Artigos

Regional management of tourism - participation and representativeness in the Conselho Regional de Turismo das Agulhas Negras – RJ[1]

Gestão regional do turismo – participação e representatividade no Conselho Regional de Turismo das Agulhas Negras- RJ

Gestión regional del turismo - participación y representatividad en el Conselho Regional de Turismo das Agulhas Negras –RJ

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Abstract

This article aims to empirically analyze one of the decision-making and management tools for tourist destinations indicated by Brazilian public policies: the regional govern-ance instance. The relevance of this study is that in the case of the Brazilian tourism sector, studies of public policies that include the composition of the participating agents, arenas, decision-making processes and their effects are incipient. The governance in-stance studied here is presented as Conselho Regional de Turismo (CONRETUR) Agulhas Negras-RJ, which stands out for having been a pioneer in the State of Rio de Janeiro in the constitution of a participatory collegiate at the regional level. The results presented here are partial results of a master's dissertation and were obtained from bibliograph-ical research about tourism in the Agulhas Negras region, documentary analysis in re-gional, state and federal registries and in-depth interviews with CONRE-TUR leaders in the first semester of 2017. The lack of participation and representativeness of the members of the Council, aligned with the difficulties of managing a regionalized territory and the high dependence of members of the public sphere, are decisive factors for this instance of governance to pass through moments of difficulty currently.

Palavras-chave:

Políticas de Turismo.
Regionalização.
Governança Turística.
Região das Agulhas Negras, RJ.

Resumo

Esse artigo objetiva analisar empiricamente um dos instrumentos de tomada de decisão e ges-tão de destinos turísticos indicado pelas políticas públicas brasileiras: a instância de gover-nança regional. A relevância desse estudo reside no fato de que no caso do setor de turismo brasileiro, os estudos de políticas públicas abrangendo a composição dos agentes participan-tes, arenas, processos decisórios e seus efeitos ainda são incipientes. A instância aqui estu-dada apresenta-se em formato de Conselho Regional de Turismo (CONRETUR) da região Agu-lhas Negras- RJ, que se destaca por ter sido pioneira no Estado do Rio de Janeiro na constitui-

ção de um colegiado participativo em nível regional. Os resultados aqui apresentados são parciais de uma pesquisa de dissertação de mestrado e foram alcançados a partir de pesquisa bibliográfica acerca do turismo na Região das Agulhas Negras, análise documental em registros regionais, estaduais e federais e de entrevistas em profundidade realizada com lideranças do CONRETUR no primeiro semestre de 2017. A falta de participação e de representatividade dos membros do Conselho alinhados às dificuldades de gerir um território regionalizado e a alta dependência de membros da esfera pública constituem-se fatores decisivos para que essa instância de governança passe por momentos de dificuldade atualmente.

Resumen

Este artículo objetiva analizar empíricamente uno de los instrumentos de toma de decisión y gestión de destinos turísticos indicado por las políticas públicas brasileñas: la instancia de gobernanza regional. La relevancia de este estudio es que en el caso del sector de turismo brasileño, los estudios de políticas públicas que abarcan la composición de los agentes participantes, arenas, procesos decisorios y sus efectos son incipientes. La instancia aquí estudiada se presenta como Consejo Regional de Turismo (CONRETUR) de la región Agulhas Negras- RJ, que se destaca por haber sido pionera en el Estado de Río de Janeiro en la constitución de un colegio participativo a nivel regional. Los resultados aquí presentados son resultados parciales de una disertación de maestría y se alcanzaron a partir de la investigación bibliográfica sobre el turismo en la región Agulhas Negras, análisis documental en registros regionales, estatales y federales y de entrevistas en profundidad realizada con líderes del CONRETUR en el primer semestre de 2017. La falta de participación y de representatividad de los miembros del Consejo, alineada a las dificultades de gestionar un territorio regionalizado y la alta dependencia de miembros de la esfera pública, son factores decisivos para que esa instancia de gobernanza pase por momentos de dificultad actualmente.

1 INTRODUCTION

The study of public policy is critical to understanding the causes and consequences of political decisions and analyzing their effectiveness in the face of societal problems, according to authors such as Hall (2004) and Pimentel (2014). Frey (2000) points out that in democracies such as Brazil, characterized by weakness and low density of institutions, political decisions are reserved for an elite class. In addition, these democracies are influenced by clientelism, populism, and patrimonialism that, in some situations, may interfere with politics more effectively than formal institutions (Frey, 2000).

Political decisions can be considered as the result of the interplay of interests between different groups involved in the political process obeying rules, rights, and duties and trying to defend their often-conflicting values and their own identities before society (Frey, 2000; Hall, 2004; Trentin & Moraes, 2014). Thus, it can be argued that decision-making spaces are also products of negotiation, reflecting power relations, and having decisive effects on the political process (Frey, 2000). In the case of the Brazilian tourism sector, however, studies on actors, arenas, decision-making processes, and their effects are still incipient (Pimentel, 2014).

In this context, the present article aims to contribute to the topic by analyzing one of the tools for decision-making and destination management indicated in Brazilian public policy: the instance of regional governance. The body studied here takes the form of a council: *Conselho Regional de Turismo - CONRETUR* (Regional Council for Tourism) of the region of Agulhas Negra, which stands out as the oldest in the state of Rio de Janeiro, composed of the municipalities of Itatiaia, Porto Real, Quatis, and Resende. The results presented here are partial results of a master's degree thesis (Bantim, 2017), which analyzed the regional tourism network of the mentioned region, including the formal and informal relationships that could influence the management decision-making process of that tourist destination. In this article we set out to present the characteristics of that participatory body from the political decision-making process, problematizing aspects such as the representativeness and legitimacy of decisions and the difficulties in managing regional territories. An analysis of the CONRETUR's statute is carried out and the data obtained from seven in-depth interviews with regional leaders are presented, addressing issues related to the composition of the participants,

the influences exerted by the participating entities, and the difficulties of management and decision-making process at regional level. Figure 1 systematizes the objectives of the research and the variables investigated with respondents:

Figure 1 – Research objectives and investigated variables

Specific Objectives	Investigated Variables
To recognize the importance of decentralized management for territorial administration on a regional scale;	Decision-making process
To characterize the Tourist Region of Agulhas Negras, RJ, from the point of view of its tourism potential and historical formation processes;	Formation process of the tourist region Regional coordination between municipalities
To verify the relations existing between the border municipalities and the tourist region of Agulhas Negras, in the state of Rio de Janeiro;	Relationship between Agulhas Negras and border municipalities Other entities that could be part of the Council
To verify if the municipalities of the state of Minas Gerais that are part of the Agulhas Negras tourist regional network are in some way included in CONRETUR;	Relationship between Agulhas Negras and border municipalities Other entities that could be part of the Council
To discuss the legitimacy of decisions of this Council, in terms of participation and representativeness of the social agents included in this governance instance.	Decision-making process Participants and Council statute Routine of CONRETUR Attendance and convening of Council meetings Absence of representatives Prominence of certain representatives Other entities that could be part of the Council Indication of other important participants for interview

Source: The authors

Based on the specific objectives and variables investigated, the general objective was to analyze the governance of the region of Agulhas Negras, considered as a tourism destination whose territory transcends state boundaries, and to understand public policy regarding tourism development in this region. The aspects related to the decision-making process in the Council were highlighted in this article.

It is important to emphasize that, despite situational validity of empirical studies such as this, as the number of studies increases so does the knowledge of specific policies and theoretical knowledge related to structural and procedural relations of the political system and state policy, thus, paving the way for a more consistent understanding of these processes (Frey, 2000).

2 TOURISM PUBLIC POLICY AND REGIONAL INSTANCES OF GOVERNANCE

In the Brazilian tourism sector, the guidelines for national public policy are the General Tourism Law (2008) and the National Tourism Plans, in its four-year editions. We emphasize here the National Tourism Plan 2013-2016 and the main program that guided the actions of the national policy as of 2004, the Tourism Regionalization Program. This program guides the management of tourism in a decentralized way from the regionalization of the Brazilian territory.

Decentralization of public management is a global process with increased visibility in Brazil as of the 1980s (Zapata, 2009). In Brazil, this process can be related to the unified struggle of civil society against authoritarianism, which brought together various social sectors organized to combat the centralized and authoritarian state model and played a key role in the transition to democracy (Dagnino, 2002). Zapata (2009) explains that the 1988 Federal Constitution can be considered a milestone in the process, strengthening municipalities, and decentralizing the Union's policies and programs because of the difficulties of centralized management in a country with the size and complexity of Brazil in a contemporary context.

In the tourism sector, there has been a trend toward management decentralization since the implementation of the Brazil's National Tourism Municipalization Program (*Programa Nacional de Municipalização do Turismo* - PNMT) in the 1990s. However, since the territorial focus was the municipality, successful experiences were often circumscribed to localities or micro-regions, not spreading to neighboring regions (Cerqueira,

2009). Santos and Pereira (2018) state that with the 2003-2007 PNT, the region instead of the municipality becomes the focus of planning, which could contribute to the advancement of the sector and regional development. It is worth noting that, even before this political orientation, tourism management focusing on regional units was already put to practice in some places, as is the case of Rio Grande do Sul (Machado & Tomazzoni, 2011) and the experience of Minas Gerais Tourist Circuits (Gomes & Santos, 2007), because decision-makers have come to realize that the municipal scale was not the most suitable for territorial management, since tourism goes beyond these spatial boundaries (Trentin & Fratucci, 2011).

In 2003, the PNMT was discontinued, giving rise to the Tourism Regionalization Program (*Programa de Regionalização do Turismo* - PRT), which maintained the trend toward management decentralization, this time, however, focusing on the region rather than on the municipality.

The PRT is initially presented as part of a broader macro-program in the 2003-2007 National Tourism Plan (PNT), as an "element for integrating objectives, optimizing resources and joining efforts to increase quality and competitiveness, increasing the supply of Brazilian products in the national and international markets "(Brasil, 2003, p. 6). The importance and scope of this program was acknowledged and in the following national plan, 2007-2010 PNT – A journey of inclusion, it became a macro-program and remained as such in the 2013-2016 PNT. In the 2018-2022 PNT it is recognized that the program "has gained momentum and status in the policies developed by the sector, becoming the central direction for the process of Brazilian tourism development" (Brasil, 2018, p. 54).

The PRT initially presents itself as a "decentralized, coordinated and integrated public management model" (Brasil, 2004, p. 11) with the proposal to transform previously circumscribed actions in municipalities into broader policies based on a systematic and participative planning, involving negotiations between stakeholders, and integrating municipalities, states, and countries (Brasil, 2004). To achieve this goal, the guidelines adopt two approaches to management decentralization. The first, is a decentralization from state to state, with the responsibilities going from the Union to the state, from the state to the tourist region, and from the tourist region to the municipality. The second approach is a transfer of State responsibilities to society, which would act in the planning and execution of actions for the development of tourism through participatory collective bodies (Brazil, 2004). This second aspect is highlighted in this study.

The PRT operational guidelines explain that all processes involving planning, development, and implementation of strategic plans require an organization responsible for coordinating, monitoring, and managing these processes at the regional level. In the case of the Regionalization Program there is an orientation toward "recognizing, institutionalizing or strengthening an organization representative of the public, private, third sector, and organized civil society of the municipalities that are components of the tourism region in question" (Brasil, 2007c, p. 16), which assumes the role of executor of the proposal, called Instance of Regional Governance.

According to the PRT, the instance of governance must be "constituted through awareness, mobilization, identification, and training - appropriate and specific - of actors with representation in the municipalities of the tourist region" (Brasil, 2004, p. 27). According to Silveira, Paixão and Cobos (2006), the great challenge of regionalization is the institutionalization of these instances, because the success of the Program depends on the good progress of these arrangements and their managerial capacity at a level that does not have traditional representatives. Dagnino (2002) states that because of the diversity of composition of these spaces, of their success, difficulties, and limitations, they constitute a rich context for research.

However, governance is a complex term that has different meanings and interpretations. Rhodes (1996; 2007) identifies several different uses for the term governance: it can be understood as a new process of governing, or a changed condition of ordered rule, or a new method by which society is governed, among others. The World Bank's definition states that governance is the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a place's economic and social resources for its development (World Bank, 1992). According to Tomio and Schmidt (2014), these varied applications of the term governance are object of heated debate; however, it is generally used to refer to any movement of "decentralization" of the decision-making process, with the participation of actors involved in this decision.

The ideas about governance are also related to a process of rupture and social transformation caused by globalization and the development of information and communication technologies, thus giving rise to a model with more cooperation and horizontality (Zapata, 2009). Some authors like Gonçalves (2005) indicate that governance is not an isolated movement of civil society in search of greater spaces of participation and influence, but rather the joint action between State and society in search of solutions to common problems. The presence of these non-state actors would be a sine qua non for the practice of governance, contributing with opinions capable of influencing public policy, international regulation, production, and revision of standards, among other fields (Gonçalves, 2005). Scott, Baggio and Cooper (2008) list the following parameters for good governance: participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity and inclusion, efficiency and effectiveness, and accountability.

The concept of governance is appropriate by the tourism sector, given the need to seek new ways of making collective decisions that allow a more active role of different social agents (Gonzáles, 2014). For Gonzáles, tourism governance can be understood as the search for new forms of collective decision-making on issues that imply the management of conflicts of interest and which seek to promote processes of social innovation, strengthening minority actors of the system, and changing tourist dynamics generating negative impacts (Gonzáles, 2014). In this study, we will not problematize the discussion about the different conceptions of governance and adopt the same understanding expressed in the Brazilian national public policy and made explicit throughout the following pages. In their work, Rodrigues and Souza (2015), Sette, Valle and Coutinho (2014), Silva, Lima and Teixeira (2012) discuss the physical and institutional composition of some examples of instances of regional governance formed from the guidelines expressed in the PRT, in different formats. Regarding its legal status, the instances of governance can be private, public, or private and public, in the form of a forum, council or other type of collective body according to the needs of each region (Brasil, 2004, 2007c). The instance of governance discussed here takes the form of a regional council, and this article focuses on discussing the difficulties in regional territorial management and the relationships among Council members that influence decision making.

For the formation of these collective bodies, the Ministry of Tourism suggests information on already-existing bodies in the regions be surveyed and collected and the possibility of assuming the role of the general coordination of the Program be analyzed. However, if an instance of regional governance is not identified, the Program points to its creation, "based on transparency, representativeness of the sectors involved in the activity and coverage areas, in a participatory and communal way" (Brasil, 2004, p. 27).

For the Ministry of Tourism, the issues related to decentralization of management and participation "result from the social pressure generated by conflicts between societal groups" (Brasil, 2007c, p. 15) and, therefore, the best way for instances to operate is through cooperation. In order to do so, the Ministry indicates that cooperation "becomes an essential condition for a joint action, in which public power, business, civil society, and educational institutions share the choice of priorities and participation in decision making" (Brasil, 2007c, p. 15).

In an evaluation of the PRT, Trentin and Fratucci (2011) point out that one of the great difficulties of the Program was to effectively promote cooperation and integration among social agents, a basic premise for its operation. These authors state that this diagnosis is related to poor preparation of municipalities to manage the activity and develop the products, because without inter-municipality cooperation structuring regional arrangements and networks becomes difficult, since the establishment of legislation and basic standards for the development of tourism is done at the municipality administrative level (Trentin & Fratucci, 2011). The fact that tourism is an activity that goes beyond municipal boundaries is an issue here, which encourages the creation of instances of governance for regionalized territories, but which does not have any administrative authority capable of legislating on a regional scale.

Empirically, this situation leads to the regionalization of tourism activity, without, however, a municipal structure minimally organized for that, as observed in Virginio and Ferreira (2013) in relation to the regionalization of Rio Grande do Norte, with regional institutional arrangements in the form of tourist centers involving few municipalities that relied on councils or municipal plans, hindering an effective tourist regionalization in the

State. Thus, in line with the studies of Trentin and Fratucci (2011), parallel work is needed in the municipalities to achieve regionalization, aligning the proposals of the two programs, and maintaining the Municipalization Program

It should be stressed that the idea of decentralized management and the participation of different social agents in the decision-making process is not easy to implement. The participatory process is not simple, it requires time and investment in the formation of human resources and in the construction of methodologies capable of dealing with the specificities of each location (Irving, 2009), otherwise there is a risk of falling into generalist planning that does not considers the local situation, disguised of collective construction.

It is also utopian to imagine that people in social groups have all the same interests or opinions, so it becomes extremely complex to speak of participation as if the participating community were a single entity, without clashes, internal power games and disputes and able to reach consensus in a simple way.

Moreover, sometimes there is no time (or interest) to circulate all the information and achieve a common understanding (Ferreira, 2010), thus, without discussion or debate the representative's opinion becomes the group's "decision". A caveat is in order here. Representatives are not necessarily chosen by voting, sometimes they are chosen based on personal relations, alliances, cronyism, exchange of favors, etc. (Ferreira, 2010), contrary to the expectation that decentralized management, in fact, represents the local reality, not only in quantitative, but in qualitative terms, in an attempt to reach different and representative segments of socio-economic needs and social demands (Gohn, 2004).

Another point to be considered is the relationship between civil society and the state. For Santos Junior, Azevedo and Ribeiro (2004), good governance in a decentralized and democratic management context, would depend on government-society interactions, on greater or lesser autonomy of society toward the State, and on its capacity to mobilize. However, in their study of participatory councils, Tatagiba (2002) states that it has been difficult to reverse the state's role in decision-making, even though the existence of the Council is already a positive point. The author refers to the control exerted by government power on councils in a context of authoritarian references, raising concerns about the conditions for an effective exercise of their deliberative role.

The participation of different social agents in the decision-making process and the representativeness of the agents involved - important aspects for the functioning of an instance of governance as a democratic process, according to the precepts indicated in the documents of the Ministry of Tourism - are subject to numerous deviations. The proposal of constitution of these spaces by the Ministry of Tourism itself is problematic, since the orientation for 'institutionalizing' an instance, including providing guidelines on how to do so (Brasil, 2007c), seems to indicate a top-down process of an authoritarian nature, with great influence of the government, being possible a reading where this initiative of the State can be considered as a way of the Government to reaffirm its own power (Virginio, Delgado, & Fortes, 2011; Bauman & Bordoni, 2016).

In our view, an instance of democratic governance should be the result of a genuinely endogenous process, based on the will and mobilization of society, generating some independence from the control of public power. In this way, their formation should be effectively constituted as a social space of democratic coexistence for the solution of common problems arising from the will of the population, in a bottom-up process. Otherwise, the legitimacy of the decisions of that instance may be questioned since, as Souza (2006, p. 33) refers, the instruments and routines of planning and management "only acquire full legitimacy when their operationalization and implementation are debated, decided, and monitored by citizens ". Reflecting on these issues, we analyze an instance of regional tourist governance of the region of Agulhas Negras, RJ, the CONRETUR.

3 THE REGION OF AGULHAS NEGRAS AND ITS CONRETUR

The results presented below are based on the literature review on tourism in the region of Agulhas Negras, documentary analysis of regional, state, and federal records, and seven in-depth interviews conducted with CONRETUR leaders in the first half of 2017.

The region of Agulhas Negras stands out within tourism studies, because it was the first in the state of Rio de Janeiro to establish a Regional Tourism Council in 1997, during the period of implementation of the National Tourism Municipalization Program (PNMT). The region is in southern Rio de Janeiro state and is officially composed by the municipalities of Itatiaia, Porto Real, Quatis, and Resende (Figure 2).
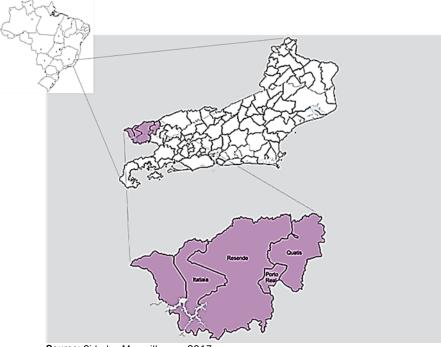
Figure 2 – The region of Agulhas Negras

Source: Cidades Maravilhosas, 2017

Fratucci (2009) identifies three historical landmarks related to the flow of visitors to this region. The first began in the 1920s with Rio de Janeiro's summer vacationers going to the German colonial center in the village of Visconde de Mauá. The second occurs in the 1930s, especially for the Finnish colony of Penedo and the Itatiaia National Park, which opened in 1937. Finally, the third landmark is identified in the 1950s, with the inauguration of the Presidente Dutra highway, considered one of the most important highways in Brazil, connecting the metropolises of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo and running through one of the most developed regions of the country, the Paraíba River valley (Fratucci, 2009).

The official tourist guide of the region of Agulhas Negras (2017) presents the following tourist locations as highlights of the region: Itatiaia National Park, Finnish colony of Penedo, Serrinha do Alambari, Capelinha do Pirapitinga, and Visconde de Mauá Region. These highlights are concentrated in the municipalities of Itatiaia and Resende, thus indicating a disparity in the region as regards the tourism area effectively compared to the officially constituted tourist region.

The institutionalization of the Agulhas Negras tourist region follows the creation of CONRETUR, then called CONRETUR Sul (South). According to an interview with the former executive secretary of CONRETUR[2] and former secretary of tourism of the municipality of Itatiaia, what is now recognized as the Region of Agulhas Negras was part of a tourist region called Serrana I, along with some municipalities that are now part of the region of Vale do Café.

This tourism division was defined by the Tourism Company of the State of Rio de Janeiro (*Companhia de Turismo do Estado do Rio de Janeiro* - TurisRio) in the 1980s, based on regional characteristics to comply with State Law No. 276/74 and the Economic and Social Development Plan of 1980-1983 (TURISRIO, 2017). This map presented seven tourist regions, including the mentioned region of Serrana I, which covered, along with other municipalities in the Paraíba valley, the territory that today composes the Region of Agulhas Negras

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[2] We chose not to identify respondents by name. Interview held on February 23, 2017

(TURISRIO, 2017). CONRETUR dates from 1997, when this regional division was still in force and, therefore, did not follow the then official division, but sought to integrate closer municipalities.

According to one of the founders of CONRETUR[3] and to the former executive secretary, the idea of creating a Regional Council came from a group of entrepreneurs who considered tourism management in the region very weak. The former executive secretary also says that entrepreneurs at the time thought that creating something regional could strengthen the sector and reflect on municipal management.

Thus, although regionalization and regional decentralized management of tourism were only institutionalized by the 2003 National Tourism Plan, the perception of the importance of inter-municipal cooperation had already been empirically identified by tourism producers in the region.

According to the former executive secretary, this group of entrepreneurs began convening meetings with the tourist trade and representatives of the public power of the municipalities of Itatiaia, Resende, Porto Real, and Quatis. The choice of these places, according to the same interviewee, was due to the identification of a natural flow of tourists within the region, mainly between the municipalities of Itatiaia and Resende.

It is important to note that this movement of tourists in the region also included municipalities bordering Rio de Janeiro State, such as Bocaina de Minas (MG), Itamonte (MG), São José dos Barreiros (SP), and Bananal (SP). The former Executive Secretary of the Council says that representatives of these municipalities were invited to attend the first meetings but showed no interest. The founder of CONRETUR, on the other hand, states that they could not include these municipalities in the Council because of SEBRAE-RJ limitations, which could not promote projects outside the state territory and, since this institution was considered the main partner of CONRETUR, they chose to be confined to state limits.

Between 1999 and 2000, in order to make it more marketable, the Council formerly known as CONRETUR Sul adopts the designation of Agulhas Negras, with a state law officializing this nomenclature (State Law No. 3395, May 5, 2000). This action coincided with meetings organized by TurisRio to prepare the Tourism Master Plan for the state of Rio de Janeiro, a document published in 2002 and that, until 2016, was the basis of the regional tourism division in the state[4]. According to this document, there were "several regional meetings with municipalities and market representatives at the regional level, where strengths and weaknesses of tourism regional development were discussed" (SEPDET/TURISRIO, 2001, p. 3).

Legally, CONRETUR is characterized as a "non-profit, private law body" (Estatuto Agulhas Negras, 2009, p. 1), with headquarters in the municipality of Resende, although it may be transferred by decision of the councilors to any other municipality within the region

According to its statute, the Council combines the efforts of the public power, civil society, and private initiative to encourage and develop projects and actions that can generate opportunities for income, employment, and qualification, and strengthen cultural values in the municipalities that make up the region (Estatuto Agulhas Negras, 2009). Its statute was approved at a general meeting held on May 6, 1998 and amended on May 15, 2009 (Estatuto Agulhas Negras, 2009).

The statute of CONRETUR lists the entities on the Council on the date of its last amendment. In an interview, the former executive secretary of CONRETUR updated that list, referring the following entities: Secretarias de Turismo das Prefeituras de Itatiaia, Resende, Porto Real and Quatis; Conselhos Municipais de Turismo de Resende, Itatiaia, and Quatis; Serviço Brasileiro de Apoio às Micro e Pequenas Empresas - Sebrae/RJ; Parque Nacional do Itatiaia – PNI; Associação Brasileira dos Agentes de Viagens – ABAV; Associação Brasileira da Indústria de Hotéis – ABIH; Secretaria de Estado de Turismo/TurisRio; Associação de Guias de Turismo da Região das Agulhas Negras – AGUIMAN; Câmara de Dirigentes Lojistas de Resende – CDL; Sindicato de Hotéis, Bares, Restaurantes e Similares; Associação Comercial de Visconde de Mauá – ACVM; Associação Comercial e Turística da Região de Visconde de Mauá – MAUATUR; Associação Comercial e de Empresários

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[3] Interview held on April 3, 2017

[4] This division was valid until 2016, when the state reduced from 92 to 71 the number of municipalities participating in its now 12 tourist regions: Águas do Noroeste, Agulhas Negras, Baixada Fluminense, Caminhos Coloniais, Caminhos da Mata, Costa do Sol, Costa Doce, Costa Verde, Metropolitana, Serra Verde Imperial, Vale do Café (Oliveira, 2016). The region of Agulhas Negras remains the same.

da Serrinha do Alambari – ACESA; Associação Empresarial Pró-Penedo; Associação de Lojistas da Pequena Finlândia – ALOFIN; Associação de Hotéis, Restaurantes e Similares de Itatiaia – AHRSI .

The former executive secretary of CONRETUR also reports that the founder of the Council, after his term as president, has continued to participate in the Council representing ACESA. In the meantime, this entity became inactive and for this councilor to continue attending the meetings, the entity RPPN Agulhas Negras was included among the members. What stands out here is not the inclusion or exclusion of an entity, which is guaranteed by the statute from the prior approval of two thirds of the members of the Council in assembly (Estatuto Agulhas Negras, 2009) but rather, the inclusion of a new entity just to allow a specific person to continue attending the Council. This suggests that the Council relies more upon the actions of specific individuals than on entities.

Regarding the structure, CONRETUR is composed of a general assembly, advisory board of former presidents, supervisory board, and executive board. Figure 3 shows the main responsibilities of each of the bodies:

Figure 3 – Composition and responsibilities of CONRETUR

General Assembly	Supreme body constituted by a member indicated by each of the entities that comprise the Council. Its functions are: • Approving the accounts, balance sheets and annual reports presented by the executive board; • Approving budget forecast; • Electing the executive board and supervisory board (every two years); • Discussing issues related to tourism, cultural and environmental activity; • Approving amendments to the statute; • Deciding on matters that are not within the competence of the executive board; • Deciding on the dissolution of CONRETUR; • Setting of general rules; • Appointing and removing board members;
Advisory Board of former presidents	The Advisory Board is a permanent and advisory body of CONRETUR, having as members its former presidents.
Supervisory Board	It is composed of three effective members of the Deliberative Council, with a mandate of two years, extendable by two more, with the competence of: • Examining the books, documents, balance sheets, and advising the executive board; • Reporting any irregularities to the Deliberative Board; • Meeting every six months to review the accounts, reports, and activities of the executive board; • Considering and approving the accounts of the executive board at the end of the term.
Executive Board	It is the Council's management body, which is responsible for the initiatives, coordination, development of projects, mobilization of bodies and entities for the development of tourism, and management of resources. It is composed of the president, vice president, executive secretary, technical director, treasurer, marketing director, training director, and director of public policy. The term of office is two years and may be extended for an equal period and, in the event of a vacancy, the president must appoint another member to hold the office of the current term.

Source: The authors with information collected in the Estatuto das Agulhas Negras (2009)

The functions carried out in the Council are not paid for and the statute provides for the replacement of a councilor member in case of unjustified absence to three consecutive or five alternate meetings (Estatuto Agulhas Negras, 2009). However, the former Executive Secretary of the Council says that there are entities that have not attended the meetings for years but have never been dismissed.

In relation to the meetings, according to the statute, they should take place every two months, being the decisions taken by simple majority, if one-fifth of the members approve it (Estatuto Agulhas Negras, 2009).

According to information obtained in the interviews, these meetings were intended to be itinerant; however, they usually are held in the same place.

The statute also defines that it is forbidden for councilors, on behalf of CONRETUR, to discuss partisan politics and to proselytize religion, to support or oppose candidates for party political office, to participate in movements contrary to the Council objectives, and to request funding, except members of the executive board who will be authorized ad referendum of CONRETUR (Estatuto Agulhas Negras, 2009). However, it was empirically observed that partisan politics is directly related to the Council, which is one of the great difficulties for the continuity of actions and management of this instance of governance, as will be discussed below.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the analysis of the interviews, we have listed some of the difficulties faced by the Council, that, if taken together, may have contributed to the current instability faced by CONRETUR.

The first difficulty is the regional governance issue and the difficulty in managing tourism on a non-institutionalized administrative level.

Although national tourism plans and literature consider that the institutionalization of an instance of governance could be capable of assuming such a role, in practice the difficulties in managing a regionalized territory are great. The former executive secretary of CONRETUR mentions that many actions face difficulties because there is not at regional level a figure of authority as a mayor (*prefeito*), since there is no way for a city to manage, for example, the financial resource passed on by the federal and/or state governments for a work that will be executed in the territory of another municipality.

Thus, to perform actions, CONRETUR focused on institutional coordination: several documents with requests from the region were sent to the higher instances with the signature of the four mayors, which, presumably, would give greater political weight to the petition - even though in many times this process has encountered difficulties with politicians who did not understand the importance of this regional association.

However, this work was criticized by those who considered that the role of the Council was not limited to just that. For example, according to the CONRETUR's founder the Council misrepresented its initial objective since it focused on political and institutional coordination aiming at carrying out events and marketing actions together instead of focusing on the development of regional master plans and policies. For this interviewee, instead of putting forward proposals, the Council became only an event organizer, which generated another conflict, because, as the events were concentrated in places like Penedo and Visconde de Mauá, people believed these regions were being given special treatment.

The implementation of regional plans and policies, however, runs up against the Council's difficulty in assuming a responsibility that depends on different municipalities. The former executive secretary of CONRETUR explains this question:

> I do not believe that the Regional Council will someday be able to do something like this: a regional tourism growth and development master plan. The laws are municipal. SEBRAE even said that it was going to bring a legislative advice from the public policy area of Rio to try to form a regional legislation… which mayor will answer? It's very difficult. The executive is the executive, folks. There is no region in the executive. With fiscal responsibility will you make a commitment to a territory that belongs to others? It's a different vision of mine: 'The Council does not have to keep making an event, we're not here to do marketing'… I think so. Because I think a good job is to be done in the municipality. The economic development management, growth, environmental policy, it must be responsible in the municipality. 'Oh, but it has to be integrated'… but then you're not talking about a Tourist Council anymore. (…) If not, within the Regional Council – of tourism – you'll bring the Secretary of Environment, the Secretary of Economic Development, of the four municipalities. Do you imagine this will work? It will not work… only with tourism is already difficult… it's not working. So, I think doing joint event yes, to do promotion in fairs together yes, the region's marketing is cool, the folder… regional training I think so because it cheapens and, I think, regional coordination. (…) so I see that's the role for the Regional Council because I do not believe in something that you will be responsible to do without having the responsibility to do.

In this passage, the interviewee refers three important aspects to research interests. First, the multidisciplinary nature of tourism that alone is not able to deal with the problems that surround it. According to Tomio and Schmidt (2014), the tourist-consumer establishes a set of requirements that depends on the combination of various enterprises such as lodgings, carriers, agencies, event and leisure organizers, among others, to be met. The same can be said about public sector management, which depends on other sectors like environment and economy to carry out its planning and its actions.

The second aspect concerns the difficulty of managing a regional territory without executive and legislative bodies to administer the region. Although the institutionalization of instances of governance is indicated as the way to manage the regional territory, empirically it is perceived that the region is hostage to the action of the executive bodies and municipal legislators, who only act regionally according to their interests. This aspect also makes clear that, although instances of governance are conceived as spaces for the decentralization of management, with the participation of different sectors of society (Brasil, 2007c), actions effectively depend on the will of the public power. Thus, despite the conceptions of governance as a neoliberal process and a repositioning of the role of the state (Bauman & Bordoni, 2016), one can perceive in this case the governance embodied in hierarchical structures with the government as a key player, a common situation in Wan and Bramwell's (2015) reading, especially in terms of legitimacy and accountability.

The third aspect concerns resources for the Council, which, according to the statute would come from the federal or state governments, income, and interest from financial investments and sponsorship, resulting from agreements and contracts, donations in kind, and budget allocations (Estatuto Agulhas Negras, 2009). The former executive secretary of CONRETUR explains the Council had already considered an annual fundraising, through municipalities, however, some of them even failed to transfer to the municipal tourism fund, so, it is unlikely that they would do it regionally and this would lead to conflicts in case the obligation was formalized and only a few municipalities complied.

Another difficulty mentioned is that the Council is extremely dependent on the public power and, consequently, dependent on the change of governors at each mandate. In this way, the Council cannot achieve stability to further its objectives.

Although the idea of institutionalizing Agulhas Negras CONRETUR came from entrepreneurs in the region, what is observed nowadays from interviews is a leadership on the sphere of public entities. In general, the interviewees point out that the Council depends entirely on the participation of the public power and few entities linked to the business are pointed out as strong leaders. However, this role has led to several difficulties for the continuity of CONRETUR's actions due to the constant political changes that have taken place in the municipalities over the years.

Several interviewees mention a scenario where a politician takes a new position in a municipality and does not understand the importance of the Council, bringing difficulties to the continuity of its actions. More than one interviewee pointed out that city councilors and mayors are often not interested in the Council because they prioritize actions that can be converted into votes in their own municipalities. That is why the Council has always experienced difficulties. The discontinuity of actions resulting from the exchange of political parties in the government is a result of the absence of permanent staff occupying public positions in the tourism sector. This point is recurrent in other similar cases in southern Brazil as described by Minasi (2015), damaging medium- and long-term tourism development projects.

In addition, when a change of parties in the municipal governments occurs, there is consequently an exchange of representatives of departments of tourism in the Council. In the municipal elections of 2016, for example, there was a party change in three of the four municipalities of the region, which directly affected the activities of the Council, since it lost the participation of people in key positions, like the executive secretary and the treasury.

The last president of CONRETUR said that the difficulties of the Council were extended in the last management after the mandate of the mayor of Itatiaia was recalled in 2013. The definitive recall of the mandate, after legal recourses in 2015, also coincided with the worsening of a financial crisis in the state of Rio de Janeiro, making fund transfers and project development more difficult

With the departure of the mayor and the inauguration of a new political group in the prefecture, the then secretary of tourism of Itatiaia (former executive secretary of CONRETUR) was also removed from the position and, consequently, of her duties in the Council and, at least four interviewees mentioned her performance was essential to CONRETUR's activity. The former executive secretary of CONRETUR was, then, a key element in the Council, which, once again, reinforces the personal and non-institutional character of this instance.

The dependency from the public power and the change of secretariat can be pointed out as the main factors that led the Council to the present situation of inactivity, corroborating studies by Trentin and Fratucci (2011). According to the last president of CONRETUR, the Council has been paralyzed for at least one year.

The Council has experienced similar moments of difficulty previously and one entity is mentioned by all the interviewees as of fundamental importance for the progress of the Council: SEBRAE-RJ. According to the former executive secretary of CONRETUR, SEBRAE, RJ has always provided legal guidance, help with regional projects, education actions, and clarification sessions for public managers on the importance of the Council. The former Secretary of Tourism of Resende reports that in other moments of instability the meetings only happened again thanks to SEBRAE, RJ projects.

The representative of SEBRAE-RJ[5], coordinator of SEBRAE Médio Paraíba's tourism activities and operating in the Region of Agulhas Negras, however, refutes the label of protagonist in the actions of the Council, describing the entity as a 'facilitator of the process' and main partner of the Council. She further states that actions for restructuring the Council should stem from private initiative.

However, since the formation of CONRETUR, the strong influence of SEBRAE-RJ is evident, e.g., the fact that border municipalities were prevented from participating in the Council because of the territorial limitation of SEBRAE-RJ.

Regarding this issue, one of the main attractions of Agulhas Negras, the micro-region of Visconde de Mauá, encompasses part of the territory of the state of Minas Gerais. Officially, the destination known as Visconde de Mauá includes, besides the village of the same name, the villages of Maromba (RJ), Maringá (RJ), and Maringá (MG), which belongs to the municipality of Bocaina de Minas. In an interview, the representative of the Tourist and Commercial Association of the Region of Visconde de Mauá and the Region of Agulhas Negras (MAUATUR[6]) explains that for tourists, the fact that one of the villages of the micro-region is in another state makes no difference to their experience, thus, MAUTUR includes companies from that locality.

The notion that the territory wherein tourists travel is not necessarily restricted to political-administrative limits is explicit in the national tourism policy, which advocate the regionalization of the tourist territory through the PRT. However, what is perceived by visualizing the Brazilian tourism map (MTur, 2017) is that regionalization of tourism, although going beyond municipal borders, stops at state limits. What is observed in this empirical study, however, is that the Region of Agulhas Negras encompasses, in practice, part of the territory of Minas Gerais. Considering also that MAUATUR is one of the participating entities of CONRETUR, it can be stated that some companies of Minas Gerais are indirectly represented in the Regional Council, since they are part of an association sitting at CONRETUR.

For this reason, participants were asked if any entity or institution should be included in the Council. However, only the former Secretary of Tourism of Resende considered that CONRETUR should include representatives of municipalities and the private initiative of Bocaina de Minas and Itamonte.

The last president of CONRETUR, the representative of SEBRAE-RJ, the representative of Porto Real, and the former executive secretary of CONRETUR, do not see any other possible participating institutions and state that many institutions that are currently members of the Council do not effectively participate. On this point, the last president of CONRETUR notes that, in fact, there are more institutions sitting at the Council than there should be, because some of them do not participate effectively and others are not representative of the local trade.

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[5] Interview held on May 19, 2017 7
[6] Interview held on April 5, 2017

The former executive secretary of CONRETUR also states that many entrepreneurs in the region are not aware of the work done by the entity, even after twenty years of operation and have neither the interest in participating in representative entities, nor worry about the development of tourism in the city or the region. One of the members of CONRETUR even admitted in an interview that he attends the meetings merely as a listener and only because his superiors have decision making power, albeit not interested in the Council.

Moreover, it is noteworthy the lack of participation of local community, an agent forgotten by most of the interviewees. Only the founder of CONRETUR mentions the lack of involvement of civil society, saying that the city's infrastructure should primarily benefit residents, who in turn should understand how to benefit from tourism development and participate in the Councils through associations of residents and community leaderships. These findings are in line with the proposals of Frey (2000) and Hall (2004) when they note difficulties in participating and representativeness issues in instances of governance.

Menicucci's (2011) study of the region of Agulhas Negras mentions interviews in which residents of the region, especially in the Penedo district, criticize the absence of community participation in the councils, seen as a 'gravy train', and doubt the effectiveness of CONRETUR's actions, claiming that if municipalities did not carry out basic actions such as paving the streets, they would not be effectively concerned with the development of tourism. They also argue that Council agents think a lot about marketing actions such as promoting waterfalls and do not worry about infrastructures that would allow tourists to visit these attractions more easily.

The results of Meniccuci's (2011) study also show that the local community sees a certain rivalry between destinations, with local merchants not wanting to 'lose' tourists to neighboring municipalities (Meniccuci, 2011). This demonstrates a contradiction and that the idea of regional cooperation is difficult to disseminate and support both by public managers, as reported in the interviews described here, and by local community.

On the other hand, some interviewees point out the lack of participation of local entrepreneurs in events and training actions carried out by CONRETUR. However, we wonder if the participation of a community is possible when it does not understand the purpose of regional actions, sees neighboring destinations as competitors, and is not effectively included in tourism decision-making processes. We question, therefore, the extent to which this community was educated, informed, and became aware of the importance of regional actions and their role in participating in the decision-making process or the extent to which this involvement was made available to them.

It is a matter of concern the statement by the Council's founder that it is always the same people taking part in all participatory bodies in the region, because, we wonder the extent to which these people really represent the local population (Frey, 2000; Hall, 2004). The extent to which these people are in fact representatives or have taken advantage of these bodies on behalf of their own interests or the groups they represent.

The lack of participation and representativeness of Council members, the difficulties of managing a regionalized territory, and the heavy dependence of members on the public sphere are, in our analysis, decisive factors for the current phase of inactivity facing CONRETUR. Some interviewees are optimistic about the return of their operation and most of them believe that the process should be led by business people in the region. However, the lack of leadership of private sector entities in the Council may indicate they consider their positions irrelevant to decision-making or that their representatives do not consider CONRETUR's actions important.

Bodernave (1995, p. 25) proposes that "a participatory society would be one in which all citizens have a part in the production, management, and enjoyment of the assets of society in equity". In the context of CONRETUR, it can be said that not all citizens are included in the decision-making process (not to mention the tourism agents of the regions' neighboring municipalities), representatives are not representative and, therefore, the legitimacy of decisions can be called into question.

5 FINAL REMARKS

Public tourism policy in Brazil points to the creation of an instance of regional governance for the management of tourism. These instances would be composed of several social agents involved in the activity, including public power, business, and civil society, contributing to a more horizontal, participative, and democratic decision-making process.

However, the decision-making process in these participatory bodies must overcome many difficulties so that they can, in fact, be democratic and representative spaces. Interests are so diverse that consensus building is a challenge. Representatives sometimes do not actually represent some societal groups, or even if they represent them, their role ends up as a carte blanche to make decisions on behalf of a group that was not consulted, among other issues. Given this, the legitimacy of these spaces to make decisions can be called into question.

In the case of the region of Agulhas Negras, it is understood that the formation of its CONRETUR was an endogenous process, starting from local entrepreneurship and even prior to public policies focused on regional management. Despite being the oldest collective body in the tourism sector in the state of Rio de Janeiro, it has always found it difficult to raise awareness of public and local population about its importance.

Despite the entrepreneurs' pioneering action, representatives of the public power in the municipalities of Resende and Itatiaia stood out in the leadership of the instance, and the possible exchanges of power among political parties of these municipalities entail difficulties in the continuity of actions of the Council over the years. This was the case in the last municipal elections (2016) and one of the factors that explain CONRETUR's current state of inactivity. A similar result was observed in the study by Virginio, Delgado and Fortes (2011), where some representatives demonstrate greater 'power' in the Council, unlike representatives of civil society who are still apathetic to participate, reinforcing the need for studies that analyze how the decision-making process occurs in these spaces.

Many representatives do not effectively participate in the decisions, others participate, but have no decision-making power and some interviewees believe that other members should be included the Council, and, in this regard, we highlight representatives of municipalities neighboring the region that effectively have their lives impacted from the decisions of that body.

In addition to issues of representation, the Council still faces difficulties regarding funding for its operation and the dependence of municipal/state bodies, in the absence of a regional administrative body with legislative or executive power.

The example studied shows that while on paper instances of regional governance exist for managing regional territories with the participation of diverse actors, in practice, these goals are difficult to achieve. These results, of course, regard the situation of this specific instance and new studies are recommended to evaluate these processes and this policy across Brazil, so that from an initial diagnosis, new strategies can be suggested so that instances of governance can be effectively spaces for democratic management.

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