

DYNAMICS OF MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE IN RACIAL EQUALITY POLICIES IN BRAZIL: AN ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL AND LOCAL INSTRUMENTS

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In this paper, we examine the dynamics of multilevel governance in racial equality policies in Brazil, comparing the national and local levels, specifically the federal government and the municipality of São Paulo. In addition to the theoretical elements that frame the discussion of federalism, we analyze the legal, organizational, and budgetary contexts inherent to the issue. Accordingly, we seek to answer the following questions: How is the governance of public policies on racial equality influenced by political and institutional factors? Has there been continuity in these policies at the local level, despite signs of dismantling at the national level? We adopt a mixed-methods approach, focusing on the period from 2019 to 2022. In our concluding remarks, we emphasize the need to expand studies that observe and compare local and national dynamics, while considering the impacts of policy dismantling and retrenchment. We also note that, although the federal level exhibited signs of dismantling, retrenchment, and discontinuity, the local level in São Paulo, based on budget data and analysis of organizational design, demonstrated continuity in racial equality policy, at least in terms of institutional instruments.

Keywords: public policy; multilevel governance; race relations; federalism; racial equality.

DINÂMICAS DA GOVERNANÇA MULTINÍVEL NAS POLÍTICAS DE IGUALDADE RACIAL NO BRASIL: UMA ANÁLISE DOS INSTRUMENTOS NACIONAIS E LOCAIS

Neste artigo, examinamos algumas dinâmicas da governança multinível nas políticas de igualdade racial no Brasil, comparando as esferas nacional e local a partir do contexto federal e da Cidade de São Paulo. Além dos elementos teóricos que abordam a discussão sobre o federalismo, analisamos o contexto legal, organizacional e orçamentário inerente à questão. Nesse sentido, buscamos responder às perguntas: Como a governança das políticas públicas de igualdade racial é influenciada por aspectos políticos e institucionais? Houve continuidade nessas políticas em nível local, apesar do indicativo de dismantelamento no nível nacional? A análise é feita a partir de uma abordagem de métodos mistos, cujo recorte temporal compreende o período de 2019 a 2022. Nas considerações finais, enfatizamos a necessidade de expandir os estudos que observem e comparem as dinâmicas locais e nacionais com o olhar para a governança multinível, bem como levem em consideração os impactos do dismantelamento e da retração de políticas. Também observamos que, embora o nível federal apresente elementos de dismantelamento, retração e descontinuidade, o nível local na cidade de São Paulo mostrou, com base nos dados orçamentários coletados e na observação do desenho organizacional, que houve continuidade na política, pelo menos em termos de instrumentalidade.

Palavras-chave: política pública; governança multinível; relações raciais; federalismo; igualdade racial.

DINÁMICAS DE LA GOBERNANZA MULTINIVEL EN LAS POLÍTICAS DE IGUALDAD RACIAL EN BRASIL: UN ANÁLISIS DE LOS INSTRUMENTOS NACIONALES Y LOCALES

Examinamos algunas dinámicas de la gobernanza multinivel en las políticas de igualdad racial en Brasil, comparando las esferas nacional y local desde el contexto federal y de la Ciudad de São Paulo. Además de los elementos teóricos que abordan la discusión sobre el federalismo, analizamos el contexto legal, organizacional y presupuestario inherente a la cuestión. En este sentido, buscamos responder a las preguntas: ¿Cómo influye la gobernanza de las políticas públicas sobre igualdad racial en aspectos políticos e institucionales? ¿Hubo continuidad en estas políticas a nivel local, a pesar de los indicios de que se estaban dismantelando a nivel nacional? Utilizamos métodos mixtos y el marco temporal comprende de 2019 a 2022. Al fin, enfatizamos la necesidad de ampliar los estudios que observen y comparen las dinámicas locales y nacionales en la gobernanza multinivel, y consideren los impactos del dismantelamiento y la retracción de políticas. También observamos que, aunque el nivel federal presenta elementos de dismantelamiento, retracción y discontinuidad, el nivel local en la ciudad de São Paulo mostró, basándose en los datos presupuestarios recopilados y en la observación del diseño organizacional, que hubo continuidad en la política, al menos en términos de instrumentalidad.

Palabras clave: política pública; gobernanza multinivel; relaciones raciales; federalismo; igualdad racial.

1. INTRODUCTION

In a democratic context, the search for a governance model that responds to democratic demands while ensuring governmental efficiency is both relevant and necessary. However, within the framework of multilevel governance, governments in Brazil face significant challenges in articulating and coordinating public actions. In this regard, the debate on multilevel governance centers on understanding the relationships between central and subnational levels (Bichir et al., 2017).

Building on this premise, the present study aims to examine the dynamics of multilevel governance in racial equality policies from a comparative vertical perspective – between national and local spheres. The local dimension is analyzed through the governance instruments employed in the city of São Paulo. The temporal scope of the study spans from 2019 to 2022, a period selected to enable the identification of causal links between federal executive management and local governance.

Accordingly, this paper seeks to address the following questions: How is the governance of racial equality public policies influenced by political and institutional factors? Has there been continuity in these policies at the local level, despite signs of dismantling at the national level?

In this sense, it is essential to recognize that government policies are shaped by instruments and institutional arrangements, configured according to how actors articulate their roles and mobilize resources – both financial and organizational – which, in turn, contribute to the capacity for public policy implementation (Pires & Gomide, 2018).

Since the inclusion of racial issues in the 1988 Brazilian Constitution, the federal government has assumed responsibility for decision-making, regulation, coordination, co-financing, and the definition of general parameters for the theme. At the subnational level, states are tasked with coordinating municipal actions, while also having the authority to develop more complex policies (Bichir et al., 2017).

Furthermore, since the enactment of the Statute of Racial Equality in 2010, racial equality policies have been developed based on instruments designed at the national level, which establish the guidelines these policies should follow at subnational levels. The Statute mandates that state, district, and municipal executive branches must, within the scope of their competencies, formulate actions, instruments, and policies to promote racial equality. One example is the racial equality promotion councils, which serve as permanent and consultative bodies responsible for monitoring the implementation of these policies.

Especially at the local level, municipalities are responsible for implementing the legal frameworks established at the national level, while maintaining autonomy in the implementation

process. Policy implementation involves the delivery of initiatives through interaction between the public sector and civil society organizations (Bichir et al., 2017). Additionally, defining macro-level analytical parameters enables an understanding of national regulation within the analyzed public policy subsystem and allows for the observation of specific normative acts created at the municipal level (Kazepov, 2005).

For the development of this study, the following macro-level parameters were defined to guide the analysis of policy instruments: thematic regulation, administrative organization, and the relationship between instruments and budgetary frameworks. This research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques. Qualitative analysis – specifically content analysis – is employed to examine policy documents and academic literature. Quantitative analysis is used to assess budgetary data at both the federal and municipal levels. At the federal level, budget data were sourced from studies published by the Institute for Socioeconomic Studies and cross-verified through the *Siga Brasil*¹ portal of the Brazilian Senate. Municipal budget data for São Paulo were obtained from the city government's official website². The collected data were processed and categorized with a focus on race-sensitive budget allocations aimed at promoting racial equity (Fundação Tide Setúbal & A Tenda, 2022).

Alongside data analysis, theoretical contributions from content analysis were incorporated into the paper, drawing on extensive research from Brazil's primary academic repositories, such as *SciELO* and *CAPES Periódicos*³. The methodology leverages national public budget data and data from the city of São Paulo, both focused on race-sensitive budgeting (Xavier, 2020). The data are analyzed through the relationship between planning and execution to assess whether local racial equality policies have been sustained despite dismantling efforts at the national level. This relationship is significant because budget planning does not always translate into implemented policy, and the budget serves as a valuable tool for observing and analyzing this gap.

This paper is structured into four main sections, in addition to the introduction and concluding remarks. The second section presents the theoretical framework of this study, specifically the debate on federalism, decentralization, and multilevel governance. The third section is divided into two subsections: one examines the national landscape of racial equity policies, while the other explores the topic at the local level, focusing on the context of the city of São Paulo. In this regard, the paper seeks to deepen the understanding of multilevel governance by exploring the relationships among different levels of government and the influence of political and institutional factors on the formulation and implementation of public policies.

¹ Website developed by the Brazilian Senate to provide access to public budget data from the federal government.

² Available at: <https://orcamento.sf.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/orcamento/index.php>

³ The Periodical Portal of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES, in Portuguese) is an online collection of scientific publications created by the Brazilian Ministry of Education. It brings together Brazilian and international publications from all fields of knowledge.

2. FEDERALISM, DECENTRALIZATION AND MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE

Federalism, decentralization, and multilevel governance are interrelated concepts. This is because the existence of federalism implies the distribution and redistribution of authority (Rodden, 2005; Arretche, 2012), whether through the decentralization of competencies (policymaking) or through decision-making autonomy in public policy (policy decision-making). Particularly within the vertical dimension of power, federalism has been studied to understand how authority is allocated across the different levels of government in a federal state – that is, how centralization and decentralization operate and how these levels of government interact (Hooghe & Marks, 2003).

Therefore, to explain the interaction between national and subnational levels of government, studies focused on analyzing multilevel relationships – and giving due attention to multilevel governance – are becoming increasingly relevant. Multilevel governance builds on the discussion of federalism and decentralization but goes further, as it enables a broader examination of the relationship between federalism and public policy. It encompasses both the vertical dimension (centralization/decentralization dynamics) and the horizontal dimension (actors beyond the state) (Bichir, 2018).

In this sense, when analyzing Brazilian federalism, Marta Arretche (2012) emphasizes that one must not conflate the dimensions of decentralization and, likewise, must distinguish between policymaking and policy decision-making. Arretche explains that decentralization can be divided into political, fiscal, and functional dimensions. Political decentralization refers to the possibility of local governors being directly elected and having mandates that cannot be revoked by higher levels of government; fiscal decentralization is reflected in the share of subnational governments' revenues and expenditures in total public spending; and functional decentralization involves responsibility for the execution of public policies (Arretche, 2012).

Given this, one way to conceptualize decentralization is by highlighting “the transfer of authority from central to local governments” (Rodden, 2005, p.10). This refers to assessing such transfers in terms of fiscal, political, and policy management authority. In analyzing the causes and consequences of decentralization, Jonathan Rodden (2005) seeks to answer key questions regarding the definitions and metrics that shape the nexus between decentralization and federalism. Rodden notes that the literature tends to focus more on fiscal decentralization, which can be explained by examining how expenditures and revenues are distributed across levels of government. Studies on the fiscal dimension typically measure the participation of local and regional governments in overall public spending. By contrast, analyses aimed at interpreting the decentralization of policy responsibilities are considered by the author to be the most difficult to conduct, given their complexity and the broader discretion in how criteria are codified.

Thus, in analyzing the decentralization of political authority, one seeks to determine which level of government holds decision-making responsibility. The displacement of political authority – or rather, the autonomy of local governments to formulate their own policies – is often limited and more complex than it may initially appear. Therefore, decentralization does not necessarily strengthen subnational governments. Jonathan Rodden (2005) explains that decentralization can make governance and policy implementation more complex and intertwined, even while strengthening state and local governments.

In addition, political decentralization also involves assessing the independence or interdependence of electoral arenas at both the central and subnational levels. In federal systems, a contract is established between federated entities, whereby decisions made by the central government are subject to the consent or cooperation of subnational units (Rodden, 2005). Regarding the degree of dependence or interdependence of political authority, one can examine the level of autonomy in the political process and policy management. Measuring this autonomy helps determine the extent of political decentralization. Rodden (2005) further argues that studies on decentralization within federalism began with a first generation of scholarship that conceived decentralization as a zero-sum game – based on the transfer of central authority to subnational levels, guided by the principles of social welfare and public choice theory.

To expand this discussion and better understand the different levels of government and the vertical and horizontal dimensions of power relations, governance has emerged as a key concept. However, there is no consensus in the literature regarding a universal definition. Precisely because of its polysemy, Renata Bichir (2018) argues that the concept is ambiguous and has been described in various ways: as a process of coordination among actors, social groups, and institutions; as a framework for understanding different levels, regulations, and actors; and, in Brazil, as a tool to address democratization and social participation, as well as efficiency and state reform.

When applied to the multilevel context, Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks (2003) highlight a definition that views governance as a system of continuous negotiation among governments at various territorial levels, where multiple levels coexist: supranational, national, regional, and local. Their understanding shifts the concept of multilevel governance toward considering citizens' preferences at each level of government.

When centralization and decentralization are brought into the analysis, Hooghe and Marks (2003) identify two types of multilevel governance. The first, Type I, is modeled on federalist principles, where power is shared among a limited number of governments operating at different levels, with a focus on the relationship between central and subnational governments. Type I is characterized by:

a) *General-purpose jurisdictions*, in which decision-making powers are distributed across levels of government;

b) *Nonintersecting memberships*, where jurisdictions are distinct and do not overlap between higher and lower levels;

c) *A limited number of jurisdictional levels*;

d) *Systemwide, durable architecture*, meaning that despite variations in jurisdictional complexity, the overall structure remains stable.

In contrast, Type II multilevel governance features:

a) *Task-specific jurisdictions*;

b) *Intersecting memberships*;

c) *No fixed limit to the number of jurisdictional levels*;

d) *A flexible design* that adapts to the preferences and needs of various levels of government.

On the other hand, Tortola (2017), in examining the expanding application of the multilevel governance (MLG) concept, identifies three axes of ambiguity within it. These ambiguities concern the concept's applicability beyond Europe, the role of non-state actors, and the distinction between policymaking structures and processes.

Regarding the first ambiguity, the Tortola clarifies that despite the concept's *sui generis* nature in European Union politics, it has been applied in other contexts that extend beyond the European example, particularly in recent years. Concerning the second ambiguity, the author emphasizes the necessity of non-governmental actor participation in policymaking as a fundamental condition for multilevel governance. As for the third ambiguity, Tortola (2017) highlights that research on multilevel governance often relies on highly formal interpretations of the concept, which tend to restrict its application to treaties and jurisdictional boundaries.

Despite these ambiguities, Tortola (2017) argues that multilevel governance can be understood as both a theory of state transformation and a theory of public policy. As a theory of state transformation, multilevel governance underscores the evolving role and relevance of the state, which is increasingly viewed as part of a fluid politico-institutional order – where power is no longer confined to a single direction but can exist across multiple directions and levels. As a theory of public policy, multilevel governance contributes to understanding the processes of policymaking and implementation, particularly because it integrates empirical approaches with theoretical analysis.

Generally, a common thread among authors who examine multilevel governance is the recognition of the importance of the local level. According to Sellers et al. (2020), studying the local level is essential for several reasons – primarily because, in addition to enabling an analysis

of governance relations beyond the macro-level dynamics between state and society, it helps to understand local governance institutions and the decentralization dynamics and actions they undertake. Sellers et al. (2020) further note that, especially in developed countries, the local level can represent a significant share of the gross domestic product, which implies greater decentralization and autonomy in policymaking.

Moreover, the local level can be decisive in interpreting national politics from other scales and can facilitate political and social participation across those scales. Therefore, it is also essential to understand the interrelation between local and national levels, as the local level contributes to national governance and reflects the complexity of institutions, which may have distinct production processes or exert influence over local policymaking. Another justification lies in the need to understand the relationship between supralocal and local institutions, as well as how their political dynamics and instruments operate.

3. BETWEEN THE NATIONAL AND THE LOCAL SPHERES: PUBLIC POLICIES FOR RACIAL EQUALITY

Regarding racial equality policies, governance dynamics involve multiple levels of government, distinct objectives, complex institutional arrangements, and a variety of instruments. These dynamics may also foster collaboration between the state and civil society.

Given this, the following subsections will present the instruments and mechanisms of governance related to racial equality policies at both the federal and local levels. To clarify the multilevel relationship, we will examine these instruments based on the experiences of the city of São Paulo and the broader Brazilian federal context.

3.1 Policies for racial equality in the federal context: context, instruments, and national settings

In Brazil, the 20th century was marked by strong organization and activism from Black movements (Nascimento, 2004; Domingues, 2007). Examples include the Black Experimental Theater (TEN⁴), founded by Abdias do Nascimento; the Union of Colored Men (UHC⁵); and the growing openness of labor unions to addressing racial issues – all of which were crucial for introducing and consolidating the topic of racial equality on the national political agenda (Nascimento, 2004; Passos & Nogueira, 2014; Pires, 2018; Silva & Teixeira, 2019).

Although legislation such as the Afonso Arinos Bill of 1951 aimed to address racial discrimination, its lack of concrete impact reflected institutional neglect of the issue (Campos,

⁴ This acronym refers to the Portuguese term Teatro Experimental do Negro (TEN).

⁵ This acronym refers to the Portuguese term União dos Homens de Cor (UHC).

1951). Only during Brazil's re-democratization – particularly during the National Constituent Assembly (ANC⁶) of 1987-1988 – did the racial issue gain unprecedented significance, mainly because, after decades of activism, Black mobilization was able to participate in the political redesign of the new constitution. At that moment, racism and racial discrimination became part of the ANC's discussions (Gay & Quintans, 2014; Silva, 2019). However, the delayed inclusion of racial issues in the Brazilian governmental agenda reflected the institutional erasure of the topic, which only resurfaced with the openness provided by the 1988 Brazilian Constitution (Silva, 2019).

In this context, during the Constituent Assembly, Black social movements succeeded in intensifying the debate on racial issues. They produced important documentation submitted to the ANC that conveyed some of the historical demands of Black populations, such as the recognition of quilombola lands and the criminalization of racism (Silva, 2019).

Part of this erasure stems from a long-standing commitment to the idea of racial democracy (Freyre, 1933), which sought to convince the international community that Brazil was a society characterized by harmonious relations among three racial groups – Black, Indigenous, and White. This notion of racial democracy was challenged by both Black movements and prominent academic figures, as reflected in the rich scholarly and activist work of Lélia Gonzalez and Abdias do Nascimento, and especially through the repertoires shaped by the political trajectory of Black feminist activism in Brazil (Rodrigues & Freitas, 2021).

In this sense, since the 1988 Federal Constitution included and recognized race as an element of the Brazilian political agenda, the responsibility to formulate and implement policies and actions to combat racism has become an obligation of the Brazilian state. The approach to this issue also became a shared responsibility among federal entities. The federal government plays a central role in formulating and implementing racial equality policies at the national level.

From the government's perspective, two key moments can be considered milestones in federal efforts to raise awareness of the need to create racial equality policies in Brazil. The first was the creation of the Interministerial Working Group⁷ (GTI) in 1995, during Fernando Henrique Cardoso's administration, to discuss race-related issues. The GTI was a direct outcome of the Zumbi dos Palmares March held on November 20, 1995, in Brasília, which challenged the rhetoric of racial democracy and paved the way for a new approach to racial issues in Brazil – this time focused on developing affirmative action and racial equality policies (Silva, 2019).

⁶ This acronym refers to the Portuguese term Assembleia Nacional Constituinte (ANC).

⁷ In Portuguese: *Grupo de Trabalho Interministerial* (GTI).

The second moment of governmental openness was the creation, in 2003, of the Special Secretariat for Policies to Promote Racial Equality (SEPPIR⁸), a body linked to the Presidency of the Republic tasked with effectively formulating and implementing racial equality policies. In both cases, these institutional mechanisms emerged from pressure exerted by Black civil society, Black social movements, and the growing prominence of racial discourse on both national and international stages. As a result, the issue gained greater visibility, began to be addressed programmatically, and became increasingly present in national political debate and the public sphere (Melo et al., 2010).

Through robust dialogue between civil society and the government, SEPPIR played a vital role in the development of the Statute of Racial Equality (Law 12.288/2010), a legal framework approved after ten years in Congress and subject to intense debate throughout its legislative process (Silva, 2012). With the Statute, the effectiveness of anti-discrimination legislation was strengthened, as its enactment encouraged the creation of more consistent institutional mechanisms to combat racial discrimination.

Although the Statute promotes national coordination of instruments based on initiatives from the federal executive branch – especially due to the centrality of the National Policy for the Promotion of Racial Equality (PNPIR⁹) and the possibility of transferring resources for subnational implementation – it also reinforces that state, district, and municipal executive branches may complement the regulation with their own initiatives. Therefore, the Statute fosters multilevel governance.

An example of this is Article 49 of the Statute, which establishes that the federal executive branch shall develop the National Plan for the Promotion of Racial Equality, including the goals, principles, and guidelines for implementing the PNPIR. This task is accompanied by other responsibilities, such as implementing, coordinating, evaluating, and monitoring the policy, as well as organizing, articulating, and coordinating the National System for Racial Equality Policies (Sinapir¹⁰) (Brasil, 2010).

Although the Statute has strengthened the legal and regulatory framework and encouraged actions that federated entities should prioritize, its application is not automatic. Among the elements necessary for a policy to yield significant results, two key dynamics can be identified: political will and incentive. These elements are subjective and relate, among other things, to the commitment to advancing a given agenda and the technical-political support

⁸ This acronym refers to the Portuguese term *Secretaria Especial de Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial* (SEPPIR).

⁹ In Portuguese: *Política Nacional de Promoção da Igualdade Racial* (PNPIR).

¹⁰ In Portuguese: *Sistema Nacional de Promoção da Igualdade Racial* (SINAPIR).

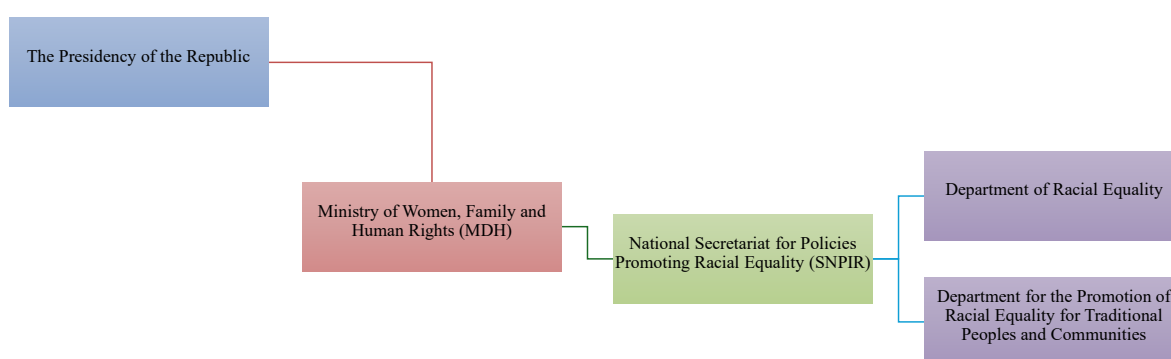
provided by the executive branch. Incentives, on the other hand, involve budgetary instruments and the technical mechanisms created to operationalize the policy.

Given these considerations, at the national level, during Jair Bolsonaro's administration (2019-2022), the institutional dynamics surrounding racial issues underwent restructuring, marked by a lack of political will and instrumental incentives. In practical terms, the racial agenda began to feel the effects of the governmental shift more acutely.

First, while previous administrations had addressed the issue through National Secretariats with ministerial status, beginning with Michel Temer's government (2016-2018), the trend was to downgrade the portfolio, reducing it to a single secretariat within the Ministry of Human Rights. Under Bolsonaro, SEPPIR was again repositioned, becoming a subunit of the National Secretariat for Citizenship, an agency within the Ministry of Women, Family, and Human Rights.

The following figure illustrates the portfolio structure under the Bolsonaro administration.

Figure 1 – Organization of the racial equality portfolio in the Bolsonaro government (2019 to 2022)



Source: prepared by the authors based on the federal government's organizational chart.

This reallocation elucidates the Bolsonaro administration's decision to deprioritize the issue of racial equality. In this regard, the lack of interest is reflected in actions and instruments that diminish the issue's significance and minimize concerns by formulating public policies that merely touch on the subject.

This dynamic is further exemplified by the ideological shift at the Palmares Foundation (FCP¹¹) (Minella, 2020), a cultural institution established in 1988 that has historically worked alongside the Black movement to promote the recognition and appreciation of Afro-Brazilian culture (Paula & Ayala, 2023). However, from 2019 to 2022, the Foundation experienced an

¹¹ This acronym refers to the Portuguese term *Fundação Cultural Palmares* (FCP).

ideological rupture under the leadership of Sérgio Camargo, a Black conservative political figure who advocates for Brazil's far-right agenda.

While heading the FCP, Camargo sought to advance a conservative platform aligned with the radical right, aiming to dismantle the progress made by Black movements. He also attempted to revise the country's racial history in ways that delegitimize anti-racist discourse, undermine Black identity, erase the legacy of slavery, and downplay the anti-racist struggle in Brazil. This phenomenon is referred to as the revisionist logic of counterpublic Black discourse (Paula & Ayala, 2023).

Another indicator of this ideological shift was the reduction of SEPPIR's budget, which began 2019 with 69.5% less funding than in 2018¹² and ended 2022 with a 97% budget cut¹³. This budgetary contraction underscored the dismantling trend, a central issue analyzed by the Institute for Socioeconomic Studies (Inesc) in a study evaluating federal budget data related to social rights, urban equity, gender, race, and childhood (Inesc, 2021). In its analysis of the impact of budget cuts on racial equality, the Institute notes that since 2015, policies promoting racial equality have faced reductions in funding, but especially since 2019, they have also suffered from a depletion of concrete actions (Inesc, 2021).

This pattern of budget cuts aligns with the priorities outlined in the Multi-Year Plan (PPA¹⁴) 2020–2023, in which the Bolsonaro administration signaled from the outset that racial issues would not be a central focus. As Ursula Peres (2018) points out, the PPA is a key instrument within Brazil's budgeting system, present at all three levels of government, and serves as a medium-term planning tool for public expenditures. Thus, when the PPA excludes certain social groups, it directly affects the allocation of resources for targeted programs (Inesc, 2024).

In this regard, the PPA under Jair Bolsonaro's administration demonstrated minimal investment in racial equality, resulting in the exclusion of Black and quilombola populations from the budget planning process (Inesc, 2024). This outcome directly impacted the possibility of implementing a race-sensitive budget during the four years of his administration.

As the name suggests, a race-sensitive budget emphasizes the need for public budgeting to address the racial inequalities present in society. In this sense, the budget cannot be viewed as neutral; it is a tool that reflects a government's priorities and political choices (Peres, 2018). Therefore, a race-sensitive budget makes racial inequalities visible, as the allocation of public resources reveals whether such distribution perpetuates or combats inequality. It can also enhance

¹² Silva, Vitória Régia da. *Futuro da Secretaria Nacional de Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial preocupa movimento negro*. 2018. Available at: <<http://www.generonumero.media/futuro-da-secretaria-nacional-de-politicas-de-promocao-da-igualdade-racial-preocupa-movimento-negro/>>. Accessed in 2024.

¹³ Final Report from the Government Transition Office. Available at: <<https://gabinetedatransicao.com.br/noticias/relatorio-final-do-gabinete-de-transicao-governamental/>>.

¹⁴ In Portuguese: *Plano Plurianual*.

the effectiveness of cross-cutting and intersectoral public policies and promote social justice (Fundação Tide Setúbal & A Tenda, 2022). However, the discussion around public budgets and inequality extends beyond race alone, as analytical approaches also address gender disparities and the intersections between race and gender (Zigoni, 2020; Rodrigues, 2020; Xavier, 2020; Farranha & Silva, 2021).

Based on this, policies that reflect liberal-democratic backsliding – such as deprioritizing or disregarding issues related to the promotion of racial equality – can be identified through reduced resource allocation, diminished staffing, and the influence of a new ideological order on administrative culture, which compromises bureaucratic neutrality (Bauer et al., 2021).

Regarding the ideological dimension, since the 2018 electoral campaigns – which resulted in the victory of Jair Bolsonaro’s anti-minority and anti-social participation agenda – it was evident that the federal government would undergo an ideological shift in the years that followed. Evidence of this shift can be seen in the process of deinstitutionalizing councils and committees whose institutional frameworks were fragile and posed challenges to Bolsonaro’s governmental agenda (Bezerra et al., 2024); the dismantling of social control policies and practices (Teixeira et al., 2024); and, most notably, the neglect of issues related to gender, sexuality, and race (Franco & Filho, 2020; Peixoto et al., 2023).

Thus, democratic backsliding and the hollowing out of actions can be illustrated through three main mechanisms of dismantling:

1. Institutional changes that erode the theme;
2. Budget cuts that affect the development of instruments and the formulation, implementation, and coordination of public policies;
3. Noncompliance with regulatory frameworks governing racial issues.

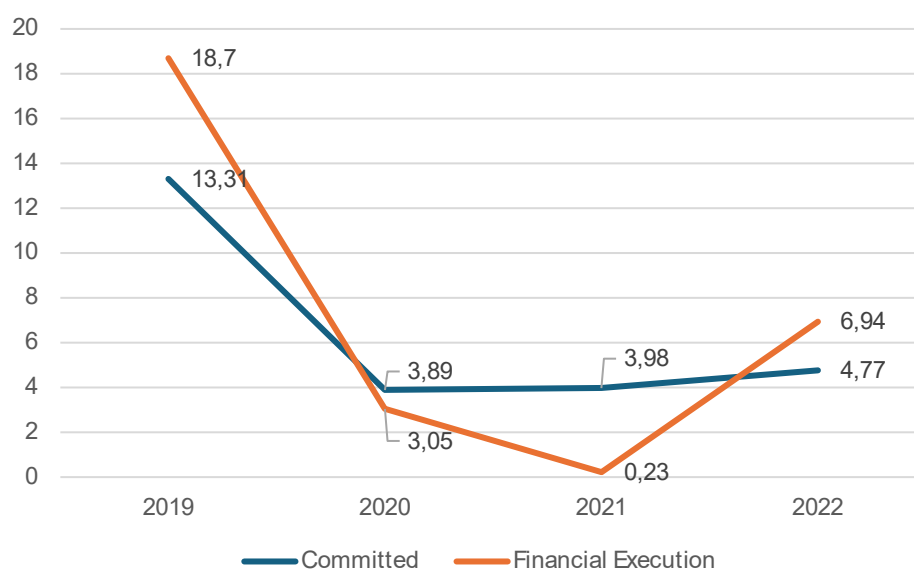
During Jair Bolsonaro’s term in office, the institutional dynamics of the federal government undermined even the public debate on racial equality policies. As a result, the fight against racism was excluded from the Multi-Year Plan (PPA) 2020–2023, which harmed not only the organization and development of racial equality instruments but also extinguished initiatives previously included in Program 2034: Combating Racism and Promoting Racial Equality. This program was absorbed and downgraded to a subset of the budgetary actions under Program 5034: Protecting Life, Strengthening the Family, Promoting and Defending Human Rights for All (Inesc, 2023, 2024).

Another manifestation of institutional changes detrimental to the theme is the weak and nearly absent performance of the National Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality (SNPIR¹⁵), which was reallocated to a lower-ranking body and subunit within the Ministry

¹⁵ In Portuguese: *Secretaria Nacional de Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial* (SNPIR).

of Women, Family, and Human Rights (MMFDH¹⁶). This second dismantling mechanism is reflected in the Secretariat's reallocation to a subunit within the MMFDH, accompanied by budget cuts that affected the development of instruments and the formulation, implementation, and coordination of public policies. Figure 2 presents the budget for racial equality from 2019 to 2022.

Figure 2 – Budget for racial equality, MMFDH, from 2019 to 2022, in millions of real¹⁷



Source: graphic from Inesc (2023), verified by the authors through consultation of Siga Brasil.

Between 2019 and 2022, the Ministry of Women, Family, and Human Rights (MMFDH) was led by Minister Damares Alves, a political and religious figure whose work favored evangelical sectors and rhetoric opposing minority rights. Her leadership ideologically transformed the ministry by introducing elements considered to reflect traditional Christian values into its institutional framework. As such, the ideological discourse within the agency echoed the phrase, “*The state is secular, but this minister is terribly Christian*” (Franco & Maranhão, 2020).

The attempt to impose Christian values in the public sphere also reinforced a binary and essentialist view of gender, exemplified by another well-known phrase coined by Damares Alves: “*Boys wear blue and girls wear pink.*” This stance opposed what the minister referred to as gender ideology, which she portrayed as a destructive force against Christian values and the traditional family (Franco & Maranhão, 2020).

¹⁶ This acronym refers to the Portuguese term *Ministério da Mulher, da Família e dos Direitos Humanos* (MMFDH).

¹⁷ Brazilian currency (Real).

Despite the continued existence of the National Secretariat for Policies to Promote Racial Equality (SNPIR), its performance was marked by timidity and insufficient resource allocation, undermining the effectiveness of the guidelines established by the 1988 Federal Constitution and the Statute of Racial Equality (Law No. 12.288 of July 20, 2010) regarding the promotion of equity and the reduction of racial inequalities (Inesc, 2023).

A concrete indication of this situation is shown in the graph above, which depicts the evolution of financial execution from 2019 to 2022, revealing a sharp decline in investments earmarked for this policy. In 2019, the amount authorized for this policy was R\$13.3 million, consistent with the previous multi-year plan. However, in 2020, the authorized amount was significantly reduced to R\$3.8 million – a cut of R\$9.5 million (a 70.7% decrease) – with actual financial execution totaling only R\$3 million (Inesc, 2023).

In the following year, 2021, the allocation of resources remained nearly the same, with an authorized amount of R\$3.9 million. However, financial execution was alarmingly low, totaling only R\$231.1 thousand, equivalent to just 5.81% of the authorized amount. In 2022, there was a slight increase in the authorized amount, reaching R\$4.7 million, and financial execution also rose to R\$6.9 million, of which R\$3.1 million refers to outstanding payables (Inesc, 2023).

In general terms, the MMFDH should promote three main types of instruments that extend beyond the national sphere and reach subnational entities:

1. Promoting institutional strengthening of state and municipal bodies to combat racism and advance racial equality – stimulated through the National System for the Promotion of Racial Equality (SINAPIR);
2. Fostering affirmative action across the national territory;
3. Ensuring the operation of the National Council for the Promotion of Racial Equality (CNPIR¹⁸), which shares its budget with the National Council of Traditional Peoples and Communities (CNPCT¹⁹).

However, considering that in 2020 the budget was zeroed out and in 2021 its financial execution was more than seven times lower than in 2019, the national scenario reflects a dismantling trend in these policies. This abrupt budget reduction raises concerns about how – and whether – subnational levels have addressed the issue, particularly in creating and implementing instruments to promote racial equality. This will be the focus of the following subsection, which examines the case of the Municipality of São Paulo between 2019 and 2022.

Despite the dismantling observed during the four years of the Bolsonaro administration, the election of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in 2022 reignited hope for institutional

¹⁸ In Portuguese: *Conselho Nacional de Promoção da Igualdade Racial* (CNPIR).

¹⁹ In Portuguese: *Conselho Nacional dos Povos e Comunidades Tradicionais* (CNPCT).

reconstruction of racial equity within the federal government. As a consequence of Bolsonaro's mismanagement, the new Lula administration began 2023 with a zero-budget allocation, as no financial resources were planned in the 2023 Annual Budget Law (PLOA²⁰), and therefore, no funds were earmarked for a Ministry of Racial Equality in the Annual Budget Law (LOA²¹) (Inesc, 2024).

Nevertheless, despite this challenging scenario, the Ministry of Racial Equality (MIR²²) managed to allocate R\$68.8 million of the R\$70.8 million authorized by Lula's administration. Of this amount, R\$30.5 million was disbursed, representing 43% of the total allocation (Inesc, 2024).

It is also important to note that, for the first time, the issue of racial equality was addressed through a dedicated ministry, rather than merely as an executive secretariat linked to the Presidency, as it had been during Lula's first two terms in the early 2000s and during Dilma Rousseff's administration (2010–2016).

3.2. Policies for racial equality in the local context: the case of the city of São Paulo

In the city of São Paulo, the issue of racial equality has undergone a long and uneven trajectory within institutional settings. When examining municipal administrations that have addressed racial equity, one of the earliest examples can be found during the government of Luiza Erundina, who served as mayor from 1989 to 1993. During her administration, initial efforts were made to institutionalize a municipal agency focused on issues affecting the Black population – a topic strongly advocated by the city's Black movements.

Although racial matters were present in Erundina's government from the beginning of her term in 1989, they were only formally codified into law in 1992 with the passage of Bill No. 11,321/1992, which established the Special Coordination for Black Affairs²³ (CONE). This agency aimed to institutionalize some of the demands of São Paulo's Black population, albeit in a limited form due to modest outcomes. CONE was linked to the Municipal Citizenship and Human Rights Advisory Office within the Municipal Government Secretariat and was tasked with formulating, coordinating, monitoring, proposing, and implementing policies directed at the city's Black population (São Paulo, 1992).

²⁰ The Annual Budget Proposal (PLOA) is a draft law presented by the President of the Republic that estimates revenue and sets expenditure for the following year.

²¹ The Annual Budget Bill, known in Brazil as *Lei Orçamentária Anual* (LOA), is a key piece of Brazilian budget legislation. It stems from the national planning process established in the Multi-Year Plan and specifies how much money will be allocated and for what purposes over the course of a year.

²² This acronym comes from the Portuguese term *Ministério da Igualdade Racial* (MIR).

²³ In Portuguese: *Coordenadoria Especial do Negro* (CONE).

In the subsequent administration of Paulo Maluf (1993-1996), the issue lost visibility, and critics accused the mayor of contributing to what is now referred to as the genocide of the Black population (Folha, 1996). During the administration of Celso Pitta (1997-2001) – the first Black mayor elected in the city – there was no significant support for the development of policies or initiatives targeting the Black population. This lack of engagement led the Unified Black Movement to support Erundina in the 1996 municipal election (Folha, 1996).

In 2001, the law that created CONE was amended during the administration of then-mayor Marta Suplicy (2001-2004), linking the agency directly to the Municipal Government Secretariat and renaming it the Special Coordination for Black Population Affairs. Despite the name change, the structure and responsibilities established by the 1992 law were maintained (São Paulo, 2001).

From 2005 to 2012 – a period encompassing the administrations of José Serra (from 2005 to March 31, 2006) and Gilberto Kassab (from March 31, 2006, to 2012) – the Special Coordination for Black Population Affairs remained part of the bureaucratic-administrative structure of City Hall. However, it was only during Fernando Haddad's administration (2013-2017) that the issue was elevated to the status of a municipal secretariat.

At the launch of the Municipal Secretariat for Racial Equality (SMIR), held on January 31, 2013, the event featured the presence of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who had left the presidency in 2010. The occasion emphasized the need for an institutionalized approach to the racial equality agenda – one that would consolidate the efforts initiated in 1989 with the creation of CONE during Luiza Erundina's administration (Prefeitura de São Paulo, 2013).

In addition to establishing a dedicated secretariat to address racial equity demands, Haddad's administration also created the Council for the Promotion of Racial Equality (Compir²⁴). This council reflected the relationship between civil society and the state in formulating, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating local racial equality policies (Prefeitura de São Paulo, 2016).

In the subsequent administration of João Doria (from 2017 to April 6, 2018), the issue of racial equality was once again downgraded to a sub-agency. It was placed under the Municipal Secretariat for Human Rights as the Coordination for the Promotion of Racial Equality (CPIR). This structure remained in place during the administrations of Bruno Covas (from April 6, 2018, to May 16, 2021) and Ricardo Nunes (from May 16, 2021, to the present).

This historical background helps us understand that, despite the limited development of policies within the governmental sphere, there was a persistent social demand that, to some extent, reverberated within public institutions. In the state of São Paulo, Black activism has a

²⁴ This acronym comes from the Portuguese term *Conselho de Promoção da Igualdade Racial* (Compir).

long history, beginning in the early 20th century with the Black press – newspapers published in the city starting in 1915 that aimed to denounce racial discrimination. This activism also led to the creation of the Brazilian Black Front (FNB²⁵) (Alberti & Pereira, 2006). Emerging from society and reaching the governmental sphere, this activism continued throughout the 20th century, led by Black social movements, intellectuals, and activists who challenged the notion of racial democracy and advocated for the genuine inclusion of the Black population (Guimarães, 2004; Andrade, 2015).

While the establishment of CONE represented a partial step toward institutionalizing racial equality policies, the creation and subsequent dismantling of the Municipal Secretariat for Racial Equality under the Haddad administration highlights the fragile nature of these structures. Although such organizational frameworks have been established, their continuity and effectiveness depend on sustained political will and adequate resource allocation. A closer examination of budgetary data is essential to assess the extent to which racial equality has been prioritized by the city.

In this regard, although the data has temporal limitations, budgetary figures are not merely technical instruments – they also reflect political decisions that reveal a government's priorities (Peres, 2018). Thus, the distribution of resources exposes the political commitments undertaken by public administration and whether issues intersecting with inequality, such as gender and race, are meaningfully reflected in the budget (Peres, 2018; Xavier, 2020).

Although no budgetary data are available for municipal administrations prior to 2003, the publicly accessible data on the São Paulo City Hall website – covering the period from 2003 to 2024 – shows that, at least since 2009, there has been a cross-cutting allocation of race-sensitive budgeting. One example is the R\$150,000 allocated to the *Risco e Rabisco* Project, in partnership with the Union of Blacks for Equality, using resources from the Municipal Social Assistance Fund.

As noted, especially from 2010 onward, following the approval of the Statute of Racial Equality (Law No. 12,288), the issue of racial equality has become more consistently integrated into the bureaucratic-administrative structure of City Hall. In compliance with the Statute, the regulation of racial equality in the Municipality of São Paulo includes a municipal plan issued by each new administration, aiming to align with and complement national initiatives.

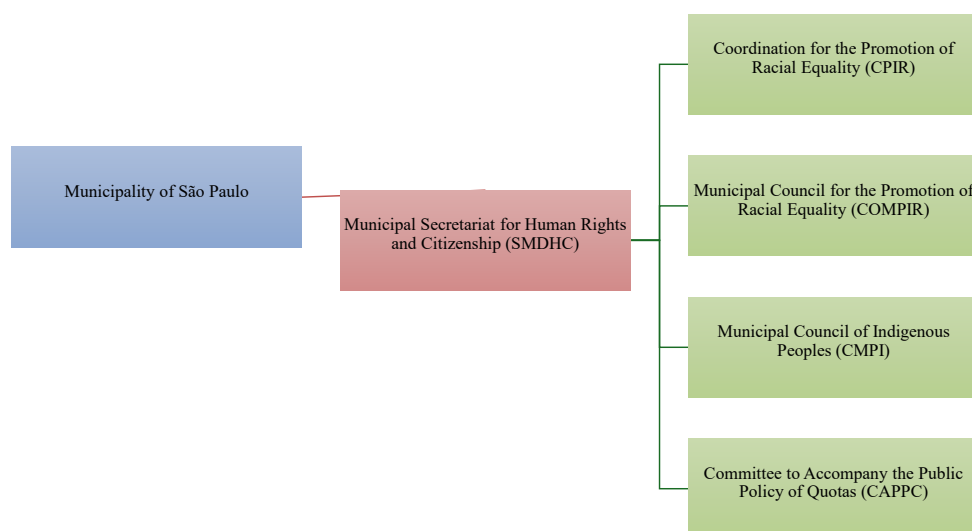
In 2018, then-Mayor Bruno Covas enacted Decree No. 58.526/2018, which established the Municipal Plan for the Promotion of Racial Equality (PLAMPIR). Implemented in the city of São Paulo, the plan addresses not only Black populations but also Indigenous communities.

²⁵ In Portuguese: *Frente Negra Brasileira* (FNB).

This regulatory instrument outlines proposals for government action to promote racial equality and includes a single annex detailing the implementation pathways.

The municipal decree also administratively organizes the racial equality portfolio within the Municipal Secretariat of Human Rights and Citizenship, as illustrated in Figure 03 below.

Figure 3 – Organization of the racial equality portfolio in the Municipal Executive Branch of São Paulo



Source: prepared by the authors based on Municipal Decree No. 58,526 of November 23, 2018, and Decree No. 58,410 of September 13, 2018.

Despite the existence of councils, the Coordination for the Promotion of Racial Equality (CPIR) is the body within the Municipal Secretariat for Human Rights and Citizenship (SMDHC) responsible for implementing racial equality initiatives. Municipal Decree No. 58.526/2018 established the Municipal Council for the Promotion of Racial Equality (COMPIR), created during Haddad's administration, to evaluate and monitor the implementation of PLAMPIR.

Therefore, CPIR is responsible for coordinating and institutionally articulating the actions outlined in the municipal plan. The instruments included in PLAMPIR are organized around ten structural axes, which address three types of actions within the subsystem of racial equality public policies: evaluative actions, repressive actions, and recognition actions. Each axis includes goals and initiatives that must be pursued through a governance dynamic involving government bureaucrats, organized civil society, market entities, and civil society at large.

To carry out its activities, the Municipal Secretariat for Human Rights and Citizenship receives an annual budget defined by the Budget Guidelines Law. This budget is internally allocated according to government priorities to meet the goals set by City Hall. Among the targets of the local executive for 2021 and 2024 are Goal 19.C, which aims to establish and

maintain the Committee for the Prevention and Combat of Institutional Racism within the Secretariat, and Goal 19.B, which seeks to certify 80 private law organizations with the Seal of Racial Equality.

As these goals are directly tied to the availability and allocation of resources, the table below presents details of SMDHC's budget from 2019 to 2022.

Table 1– Budget of the Municipal Secretariat for Human Rights and Citizenship of the City of São Paulo between 2019 and 2022

YEAR	BUDGET	UPDATED	COMMITTED	LIQUIDATED
2019	R\$ 87.175.473,00	R\$ 69.853.165,12	R\$ 50.582.588,01	R\$ 50.282.588,01
2020	R\$ 108.887.294,00	R\$ 146.201.403,95	R\$ 113.344.388,26	R\$ 113.344.388,26
2021	R\$ 117.888.004,00	R\$ 295.648.786,90	R\$ 260.136.330,87	R\$ 228.509.059,90
2022	R\$ 144.196.707,00	R\$ 322.256.925,26	R\$ 286.377.576,61	R\$ 235.653.296,47

Source: data retrieved from the official website of the Municipality of São Paulo²⁶.

Although the data above indicates that the SMDHC has budgetary self-sufficiency to meet the goals set by City Hall and, therefore, to operate actively, only the expenditures directly allocated to racial equality instruments can demonstrate whether the issue has received the attention outlined in the Plan and whether it continues to be prioritized on the municipal agenda.

In this regard, it is important to note that the Municipal Secretariat for Human Rights and Citizenship encompasses two types of expenditures specifically directed toward racial issues, which can therefore be considered race-sensitive budgeting. These are the amounts allocated to: (i) Maintenance and Operation of Public Facilities for the Promotion of Racial Equality, and (ii) Policies, Programs, and Actions for the Promotion of Racial Equality.

The budget allocated to the first item – hereafter referred to as *Maintenance* – covers operational costs such as personnel expenses, materials, event organization, support centers, and service units. The second item – referred to as *Policies* – focuses on developing programs and initiatives ranging from educational campaigns to training programs and related activities.

Examining the budget allocated to these two categories is important because the amounts assigned to them help assess the quality of spending – an aspect that goes beyond simply identifying what is or is not a priority. In other words, while it is essential to understand what is prioritized, analyzing how the issue is addressed is equally relevant. To evaluate this, it

²⁶ Available at: <https://www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/cidade/secretarias/direitos_humanos/acesso_a_informacao/index.php?p=178713>. Access in 2022.

is necessary to map the government's allocative choices (Pereira, 2022) – that is, the decisions made regarding where funds are directed, which must take into account the social impact the budget will have on citizens' lives, particularly in terms of promoting social justice and reducing inequalities.

Another important point is that the amounts presented in the PPA are not necessarily executed, as it is a medium-term planning instrument that defines only guidelines, objectives, and goals for public administration over a four-year period (Pereira, 2022). Nevertheless, it is important to consider what the PPA outlines, as it provides insight into how government priorities are shaped and helps assess whether there is coherence between what is planned and what is executed (Xavier, 2020; Pereira, 2022).

Thus, the PPA will not be evaluated in isolation. Alongside the budgetary figures from the PPA, we will present a table with the executed amounts for *Maintenance* and *Policies* from 2019 to 2022. The following table presents the Multi-Year Plan budget from 2019 to 2022.

Table 2 – Budget in Real in two Multi-Year Plans – 2018–2021 and the first year of the 2022–2025 Plan – for racial equality initiatives by the Municipal Secretariat of Human Rights and Citizenship, São Paulo City Hall

Budget Action	PPA 2018-2021			PPA 2022-2025
	2019	2020	2021	2022
Maintenance and Operation of Public Facilities for the Promotion of Racial Equality	3.426.000	3.396.000	3.396.000	2.500.000
Policies, Programs, and Actions for the Promotion of Racial Equality	889.352	1.477.905	1.219.682	626.000
Total for the Year	4.315.352	4.873.905	4.615.682	3.126.000
Variation	-27,9309	12,94339	-5,298072	-32,27436379

Source: prepared by the authors based on the 2018–2021 and 2022–2025 Multi-Year Plans of the São Paulo City Hall.

The data presented in the table suggest that, although there was a budget expansion in 2020 – with a 12.94% increase compared to 2019 – the following years showed a significant downward trend, which may affect the sustained attention given to the topic by City Hall. In this regard, there is a notable reduction in the budget planning of the PPA 2022-2025, which begins its first year with a 32.27% decrease compared to the final year of the PPA 2018-2021. This shift may indicate that, while actions continue, there is a trend toward re-evaluating the

city's budget priorities, which could eventually lead to the discontinuation or dismantling of local racial equality policies.

The second table outlines how *Maintenance* and *Policies* were treated in terms of executed expenditures. It also presents the budgeted amount, the committed amount, the paid amount, and the outstanding liabilities. The updated budget is useful for analysis because it reveals the actual variation between the PPA projections and the amounts effectively allocated for specific expenditures. Additionally, we present the total updated values for each action, reflecting the sum of all revised budgeted amounts and helping to clarify what the government estimates it will spend within a defined period.

Regarding committed amounts, the table is divided into *net committed* and *total committed*:

- The *net committed* amount refers to what has actually become a government obligation, excluding canceled or annulled amounts.
- The *total committed* amount includes all commitments, already accounting for any cancellations or annulments.

We also present the *paid amount*, which is the total effectively disbursed by the government to settle committed expenditures. This distinction is important because committed amounts are not necessarily paid. Finally, to determine whether the government paid within the fiscal year or deferred payment to future periods, we include a column for *outstanding liabilities* – amounts committed at a specific financial moment but not paid by year-end. We also show the total *outstanding liabilities*, which represent the sum of all unpaid commitments yet to be settled (Xavier, 2020).

Table 3 – Race-sensitive executed budget in Real from 2019 to 2022, based on updated, committed, paid, and outstanding amounts from the Municipal Secretariat of Human Rights and Citizenship of São Paulo City Hall

Year	Type of Expenditure	Updated Budget	Total Revised	Net Committed	Total Committed	Amount Paid	Total Paid	Outstanding Liabilities	Total Outstanding
2019	Maintenance	1.307.426,96	1.497.344,74	1.221.068,96	1.303.695,64	1.091.368,11	1.143.994,79	0,00	0,00
	Policies	189.917,78		82.626,68		52.626,68		0,00	
2020	Maintenance	1.900.554,42	2.480.654,32	1.255.617,41	2.050.475,60	1.103.956,35	1.144.884,35	704.491,36	704.491,36
	Policies	580.099,90		794.858,19		40.928,00		0,00	
2021	Maintenance	1.857.760,00	2.052.610,00	1.029.207,49	1.137.247,37	960.843,17	1.061.883,05	828.552,51	914.368,51
	Policies	194.850,00		108.039,88		101.039,88		85.816,00	
2022	Maintenance	3.004.507,60	3.321.052,20	1.833.844,23	1.852.494,23	1.355.653,60	1.374.303,60	1.770.662,84	2.068.557,44
	Policies	316.544,60		18.650,00		18.650,00		297.894,60	

Source: prepared by the authors based on public budget data from São Paulo City Hall.

Regarding the updated budget and total revised figures, we observe a significant increase from 2019 to 2022 in the budget allocated to *Maintenance*, as the amount more than doubled during this period – from R\$1.3 million in 2019 to R\$3 million in 2022. Similarly, the updated budget for *Policies* also grew substantially, rising from R\$189,000 in 2019 to R\$316,000 in 2022. When combining the amounts related to *Maintenance* and *Policies*, these figures are important because they highlight a noticeable discrepancy between the planned values and the amounts available for execution. Only in 2022 did the executed amount exceed the planned amount in the PPA, reaching R\$3.3 million compared to the PPA projection of R\$3.1 million.

With regard to committed amounts, the low figures allocated to *Policies* stand out, as they are generally much lower than those allocated to *Maintenance*. In 2022, the amount committed to *Policies* was just R\$18,650 – an 82.65% decrease from 2021. This amount was spent on direct applications: R\$15,400 for Cultural, Artistic, Scientific, Sports, and Other Awards, and R\$3,250 for consumables. However, no further information is available regarding which awards were granted or what types of materials were produced, purchased, or developed.

Observing the amounts paid for the *Maintenance* action is equally relevant, as they far exceed those for *Policies*. The highest payment occurred in 2022, when R\$1.3 million was spent on *Maintenance*. Of this amount, R\$1.1 million was allocated to transfers to non-profit private institutions for services rendered by third parties, and R\$214,000 was allocated for labor leasing and other unspecified third-party services.

Regarding outstanding payments, there has been a significant increase since 2020, particularly for *Maintenance* expenses, which reached R\$1.7 million in 2022. This suggests that committed funds are not being effectively settled within the annual fiscal period, potentially leading to the discontinuation of programs and initiatives focused on racial equality in the city of São Paulo. On the other hand, examining the outstanding payments for *Policies* reveals a striking figure for 2022, as these unpaid commitments were nearly 16 times greater than the amount disbursed – implying a policy blackout on this issue during that year. This elevated figure may reflect challenges beyond the scope of local policy continuity, pointing to the need to consider constraints arising from bureaucratic inefficiencies or management priorities.

However, this data indicates that, despite continuity, racial equality policies require sustained efforts to ensure that financial resources are effectively allocated to the creation and maintenance of local programs and initiatives. The mere existence of funding does not guarantee that the issue is being prioritized. We can observe that racial equality is present on the local government's agenda. Even though the Secretariat has a multi-million budget – which even exceeded the national budget of the Ministry of Human Rights under Jair Bolsonaro's federal administration – the availability of funds requires civil society oversight to ensure that resources are effectively applied to this cause.

In this regard, it is important not only that resources are available, but also that they are effectively utilized to support the development and implementation of policies promoting racial equality at the local level. The data presented suggests that, while there may be intentions to prioritize racial equality and maintain its continuity despite the dismantling of federal policies, these intentions are not consistently reflected in financial commitments and expenditures. This highlights a gap between what remains on the political agenda and the actual allocation of resources.

Furthermore, the data suggests that this situation calls for a more robust framework to monitor and evaluate financial flows related to racial equality initiatives. Such a framework would help ensure that the actions undertaken by the Human Rights Secretariat are aligned with the commitments outlined in the municipal agenda, which often reflects the aspirations of segments of the population. In this context, the continuity of racial equality efforts at the local level must also guarantee the involvement of civil society in setting priorities. Although

examining the relationship between civil society and the state was beyond the scope of this paper, we believe that a more direct relationship between the two would enable local government to better demonstrate its commitment to fostering an inclusive environment – one in which racial equality is not merely a topic of perennial and cross-cutting discussion in the budget, but a priority reflected in intersectional decisions and concrete budgetary actions (Farranha & Silva, 2021).

In this sense, the challenge of multi-level governance lies in coordinating public, economic, and social actors across different spheres of government. It is therefore crucial to consider the articulation between public sector bodies and secretariats at various levels, avoiding overlapping governance structures that could hinder the effective coordination of policies.

In this context, within the debate on multi-level governance, local power – with its similarities and particularities – is reinforced as the space where the effectiveness of government actions becomes visible. Since the 1988 Constitution, municipalities have been recognized as federative entities in Brazil, helping to emphasize the importance of local interests.

In this paper, the municipality of São Paulo stands out, particularly due to its distinct financial and political autonomy, which contributes to its fiscal and administrative capacity. A large portion of its revenue comes from its own tax collection, meaning it is not necessarily dependent on federal transfers for policy development. This autonomy is evident in the city's budget data, as most resources originate from the Municipal Fund, which is primarily financed by municipal tax revenue. In other words, São Paulo enjoys decision-making autonomy at the local level – a direct consequence of high tax collection in the country's most populous and economically powerful city.

In this regard, although racial equality policies have been dismantled at the national level, as shown in the previous subsection, the scenario in the municipality of São Paulo is somewhat different. Data collected from the city's budget also suggests a pattern of continuity, albeit with low-quality expenditures allocated to race-sensitive budgets. As previously noted, this may be linked to the persistence of these policies due to the municipality's budgetary autonomy, although mere continuity does not necessarily imply effective budget implementation. Despite the continuity, there is a pattern that mirrors the federal government's approach – marked by budget cuts or the hollowing out of policy through a lack of new initiatives and nearly arbitrary resource allocation, as reflected in spending quality.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study aimed to understand some of the dynamics of multilevel governance in relation to racial equality policies, particularly by examining the instruments used at both national and

local levels. At the national level, we analyzed the emergence of the theme within the Brazilian context, the public policy instruments employed by the Ministry of Women, Family, Human Rights, and Citizenship, and the budget allocations for maintaining and developing these policies. In turn, we examined the local level through the case of racial equality policies in the city of São Paulo, where responsibility for formulating, implementing, and promoting these policies lies with the Municipal Secretariat for Human Rights and Citizenship.

In the case of racial equality policies, the analysis reveals a tendency toward greater decision-making autonomy at the subnational level, especially when subnational and local entities show interest in continuing to invest in these policies, despite limited engagement at the national level. As demonstrated, it is also essential to assess the quality of expenditures, as doing so reveals how the budget is actually implemented. Notwithstanding this tendency, this aspect could be better addressed through large-N studies that observe and compare the dynamics of policy development in municipalities with greater fiscal independence and the national government's treatment of the issue. Despite this limitation, the example of São Paulo shows that, due to its extensive fiscal capacity and decentralization, the municipality is able to allocate funding for these policies without necessarily relying on federal transfers.

In this sense, the study contributes to advancing the research agenda in the field of public policy and race relations by examining federalist dynamics that enable decentralized, multilevel governance to account for the continuities and discontinuities of agendas and policies. In this regard, analyzing budget data and examining institutional and organizational design are key elements for gaining deeper insight into institutional change and policy dismantling.

Governance dynamics at the national level have been affected by the dismantling of racial equality policies by the federal executive branch, which can be observed through three main mechanisms:

1. Institutional changes that erode the issue;
2. Budget cuts that affect the development, formulation, implementation, and coordination of public policies;
3. Noncompliance with regulatory instruments governing racial equality.

In the case of São Paulo, local governance dynamics demonstrate an effective apparatus that continues to operate but must improve the quality of spending and invest not only in maintaining existing programs but also in developing policies that respond to the local context. This is because, despite the dismantling of policies at the federal level, the set of instruments – or rather, the institutional framework for racial equality in São Paulo – includes not only regulatory tools but also budgetary and managerial instruments that support the achievement of objectives outlined in federal policy. Moreover, given the budgetary scale of São Paulo's capital, this is made possible by a notable degree of decentralization.

Despite the dismantling of racial equality policies at the federal level, a multilevel governance analysis – based on the case of São Paulo – suggests that such policies tend to persist at the local level, particularly in municipalities with greater financial and political autonomy. However, further studies are needed to examine municipalities with sufficient administrative and budgetary capacity. It is also worth noting that racial equality policies demonstrate resilience at the local level, as this in-depth study of São Paulo reveals that financial autonomy, combined with strong civil society participation in oversight and monitoring, can help sustain the visibility of key issues for societal development.

Future research directions include:

1. Advancing a deeper analysis of multilevel relationships;
2. Expanding this study through empirical observation;
3. Analyzing additional elements of policy dismantling, particularly in racial equality policies;
4. Observing and comparing other cities with secretariats dedicated to racial equality;
5. Enhancing theoretical discussions; and
6. Investigating further instruments and discretionary budget use for racial equality at the municipal level.

The main challenges encountered in this study relate to difficulties in obtaining data and information about the concrete actions of public institutions. In future research, one solution to this problem will be to combine empirical data analysis with interviews involving the actors responsible for developing and managing racial equality policies.

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