

INTRODUCTION

SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT: AN INTRODUCTION¹

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The increasing role of South-South cooperation (SSC) is one of the key transformations concerning international development cooperation in the twenty-first century. This role relates not only to enhancing resources dedicated to promoting international development, but also to normative and conceptual issues related to what international development refers to and how to measure funding, goals and targets. Unlike countries that have been reporting to the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (DAC/OECD) for decades, the so-called “emerging donors” or “southern providers” find themselves in a double task: on the one hand, becoming familiar with all the historical construction that resulted in the current patterns of data collection on international development cooperation; on the other hand, elaborating appropriate methodologies to the particularities of their international insertion as developing countries.

Thanks to a plurality of contributors in terms of gender and origin – both inside Brazil, but also including authors from other countries –, this special issue focuses on Brazil, a country that has dedicated extensive efforts to measure development cooperation financed by its public resources through the report of the Brazilian Cooperation for International Development (Cooperação Brasileira para o Desenvolvimento Internacional – Cobradi), gathering data from dozens of public federal institutions since 2010. While Laura Waisbich uses the concept of “active non-alignment” to describe Brazil's intermediate position between countries that fully adopt DAC/OECD recommendations and those that take an absolute revisionist stance, and show how measurement decisions are connected to political domestic and international debates, Rafael Schleicher and Ana Flávia Barros-Platiau, relying on Cobradi's primary data, point to

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normative implications of Brazil's development cooperation disbursements. If cooperation destined to developed countries, which has been one of Cobradi's innovation (Waisbich, 2023), is accounted for, their dominance in scientific, technological and educational cooperation expenses can contradict discourses on the prioritization of SSC (Schleicher and Barros-Platiau, 2023), while at the same time indicate the urgency of knowing and regulating South-North flows.

Another normative issue concerns allocation through bilateral and multilateral channels. Whether the enduring dominance of Brazil's disbursements through international institutions could point to an abdication of donor's national interests in development cooperation, to the benefit of receiving partners, one can also wonder to which extent such expenses are transparent enough for evaluation purposes, as questioned by Schleicher and Barros-Platiau (2023). The creation of new institutions, driven by Southern countries, could in principle favor what Santos (2023) calls "multinormative multilateralism", but this author concludes that their effectiveness depends on multilateralism beyond rhetoric, thus criticizing the slow implementation of the BRICS⁵ Vaccine Research and Development Center.

Recently, as shown by Schleicher and Barros-Platiau (2023), the Cobradi report also started to classify expenses considering the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), whose agenda expanded beyond the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), thus having sustainable development as a transversal issue. Differently from the MDGs, the SDGs included dimensions related not only to social sectors, but also to economic growth and science and technology. In this sense, this special issue brings several debates on the SDGs, including critical perspectives according to which the OECD attempts to use them as evaluation mechanisms for the Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (TOSSD). This would express one more attempt to push Southern partners towards a common measurement framework, therefore ignoring the particularities of SSC (Camila dos Santos in this volume).

Discussions on environmental cooperation are part of the broader debate on North-South cooperation (NSC) priorities and interests. In this sense, Pedro Matos highlights that African interests are underestimated in global environmental negotiations and that Brazil could contribute to fill this gap. He suggests that a climate change agenda between Brazil and African countries is necessary and win-win for both sides, as they face common challenges and host complementary experiences (Matos, 2023). Johanne Saltnes and Juliana Santiago, on their turn, show that Brazil-Norway collaboration through the Amazon Fund is different from traditional NSC. They argued that this mechanism is innovative and assures

5. Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS).

that Brazil keeps the control of the decision-making processes, while donor states can freeze their donations in case of disagreement, as it was the case a couple of years ago (Saltnes and Santiago, 2023). This can be considered a success case to be analyzed by potential interested countries.

Science, technology and innovation (STI) are also part of specific discussions in different articles. Related to Brazil-China, Aline Dantas states that STI bilateral cooperation changed significantly and was affected by the covid-19 crisis. However, the comeback of President Lula in 2023 has signaled a renewal of STI agreements, especially in space collaboration (Dantas, 2023). Henrique Menezes expresses the same expectations on Lula's current administration, but refers to a different topic: the promotion of health technology cooperation in South America through the design of a regional health industrial complex (Menezes, 2023). He agrees with Camila do Santos that vaccine nationalism and the failure of multilateral schemes to deal with the covid pandemic have shown that developing countries should cooperate to avoid dependence on developed ones in health emergencies (Santos, 2023).

Going beyond analysis focused on governmental agreements or disagreements, two articles bring new evidence on transnational networks involving Brazilian scientists and researchers. Concepta McManus, Abilio Neves, Felipe Pimentel and Daniel Pimentel and Timothy Finan offer a detailed and updated picture of Brazilian regions and national inequalities in that agenda. They conclude that open-access journals are likely to have a positive impact only for NSC, while it is negative for SSC. As a consequence, hybrid journals should be considered as part of a strategy to improve Brazilian performance. Finally, they suggest that inequalities are not necessarily qualitative, but rather in terms of quantity (McManus et al., 2023). To enrich this topic, Finan, Neves and McManus (2023) analyzed Brazilian SSC also looking at the regional perspective, stressing the persisting asymmetries among Brazilian states in terms of scientific collaboration networks and publishing. They propose a strategic approach to the scientific cooperation agenda. Combined, both articles provide a comprehensive view of the Brazilian scientific international cooperation encompassing SSC.

From a sectoral perspective, Murilo da Costa, Andréa Cid and Leonardo Alves demonstrated how the technical cooperation of the National Institute of Metrology, Standardization and Industrial Quality (Instituto Nacional de Metrologia, Qualidade e Tecnologia – Inmetro) evolved, including an analysis of the trajectory of institutional reforms aimed at improving Inmetro's cooperation. Shedding light on the specific topic of quality control in Brazil's South-South relations, including case studies on South Africa, Cape Verde and Paraguay, the authors discuss a rather unexplored topic of SSC in Brazil. As regards to food

security, Andrea Bertolini, Stelito Reis Neto and José Roberto Andrade explores the policy space in the United States and China in order to offer some insights for Brazilian policymakers. As a result, they acknowledges the high importance of food security as part of the national security strategy for Washington and Beijing. They argues this should be true for Brasília, for both economic growth and the role of Brazil as a global player (Bertolini, Reis Neto and Andrade, 2023).

A final and enduring discussion is related to which extent South-South differs from NSC. Although the inequalities among countries from the so-called Global South are obvious, from China to Cuba, from India to Paraguay, SSC unfolds in different ways for many other reasons. For instance, individual countries have specific priorities connected to geopolitical and/or interbureaucratic dynamics, and higher degrees of transparency and institutionalization could in principle counterbalance presidential preferences. This point, however, needs to be further explored, as many others. The BRICS and other collective or regional initiatives deserve future research from a Brazilian perspective. In the case of South America, it is safe to say that the potential to be explored is enormous, although regional governance institutions are fragile. Third, sectoral agendas such as health and STI constitute precious entry points for Brazil to develop more cooperation initiatives in the near future. Finally, the United Nations 2030 Agenda remains rather underexplored in the case of South American effective regionalism.

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