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FRONTIER TERRITORIES: COUNTERING THE GREEN REVOLUTION LEGACY IN THE BRAZILIAN CERRADO

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Brazilian Civil Society and South–South Cooperation: Countering the Green Revolution from Abroad*

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Abstract Having transformed its hinterland to become a major exporter of agricultural commodities, Brazil has, since the mid-2000s, set up a range of South–South cooperation (SSC) initiatives to export its agri-food policies and technologies to other countries, mainly in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. Both the domestic agricultural policies and SSC have been scrutinised and shaped by interactions with civil society actors, from peasant associations and trade unions to rights-based non-governmental organisations. This article explores modes of interaction and interdependence between different civil society and state actors in the context of SSC relating to food security and agricultural development. It analyses changes and continuities in civil society engagement, and mobilisation and de-mobilisation dynamics. Recently, the government's de-prioritisation of the South–South agenda has been accompanied by very limited civil society activism. The article discusses why this needs attention and the challenges that need to be considered to reinstate productive state–civil society dynamics.

Keywords South–South cooperation, civil society mobilisation, agriculture, Green Revolution, Brazil.

1 Introduction

Brazil is widely recognised as a global agricultural powerhouse. Having achieved its own Green Revolution – also described as a 'tropical revolution' in the Cerrado (Albuquerque and Silva 2008) – and becoming the top producer and exporter of a range of agricultural commodities (Contini 2014), the country has come to be regarded as a hub for tropical agricultural science and technology. Sharing this experience with other countries, notably low- and middle-income countries in the global South, has been an opportunity to enable a similar agricultural development trajectory elsewhere.

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Brazil's engagement with South–South cooperation (SSC) coincided with a time of change in the architecture and discourse of international development cooperation. Over the first decade of the twenty-first century, SSC gained prominence in global policy spaces, such as the High-Level Fora on Aid Effectiveness hosted by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD-DAC). SSC was portrayed as an emerging and complementary modality to traditional aid. While some argued that SSC constituted a counterbalance to Western hegemony (Chaturvedi, Fues and Sidiropoulos 2012), others saw it as reproducing colonial dynamics between emerging powers and peripheral Southern nations (Moyo, Jha and Yeros 2019).

As Brazilian diplomacy intensified South–South relations, a more diversified set of ideas about agricultural development permeated this space, including experiences with Brazilian policies that prioritised food and nutrition security, social inclusion, and justice (Sabourin and Grisa 2018). Both streams converged, however, to turn Brazil into a Southern node in agricultural global policy circulation (Porto de Oliveira and Pal 2018).

Research explored the nature of these policy, knowledge, and technology exchanges, as well as the main actors involved and their motivations (Milhorance 2014; Sabourin and Grisa 2018; Porto de Oliveira 2020). Critical scholarship connected the circulation of technology and know-how with the internationalisation of Brazilian agriculture more broadly, including investments and businesses as well as international policy advocacy. It also unpacked concurrent narratives around agricultural development in Brazil and claimed successes, and interrogated the possibility of transferring these experiences into other settings (Scoones *et al.* 2016; Cabral *et al.* 2016; Shankland and Gonçalves 2016).

Starting from the assumption that policy, knowledge, and technology are embedded in power relations, research identified tensions and contradictions relating to Brazilian agricultural cooperation and its connection to domestic politics (Cabral 2016; Pierri 2013; Aguiar and Pacheco 2016). A long-running dispute in Brazilian agriculture is between a model of development centred on technology-intensive production of agricultural commodities for exports, which has dominated since the Green Revolution, and a model of development centred on small-scale family farming, domestic food markets, and agrarian justice. The latter received substantial (though not exclusive) government backing during the years of the Workers' Party (PT)-led coalition. Concomitant support to both models generated contradictory policies in Brazil and inconsistent cooperation projects abroad (Pierri 2013; Cabral *et al.* 2016).

These contradictions and inconsistencies were highlighted by critical scholars, non-governmental organisations (NGOs),

and social movements. As Brazilian South–South diplomacy, cooperation, and business expanded, Brazilian civil society actors engaged too with a process of internationalisation that enlarged their space for action *vis-à-vis* the Brazilian government (Cabral and Leite 2015; Millhorce and Bursztyn 2017). Some of these actors were already connected to transnational networks focused on agrarian and environmental justice, such as La Via Campesina or anti-land-grabbing movements in sub-Saharan Africa. Such linkages generated opportunities for transnational mobilisation in connection to their struggles at home.

In this article, we draw on secondary literature and our own research in this field (see Waisbich 2021a; Cabral and Leite 2015; Cabral *et al.* 2016) to explore the interaction between state and civil society around Brazil's Green Revolution and its attempted internationalisation. We analyse changes and continuities in this relationship across two phases of the Brazilian SSC: an expansion phase during the 'golden age' of Brazilian SSC under the PT-led government (2003–16), and the retraction phase that followed and intensified under President Jair Bolsonaro (elected in 2018).

Looking at almost two decades of interaction, we highlight how state activism and extroversion during the PT era was accompanied by civil society activism aimed at either participating and influencing official international agricultural development-related initiatives or vocally contesting policies and initiatives. During the Bolsonaro period, and despite Brazil's ever-expanding role as an agri-commodity exporter, the de-prioritisation of the South–South agenda has been accompanied by limited SSC-related civil society activism, in the sense of occupying policy spaces and openly contesting the export of Brazil's Green Revolution model abroad.

The remainder of the article is organised as follows. Section 2 introduces our framework for analysing civil society engagement *vis-à-vis* efforts to internationalise Brazilian agriculture. Section 3 then explores the main features of civil society mobilisation during the 'golden age' of Brazilian SSC. This is followed in section 4 by an analysis of changes and continuities in civil society activism post-2016 and, specifically, under President Bolsonaro. Section 5 concludes and discusses challenges and opportunities for re-energising civil society activism in the SSC sphere.

2 Civil society engagement with public policy: between construction and contention

To understand changes and continuities in civil society engagement with government-led SSC, we draw on scholarship on civil society engagement with public policy in Brazil and studies that have unpacked these engagements in relation to foreign policy and SSC. This literature does not just emphasise the conditions under which civil society actors scrutinise policy, but also how they participate in policymaking (Avritzer 2003;

Abers, Silva and Tatagiba 2018). There is also a focus on mobilisation dynamics and the ways in which Brazilian civil society actors negotiate their autonomy *vis-à-vis* the state, while navigating between political contention and policy construction (Abers, Serafim and Tatagiba 2014; Lavalle *et al.* 2019).

The notion of 'spaces for participation' provides a starting point to conceptualise civil society engagement. These spaces provide 'opportunities, moments and channels where citizens can act to potentially affect policies, discourses, decisions and relationships that affect their lives and interests' (Gaventa 2006: 26). Spaces can be 'closed', 'invited', or 'claimed', depending on the power dynamics between actors (Cornwall 2002). The first category refers to decision-making spaces that civil society cannot access. The second category encompasses spaces where authorities invite citizens to participate and where the state regulates who participates and on what terms, while having to negotiate with citizens regarding the institutional architectures and aims of interactions (consultation, co-production, and/or co-management of policies). The third category refers to spaces claimed by less powerful actors against power holders, or autonomously created as part of a rejection of spaces perceived as hegemonic.

Brazil has seen much experimentation with invited spaces and the interaction between them and civil society-led claimed spaces, under what is known in Brazil as **institutionalised participation** (Avritzer 2003; Lavalle *et al.* 2019). Civil society efforts to institutionalise participation and build **state-society interfaces** (Pires and Vaz 2014) are noticeable across multiple policy domains, including in health, urban planning, food and nutritional security (see, for instance, Abers *et al.* 2014) and, more recently, foreign policy and Brazilian development cooperation (Pomeroy and Waisbich 2019). While less developed than other domains, civil society engagement in foreign policy and SSC has evolved considerably over the last decades in tandem with the process of **democratisation of Brazilian foreign policy** (Lopes 2012; Milani and Pinheiro 2013). Regarding development cooperation, this engagement varies according to the sector and/or initiative but includes participation in government-led projects abroad (as implementers alongside governmental agencies or in monitoring and evaluation), as well as engagement in policy dialogue with 'SSC bureaucracies', including line ministries, specialised agencies, and the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (Agência Brasileira de Cooperação, ABC) (Waisbich 2021a).

What, therefore, is the nature of the interaction across these invited and claimed spaces? Abers *et al.* (2018) suggest that engagement dynamics are not only complex but also interdependent. They propose working with the concept of **relational power structures**: 'The opportunities and constraints faced by social movements in acting in public policies are framed

as products of simultaneous and reciprocal assemblages of various actors, networks and institutions, including the movements themselves' (*ibid.*: 38). The interdependence between state and civil society actors means that social actors do not **relate to** policy spaces and institutions; rather, they **relate with** these spaces and institutions. This suggests a complex interaction whereby social actors are not entirely autonomous from or dependent on the state but constantly navigate between these positions.

How does this interdependence play out, then, in the context of South–South agricultural cooperation? To answer this, one has to consider the central role mobilisation dynamics relating to Brazilian agriculture and foreign policy have in shaping activism in agricultural cooperation. While predominantly concentrated on professionalised NGOs based in the largest urban centres (São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Brasília) (Waisbich 2021a; Cabral and Leite 2015), civil society mobilisation on agricultural cooperation has benefited from existing transnational networks between peasant and rights-based movements. It has also benefited from the Brazilian government's growing interest in international development. Research has identified different forms of civil society engagement in an emerging policy and political field (Poskitt, Shankland and Taela 2016). Studies have also described how civil society actors adopt both 'collaboration' and 'confrontation' strategies, as well as 'insider' and 'outsider' approaches, in their interactions with state actors (Berrón and Brant 2015; Milhorange and Bursztyn 2017; Waisbich 2021a), oscillating between more dependent and more autonomous positions and between more conciliatory or critical stances *vis-à-vis* the state.

For those organisations and networks that have opted for collaborative approaches, participation includes carrying out advocacy work to influence the design of SSC projects, as well as (whenever possible) acting as implementors of SSC projects abroad. Implementation partnerships have been scarce, however. Out of 1,386 technical cooperation projects mapped by Morais de Sá e Silva (2021), for the period 1999–2020, only 10 per cent were implemented by entities other than government institutions, including NGOs and the private sector. Additionally, most NGOs worked as implementers during the administration of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (which ended in 2002), but very few have done so since then, with some exceptions during the PT rule (as discussed in section 3).

More frequently, civil society organisations have operated as watchdogs of government initiatives as part of emerging 'SSC monitoring movements',³ with positions ranging from 'critical collaboration' through policy dialogue and advocacy work (Milhorange and Bursztyn 2017) to radical opposition and resistance in the form of 'naming and shaming' campaigns. While acting as interest groups trying to influence SSC policymaking,

Brazilian civil society organisations and networks have worked both at home and abroad alongside organisations from other countries to re-shape or halt specific projects or to shape global policy spaces (Waisbich 2021a). Milhorange and Bursztyn (2017) describe two types of transnational network of activists working on issues relating to Brazilian agricultural cooperation in Africa: the first mobilised around the critique of Brazilian agribusiness and scientific cooperation inspired by the Green Revolution; and the second collaborated with the government to promote Brazil's family farming policies abroad.

3 Critical engagement during the 'golden age' of Brazilian SSC

Brazil's most active SSC period overlapped with the time the PT-led coalition governed the country, under the presidencies of Lula da Silva (2003–10) and Dilma Rousseff (2011–16).⁴ The rise of Brazil as a 'development policy exporter' has been linked to a favourable international context (Waisbich, Luiz and Faria, forthcoming). This was a time when the global commodity boom that benefited commodity exporters such as Brazil combined with a 'hype' around emerging economies and their potential to transform global development paradigms contributing with their own 'Southern-grown' developmental solutions. The two consecutive mandates of President Lula da Silva saw the rapid expansion of Brazil's presence in global development.

During this period, the Brazilian government felt empowered to share domestic policy experiences and technological solutions with other countries and international organisations (Porto de Oliveira 2020), in line with the president's **solidarity diplomacy** (Faria and Paradis 2013). This responded to multiple drivers, including foreign policy goals to increase soft power in the global South and pressure to scale up Brazil's social and agricultural policies to the international arena (Leite, Suyama and Pomeroy 2013; Cabral 2016). It also responded to the growing appetite of Brazilian companies to do business abroad (Shankland and Gonçalves 2016; Chichava and Alden 2017). Although Brazilian companies mainly targeted infrastructures and mining (Cezne 2019; Dye and Alencastro 2020), initiatives relating to agriculture included a concessional loan to export farming machinery originating from Brazil to five African countries and the establishment of an investment fund (Fundo Nacala) to attract Brazilian investors to Mozambique (Milhorange 2014; Cabral *et al.* 2016).

During this expansionary phase, SSC became a hot topic in policy circles, receiving attention from diplomats, politicians, legislators, researchers, and activists. Civil society actors drove much of the debate, questioning policy priorities, the transferability of Brazil-grown policies and technologies, and the principles and real motivations of SSC (Waisbich 2021a). While some organisations were active in high-level debates about SSC policy and governance, others became directly involved in South–South

interactions, either contesting projects that were deemed socially and environmentally harmful or influencing the design and participating in project implementation and appraisal.

One of Brazil's most scrutinised and debated agricultural cooperation projects during this period was ProSavana in Mozambique. This started off as a technical cooperation initiative supported by the Brazilian and Japanese governments and seeking to adapt Brazilian crop technology (mainly grains and legumes) to the Mozambican agro-ecological environment. The project's narrative indicated that it was inspired by the Green Revolution of the Cerrado and suggested that Mozambique could replicate this experience to become a successful exporter of agricultural commodities, much like Brazil.⁵ Business interests intersected with cooperation goals. Initiatives such as Fundo Nacala and government-sponsored prospection visits to Mozambique by Brazilian farmers and politicians alerted civil society organisations at a time when land grabbing across Africa was hotly debated (Moyo *et al.* 2019).

Opposition to the project mobilised organisations from Brazil, Japan, and Mozambique to engage in a series of protest activities, including the 'No to ProSavana' campaign (Shankland and Gonçalves 2016). The campaign started with demands for greater transparency and participation in shaping the initiative on the ground and ended with calling for the complete halt of the project, although not without disagreements (within the network) on whether to resist or transform it (Chichava and Alden 2017; Funada-Classen 2019).

The diverse group of civil society voices engaged in the campaign (including peasant movements and rights-based NGOs in Brazil and Mozambique, and aid-watching groups in Japan)⁶ employed a range of mobilisation tactics, including field trips to all three countries, face-to-face meetings between activists, street protests in Mozambique, and policy advocacy work in Brazil and Japan (Shankland and Gonçalves 2016; Aguiar and Pacheco 2016). Brazilian civil society organisations drew their strength from existing networks, which included diverse autonomous spaces focusing on issues ranging from agrarian justice to the democratising of foreign policy and SSC. By articulating with Japanese and Mozambican organisations through transnational networks such as La Via Campesina, they connected the contestation of ProSavana with regional and international agendas centred on food and nutrition security (Sabourin and Grisa 2018; Milhorange and Bursztyn 2017) and civil society participation in global policy arenas, notably the Committee on World Food Security (Beghin 2015).

While mounting fierce opposition to Brazilian SSC, notably in Africa, civil society organisations also became enablers and co-constructors of SSC initiatives, becoming invited participants

in this space. One notable example was Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos (Food Acquisition Programme Africa) (2012–16), also known as PAA Africa. This programme, based in five African countries (Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Niger, and Senegal), sought to replicate a similar programme to the Food Acquisition Programme (Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos, PAA) in Brazil that combined support to family farmers, social welfare, and food and nutrition security goals (Milhorce 2014).

In Brazil, PAA procured food from family farmers to build local food stocks and supply school-meal programmes. The programme had been driven and shaped by the Brazilian Food and Nutrition Council (Conselho Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional, CONSEA), a multi-stakeholder space where civil society organisations were invited to discuss food and nutrition security policy with government agencies. Brazilian civil society organisation members of CONSEA were also called on to assist in assessing implementation and to advise the government on how to improve the programme in Africa, much as they had done in Brazil. As such, CONSEA itself – as an invited space – played an important role in shaping the project in Africa, advocating for a clearer nexus between agricultural development and social protection, and home-grown and nutritious school meals, as well as for the participation of local communities and civil society organisations in its implementation.

Another example of civil society's direct involvement in SSC was the project Community Managed Native Seed Banks in Family Farming Areas (2009–14) in Brazil, South Africa, and Mozambique. Guided by food sovereignty and agroecology ideas, the project was designed to be delivered in the three countries by social movements working in coalition with a Brazilian NGO (the Institute of Social and Economic Analysis, the Popular Peasant Movement, and the Peasant Women's Movement, in Brazil; the National Peasants' Union, in Mozambique; and the Trust for Community Outreach and Education, in South Africa) and different government agencies, including ABC. This was the first project under an ABC portfolio conceived and implemented by a Brazilian civil society organisation (Suyama and Pomeroy 2014).

Civil society organisations have also established autonomous spaces for South–South interaction outside official government channels. The connection between the MPA and UNAC is a case in point. Both organisations are affiliated with La Via Campesina, sharing an active stance in the protection of farmers' rights and a critical position in relation to capital-intensive agriculture dominated by corporate interests. Their interaction, which focused on the conservation and management of native seeds, was initially supported by the international NGO Oxfam. While the funded project was short-lived, the two organisations have maintained their interaction over time. Although scope for impact is limited without financial support, the sustained dialogue has

enabled them to gradually develop an understanding of their distinct experiences with seed conservation and struggles for land, and a critical perspective on policy transfer from one context to another (Cabral, Schmitt and Levidow 2021).

Although autonomous spaces have been established, notably between agrarian movements already connected through transnational networks, Brazilian civil society activism has been largely responsive to opportunities offered by government-led initiatives, either opposing or engaging with them. It mirrored the pattern of state–society interactions found in other domestic policy arenas during the period under discussion, when the proximity between social movements and the state created new repertoires for collective action and new forms of negotiation with state officials (Abers *et al.* 2014).

Proximity as a tactic, however, reflected the heterogeneity of state–society relations across different policy sectors in Brazil (Abers *et al.* 2018) and the highly decentralised nature of Brazilian SSC (Pomeroy and Waisbich 2019). As such, civil society organisations strategically selected certain official agricultural initiatives to act upon. The choice of initiatives to target not only reflected their perceived damaging potential but also the organisations' willingness to engage with certain implementing agencies and/or to protect others from open criticism considering Brazil's own domestic agricultural politics (Pierri 2013; Cabral 2016). While proximity made civil society organisations eager to spend their limited resources on 'insider' approaches, this also meant that, once the government started to lose steam with SSC, civil society also retreated.

4 The retreat of civil society from SSC

Under a challenging political and economic scenario, SSC took on a different direction after 2016. Political and policy changes from above impacted civil society engagement with SSC. The government that succeeded President Rousseff⁷ sought to radically change foreign policy by 'removing ideology' and implementing an alternative South–South agenda driven by economic goals (Ministério das Relações Exteriores 2016). Further changes were introduced by President Bolsonaro, who took office in 2019. During the electoral campaign, Bolsonaro attacked what he called 'PT's ideological agenda' of South–South alliances with communist regimes. Alongside an 'anti-SSC' rhetoric, Bolsonaro's government oversaw the dismantling of domestic policies and programmes that had inspired and shaped agricultural SSC initiatives over the previous decade (Waisbich *et al.*, forthcoming).

Signs of the shrinking of Brazilian activism in the SSC agenda since 2016, and even more so under Bolsonaro, is seen in the decreasing number of new initiatives in the technical cooperation portfolio (see Table 1).

Table 1 Number of new SSC initiatives (2003–20)

President	Years in power	Number of new initiatives	Number of new initiatives (annual average)
Lula da Silva	8	679	85
Dilma Rousseff	5.5	542	99
Michel Temer	2.5	104	42
Jair Bolsonaro	1.5	22	15

Source Authors' own, based on Morais de Sá e Silva (2021).

However, rather than completely disappearing, some Brazilian technical cooperation initiatives survived with a low profile. According to the latest official statistics, ABC coordinated 176 initiatives in 2019 and 112 in 2020 (many in the agricultural sector) with countries such as Mozambique, Senegal, Benin, Botswana, Tanzania, Paraguay, and Bolivia (Baumann *et al.* 2021). The 'resilience' (Morais de Sá e Silva 2021) of bureaucracies involved in SSC under Bolsonaro can be explained by the fragmentation of Brazilian SSC, which allowed for international development engagements to survive despite the president's hostility and direct attack on policy spaces such as CONSEA and policies targeted at family farming. Paradoxically, the institutional dispersion of SSC, which had been the cause of coordination and coherence problems during the PT era, now seemed to secure a degree of continuity.

But continuity has been partial and has benefited a subset of agricultural cooperation initiatives linked to technology transfer and inspired by the Green Revolution, with a focus on commodities and technological innovation transferred to farmers in a top-down, diffusionist manner. Cooperation in cotton is a case in point. The cotton portfolio has not only survived the more turbulent times since the mid-2010s; it has also expanded considerably, largely due to the convergence between a will to innovate by ABC and the entering of new (and more market-friendly) national implementing actors – such as the National Association of Cotton Producers (Associação Brasileira dos Produtores de Algodão, ABRAPA) – willing to carry on technical exchanges with partners in Latin America and Africa (Silva and Moreira 2020). This is an area that remains unscrutinised by Brazilian civil society, despite the prior experience with ProSavana. The withdrawal of the critical stance of civil society actors from this space has happened in tandem with the emptying of the cooperation portfolio, in which civil society had a direct role. Without this direct engagement, Brazilian civil society seems to have lost interest in SSC and in continuing the contestation of the Green Revolution model from abroad.

The dismantling of family farming-focused policies and spaces (e.g. CONSEA) in Brazil has made it hard for SSC initiatives with this focus to remain a priority and for civil society to maintain a role in implementation. At the same time, triangular cooperation with international organisations, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), has offered channels for these policies to continue circulating internationally. For example, the FAO–Brazil Programme on Food and Nutritional Security, launched in 2008, is still running. Another example is the Brazil–Colombia Sowing Capabilities initiative, which seeks to strengthen family farming, agroecology, and short food chains.⁸ Partnering with United Nations agencies to promote triangular cooperation has guaranteed SSC continuity and a safe haven for Brazilian experts, even without the active participation of Brazilian civil society actors. Nonetheless, these arrangements have generated different forms of policy circulation that are less directly connected to Brazilian domestic institutions and policies. While securing technical continuity, triangular cooperation has distanced SSC from Brazilian bureaucracies and civil society during this recent period.

Civil society organisations are now focusing on domestic issues and appear less attentive to the international sphere. This seems to be a response to both the official retreat of SSC by the current administration and the rising food insecurity in Brazil as a result of the pandemic, economic decline, and political decisions.⁹ It also reflects a decline in support from international organisations for this advocacy work, including by the Oxfam Confederation, Action Aid, and the German Heinrich Böll Foundation (Waisbich 2021b).¹⁰ Support has turned towards strengthening the capacity of Brazilian civil society actors and networks to respond to the new domestic emergencies. At the same time, without civil society pushing for more or alternative SSC policies and projects, the Brazilian state has lost an important partner in this field, further contributing to its own 'retreat'.

5 Conclusion

This article has reviewed two decades of civil society engagement with state-led SSC in Brazil and identified an expansionary and a retraction phase that reflected and shaped the rise and fall of Brazil in global development. During the period 2003–16, Brazilian civil society organisations were actively engaged in SSC, particularly agri-food-related initiatives (participating in the construction of some while openly contesting the implementation of others). This international experience strengthened their political muscle at home, both in terms of supporting alternatives focused on family farming and food and nutrition security, and in terms of opposing the Green Revolution model, with its focus on export commodities and diffusionist logic of technology transfer. Since 2016, there has been limited civil society activism and scant attention directed to Brazilian cooperation and investments abroad that continue to advance the Green Revolution logic.

While this is in part due to the government's partial retreat from the international sphere, it also reflects the dismantling of participatory spaces in Brazil where state and civil society actors had previously interacted, as well as reduced funding for international advocacy.

Our analysis of the recent history of Brazilian SSC suggests that the relationship between state and civil society is interdependent in complex ways. During the period of the expansion of state-led SSC, civil society organisations either engaged in its construction or in its contestation and regarded their international endeavours as instrumental to the strengthening of their domestic advocacy. During the retreat period, the dismantling of the policies and spaces that justified civil society's enrolment meant that the international sphere lost its value as a route for domestic influence. The retreat by the government also demobilised those organisations that closely monitored Brazilian agricultural cooperation. With domestic food insecurity on the rise in Brazil, international engagements were deprioritised by civil society, leaving SSC largely unscrutinised. Yet, the Green Revolution legacy continues to drive Brazilian agricultural investments and science and technical cooperation initiatives abroad in ways that are problematic and need to be kept in check.

While Brazilian SSC has considerably dimmed, it has not disappeared. Yet its priorities, principles, and modalities of implementation are less clear and no longer publicly debated. In this context, it is necessary to rebuild civil society's presence in this sphere and to maintain their 'monitoring movements'. Civil society has a key role to play because of its direct experience with domestic policies that inform SSC abroad, and because its clout at home is strengthened through participation in international spaces. Also, autonomous spaces where civil society organisations connect with their Southern peers enable peer-to-peer exchange and learning in ways that help advance thinking about alternatives to the dominant agricultural development models privileged by governments (Cabral *et al.* 2021).

Two dimensions of the civil society–state interdependence need attention and constitute challenges for sustaining mobilisation in the short and long term. One refers to autonomy. As in other policy domains, Brazilian civil society mobilisation on SSC became somewhat dependent on the state. As we show in this article, its action intensified at the time when SSC was booming, which suggests it may not be wholly autonomous from official initiatives and the political cycle. Autonomy here is not only thought of as independence from the state (with power to dissent), but rather the capacity to keep building a transformative agenda for Brazilian international cooperation when the government downsizes its own global footprint. Yet, being largely reactive to state initiatives and engaging with them more in state-led terms and spaces, rather than advancing and promoting alternative

futures on its own, hindered the very sustainability and impact of civil society mobilisation regarding this agenda.

The second dimension refers to funding. Reliance on international networks and Northern-based funding raises questions about Brazilian civil society's autonomy and legitimacy as Southern voices. While much of this criticism has been instrumentalised by government authorities in Brazil and partner countries to delegitimise civil society dissent (notably on ProSavana), it has an impact on mobilisation dynamics. Expanding domestic funding for this kind of SSC-related policy/advocacy work is crucial to ensure the sustainability of civil society mobilisation, as well as for the overall sustainability of SSC as a policy field in Brazil. There is a need to explore the role of Southern philanthropic organisations in rebuilding international networks for SSC monitoring and advocacy.

The previous cycle has shown the value of robust civil society mobilisation in shaping, contesting, and reforming Brazil's SSC initiatives and the broader global agricultural development agenda. These functions can help build civil society actors' resilience and clout and ought to be reinstated regardless of the political scenario in Brazil for the next five years.

Notes

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- 3 'SSC monitoring movements' is the expression used by Waisbich (2021b) to define the group of civil society actors that progressively decided to scrutinise Brazilian official international development engagements.
- 4 President Rousseff never ended her second term in office; she was ousted by the Parliament in 2016 under a highly contentious and divisive impeachment process that many analysts qualified as a *coup d'état*.

- 5 The Japanese side of the cooperation helped draw this connection between ProSavana and the Cerrado. It highlighted the role of Japanese cooperation in supporting the transformation of the Cerrado and promised to enable the same transformation in Mozambique (Hosono and Hongo 2012).
- 6 Among the most active peasant movements were the Mozambican National Peasants' Union (União Nacional dos Camponeses, UNAC) and the Brazilian Small Farmers Movement (Movimento dos Pequenos Agricultores, MPA); among the most vocal NGOs were Justiça Ambiental (Mozambique), FASE (Brazil), ATTAC Japan, and Oxfam Japan.
- 7 With Michel Temer as an interim president and key politicians from the centre-right Brazilian Social Democracy Party (Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira, PSDB) heading the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- 8 See the **Sowing Capabilities (Sembrando Capacidades) website**.
- 9 According to a study by the Brazilian Research Network on Food Sovereignty and Security, approximately 19 million Brazilians suffered from severe food insecurity in 2020. See the **Olhe Para a Fome website**.
- 10 Action Aid and Oxfam have offices in Brazil and were among the most active international NGOs discussing SSC. In 2016, they started to downsize their programmes, and by 2019 they were significantly less involved in these issues. Their retreat also responded to shrinking international funding to monitor the Brazilian global development footprint from foundations such as Bill & Melinda Gates and Mott, many of which decided to move their focus to China.

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