenda and he was able to convince the Mayors Serra and Kassab, that climate change was an important matter for São Paulo (Furriela 2011; Macedo 2017; Back 2016). Therefore, during this period, the SMVMA did not find any significant obstacle to its activities. On the contrary, the mayor was willing to promote and to attend climate change events, including to bear the costs of hosting the C40 Summit in 2011. Consequently, the climate entrepreneurship of the environment secretary and the mayors guaranteed the ability to provide all the climate responses from 2005 to 2012.

After that, with the change in the administration which also meant a change in the command of the SMVMA, the element of a climate leader was no longer present. This had implications on the local implementation process of the climate policy and international participation in TMNs. Mayor Haddad changed his environment secretary almost every year and nominated secretaries that were not involved with the agenda, demonstrating little appreciation for the SMVMA's work. One episode illustrates the political choice from 2013 to 2016 regarding climate change: all the work that was being carried out by the Committee was suspended at the beginning of 2013 (Committee 51th meeting report – Ata 51/March 24, 2017). The Committee did not hold any meeting for more than one year from 2013 to 2014, breaking its regularity established since 2009. Its activities were only resumed after a request from the public prosecutor in 2014. This is even more critical as it was the only governance instrument exclusively dedicated to dealing with climate change. In a nutshell, the lack of climate leadership from the mayor and his environmental secretaries had a negative impact on the climate policy implementation process during Haddad's term.

In addition, Haddad also did not demonstrate much interest in the international relations agenda, weakening the presence of São Paulo in TMNs. The mayor was reluctant to attend international events and many times he sent his vice-mayor to represent the city instead. His absence from the 2015 C40 Latin America Mayors Forum in Buenos Aires was remarkable, – a city with which São Paulo has many partnerships, and that by then was projecting itself as a climate leader. It is important to note that at that time, the director of C40 was Eduardo Paes, Rio de Janeiro's mayor and from an opposing party (PSDB). Therefore, party issues, as well as political ideologies, may have influenced the less prominent role of São Paulo within the international arena during this period, at least in climate governance, since the SMRI started directing its activities towards other agendas and fostering more projects within Latin America.

The succeeding administration initially signaled that it could recover São Paulo's international leadership position, as Doria presented himself as a global mayor who was very attracted to international agendas, so we could have expected a more active international policy. He nominated

Gilberto Natalini as his environmental secretary, a council representative from the green party (PV), who had actively worked for the approval of the climate law back in 2009, but before the end of his first year, Natalini was replaced. Doria demonstrated an erratic pattern in all matters of his administration, but regarding climate and environmental policies, we can highlight that he did not renew the vehicle emissions control program, removed bicycle lanes, and took investments off the fund to build more BRT corridors. Therefore, his administration did not recover São Paulo's international role as a climate leader.

It is important to highlight that before the approval of law 16,802 (January 18th 2018), that modified the climate law by defining new deadlines for the public transportation fleet to become cleaner, less than 4% of the São Paulo fleet could be considered adequate to what had been established in 2009.<sup>7</sup> This exposes the lack of actions that should have been taken in the previous years to follow the climate policy. The new law to update the deadlines fixed in 2009 was approved, but still has not been legalized, meaning that there is no expectation that it will – once again – be implemented.<sup>8</sup> This demonstrates the fragile rule of law in São Paulo – but we can argue that this is a feature of Brazil as a whole – as well as the low priority given to climate change as an urgent agenda.

Overall, the institutional structures constrain the development and effective implementation of local policies. For example, SMVMA, the political institution responsible for implementing and monitoring the climate law, did not have sufficient resources, nor the political capital, which also explains the weak implementation of the climate policy. The evolution of its budget is an indication of how this was not a priority to the municipal government at any time. According to Macedo (2017), the percentage of spending with the SMVMA compared to the total budget of the city rose from 0.52% in 2005 to a high of 1.05% in 2010 back down to 0.40% in 2017. These figures demonstrate changes in the perception of its relevance to each administration, but still exposes how few resources were allocated during the entire period analyzed.

According to law 14,933, the budget for the GHG inventory was supposed to come from the FEMA. This means that there was already an established source that could be accessed to guarantee the production of a GHG inventory every five years. Nevertheless, São Paulo only produced two GHG inventories, and one of them was funded by the Global Environmental Facility (Ata 52/April 25, 2017 Comitê Municipal de Mudanças Climáticas e Ecoeconomia). It was argued that the FEMA funds should be used to finance social projects and not an inventory. This illustrates the disconnection of the climate law with the functioning of the municipal government, as well as the perception that climate action was not a priority. Consequently, the city did not produce other inventories, making it hard to track its GHG emissions path and to design and adapt policies to better address the challenge.

<sup>7</sup> Statistic available at: <https://diariodotransporte.com.br/2016/10/24/custo-anual-dos-transportes-na-cidade-de-sao-paulo-so-com-combustivel-poderia-ser-r-200-milhoes-menor-com-lei-de-mudancas-climaticas/> Accessed: January 26, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> <https://g1.globo.com/sp/sao-paulo/noticia/prefeitura-de-sp-nao-regulamenta-lei-que-preve-que-empresas-de-onibus-zerem-emissao-de-gas-carbonico-e-outros-gases.ghtml> Accessed: July 20, 2018.



Finally, the opinion that climate responses in São Paulo – but also in other major cities in Brazil, such as Rio de Janeiro and Belo Horizonte – were not followed by systematic planning is shared among many observers. This can be noted in the testimony of one member of an important civil society organization, Observatório do Clima, given to Macedo (2017) when mentioning the São Paulo climate law: “It happened specifically, opportunistically, motivated by partnerships or by participating in ICLEI activities. In none of the three cities has the process been continuous, systematic or integrated into long-term development policies, or urban, territorial planning of cities”<sup>9</sup>(Macedo 2017, 139).

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that one spillover effect of the São Paulo climate law was the creation of a momentum in Brazil that mobilized other cities to also design and propose their climate laws and policies, such as Belo Horizonte. The downside of this momentum is that it was created over an impracticable law, contributing to generating other climate responses in Brazil that did not find ground in reality and therefore are not being implemented.

## Conclusion

In similarity with the Brazilian government’s position on global environmental governance, São Paulo has presented an inconsistent trajectory, marked by periods of leadership and active international relations, and others by distancing itself from the global debate and holding local climate policies back. This demonstrates that structural factors such as lack of human and financial resources, as well as an optimistic discourse are shared among the national and the local governments, calling for the need to break with path dependencies that impede Brazil and São Paulo to move forward within the climate agenda.

Climate change has traditionally been a national issue instead of a local one, but this began to change in the 1990s, at least for cities in the North and global cities in the South. This means that cities began to perceive climate change as an agenda that should be addressed by local governments. This happened due to many factors, with a central role played by international relations. In this logic, the climate agenda was initially brought to São Paulo by international organizations such as the ICLEI and by its International Relations Secretary’s perspective on its global projection.

However, as the case of São Paulo demonstrates, without local government capacity and technical and financial resources, how could São Paulo have implemented its climate policy? The policy designed by law 14,933 was devised to be implemented by a city with governmental capacity and political actors and factors that São Paulo did not have. Also, it would have been extremely hard for São Paulo to develop and implement mitigation and adaptation policies in the following

<sup>9</sup> Our translation of: “Aconteceu pontualmente, de forma oportunista, motivada por parcerias ou pela participação nas atividades do ICLEI. Em nenhuma das três cidades o processo foi contínuo, sistemático ou integrado a políticas de desenvolvimento de longo prazo, ou a planejamento urbano, territorial das cidades.”

years in order to respond to a climate agenda without constituencies being aware of its urgency or willing to pay for its costs. Moreover, the law falls short of framing and communicating climate change as a local policy that could foster local development and generate co-benefits when aligned with its sectorial policies.

São Paulo's climate policy was most closely linked to its international relations policy. This connection was positively crucial for the city's early development of climate responses but was indifferently observed during the 2013-2018 implementation period. As São Paulo moved away from its international relations agenda, its climate agenda also suffered retraction, demonstrating that their connection continues to matter in an unconstructive scenario.

Conclusively, São Paulo was a pioneer in formally responding to climate change in Brazil, but the municipal government was unable to put its responses into practice, failing to effectively implement its climate law and policies. Therefore, for the period analyzed here, São Paulo can be characterized as a discursive leader but a letdown in following its discourse. The role of São Paulo in global climate governance varies across the period observed from being part of the group of cities considered as leaders and often referred to as such, to be marginalized, although its international relations strategy and some international actors continue to reinforce the leadership discourse.

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