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**From Rio92 to Rio+20: Brazilian Media Coverage  
of Sustainable Development**

**by**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Media and Communication

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## Table of Contents

<b>List of Figures</b>	4
<b>List of Abbreviations</b>	7
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	9
<b>Declaration</b>	10
<b>Abstract</b>	11
<b>Resumo (Abstract, Portuguese version)</b>	12
<b>Chapter 1 – Introduction</b>	13
<b>1.1 – Contextualisation</b>	15
<b>1.2 – Thesis structure</b>	18
<b>1.3 – Conclusion</b>	23
<b>Chapter 2 – Environmental journalism in context</b>	25
<b>2.1 – The environmental agenda</b>	28
<b>2.2 – Environmental reporting and research</b>	30
<b>2.3 – Environmental coverage through the lens of developing countries</b>	35
<b>2.4 – Conclusion</b>	37
<b>Chapter 3 – Methodology</b>	39
<b>3.1 – Objectives</b>	39
<b>3.2 – Timeframe</b>	41
<b>3.3 – Data collection</b>	42
<b>3.4 – Data Overview</b>	43
<b>3.4.1 – Rio92</b>	46
<b>3.4.2 – From 1993 to 2001</b>	48
<b>3.4.3 – Rio+10</b>	51
<b>3.4.4 – From 2003 to 2011</b>	53
<b>3.4.5 – Rio+20</b>	56
<b>3.5 – Thematic textual and content analysis</b>	58
<b>3.6 – Reflections</b>	61
<b>3.7 – Conclusion</b>	62
<b>Chapter 4 – Definitions of sustainable development</b>	65
<b>4.1 – Type A: economic, environmental, and social values</b>	66

4.1.1 – Brazilian government	66
4.1.2 – International leaders	75
4.1.3 – Specialists	78
4.1.4 – Business industry	83
4.1.5 – Religious narratives	85
4.1.6 – Events	87
4.2 – Type B: economic definitions	91
4.3 – Type C: environmental aspects	94
4.4 – Type D: economic and environmental definitions	95
4.4.1 – Brazilian government	96
4.4.2 – Specialist	97
4.4.3 – Business industry	98
4.4.4 – Media	99
4.4.5 – Events	102
4.5 – Type E: social and environmental features	103
4.6 – Type F: future generations	107
4.7 – Type G: critical features	115
4.8 – Conclusion	118
<b>Chapter 5 – Social narratives in the coverage of sustainable development</b>	120
5.1 – Poverty	121
5.1.1 – Childhood	121
5.1.2 – Inequalities	124
5.1.3 – Projects	128
5.2 – Food security	131
5.3 – Women’s health	137
5.4 – Environmental education	146
5.5 – Indigenous population	151
5.6 – Conclusion	159
<b>Chapter 6 – Economic narratives: greenwashing sustainable development</b>	161
6.1 – Greenwashing	162
6.1.1 – Rio92	162

6.1.2 – Between conferences	166
6.1.3 – Rio+20	176
6.2 – Consumerism	183
6.3 – Monetisation of natural resources	188
6.4 – Conflicts over money	193
6.4.1 – Discussions in Rio92	193
6.4.2 – Controversies between the conferences	197
6.4.3 – Disputes in Rio+20	201
6.5 – Conclusion	203
<b>Chapter 7 – Sustainability’s environmental narratives: superficiality and greenwashing</b>	205
7.1 – Environmental topics	205
7.1.1 – Discussions during Rio92	206
7.1.2 – Discussions before Rio+20	210
7.2 – Environmental policy	220
7.2.1 – International environmental policy	221
7.2.1.1 – Rio92	221
7.2.1.2 – Rio+10 and beyond	224
7.2.2 – Brazilian environmental policy	255
7.2.2.1 – Brazilian Forest Code	251
7.3 – Conclusion	253
<b>Chapter 8 – The coverage of the Amazon rainforest: a case study</b>	255
8.1 – World Environment Day and Environment Week	255
8.2 – Deforestation	263
8.3 – Economic activities	280
8.4 – Conclusion	290
<b>Conclusion</b>	292
<b>Bibliography</b>	303
<b>Appendix: Articles</b>	307

## List of Figures

<b>Figure 3.1:</b> Timeframe 1993-2001 and 2003-2011	41
<b>Figure 3.2:</b> Timeframe Rio92, Rio+10 and Rio+20	42
<b>Figure 3.3:</b> Distribution in Newspapers from 1992 to 2012	44
<b>Figure 3.4:</b> <i>Folha de S. Paulo</i> VS <i>O Globo</i>	45
<b>Figure 3.5:</b> Distribution in Newspapers during Rio92	47
<b>Figure 3.6:</b> Journalistic Styles during Rio92	48
<b>Figure 3.7:</b> Distribution in Newspapers from 1993 to 2001	49
<b>Figure 3.8:</b> Journalistic Styles from 1993 to 2001	50
<b>Figure 3.9:</b> Distribution from 1993 to 2001	51
<b>Figure 3.10:</b> Distribution in Newspapers during Rio+10	52
<b>Figure 3.11:</b> Journalistic Styles during Rio+10	53
<b>Figure 3.12:</b> Distribution in Newspapers from 2003 to 2011	54
<b>Figure 3.13:</b> Journalistic Styles from 2003 to 2011	55
<b>Figure 3.14:</b> Distribution from 2003 to 2011	55
<b>Figure 3.15:</b> Distribution in Newspapers during Rio+20	57
<b>Figure 3.16:</b> Journalistic Styles during Rio+20	57
<b>Figure 4.1:</b> Image published in <i>Folha de S. Paulo</i> on 5 June 1995	69
<b>Figure 4.2:</b> Image published in <i>O Globo</i> on 26 August 2002	70
<b>Figure 4.3:</b> Pictures published in <i>O Globo</i> on 3 September 2002	72
<b>Figure 4.4:</b> Picture published in <i>Folha de S. Paulo</i> on 21 June 2012	75
<b>Figure 4.5:</b> Pictures published in <i>O Globo</i> on 27 August 2002	77
<b>Figure 4.6:</b> Image published in <i>Folha de S. Paulo</i> on 11 June 1992	82
<b>Figure 4.7:</b> Picture published in <i>Folha de S. Paulo</i> on 23 June 2012	84
<b>Figure 4.8:</b> Picture published in <i>O Globo</i> on 14 June 1992	89
<b>Figure 4.9:</b> Picture published in <i>O Globo</i> on 29 May 1992	92
<b>Figure 4.10:</b> Image published in <i>Folha de S. Paulo</i> on 13 June 1992	93
<b>Figure 4.11:</b> Picture published in <i>O Globo</i> on 31 May 1992	103
<b>Figure 4.12:</b> Picture published in <i>Folha de S. Paulo</i> on 5 June 2011	106
<b>Figure 4.13:</b> Picture published in <i>Folha de S. Paulo</i> on 5 June 2011	106
<b>Figure 4.14:</b> Image published in <i>O Globo</i> on 5 June 1996	109
<b>Figure 4.15:</b> Image published in <i>O Globo</i> on 28 August 2002	111
<b>Figure 4.16:</b> Image published in <i>Folha de S. Paulo</i> on 5 June 2010	114
<b>Figure 4.17:</b> Picture published in <i>Folha de S. Paulo</i> on 17 June 2012	117

<b>Figure 5.1:</b> Picture published in <i>O Globo</i> on 7 June 2011	129
<b>Figure 5.2:</b> Picture published in <i>O Globo</i> on 7 June 2011	129
<b>Figure 5.3:</b> Image published in <i>Folha de S. Paulo</i> on 8 June 2007	134
<b>Figure 5.4:</b> Picture published in <i>O Globo</i> on 6 June 2008	137
<b>Figure 5.5:</b> Picture published in <i>O Globo</i> on 4 September 2002	139
<b>Figure 5.6:</b> Picture published in <i>Folha de S. Paulo</i> on 21 June 2012	141
<b>Figure 5.7:</b> Picture published in <i>Folha de S. Paulo</i> on 23 June 2012	144
<b>Figure 5.8:</b> Picture published in <i>O Globo</i> on 23 June 2012	145
<b>Figure 5.9:</b> Picture published in <i>O Globo</i> on 7 June 2011	148
<b>Figure 5.10:</b> Picture published in <i>O Globo</i> on 7 June 2011	148
<b>Figure 5.11:</b> Picture published in <i>O Globo</i> on 21 August 2002	153
<b>Figure 5.12:</b> Picture published in <i>O Globo</i> on 16 June 2012	156
<b>Figure 5.13:</b> Image published in <i>O Globo</i> on 18 June 2012	158
<b>Figure 5.14:</b> Picture published in <i>O Globo</i> on 18 June 2012	158
<b>Figure 6.1:</b> Picture published in <i>O Globo</i> on 28 May 1992	165
<b>Figure 6.2:</b> Pictures published in <i>O Globo</i> on 5 June 2007	170
<b>Figure 6.3:</b> Pictures published in <i>O Globo</i> on 2 June 2008	171
<b>Figure 6.4:</b> Picture published in <i>O Globo</i> on 8 June 2010	174
<b>Figure 6.5:</b> Images published in <i>Folha de S. Paulo</i> on 7 June 2008	185
<b>Figure 6.6:</b> Pictures published in <i>Folha de S. Paulo</i> on 5 June 2011	186
<b>Figure 6.7:</b> Pictures published in <i>O Globo</i> on 28 August 2002	189
<b>Figure 6.8:</b> Images published in <i>O Globo</i> on 4 September 2002	190
<b>Figure 6.9:</b> Image published in <i>O Globo</i> on 4 September 2002	191
<b>Figure 6.10:</b> Images published in <i>O Globo</i> on 6 June 2007	200
<b>Figure 7.1:</b> Picture published in <i>Folha de S. Paulo</i> on 7 June 2006	211
<b>Figure 7.2:</b> Images published in <i>O Globo</i> on 5 June 2009	213
<b>Figure 7.3:</b> Images published in <i>O Globo</i> on 5 June 2009	214
<b>Figure 7.4:</b> Images published in <i>O Globo</i> on 5 June 2009	215
<b>Figure 7.5:</b> Image published in <i>O Globo</i> on 7 June 2009	217
<b>Figure 7.6:</b> Images published in <i>Folha de S. Paulo</i> on 5 June 2010	218
<b>Figure 7.7:</b> Picture published in <i>Folha de S. Paulo</i> on 5 June 2011	219
<b>Figure 7.8:</b> Image published in <i>Folha de S. Paulo</i> on 5 June 2011	220
<b>Figure 7.9:</b> Picture published in <i>O Globo</i> on 15 June 1992	223

<b>Figure 7.10:</b> Images published in <i>O Globo</i> on 25 August 2002	227
<b>Figure 7.11:</b> Images published in <i>O Globo</i> on 25 August 2002	228
<b>Figure 7.12:</b> Pictures published in <i>O Globo</i> on 26 August 2002	230
<b>Figure 7.13:</b> Pictures published in <i>O Globo</i> on 29 August 2002	232
<b>Figure 7.14:</b> Picture published in <i>O Globo</i> on 31 August 2002	234
<b>Figure 7.15:</b> Picture published in <i>O Globo</i> on 4 September 2002	239
<b>Figure 7.16:</b> Image published in <i>Folha de S. Paulo</i> on 6 June 2011	240
<b>Figure 7.17:</b> Picture published in <i>Folha de S. Paulo</i> on 20 June 2012	249
<b>Figure 7.18:</b> Pictures published in <i>O Globo</i> on 7 June 2011	251
<b>Figure 7.19:</b> Image published in <i>Folha de S. Paulo</i> on 4 June 2011	252
<b>Figure 8.1:</b> Images published in <i>Folha de S. Paulo</i> on 6 June 2006	260
<b>Figure 8.2:</b> Image published in <i>O Globo</i> on 22 August 2002	266
<b>Figure 8.3:</b> Image published in <i>O Globo</i> on 7 June 2005	270
<b>Figure 8.4:</b> Image published in <i>Folha de S. Paulo</i> on 4 June 2008	272
<b>Figure 8.5:</b> Picture published in <i>O Globo</i> on 15 June 2012	278
<b>Figure 8.6:</b> Pictures published in <i>O Globo</i> on 3 June 2007	282
<b>Figure 8.7:</b> Picture published in <i>O Globo</i> on 7 June 2011	289



## List of Abbreviations

<i>AFP</i>	<i>Agence France-Presse</i>
AP	Associated Press
<i>BNDES</i>	National Bank for Economic and Social Development
<i>BR</i>	Brazilian Highway
CO <sub>2</sub>	Carbon Dioxide
<i>CNBB</i>	National Conference of Bishops of Brazil
<i>CNPS</i>	National Soil Research Centre
COP	United Nations Climate Change Conference
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation
<i>FEBRABAN</i>	Brazilian Bank Federation
<i>FIESP</i>	Federation of Industries of the State of São Paulo
<i>Firjan</i>	Federation of Industries of the State of Rio de Janeiro
<i>Flonas</i>	National Forests
<i>FSP</i>	<i>Folha de S. Paulo</i>
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
G-77	The Group of 77
G8	The Group of Eight
<i>IBGE</i>	Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ICC	International Chamber of Commerce
<i>Idec</i>	Brazilian Institute of Consumer Protection
IISD	International Institute of Sustainable Development
<i>INPE</i>	Brazilian National Institute for Space Research
MPhil	Master of Philosophy
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
<i>OG</i>	<i>O Globo</i>
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
<i>Planofloro</i>	Agricultural and Forestry Program of Rondônia

Rio92	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
Rio93	First Conference of Cities to the Century
Rio+10	World Summit on Sustainable Development
Rio+20	United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development
<i>Sebrae</i>	Brazilian Service of Assistance to Micro and Small Enterprises
SOS	Morse Code distress signal
TV	Television
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCSD	United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
US	United States
USA	United States of America
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

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**Declaration**

I declare that this thesis submitted in support for the application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

## Abstract

This thesis explores Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development and analyses the connection between media representation and environmental protection in Brazil. It investigates how the Brazilian national newspapers *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* covered and framed the concept of sustainable development in Brazil between 1992 and 2012. The period chosen for this research corresponds with the occurrence of two international conferences in the city of Rio de Janeiro: the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992, and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) in 2012. The timeframe is significant, as analysing the ways these major national newspapers covered a wide range of topics related to sustainable development during and between these seminal environmental events can reveal long-term patterns in both official and public perceptions of environmental concerns in Brazil. To understand how the media plays a role in cultivating such perceptions, the thesis uses thematic textual and content analysis, informed by the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis as its key methodological approach. By analysing 240 texts published in the 20-year period covered, the study uncovers the ways these publications position the integration of the principles of sustainability and the imperatives of development. The analysis reveals that the coverage produced by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* focused on economic concerns and often ignored or undervalued the implications of environmental sustainable development. Despite acknowledging intermittent efforts to promote environmental awareness in Brazil, the study identifies coverage gaps, a lack of contextualisation, superficiality, missing and inaccurate information, and greenwashing strategies as the dominant strands shaping this media coverage. The thesis concludes that the principles of sustainable development have been distorted by the Brazilian media coverage, as instead of promoting its potential by aligning it with the activities of Rio92 and Rio+20, news media was largely responsible for disseminating disinformation throughout Brazil.

**Resumo (Abstract, Portuguese version)<sup>1</sup>**

Esta tese explora a cobertura da mídia brasileira sobre desenvolvimento sustentável e analisa a conexão entre representação midiática e proteção ambiental no Brasil. Investiga-se como os jornais brasileiros de circulação nacional *Folha de S. Paulo* e *O Globo* cobriram e desenvolveram o conceito de desenvolvimento sustentável no Brasil entre 1992 e 2012. O período escolhido para esta pesquisa compreende a ocorrência de duas conferências internacionais na cidade do Rio de Janeiro: a Conferência das Nações Unidas sobre Meio Ambiente e Desenvolvimento (Rio92), em 1992, e a Conferência das Nações Unidas sobre Desenvolvimento Sustentável (Rio+20), em 2012. O período é significativo, visto que analisar os modos como esses grandes jornais nacionais cobriram uma ampla gama de temas relacionados ao desenvolvimento sustentável durante e entre esses importantes eventos ambientais pode revelar padrões sobre as preocupações ambientais no Brasil, tanto em percepções oficiais quanto em percepções públicas. Para compreender como a mídia desempenha uma função no cultivo de tais percepções, a tese utiliza temática textual e análise de conteúdo, com base nos princípios da Análise Crítica do Discurso como principal abordagem metodológica. Ao analisar 240 textos publicados em 20 anos, o estudo demonstra como essas publicações posicionam a integração dos princípios da sustentabilidade e do desenvolvimento. A análise revela que a cobertura produzida pela *Folha de S. Paulo* e *O Globo* concentrou-se em questões econômicas e frequentemente ignorou ou subestimou os impactos do desenvolvimento ambiental sustentável. Apesar de reconhecer esforços intermitentes para promover a conscientização ambiental no Brasil, o estudo identifica falhas de cobertura, falta de contextualização, superficialidade, informações ausentes ou imprecisas e estratégias de *greenwashing* como as vertentes dominantes que moldam essa cobertura midiática. A tese conclui que os princípios do desenvolvimento sustentável foram distorcidos pela cobertura midiática brasileira, pois ao invés de promover seu potencial alinhando-o às atividades da Rio92 e Rio+20, a mídia jornalística foi amplamente responsável por disseminar a desinformação no Brasil.

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<sup>1</sup> The Portuguese version of the Abstract is a requirement of the cotutelle agreement between the University of Warwick and *Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte*, in Brazil.

## Chapter 1 – Introduction

From January 2019 until April 2022, Brazil has suffered at least four major environmental catastrophes. First, the Brumadinho Dam disaster, in the state of Minas Gerais, southeast Brazil, killed 270 people, on 25 January 2019. The dam failure released 12 million m<sup>3</sup> of tailings into the Paraopeba river that supplied water to roughly two million people. A few months later, on 30 August 2019, a crude oil spill, which is still ongoing, affected 2,250km of Brazil's northeast coastline. This was considered the worst oil spill in Brazilian history and the worst environmental disaster on the country's coast. In 2020 and 2021, amid the global Covid-19 pandemic, unprecedented fires devastated areas of the Amazon rainforest and Pantanal, destroying local biodiversity. Furthermore, severe droughts and heavy rainfall occurred throughout these years. The worst episode occurred on 15 February 2022 when heavy rainfall caused flooding and mudslides in the city of Petrópolis, Rio de Janeiro, causing 223 deaths.

This period coincides with the government of Brazilian president Jair Messias Bolsonaro. This far-right politician started to denigrate the environment during his presidential campaign by promising to eliminate the Ministry of the Environment. Even though the president did not manage to extinguish the Ministry, the government was responsible for weakening environmental policy in the country, which encompassed the approval of 493 pesticides in the year 2020 alone, including products that are forbidden in the European Union.

Recent environmental disasters and policy erosion in Brazil indicate that arguments supporting economic growth continue to outshine social and environmental protection in the country. This tragic scenario is not exclusive to Brazil, however, but is an international phenomenon. The media is one of the agents responsible for propagating the concept of sustainable development and ultimately enhancing environmental awareness in society. The media discourse constructs most things that society knows about the world, influencing the public's truths and beliefs. This draws from constructionist perspectives, which define social problems as intentionally created, defined, and disputed in public arenas such as the media. Social problems are therefore a planned discursive product.

Accordingly, this thesis investigates environmental communication in Brazil. The investigation presents a historical study of Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development and connects this to wider socio-political and economic developments in Brazilian society from 1992–2012. Underpinning this research is concern that a lack of data about specific areas of the planet, particularly the Global South, jeopardises the promotion of sustainable development worldwide. The primary impetus for this research is to understand the development of environmental journalism in Brazil and its connection to environmental protection, due to the large number of recurring environmental disasters in the country. The initial hypothesis is that Brazilian environmental media coverage of sustainable development is predominantly linked to economic debates and is limited in its contribution to environmental protection in Brazil.

This hypothesis is based on previous studies about environmental communication in Brazil, especially from my own experience with my MPhil research, developed at the Media Studies Postgraduate Programme at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte in Brazil. During the MPhil, I investigated the coverage of wind energy by the Brazilian newspaper *Tribuna do Norte*, which is based in northeast Brazil. The analysis revealed that this regional publication prioritised economic debates over promotion of the environmental agenda, despite a favourable timeframe that corresponded to the implementation of the first wind farm in the region (Holanda, 2017). This result matches findings that emerged in other studies about environmental communication in Brazil and is presented in chapter 2, *Environmental journalism in context*.

The objective of this thesis is to analyse how Brazilian national media covered the notion of sustainable development and to understand how media contributes to the promotion of environmental and sustainability awareness in the country. The concept of sustainable development was established in 1987 by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development that produced the document *Our Common Future*, also known as the *Brundtland Report* in reference to former Norwegian prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland who coordinated the report. The document presented a study of the global impacts of current development and how economies should evolve to promote less



environmental destruction and more social equity, hence outlining the basic principles of the notion of sustainable development.

*The Brundtland Report* defines sustainable development as “the development that meets all human needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987:43), and merges environmental, social, and economic aspects. Accordingly, the concept acknowledges the need for worldwide improved development that considers economic growth in relation to social and environmental impacts. Furthermore, when describing a sustainable world economy, the report suggests that “If large parts of the developing world are to avert economic, social, and environmental catastrophes, it is essential that global economic growth be revitalized” (WCED, 1987:66). The document explains that, in practice, a sustainable world economy requires “more rapid economic growth in both industrial and developing countries, freer market access for the products of developing countries, lower interest rates, greater technology transfer, and significantly larger capital flows, both concessional and commercial” (WCED, 1987:66).

### **1.1 – Contextualisation**

Acknowledging the importance of global sustainable growth, in 1992 the United Nations promoted the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), Rio92. The event occurred in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 3 to 14 June 1992, and gathered 117 heads of state and delegations from 175 countries to discuss the implementation of the concept of sustainable development. Rio92 was not only important for putting the spotlight on the environmental cause, but was also a global breakthrough in the development of environmental communication. The conference attracted over 7,000 international journalists and put environmental discussions on the global media agenda.

Rio92 discussions resulted in the publication of important documents that are still in use, namely the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Agenda 21, and the Forest Principles. Additionally, three agreements were opened for signatures: the Convention on Biological Diversity, Framework Convention on

Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. More importantly, Rio92 marked international popularisation of environmental concerns and, more specifically, of the notion of sustainable development.

Ten years after Rio92, the United Nations coordinated the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), Rio+10. The summit took place in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September 2002. It highlighted the underachievement of global sustainability. Despite efforts at Rio92, the international economy had not implemented sustainable practices, and economic development practices were still devastating the environment and promoting social inequality worldwide. Rio+10 preceded the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), Rio+20, which was hosted in Rio de Janeiro from 20 to 22 June 2012. Once again, the conference's goal was reviewing outcomes of Rio92, proceeding with the implementation of sustainability, and promoting discussions on establishing sustainable societies to prevent global development from destroying humanity's future.

Brazil, the country that held the two UN environmental conferences, was in the global environmental spotlight before, during, and after the events. The country holds about 60% of the world's largest tropical rainforest, the Amazon, which is important to different areas of the global environment, especially climate and biodiversity. The Brazilian National Institute for Space Research<sup>2</sup> (*INPE*, Portuguese acronym) has been chronicling Amazon deforestation rates in Brazil since 1970. In 2020, the *INPE* reported that within the previous 50 years, 20% of the forest had been destroyed. This figure suggests that international negotiations on sustainable development have not been very effective in promoting environmental protection. Likewise, environmental media coverage, which gained more attention due to international discussions of environmental issues, was not successful in boosting environmental awareness and protection.

In selecting the material for research exploring media coverage of sustainable development in Brazil it was important to consider that Brazil is the world's fifth largest country and the largest in Latin America, covering

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<sup>2</sup> Original in Portuguese: *Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Espaciais*

8,515,767km<sup>2</sup>. The country's continental size makes it difficult for daily publications to reach all regions. Hence, Brazil's vast scope has been an essential concern in selecting newspapers to be investigated. This thesis identified that *Folha de S. Paulo (FSP)* and *O Globo (OG)* were the most appropriate newspapers because they have national distribution. The aim was ensuring that the newspapers were available in all five regions of Brazil.

Based in São Paulo, *Folha de S. Paulo* was launched in 1921 and is part of the Brazilian media conglomerate Grupo Folha. The newspaper headquarters is in São Paulo, Brazil's wealthiest and most populous state. According to the Brazilian Institute for the Verification of Circulation<sup>3</sup>, since 1986 *FSP* has had the highest newspaper readership in the country. *O Globo* was founded in 1925 in the city of Rio de Janeiro. It is the main print publication of Grupo Globo, which is the largest media conglomerate in Latin America. Moreover, both newspapers are historically connected to right-wing politics, and so present a more conservative viewpoint to the Brazilian public. It is relevant to describe the publications' political perspectives because these positions are reflected in the editorial line of *FSP* and *OG*.

To analyse the coverage by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* of sustainable development this research considers a timeframe that encompasses two UN environmental conferences hosted in Brazil: the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. The timeframe reflects the increasing prominence of sustainability in Brazil. More specifically the study will focus on a 193-day period encompassing UN environmental events and the World Environment Day, which has been celebrated on 5 June since 1974. This period incorporates 386 newspaper editions that are available in *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* online archives: <<https://acervo.folha.com.br/>>, and <<https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/>>.

From these 386 newspaper editions, the research considers pieces that specifically mention sustainable development, to investigate how *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* covered the topic. In total, 790 texts correspond to the requirement. Another prerequisite for the analysis is selecting pieces with more significant

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<sup>3</sup> Original in Portuguese: *Instituto Verificador de Comunicação*

content, which is further examined in five different chapters. The following segment will specify the analysis employed in each chapter of this thesis.

## 1.2 – Thesis structure

This section presents the thesis structure, underlining the main elements discussed in each of the subsequent seven chapters. The structure was specifically organised to address the six main objectives of this research: 1) producing an updated literature review on environmental journalism, including characteristics of Brazilian research, as displayed in chapter 2; 2) identifying how the concept of sustainable development was presented by *O Globo* and *Folha de S. Paulo* between 1992 and 2012, as revealed in chapter 4; 3) analysing *FSP* and *OG* coverage of sustainable development related to social subjects, as demonstrated in chapter 5; 4) evaluating the economic content produced by the Brazilian media coverage of sustainability, as exhibited in chapter 6; 5) examining environmental coverage in *FSP*'s and *OG*'s sustainability reporting, as demonstrated in chapter 7; and finally 6) reviewing *FSP* and *OG* coverage of sustainability and the Amazon rainforest, detailed in chapter 8.

This thesis encompasses a literature review of environmental journalism; methodological rationalisation; analysis of sustainable development definitions used by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* in the coverage produced between 1992 and 2012, to investigate how the coverage comprehended and presented the concept; and examination of collected data in relation to the three pillars of sustainability: economic, social, and environmental aspects, mainly associated with the Amazon rainforest.

Chapter 2, *Environmental journalism in context*, reviews recent literature on the development of international environmental coverage. Literature reviews are important to present and evaluate previous relevant academic works about environmental communication. The chapter contains reflections on studies produced in the Global South, especially in Brazil, and presents the most explored environmental topics by Brazilian media researchers.

The investigation covers five topics: 1) *The environmental agenda* explores the connection between public opinion and media coverage, and defines quality parameters of environmental coverage; 2) *Environmental reporting as a tool for awareness and engagement* examines the environmental coverage in regard to public awareness, education, and behaviour change; 3) *Research area and framings* presents studies of media coverage in the Global South, despite acknowledging that most researches on environmental journalism come from the Global North and focus on climate change and global warming; 4) *Environmental coverage through the lens of developing countries* focuses on research regarding environmental communication issues in the Global South; and 5) *The development of environmental journalism in Brazil*, which focuses specifically in the Brazilian media scenario.

Finally, the literature review outlines gaps in the existing literature that this study aims to address. Namely, investigations of the historical development of environmental communication from the Global South, which the thesis will address by conducting extensive primary research into Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development.

Chapter 3, *Methodology*, presents the methodological approach used in this thesis. The chapter explores five topics: 1) *Objectives*: making a literature review of environmental journalism, studying the concept of sustainable development through the coverage of *O Globo* and *Folha de S. Paulo*, evaluating the coverage of sustainable development related to social, economic, and environmental subjects; and of the coverage of the Amazon rainforest; 2) *Timeframe* gives details of the 20 years of coverage, dating from 1992 to 2012; 3) *Data collection* explains that the content gathering took into account the term sustainable development, and 26 synonyms; 4) *Data overview* describes 790 pieces, showing that during Rio92, *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* produced 123 pieces on sustainable development; 48 texts from 1993 to 2001; 77 during Rio+10; 165 from 2003 to 2011; and 377 during Rio+20; and finally 5) *Textual analysis* explains the investigation of the concept through a six-type categorisation, specifically created to study explanations of sustainable development. Moreover, it describes Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (1989; 1995; 2001), which connects the study of text, discursive practice, and analysis of the social, cultural, and political conjuncture in which the material

was developed and consumed. It also specifies that texts analysed in further chapters were selected for presenting relevant social, economic, and environmental framing, connecting the focus of media coverage to the definitions of sustainable development.

Chapter 4, *Definitions of sustainable development*, investigates 57 distinct explanations of sustainability that were published by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* in 57 pieces out of the 790 collected for this thesis. This encompasses roughly 7% of texts introducing sustainability to Brazilian readers in the 20 years of coverage. In this chapter, the goal is identifying how *FSP* and *OG* presented sustainable development in Brazil, particularly in comparison to the official concept released in 1987 by the United Nations in the document known as the *Brundtland Report*: “sustainable development is the development that meets all human needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987:43), including environmental, social, and economic facets.

The chapter uses a seven-type categorisation created for this research to identify how sustainable development was perceived by the media and presented to the public. Type A relates to the *Brundtland Report*’s classification, presenting environmental, economic, and social aspects; Type B refers to economic descriptions; Type C focuses on environmental issues; Type D represents economic and environment elements; Type E shows social and environmental features; Type F refers to the mention of future generations that is part of the *Brundtland Report*; and Type G unveils critiques. The analysis shows that almost half of the explanations were analogous to the concept of sustainability, which suggests historical patterns of improving media understanding of the subject.

Chapter 5, *Social narratives in the coverage of sustainable development*, investigates 32 pieces displaying social narratives – less than 4% of the 790 texts collected in this research. This is the first chapter that analyses media content in relation to the three aspects of sustainability, namely social, economic, and environmental features. The material studied in this chapter was selected for displaying the most relevant social framing within all 790 pieces. This is also the first time that the term narratives emerges in the thesis. It is worth explaining that,

in this research, the word narrative is used as a synonym for stories and thus indicates the subjective angle taken in each piece of news reporting.

Discussion was divided into five main social aspects presented by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* between 1992 and 2012, namely: 1) *Poverty* analyses texts presenting links between childhood, inequalities, and projects; 2) *Food security* discusses pieces linking hunger and sustainability that were published between 2002 and 2012; 3) *Women's health* shows ten texts revealing conflicts involving western societies and the Vatican, Arab countries, and other conservative nations; 4) *Environmental education* studies pieces highlighting a gap in Brazilian media coverage of sustainability; and 5) *Indigenous population* examines texts produced between 1992 and 2012.

Finally, chapter 5 observes that social subjects are the least represented in *FSP* and *OG* reporting of sustainable development, which spotlight *O Globo's* texts and photographs displaying post-colonial prejudice and hostility towards Brazilian indigenous communities. Investigation also reveals similarities in *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage, thus showing that the Brazilian public had access to similar content in regard to sustainability narratives produced by the media.

Chapter 6, *Economic narratives: greenwashing sustainable development*, investigates economic narratives presented in 57 texts, roughly 7% of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* pieces addressing sustainability published between 1992 and 2012. Here, in the introduction, it is the first time that the concept of greenwashing emerges in this thesis. It is noteworthy to recollect that the notion arose in 1986 to spotlight disinformation deliberately used by companies and governments that pretended to support environmental care while promoting destruction. It also relates to institutions “that spend more time and money advertising that they are green than on actually putting into place environmentally friendly practices” (Orange & Cohen, 2010:30). The definition of greenwashing refers to disinformation, which is another term widely explored in this thesis. According to Born and Edgington (2017:4), disinformation is “intentionally false or inaccurate information that is spread deliberately, historically by ‘unknown state officials’ but increasingly by other politically interested actors, with a motive of undermining public confidence”.

The content analysed in chapter 6 was chosen for displaying significant economic discussions, as a reference to the three characteristics of sustainable development: social, economic, and environmental aspects. *FSP* and *OG* coverage of sustainability's economic narratives was based on four main subjects: 1) *Greenwashing* revises pieces producing and replicating greenwashing narratives that were subdivided according to a timeframe: *Rio92*, *Between conferences*, and *Rio+20*; 2) *Consumerism* shows misuse of the notion of sustainable development to promote consumption; 3) *Monetisation of natural resources* relates to the coverage that treated nature and money as similar concepts, produced between 2000 and 2008; and 4) *Conflicts over money* demonstrates that clashes between rich and poor countries throughout the 20-year timeframe referred to financial resources to invest in sustainable development. The segment is divided into discussions in *Rio92*, controversies between conferences, and disputes in *Rio+20*.

Finally, chapter 6 reveals that when covering economic aspects of sustainability, *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* reinforced greenwashing narratives and promoted inaccurate information. It also shows the usage of sustainability as part of business and government marketing strategies, resulting in political propaganda and weak media content.

Chapter 7, *Sustainability's environmental narratives: superficiality and greenwashing*, concludes the study of the three aspects of sustainable development: social, economic, and environmental issues. Pieces studied in this chapter were selected for showing relevant environmental subjects among the 790 gathered for this research. The chapter investigates 58 texts, roughly 7% of the coverage by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* of sustainable development.

The content is divided into two main sections: 1) *Environmental topics*, which is subdivided into: *Discussions during Rio92*, which were superficial and highlighted political instead of environmental discussions, and *Discussions before Rio+20* that tried to promote environmental awareness but lacked basic information and contextualisation; and 2) *Environmental policy*, which is available through texts containing international and Brazilian environmental policy. Both sections unveil obstacles to produce and employ effective environmental legislation.



Ultimately, chapter 7 exposes how both *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* either ignored or superficially covered environmental aspects, while greenwashing narratives contributed to the spreading of disinformation about sustainable development in Brazil throughout the 20 years.

To conclude, chapter 8, *The coverage of the Amazon rainforest: a case study*, investigates 36 texts produced by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* between 1992 and 2012 linking narratives of the Amazon rainforest to the concept of sustainable development. It is important to reiterate that 60% of the Amazon rainforest, the world's largest tropical rainforest, is located in Brazil. Pieces relate to four main subjects: 1) *World Environment Day and Environment Week* discloses that *FSP* and *OG* repeatedly used World Environment Day and Environment Week to publicise environmental projects of the Brazilian national government, constituting greenwashing narratives; 2) *Deforestation* studies pieces published between 1996 and 2012 that uncovered deforestation in the Amazon rainforest, highlighting the main causes of the devastation, efforts to halt deforestation, and greenwashing narratives used to publicise governments' actions; and 3) *Economic activities* examines pieces about the effects of mining, cattle farming, and construction in the forest. More specifically, the section analyses pieces on mining in the Amazon region in 2007, articles about cattle farming in the rainforest between 2008 and 2009, and texts referring to the Belo Monte Dam in 2011.

### **1.3 – Conclusion**

In summary, *From Rio92 to Rio+20: Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development* is the first study of its kind focusing on a long-term historical evaluation of a substantial part of national media coverage in one of the major global economies. In doing so, it provides an understanding of how sustainability initiatives were compromised from their inception by a heavy economic focus, leading to greenwashing of the news agenda by journalists and organisations closely affiliated with external interests. These findings challenge some of the existing literature by changing the focus on environmental journalism from the Global North to the Global South, but also provide first-hand data of the ways that environmental journalism developed in Brazil during two significant decades for the global

environment due to the occurrence of three major international environmental events between 1992 and 2012. Having presented the core structure of the research, the thesis now moves to chapter 2, *Environmental journalism in context*, a literature review of the development of international environmental media coverage.

## Chapter 2 – Environmental journalism in context

Environmental journalism is a key area in the contemporary media landscape, as it deals with some of the most important long-term issues facing the world today that threaten human existence. The continuous and extensive environmental press coverage from the media all over the planet has made subjects like ozone depletion, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, acid rain, air pollution, climate change, global warming, environmental sustainability, and melting arctic ice part of the present global agenda and turned them into international concerns.

Environmental journalism evolved differently throughout the world, responding to economic, social, and political values endemic to particular cultural and political contexts (Hansen, 2019; Wyss, 2018). Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there have been significant environmental discussions in the so-called ‘developed world’, which is usually ruled by democratic governments that protect freedom of expression and press freedom. In most cases, media coverage has amplified public perception of environmental causes even though it has not been able to prevent environmental destruction (Neuzil & Kovarik, 1996; Bødker & Neverla, 2013; Anderson, 2019). Meanwhile, most developing nations have had their natural resources exploited for centuries. The majority of the countries that receive this classification were colonies of exploitation, a condition that affected some parts of the world until the 20<sup>th</sup> century and continues to the present day under different labels. Thus, it is not difficult to understand that these abused nations have been fighting to protect what is left of their environment as well as trying to upgrade their economy and social standards. Their media often report the struggle and link environmental news to the coverage of developmental issues, such as deforestation and agricultural expansion, usually emphasising the interrelation between a growing economy and environmental impacts (Takahashi *et al.* 2018; Tong, 2015; Kalyango Jr. & Mould, 2014).

Having different developments and approaches around the world, the definition of environmental journalism varies, but in essence, it is a specialisation that relates to the coverage of environmental issues (Girardi *et al.*, 2012); it comprehends “researching, verifying, writing, producing, and broadcasting of news

about the environment to the public sphere traditionally by trained professionals” (Pezzullo & Cox, 2018:92). In a more traditional approach, the media coverage of environmental issues maintains journalistic fundamentals (Pezzullo & Cox, 2018). Its practices are similar to general journalism – the classic method of producing and distributing news – but with the insertion of an environmental focus.

In regard to journalistic fundamentals, the notion of truth is questionable and can achieve different interpretations. Nevertheless, the essence of good journalism relies on the pursuit and sharing of information in a way that is honest and unbiased. Therefore, fair reporting expects to emerge from further professional abilities such as verification, scepticism, knowledge, and experience. Such characteristics may affect the final product and the way that reporters challenge their sources and deal with the information that they gather. Obtaining a substantial background to defy the news is vital in this field, as “[c]learly, the role of the journalist is not that of a parrot” (Boykoff, 2011:62). It then becomes perceptible that a good deal of critical scepticism when dealing with news and sources can improve reporting as well as its outcomes.

Besides, in order to produce effective coverage, reporters need to have a good level of knowledge of the field, because if the writer cannot properly understand a certain subject it may be impossible to produce interesting and committed texts as well as give a proper explanation of specific circumstances. The complexity within environment-related issues defies traditional communication strategies (Arnold, 2018). Such is the case with balance and objectivity, values that have stood as the bedrock of journalistic norms (Pezzullo & Cox, 2018) but which are not necessarily helpful for environmental coverage. The intent of balance is to achieve impartiality, while objectivity can undermine the process of raising awareness and eventually preventing actions that could be taken to minimise impacts (Pezzullo & Cox, 2018).

Howart (2013:71) observed that journalistic norms such as objectivity, impartiality, and accuracy, often linked to the maintenance of political stability, have been challenged under the current environmental risk context “because knowledge is contested, scientific methods are disputed, and acrimonious disagreements emerge on how to proceed in conditions of uncertainty”. Notably,

Pezzullo and Cox (2018:102) highlighted that when “environmental issues are controversial, or when reporters lack the expertise to adjudicate between conflict claims, the tendency in journalism has been to balance stories by quoting differing viewpoints”. Such practices are concerning as neoliberal think tanks that are sceptical towards environmental problems build their own strategies to gain media attention. A successful and recurrent practice has been to publish books that promote environmental scepticism before major international environmental events (McKeown, 2013).

Researching journalistic norms, media researcher Fahy (2018) claimed that environmental reporters have reconfigured the definition of objectivity in three instances. First, from the year 2000, US environmental reporters who were covering climate change made a “conceptual shift to viewing objectivity as trained judgment” (Fahy, 2018:859), because they felt misled by the fossil fuel industry. In addition to that, the shift “occurred as a result of the expertise reporters developed around climate change, allowing them to report the issue in greater depth” (Fahy, 2018:859). Second, environmental journalists became more transparent concerning their methods of gathering information, their sources and the motivations of these sources. To Fahy (2018), this idea of objectivity links to the approach taken in academia, as researchers purposely disclose the methodology and analytical frame of every study. Third, environmental reporters understand objectivity as “the pluralistic search for consensus” (Fahy, 2018:859), thus avoiding extreme views and reducing polarisation.

According to Lewenstein (2017), scientific consensus could have a social impact, because dialogue is a means to address and solve scientific controversies and ultimately contribute to social changes. In the same way, Fahy (2018:860) considered that these new ways of addressing objectivity turned environmental journalists into “pioneers for contemporary ‘post-truth’<sup>4</sup> journalism”, which corresponds to journalism in the digital era, when facts tend to have less influence on public opinion. Despite the decreasing importance of evidence in contemporaneity, news media assist the disclosure of global issues, such as environmental affairs. Currently, environmental communication encompasses a

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<sup>4</sup> Oxford English Dictionary defines it as the era when “objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief”.

large number of issues. To understand better the environmental media agenda, the majority of the research in the field relies on the study of “news coverage of environmental issues and controversies” (Hansen, 2019:179). This research field contributed to delineating the reason why some issues gained proper media attention and public concern while others were less successful in doing so. Similarly, this thesis will analyse environmental reporting in Brazil to comprehend connections between environmental protection in the country and media coverage. The focus on studying the reporting of sustainable development aims to understand whether the media agenda contributed to environmental protection in Brazil

This study analyses a twenty-year timeframe, from 1992 to 2012, in order to include both UN environmental conferences hosted in Rio de Janeiro, thus providing a historical perspective of the Brazilian environmental national media coverage of sustainable development. After examining the development of environmental journalism, the following section aims at understanding the connection between public opinion and media coverage.

## **2.1 – The environmental agenda**

This section studies the correlation between environmental media coverage and public opinion. With the purpose of studying the impact of news coverage, Mazur (2016) developed the quantity of coverage theory, which examines the connection between the amount of reporting on a specific subject and audience awareness. Mazur (2016:209) stated that “the rise and fall of widespread public concern and governmental action may be traced back to the rise and fall of coverage by the central media”. Consequently, this finding emphasised the importance of regular and sustained environmental media coverage.

Generally, the problem with environmental media coverage is not necessarily the amount of reporting that is available to the public; rather, it resides in the framing and presentation of the subject and the impacts it may have on society. The customary focus on risks, disasters, and governmental divergence produces a general pessimism that leads to detachment and hopelessness (Hackett *et al.*, 2017).

The mass news media is often linked to the increase in environmental awareness in the public arena. Initially, environmental groups and organisations played an important role in turning environmental issues into social and political problems, and this data was eventually turned into news content. Presently, there is no standardised definition or outline of quality environmental reporting. Nevertheless, scholar Abbati claims:

Communicating Environment through a qualified journalism means to report the facts in details, contextualize them with a fluent and clear language, whatever the topic: about a campaign for the forestation in favour of an Amazon wooden area, or about the effects of climate change on the Polar pack or even about the pollution of the groundwater in a quarter of our town (Abbati, 2019:50).

Analogously to Abbati (2019), Rögner and Wormer (2017) established a definition of what constitutes quality parameters for environmental coverage by identifying ten environmental and three general analytical criteria. The general principles include the topic choice, encompassing relevance and originality; the presentation, assuring the explanation of elaborate environmental interactions; and accuracy, to ensure data and facts are correct. The environmental norms propose: the avoidance of alarming and of minimising information; the presentation of elucidative studies and data; transparency about the selected sources and experts as well as plurality of voices; the accurate presentation of the main for and against views; improvement from primary press release sources; clarity in delineating novelty; description of possible solutions; proper geographical scale, with local and global connections; temporal dimension; and contextualisation.

Whereas the general principles relate to journalistic coverage on a broader sense, the environmental norms attempt to improve the reporting by focusing on the area's current characteristics and necessities. Among the main environmental criteria, some focus on clarifying the issues, such as contextualisation and explanation of geographical and temporal scale; others, on preventing misleading information to avoid alarmist and reductionist tones. The suggestions are broad and

potentially useful to reporters working on an environmental story and for academics studying environmental reporting.

Rögner and Wormer (2017) acknowledged that journalists who evaluated the criteria found the list too long to fulfil due to the time and financial constraints that media workers faced on a daily basis. Nevertheless, the values pose as interesting requirements for the definition of quality among environmental journalism. The list suggests that the ideal environmental coverage should promote high-standard information that would be accurate, contextualised, clear, transparent, connected with other issues and areas, and ultimately that presents possible resolutions. The relationship between press coverage and public engagement is not forthright, though it may be an aspiration for journalists who feel connected to the environmental cause. The following section will analyse how environmental journalism may contribute to improving environmental knowledge and social engagement.

## **2.2 – Environmental reporting and research**

This section focuses on the importance of environmental media coverage and research to the improvement of public engagement and environmental knowledge. Considering the impacts of environmental journalism in society, Pezzullo and Cox (2018:105) argued that the “media’s impact is cumulative and a part of the wider context of social influences that help construct our interest in, and our understanding of, the environment in the public sphere”.

Similarly, Hackett *et al.* (2017) claimed that journalism plays a key role in shaping more effective responses to environmental crises. Belsey and Chadwick (1992:3) state that the awareness produced by the news developed from “both the democratic understanding and the democratic action”.

According to the Brazilian geographer Milton Santos (2009), information’s despotic role is a characteristic of the current era. Santos (2009:39) emphasises that most information is manipulated and “presented as ideology”. Similarly, Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2002) claims that media distorts and creates reality, taking into account the interests of economic elites.



Sousa Santos (2002) created the Sociology of Absence realising that it is possible to understand contemporary society through investigating its silencing, which is usually provoked to guarantee the maintenance of noxious ideologies.

Here, it is noteworthy explaining that this thesis refers to ideology as ideas that serve the interests of the hegemonic class, in accordance with Marxist philosophy (Marx *et al.*, 2001). The definition of ideology connects to Gramsci's (2011) explanation of cultural hegemony, which is the manipulation of society's value system by the ruling class to guarantee its cultural dominance. These theories relate to the "indexation hypothesis", created by US political scientist W. Lance Bennett (2010), who states that media news, particularly about politics and public policy, usually follows the political elite's opinion. To Bennett (2010:106), "Mass media news professional, from the boardroom to the beat tend to index the range of voices and viewpoints in both news and editorials according to the range of views expressed in the mainstream government debate about a given topic".

Nevertheless, this type of elitist communication damages Habermas' (1991:398) concept of public sphere as a way to strengthen democracy, "a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed". The influence of economic and political elites on media coverage shows that the public sphere reflects the views and interests of privileged classes, ultimately neglecting social needs.

Making an analogy between politics and journalistic ethics, any vacuum generated by the lack or misrepresentation of environmental concerns in news media is harmful. Consequently, despite possible desires to silence sensitive messages, qualified environmental reporting seems increasingly needed in the contemporary era as it can have long-standing effects on public perception, and it may progressively promote environmental consciousness worldwide.

Regardless of the importance of raising awareness of environmental issues, the relationship between environmental awareness and behavioural change is not straightforward. The unclear correlation between journalistic reporting and readership engagement makes it necessary to reflect on the idea that, beyond the social and the commercial facet, journalism is a political practice as it assists decision-making processes and policy creation.

Due to the current low levels of public engagement with environmental principles, Hacket *et al.* (2017:13) endorsed the idea that environmental journalism needed to be “providing counter-hegemonic narratives or supporting popular mobilization”, whereas nowadays it is solely informational. However, it is understandable that the use of engaging narratives contradicts conventional journalistic norms and can be quite alien to mainstream journalists. Sustaining this perspective, Hacket *et al.* (2017) argued that news media has been providing enough information regarding the current environmental situation; nonetheless, knowledge does not automatically turn into action, behavioural change, and support for new policies. Hence, the journalistic coverage of critical issues asks for a commitment to generate feedback: “It’s less about the informed citizen, and more about engaged publics” (Hacket *et al.*, 2017:7).

Considering the impacts of environmental media coverage on public awareness and engagement, environmental journalism became a significant research area. In a broader and detailed perspective, Pezzullo (2017) classified seven research fields involving studies of environmental communications, focusing on: 1) environmental personal identity and interpersonal relationships; 2) environmental organisational communication studies; 3) environmental science, technology, and health communication; 4) public participation in environmental decision-making; 5) environmental mass media; 6) green applied media and arts; and 7) environmental rhetoric and cultural studies.

The research fields listed by Pezzullo (2017) cover the studies on environmental communication under a broader perspective ranging from interpersonal behaviour to business administration, and including social, economic, and political inputs. These classifications are useful to define environmental research purposes and possible outcomes. Following Pezzullo’s (2017) classification, this thesis aims to investigate the discourse of environmental news media, which links to Pezzullo’s fifth category. Additionally, this research targets the analysis of news coverage to establish the importance of environmental reporting, as well as its quantitative and qualitative development in Brazil. Thus, the ultimate objective of this thesis is to provide original data and findings about environmental news media in the Global South.

Investigations about the discourse of environmental news media acknowledge that most studies of environmental communication have a common criticism, which is that media coverage focuses on crises and catastrophes, thus offering the public an event-driven perspective of the field. News media targets isolated episodes rather than promoting analysis of the interrelated phenomena that concur to generate environmental issues.

In researching the social features of environmental coverage, Hansen (2019) aimed to understand why some environmental issues are identified as problems and receive public and political attention, while other similar issues never achieve recognition, and consequently do not gain political attention or investment. Hansen's analysis centred on the constructionist perspective that interprets social problems as issues deliberately created, defined, and disputed in public arenas. Elaborating on the relationship between environmental news and the constructivist process, Hansen (2019:65) stated that "News about the environment, environmental disasters and environmental issues or problems does not happen by itself but is rather 'produced', 'manufactured' or 'constructed'".

Environmental news, just like any other type of news, is part of a process that involves information selection, production, eventual releasing, reception, and, lately, feedback. Those issues also suffer external influences that can determine the viability (or not) of an issue. It all leads to the media framing process, which refers to issue selection and prominence (Hansen, 2019). As Pezzullo and Cox (2018:100) explain, "In journalism, a media frame is the central organizing theme that connects the different elements of a news story (headlines, quotes, etc.) into a coherent whole." When thinking about media framing, the importance of the communication strategies and agendas of claim-makers – environmental pressure groups, governments, and industries – becomes evident. These parties show their power either by promoting issues or by silencing the media interest in specific subjects.

Through several of its framing processes, news media produces environmental knowledge, and consequently it endorses certain discourses to the detriment of others. By promoting environmental news through specific events, the sense of completeness is lost. Through providing a parcelled mediation, journalists fail to improve public understanding. Consequently, a more contextualised

approach in journalistic texts could be beneficial to the public. Essentially, such approaches could increase comprehension of the significance of ecosystemic interconnection, especially by demonstrating how diverse scenarios perform and are associated through co-dependent and symbiotic relationships. Such concerns are legitimate, as environmental journalistic coverage needs broader perspectives on specific issues to improve society's comprehension and attachment to the cause.

Another characteristic of environmental media coverage that instigated research is that it is cyclical. Environmental journalistic coverage initiated in the mid-1960s, reaching a peak in the early 1970s, followed by a decline from the 1970s to the early 1980s, re-increasing on the second half of the 1980s, getting to the top in 1990, decreasing in the 1990s and re-emerging in the 2000s, with a specific focus on climate change (Hansen, 2019). Hansen (2019:25) explains that the result of cyclical themes and a poor fit between media coverage and global demands is two-fold. First, continuous interest in an environmental issue may not be enough to guarantee space on the media agenda, as unexpected or 'more newsworthy' events may arise. Second, the amount of coverage does not relate to the importance of the issue and its disappearance from the media is not a result of its solution. Thus, topics with important outcomes may receive less coverage because they may not look attractive to news media gatekeepers or seem easily manageable. Regardless of Hansen's (2019) findings, a study conducted by Schmidt *et al.* (2013) of the newspaper coverage of climate change in 27 countries between 1996 and 2010 showed that, despite the cyclical coverage, "media attention to climate change has increased significantly in an overall upward trend across all countries" (Hansen, 2015:211).

This section investigated environmental journalism as a research area. Most studies of environmental journalism come from the Global North, yet this scenario has been gradually changing with the emergence of analysis of media coverage in the Global South. This thesis contributes to diminishing this research gap by providing new analysis about news media in the Global South. The following section will focus on the characteristics of environmental media content produced in developing countries.

### 2.3 – Environmental coverage through the lens of developing countries

Initially, public discourse on the environment was based in the Global North, leaving limited space for the issues facing developing and least developed countries – largely the Global South. Nowadays, not only does environmental media coverage address international concerns, but also environmental issues from the developing world have been gaining increasing notoriety in the international press. Nevertheless, internally, most of these countries have their own environmental agenda and their own issues concerning environmental media coverage.

Regarding Latin America, which is the focal point of this thesis, it is noticeable that submissive press coverage and government censorship exist as a consequence of fragile democracies (Matos, 2012). Traditionally, Latin American media coverage prioritises economic and social development over environmental issues. This primacy prevented the development of mature environmental journalism in the region (Takahashi *et al.*, 2018). Recent research shows that environmental and scientific issues have been largely covered in Latin America (Mellado *et al.*, 2012; Mercado, 2013; Pinto *et al.*, 2017; Zamith *et al.*, 2013).

Ideology and political leaning play a significant role in environmental media coverage internationally. An investigation (Dotson *et al.*, 2012) of journalism in the Global South indicated that political alignments influenced news content and the focus of environmental reporting, and could result in discrepancies.

In Brazil, environmental media coverage gained attention from the 1960s onwards. During nearly three decades, from the 1960s to the 1990s, Brazilian journalists produced articles focusing on environmental issues; nevertheless, environmental journalism was not yet a specialisation but rather embedded in science journalism. By 1989, the Brazilian press started to detach environmental journalism from science journalism. This detachment was a result of discussions promoted in preparation for the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) hosted in Rio de Janeiro.

One of the most important events to the Brazilian media leading up to the UNCED was the 1989 *Seminar to Journalists about Population and Environment*<sup>5</sup>,

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<sup>5</sup> Original in Portuguese: *Seminário para Jornalistas sobre População e Meio Ambiente*

which was organised by the Journalists National Federation<sup>6</sup> (Belmonte, 2017:113-114). Journalists who attended the seminar were then responsible for popularising environmental journalism within their regions and for supporting the specialisation. Despite the UNCED's importance to the consolidation of environmental journalism, the recognition of its significance was not straightforward.

Investigating the history of Brazilian environmental coverage, Belmonte (2017) noted that the establishment of environmental journalism in Brazil occurred due to the intent to present environmental issues as complex, including causes, consequences, and possible solutions. As Brazilian environmental journalism developed, researchers started to study the area. Girardi *et al.* (2012) detected 101 investigations of environmental journalism conducted in Brazilian universities between 1987 and 2010. This figure includes eight PhD theses, 90 master dissertations and three postgraduate diploma studies.

The first research on environmental communication in Brazil dates from 1988. In the 1990s, one to two studies were published per year, except in 1992, 1997, and 1998, when there was no investigation concluded. In the 2000s, there was an increase in the number of research projects, which reached a peak in 2008, with 13 studies; the year 2007 came in second registering 12 investigations, followed by 2006 and 2005, which had 11 studies each. Girardi *et al.* (2012) believed that the increasing quantity of studies was a consequence of the emergence of environmental media coverage of ever more frequent environmental issues worldwide, and of the growing number of postgraduate courses in Brazil.

The study also highlighted the geographical distribution of the research, as 52 out of 101 studies were from Brazil's southeast region. The data showed the interconnection between research and economic development. The southeast region of Brazil is the richest area in the country, responsible for approximately 60% of Brazilian GDP. Thus, Girardi *et al.* (2012) argued that the discrepancy between Brazilian regions occurred because most postgraduate courses were based in Brazil's southeast, which consequently promoted more research.

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<sup>6</sup> Original in Portuguese: *Federação Nacional dos Jornalistas*

Girardi *et al.*'s (2012) mapping of environmental investigations conducted at Brazilian universities also noted that the studies focused on three main areas: journalistic products, which involves the analysis of all types of journalistic content; journalistic process, which relates to routines, relationship between journalists and sources, and views of content producers; and reception. Moreover, 59 studies analysed newspapers; *Folha de S. Paulo* was the most studied media outlet, being part of 18 investigations.

This section focused on the analysis of environmental journalism in Brazil as well as investigations in the area. It introduced the journalistic environment that serves as the basis for this thesis. It also revealed the importance of this investigation due to the low number of academic works about environmental communication in Brazil, which were produced during the studied timeframe of this thesis.

This concludes the analysis of the development of environmental journalism and its evolution as a research area. The following section will present findings about the studies investigated in this chapter.

## **2.4 – Conclusion**

This chapter presents a review covering general patterns in the academic study of environmental journalism. The investigation aims to present the wider field, thus setting the scene for my analysis of this area in Brazil. The research highlights the main global concerns about the environmental discourse within news media. Environmental media coverage gained global prominence in the past few decades following the increasing number of natural calamities worldwide.

Environmental journalism developed differently, in accordance with each country's economic development and political system. Thus, a sensitive topic such as global warming can be covered using very different angles depending not only on the media outlet's geographic region but also on financial and political interests. Nevertheless, due to ecosystemic interconnectedness, the challenges surrounding the environment are global and pose worldwide challenges, in spite of the frequently fragmented forms of media coverage.

Through the examination of the evolution of studies about international environmental coverage, this chapter also acts as a starting point for the investigation of Brazilian environmental media coverage with a specific focus on the narrative of sustainable development. The literature review of studies of environmental journalism reveals a research gap in studies of environmental communication in the Global South, and produces a historic overview of environmental journalism in Brazil. As presented in this initial discussion, most studies of environmental journalism focus on the Global North and have a specific focus on climate change and global warming.

This thesis contributes to the investigation of the Global South's environmental press. It is important to note that this research's original contribution emerges in the contextual framing of environmental coverage from the perspective of Brazilian newspapers and their position in the Global South. In addition, the topics under discussion will include sustainable development, which is a prominent but rather relegated subject within environmental studies.

The thesis continues with the presentation of the chosen methodology – thematic textual and content analysis, informed by the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis – and the investigation of the media coverage of sustainable development in Brazil, followed by further analysis of this journalistic data. Subsequent chapters focus on the study of media coverage of sustainable development in two Brazilian national circulation newspapers: *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo*, during a 20-year timeframe, from 1992 to 2012, which includes three main international environmental events: Rio92 and Rio+20.



## Chapter 3 – Methodology

Following a review of existing literature on environmental journalism, chapter 2, *Environmental journalism in context*, the present chapter provides details of the methodology adopted in this study to investigate media coverage of sustainable development in Brazil. Given recurring environmental disasters in Brazil, the primary impetus for the present study was to gain insights into the development of environmental journalism in the country and its connection to environmental protection. This thesis is based on the hypothesis that the Brazilian media's coverage of sustainable development has historically been linked to economic debates rather than to environmental protection in the country.

The study focuses on the analysis of environmental media coverage produced by two key national circulation newspapers in Brazil, including *O Globo* (*OG*) and *Folha de S. Paulo* (*FSP*). The publications are based in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo which are states located in southeast Brazil. A continental country, Brazil has a total area of 8,514,887km<sup>2</sup>, and most Brazilian daily print news publications have local or regional distribution. In this thesis, *O Globo* and *Folha de S. Paulo* were selected as they represent daily print media outlets promoting somewhat unified discourse across Brazil due to their nationwide circulation.

*Folha de S. Paulo* is the core company of media conglomerate *Grupo Folha*. Founded in 1921, the newspaper has its provenance in the south-eastern state of São Paulo which is Brazil's economic centre. According to the Brazilian Circulation Verifying Institute, *FSP* has maintained the highest readership rate in the country since 1986. *O Globo* is the main newspaper from *Grupo Globo*, which is Latin American and consequently Brazilian largest media conglomerate. Based in the south-eastern state of Rio de Janeiro, *O Globo* was founded in 1925.

### 3.1 – Objectives

The thesis' methodology was designed to achieve six main objectives of this research. These comprise i) producing an updated literature review of

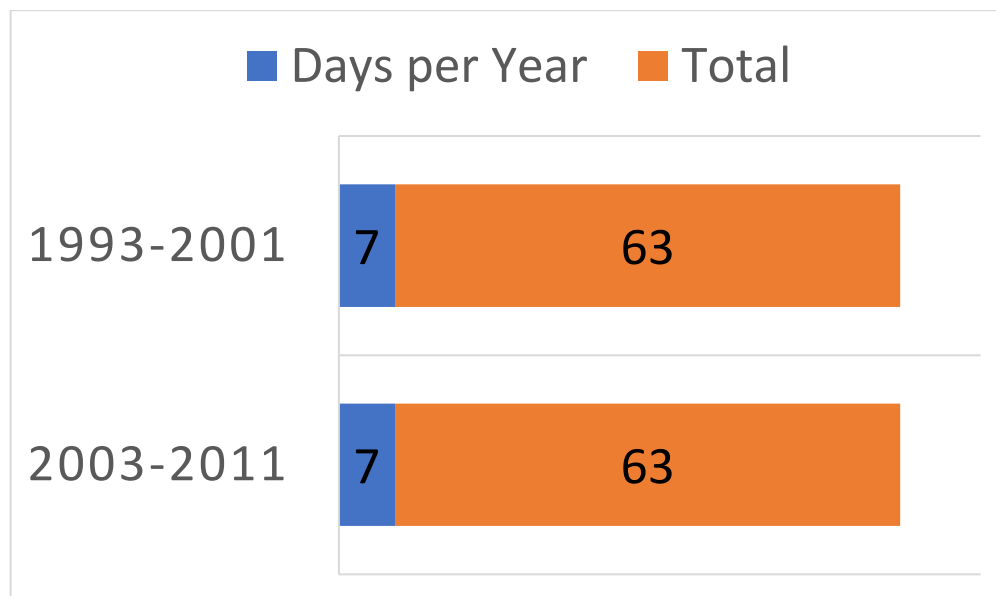
environmental journalism, including characteristics of Brazilian research (chapter 2), ii) identifying how the concept of sustainable development has been presented by *O Globo* and *Folha de S. Paulo* between 1992 and 2012 (chapter 4), iii) analysing *FSP* and *OG* coverage of sustainable development related to social subjects (chapter 5), iv) evaluating the economic content within Brazilian media coverage of sustainability (chapter 6), v) examining environmental coverage in *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo*'s sustainability reporting (chapter 7), and finally vi) reviewing *FSP* and *OG* coverage of sustainable development and the Amazon rainforest (chapter 8).

To address these six objectives, the thesis deployed specific methodological strategies that are explained in detail within this chapter, with specific reference to timeframe, data collection, and analysis.

### **3.2 – Timeframe**

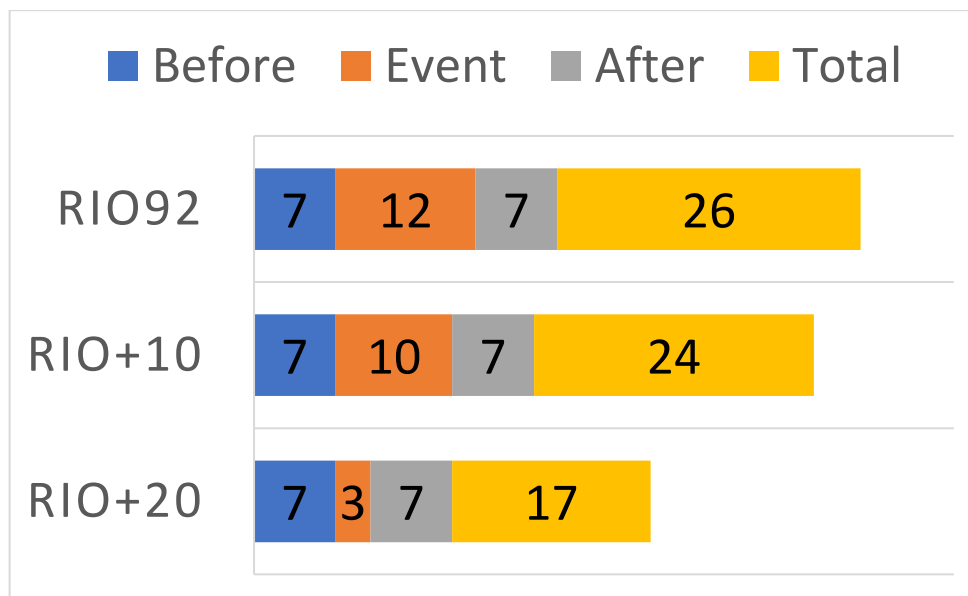
Taking into account the objectives of the present study, the selected research timeframe includes debates covered by *Folha de S. P* and *O Globo* over a period of twenty years spanning 1992 to 2012. This timeframe includes three main international environmental events: the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, and the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

Based on this timeframe, the sampling of material contains newspaper editions published by *Folha de S, Paulo* and *O Globo* from 2 to 8 June, every year from 1993 to 2001 and 2003 to 2011. The seven-day yearly investigation period was selected to highlight the World Environment Day, which has been internationally celebrated on 5 June since 1974 (Figure 3.1).



**Figure 3.1:** Timeframe 1993-2001 and 2003-2011

In addition to that period, the sampling of material includes the coverage of Rio92, Rio+10, and Rio+20. The 1992 UNCED's sample collection comprises the dates when the conference took place in Rio de Janeiro: from 3 to 14 June, plus a week before (27 May) and a week after the event (21 June), thus consisting of a total of 26 days in 1992. The 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), informally known as Rio+10, occurred in South Africa from 26 August to 4 September 2002. Similar to the selected timeframe for Rio92, the 2002 analysis consists of seven days before (19 August) and after (11 September) the summit, which provides a 24-day research period for 2002. Finally, the 2012 UNCSD, Rio+20, hosted in Brazil from 20 to 22 June, also includes the investigation of seven days before (13 June) and after (29 June) the conference, resulting in a seventeen-day study interval for 2012 (Figure 3.2).



**Figure 3.2:** Timeframe Rio92, Rio+10 and Rio+20

In total, the research spectrum of this thesis comprises the investigation of 193 days which spans 386 daily editions from the selected newspapers. From this dataset, only content specifically related to sustainable development was selected for further analysis. Data were respectively collected from *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* online databases, <https://acervo.folha.com.br/>, and <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/>. Specifications of data collection are elaborated in the next section.

### 3.3 – Data collection

This section details the data collection undertaken in this research. Data collection is a significant phase for ensuring the effective achievement of the research objectives because it ensures the analysis of applicable content.

The first stage of data collection entailed selecting news items pertaining to sustainable development from the *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* online databases. To this end, all texts explicitly displaying the term sustainable development were chosen. However, during the selection process, it was observed that both *FSP* and *OG* used other terms as synonyms for sustainable development.

A total of 26 terms utilised by *FSP* and *OG* to stand in for sustainable development as synonyms were identified: sustainable development, sustainability, sustained development, environment and development, sustainable growth, self-sustained development, self-sustainable development, economic sustainable development, development without destruction, environmental sustainability, development with respect to the environment, self-sustainable model of development, progress considering the interests of future generations, new paradigm of development, economic growth without harming the environment, development and nature conservation, development and preservation, ecologically unsustainable development, regional sustainable development, development without preservation concerns, socially just and ecologically healthy development, sustainable urban development, sustainable human development, sustainable model of development, ecological sustainability, development with environmental preservation, economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection<sup>7</sup>.

Data collection led to the selection of a total of 790 pieces on sustainable development published by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* between 1992 and 2012. The selected content will be presented in the next section.

### 3.4 – Data overview

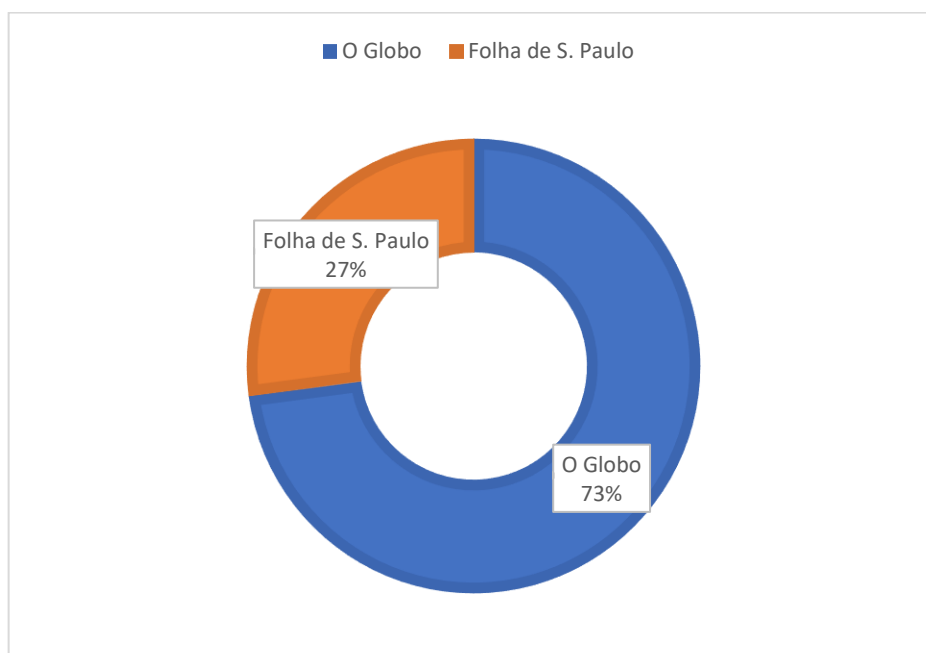
This section presents an overview of the data collected for this research. As previously explained, the selected texts were printed during a seven-day timeframe over a period of eighteen years. The sample includes editions published between 2 and 8 June from 1993 to 2001, and 2003 to 2011. The sampled material also contains pieces produced between 27 May to 21 June 1992 which enabled coverage

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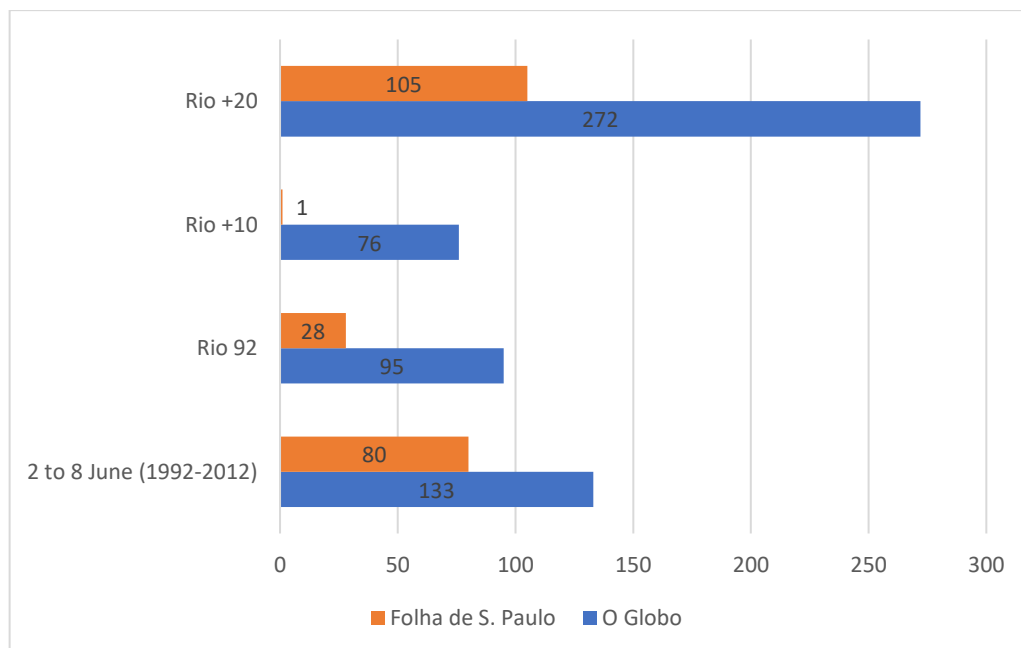
<sup>7</sup> Original in Portuguese: *desenvolvimento sustentável, sustentabilidade, desenvolvimento sustentado, meio ambiente e desenvolvimento, crescimento sustentável, desenvolvimento auto-sustentado, desenvolvimento auto-sustentável, desenvolvimento econômico sustentável, desenvolver sem destruir, sustentabilidade ambiental, desenvolvimento com respeito ao meio ambiente, modelo auto-sustentável de desenvolvimento, progresso considerando os interesses das gerações futuras, novo paradigma de desenvolvimento, crescimento econômico sem agressão ao meio ambiente, desenvolvimento e conservação da natureza, desenvolvimento e preservação, desenvolvimento ecologicamente sustentável, desenvolvimento regional sustentável, desenvolvimento sem se preocupar com a preservação, desenvolvimento socialmente justo e ecologicamente saudável, desenvolvimento urbano sustentável, desenvolvimento humano sustentável, modelo sustentável de desenvolvimento, sustentabilidade ecológica, desenvolvimento com preservação ambiental, crescimento econômico, inclusão social e proteção ambiental.*

of Rio92; between 19 August and 11 September 2002, Rio+10; and between 13 and 29 June 2012, Rio+20.

Taking into consideration the 790 texts analysed in this thesis, 214 (27%) and 576 (73%) were published by *Folha de S. Paulo* by *O Globo* respectively (Figure 3.3). Within the time period spanning 2 to 8 June (the seven-day period examined every year from 1993 to 2001 and from 2003 to 2011), 80 pieces and 133 pieces were published by *FSP* and *OG* respectively. In addition to that content, the coverage of Rio92 was identifiable in 28 texts from *FSP* and 95 texts from *OG*. Rio+10 was covered in a single piece from *FSP*, and 76 from *OG*. Rio+20 resulted in 105 publications by *FSP* and 272 pieces by *OG* (Figure 3.4).



**Figure 3.3:** Distribution in Newspapers from 1992 to 2012



**Figure 3.4:** *Folha de S. Paulo VS O Globo*

This initial data analysis proves that in all scenarios *O Globo* published nearly thrice the number of pieces produced by *Folha de S. Paulo*, demonstrating that *OG* editorial line devoted more attention to the coverage of sustainable development than *FSP*. Nevertheless, it is important to note that both Rio92 and Rio+20 were held in Rio de Janeiro, home to the *O Globo* headquarters. Geographical proximity to two international environmental events may also have influenced the significantly higher number of texts published by *OG*, in comparison with *FSP*. Additionally, it is likely that *OG* readers would be more interested in news from the conferences as they were held in their own city, leading to ramifications for city traffic, holidays, and events on offer. Moreover, *O Globo* was in a position due to its privileged proximity to the UN environmental discussions to have a higher number of journalists cover the event.

Analysing Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development during UN environmental conferences in 1992, 2002, and 2012, a similar pattern vis-à-vis the number of articles is identifiable. *O Globo* outstripped *Folha de S. Paulo* on all occasions, producing 77% of the content in Rio92, 99% of the content in Rio+10, and 72% of the pieces in Rio+20, as previously demonstrated in Figure 3.2.

The following sections will analyse the material in more detail, examining five main periods: Rio92 (1992), from 1993 to 2001, Rio+10 (2002), from 2003 to 2011, and Rio+20 (2012).

### **3.4.1 – Rio92**

This section introduces *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* data on the coverage of sustainable development produced during the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as Rio92, Eco-92, the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit, the Rio Summit, the Rio Conference, and the Earth Summit.

The 1992 UN Conference was a global landmark for environmental awareness. With reference to the media sector, not only did it consolidate environmental communication in Brazil but it also served as a turning point for both Brazilian and international media, comprising as it did “an explicit appeal was made to the media to become more involved in information work for the preservation of the environment and in changing public attitudes” (Mercado, 2013:43). The UNCED received media attention from over 7,000 international journalists who attended the Conference and turned the environmental agenda into a globally trending topic (Campos, 2006) due to the concerns raised over increasing environmental impacts around the world.

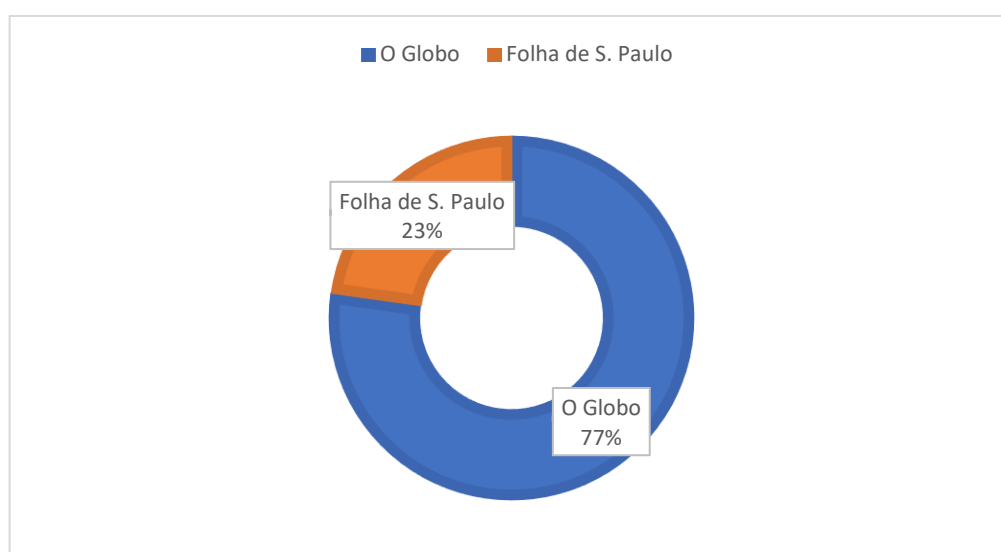
The UNCED took place in Rio de Janeiro from 3 to 14 June 1992. Nevertheless, the timeframe selected for the analysis in the current study extends beyond this, covering the duration of the conference as well as the week before (27 May) and a week after the event (21 June). Thus, the analysis covers 26 days in total.

During this period, Brazil was governed by right-wing politician President Fernando Affonso Collor de Mello (1990-1992) elected to office following the end of 21 years of dictatorship (1964-1985), a period of rule that witnessed the murder of 434 people and torture of 20,000 citizens. The Brazilian minister of environment and professor, physicist, and politician José Goldemberg as well as the Brazilian foreign minister and jurist Celso Lafer took part in the conference. Highlighting



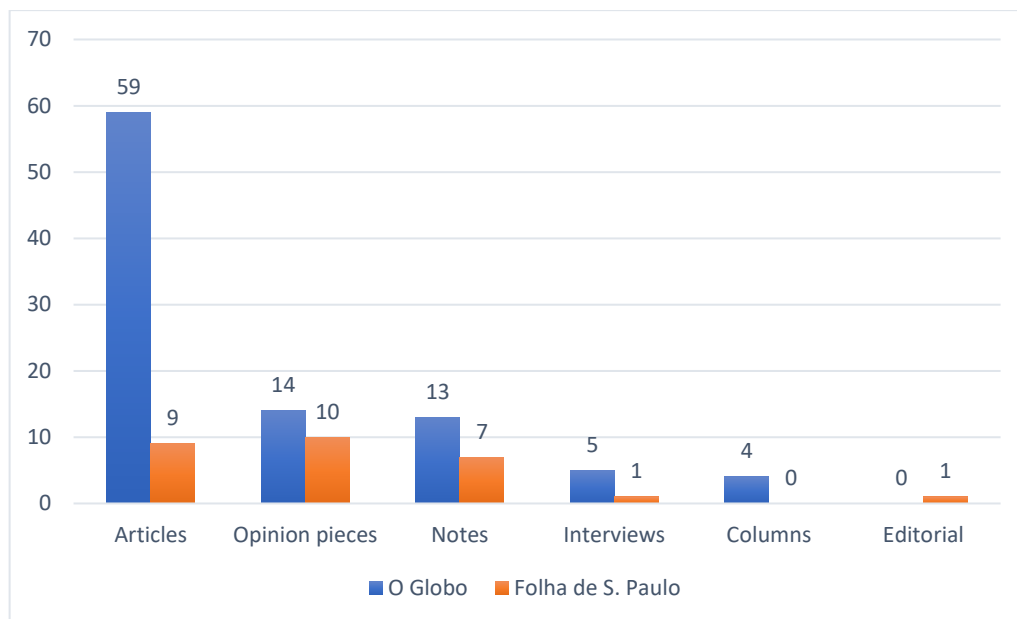
Brazilian political representatives in each period is important for clarifying policy actors responsible for designing and implementing environmental policy in Brazil.

According to the data collection, from 27 May to 21 June 1992, *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* published 123 pieces on sustainable development, which corresponds to 16% of the sample of material investigated in this thesis. *FSP* was responsible for 28 texts on sustainability, 23% of the 1992 coverage; and *OG* has 95 pieces, or 77% of the total (Figure 3.5).



**Figure 3.5:** Distribution in Newspapers during Rio92

Accounting for the 123 components included in the 1992 coverage of sustainable development, there are 59 articles, 14 opinion pieces, 13 notes, 5 interviews and 4 columns from *OG*. *FSP* produced 9 articles, 10 opinion pieces, 7 notes, 1 interview and 1 editorial (Figure 3.6).



**Figure 3.6:** Journalistic Styles during Rio92

The review of Brazilian media's coverage of sustainability produced during the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development is followed by the investigation of the content published by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* between 1993 and 2001 presented in the next section.

### 3.4.2 – From 1993 to 2001

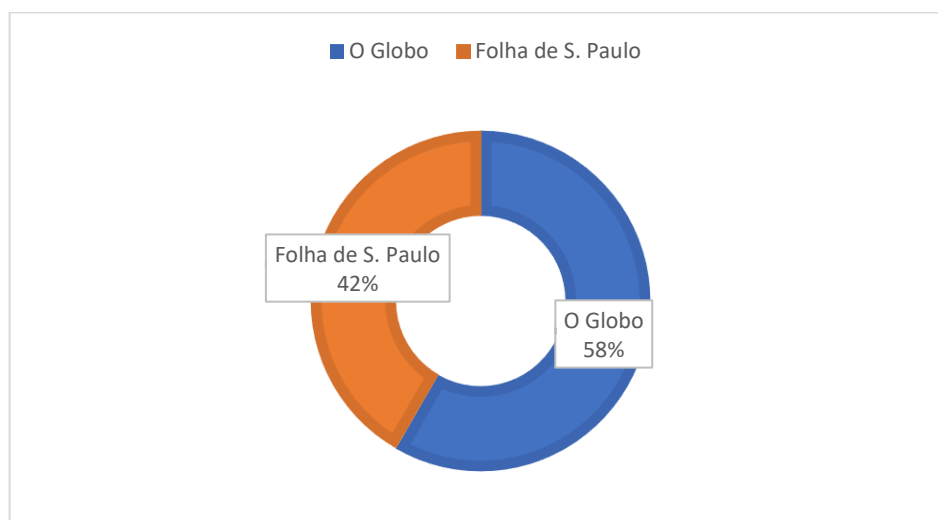
This segment presents the coverage of sustainable development published in *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* between 1993 and 2001. The interval corresponds to the period between the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio92, and the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, Rio+10. Here, the sampling of material refers to newspaper editions published between 1993 and 2001, from 2 to 8 June, comprising a total of 63 days. Additionally, the time interval encompasses the World Environment Day, which is celebrated on 5th June every year since 1974.

During this timeframe, Brazil had two presidents and five ministers of the environment. After Fernando Collor de Mello's impeachment in 1992, right-wing politician Itamar Franco who was Collor de Mello's vice governed Brazil from 29

December 1992 to 1<sup>st</sup> January 1995. During his presidency, three ministers of the environment held office, including Fernando Coutinho Jorge (19 October 1992 to 16 September 1993), Rubens Ricupero (16 September 1993 to 5 April 1994) and Henrique Brandão Cavalcanti (5 April 1994 to 1<sup>st</sup> January 1995).

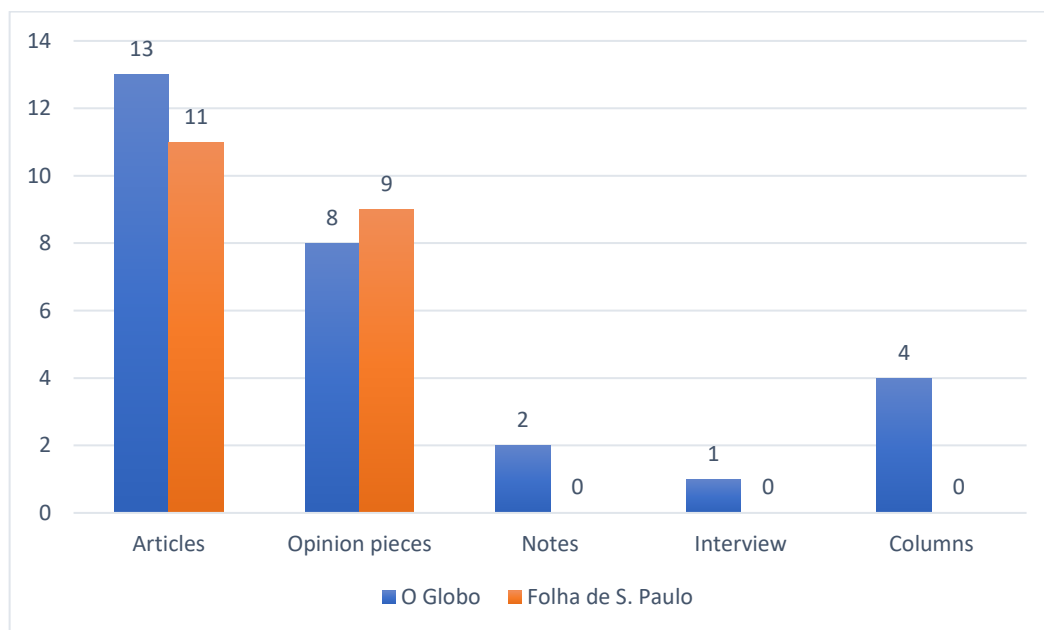
Following the rule of the dictatorship in Brazil, the second elected president (1964-1985) was right-wing politician Fernando Henrique Cardoso who governed the country for two consecutive mandates, from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1995 to 1<sup>st</sup> January 1999, and from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1999 to 1<sup>st</sup> January 2003. Cardoso became popular when he was the minister of finance during Franco's government (19 May 1993 to 30 March 1994). Fernando Henrique Cardoso was responsible for implementing a successful economic plan which controlled inflation, in addition to establishing a new currency (the Real), still in use in Brazil. From 1993 to 2001, as part of Cardoso's government, Brazil had two ministers of the environment, namely Gustavo Krause (1<sup>st</sup> January 1995 to 1<sup>st</sup> January 1999) and Sarney Filho (1<sup>st</sup> January 1999 to 5 March 2002). These political representatives were responsible for designing and implementing the environmental policy in Brazil during this period.

Within this nine-year timeframe, *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* printed 48 texts on sustainable development. The content relates to 6% of the 790 collected pieces: twenty items are from *FSP*, roughly 42% of the nine-year coverage, whereas 28 are from *OG*, about 58% of the selected data (Figure 3.7).



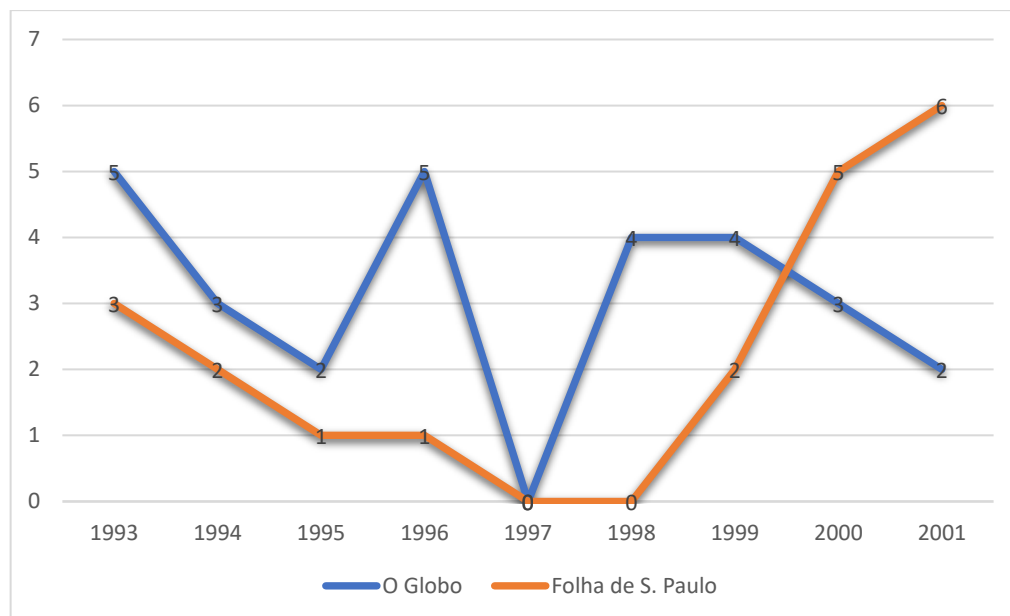
**Figure 3.7:** Distribution in Newspapers from 1993 to 2001

The examination of the 48 components on sustainable development produced between 1993 and 2001 features 13 articles from *O Globo*, and 11 from *Folha de S. Paulo*, including 8 opinion pieces from *OG* and 9 from *FSP*, 2 notes from *OG*, 1 interview from *OG* and 4 columns from *OG* (Figure 3.8).



**Figure 3.8:** Journalistic Styles from 1993 to 2001

Contemplating the data distribution along the nine-year timeframe spanning 1993 to 2001 (Figure 3.9), it is noticeable that *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo*'s coverage of sustainable development remained limited, resulting in a low number of articles throughout the period. The years 1993, 2000 and 2001 presented the highest number of pieces, featuring eight texts each. *O Globo* did not produce publications in 1997 on sustainability, and *FSP* produced no pieces in 1997 or in 1998, corresponding to a two-year hiatus on the topic.



**Figure 3.9:** Distribution from 1993 to 2001

Following the analysis of Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development produced between 1993 and 2001, the next section presents the figures of the sustainability content published by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* during the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, Rio+10.

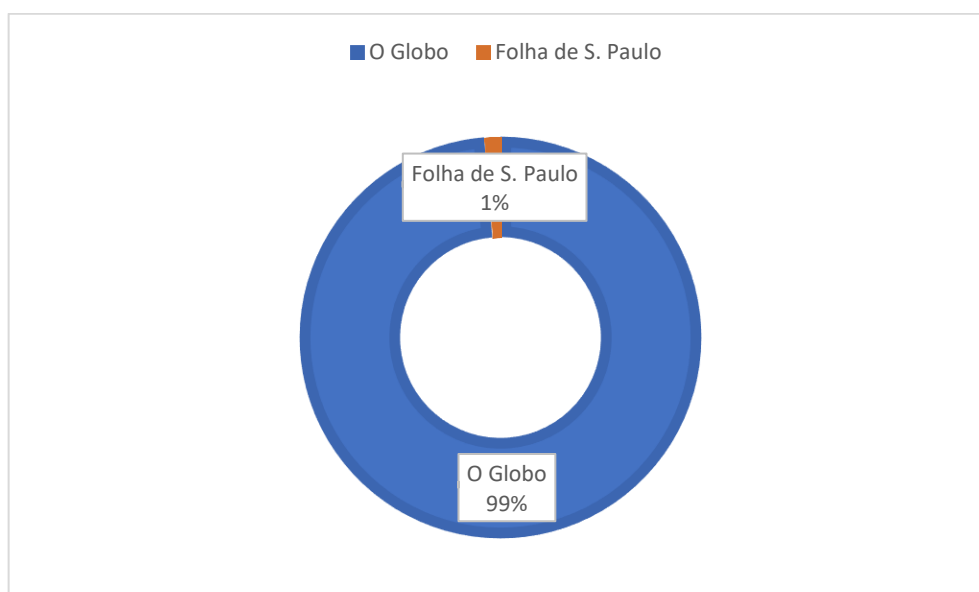
### 3.4.3 – Rio+10

This segment relates to the content published by Brazilian national newspapers *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* pertaining to sustainable development covered within the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), Rio+10. The summit took place in Johannesburg, South Africa from 26 August to 4 September 2002. Following the research interval selected for Rio92, this thesis will examine *FSP* and *OG* publications distributed seven days before (19 August) and after (11 September) Rio+10 which corresponds to a 24-day research period for the year 2002.

With reference to the political situation in Brazil and the Brazilian environmental policy, amidst Rio+10, the country was governed by President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who was on his second and final mandate (1<sup>st</sup> January

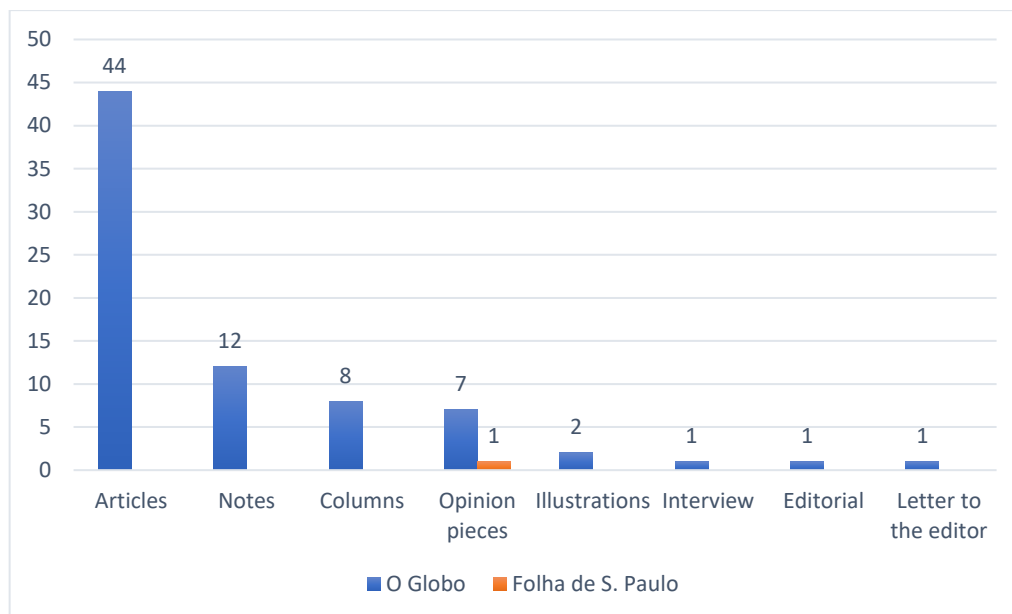
2000 to 1<sup>st</sup> January 2003). The second elected president after the end of the Brazilian dictatorship (1964-1985), Cardoso was president Itamar Franco's minister of finance from 19 May 1993 to 30 March 1994. Cardoso implemented a successful economic plan that controlled inflation in Brazil. In the year that Rio+10 was held, José Carlos Carvalho was Brazil's minister of the environment (5 March 2002 to 1st January 2003).

The timeframe includes 77 pieces published over a period of 24 days from 19 August to 11 September 2002. The content represents roughly 10% of the 790 texts studied in this thesis. With regard to the 2002 production, 76 items are from *O Globo*, representing roughly 99% of the coverage, whereas 1 item is from *Folha de S. Paulo*, representing about 1% of the data (Figure 3.10).



**Figure 3.10:** Distribution in Newspapers during Rio+10

Data classification of Rio+10's 77 pieces on sustainable development shows that in addition to the opinion piece published by *Folha de S. Paulo*, *O Globo* printed 44 articles, twelve notes, eight columns, seven opinion pieces, two illustrations, one interview, one editorial and one letter to the editor (Figure 3.11).



**Figure 3.11: Journalistic Styles during Rio+10**

Following the presentation of data on the Brazilian media's coverage of sustainable development produced during the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, Rio+10, the next segment reviews the content pertaining to sustainability published by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* between 2003 and 2011.

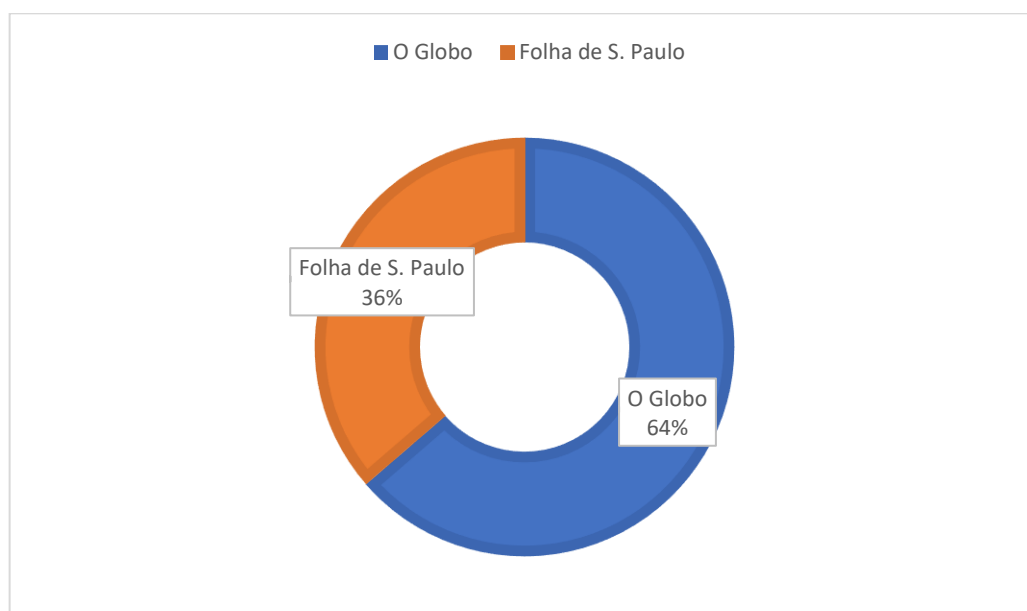
#### 3.4.4 – From 2003 to 2011

This section focuses on the coverage of sustainable development produced by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* between 2003 and 2011. This period relates to the timeframe between Rio+10 and Rio+20. The coverage of the material spans a period of 63 days. It corresponds to *FSP* and *OG* editions printed between 2 and 8 June, including the World Environment Day which has been celebrated on 5 June since 1974.

During this nine-year interval, Brazil elected two left-wing presidents from the Workers' Party, namely Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (1<sup>st</sup> January 2003 to 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011), and Dilma Vana Rousseff (1<sup>st</sup> January 2011 to 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016). Presidencies had four ministers of environment Marina Silva (1<sup>st</sup> January 2003 to 1<sup>st</sup> February 2003, and 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2003 to 15 May 2008), Cláudio Roberto

Bertoldo Langone (interim from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2003 to 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2003), Carlos Minc (27 May 2008 to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010), and Izabella Teixeira (1<sup>st</sup> April 2010 to 12 May 2016). These political representatives were the key actors responsible for creating and implementing the environmental policy in Brazil.

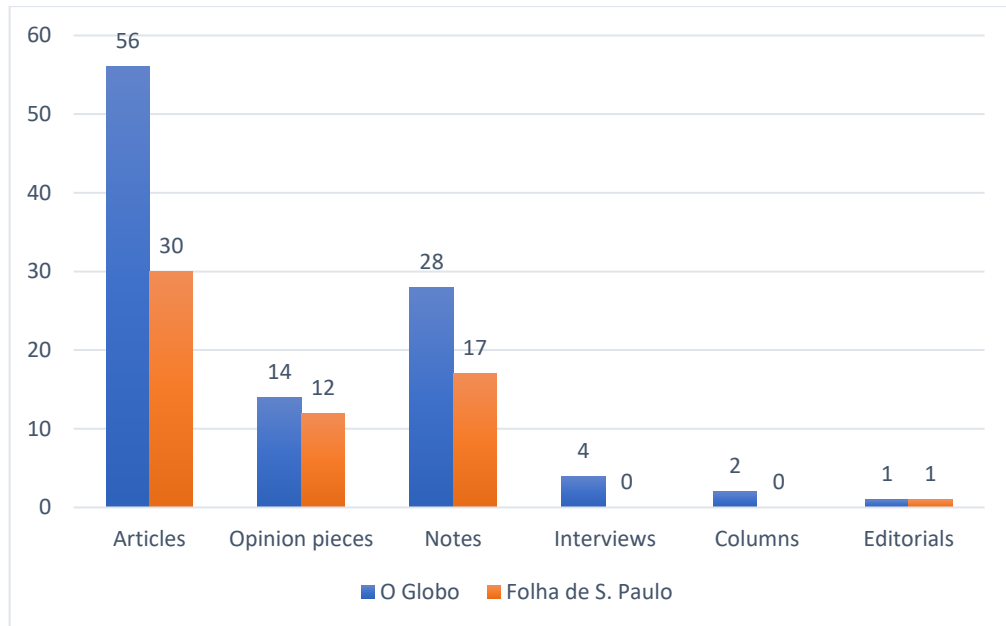
Between 2003 and 2011, *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* printed 165 pieces on sustainable development. The figure corresponds to 21% of the 790 texts investigated in this thesis. FSP produced 60 works, representing roughly 36% of the material produced within the nine-year timeframe, whereas *OG* published 105 texts, representing about 64% of the content (Figure 3.12).



**Figure 3.12:** Distribution in Newspapers from 2003 to 2011

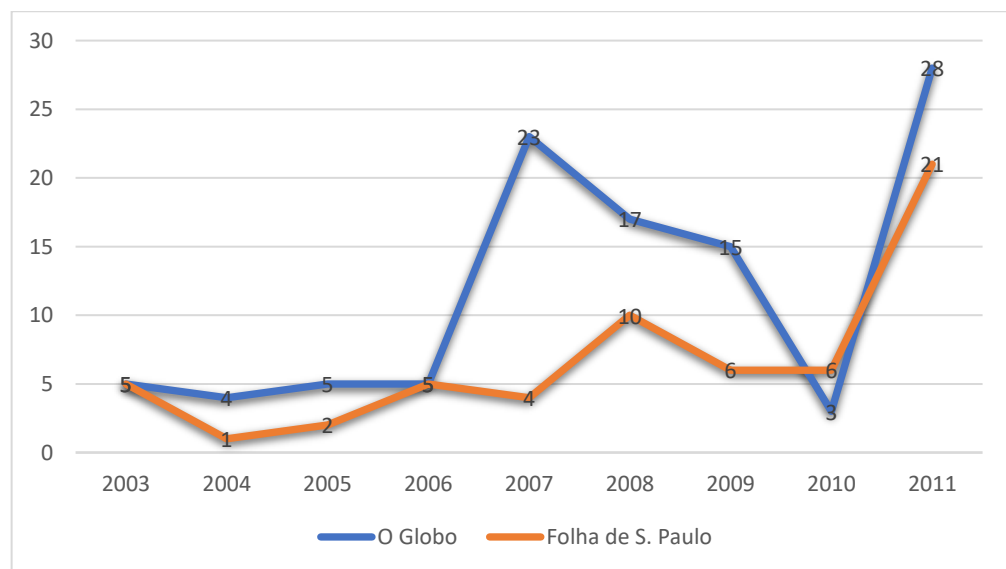
The 165 pieces produced between 2003 and 2011 cover 56 articles, 14 opinion pieces, 28 notes, four interviews, one editorial and two columns from *OG* as well as 30 articles, 12 opinion pieces, 17 notes and one editorial from *Folha de S. Paulo* (Figure 3.13).





**Figure 3.13:** Journalistic Styles from 2003 to 2011

The analysis of publications printed between 2003 and 2011 (Figure 3.14) reveals a steady rise in 2007 with a peak in 2011. Moreover, over these nine years, *O Globo* printed an equal or higher number of articles in comparison with *Folha de S. Paulo*, except in 2010, when *OG* reached its lowest level of publications, producing only three pieces.



**Figure 3.14:** Distribution from 2003 to 2011

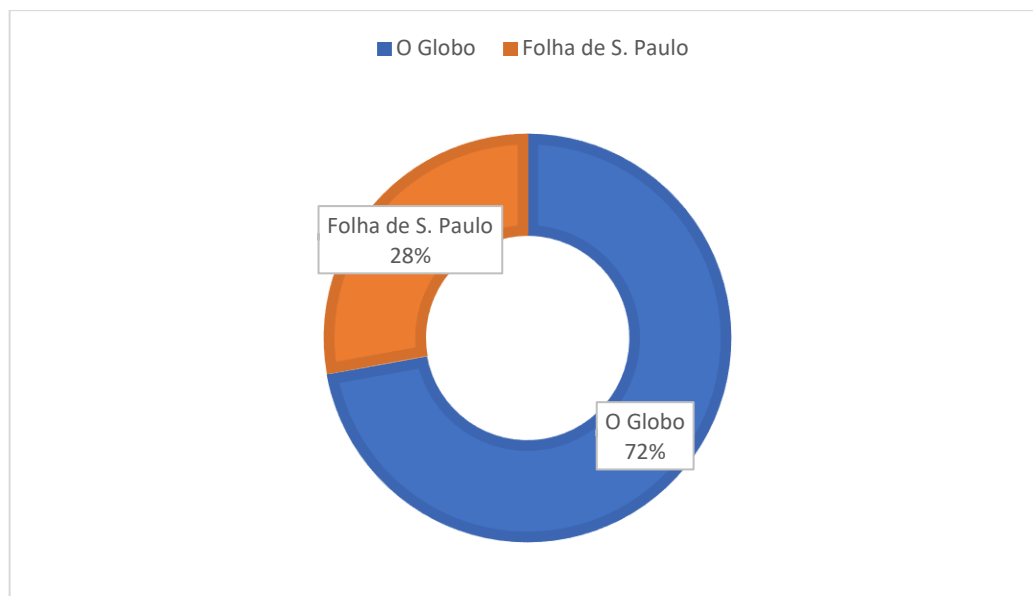
Subsequent to the review of data representing Brazilian media's coverage of sustainable development between 2003 and 2011, the next section presents *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* production during the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20.

### 3.4.5 – Rio+20

This section looks at coverage of sustainable development published by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* during the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), Rio+20. The event took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, between 20 and 22 June. In line with the data collection pattern followed for Rio92 and Rio+10, the investigation of Rio+20 spanned the duration of the actual event as well as seven days before (13 June) and after (29 June) the conference, leading to coverage of a 17-day research period for 2012.

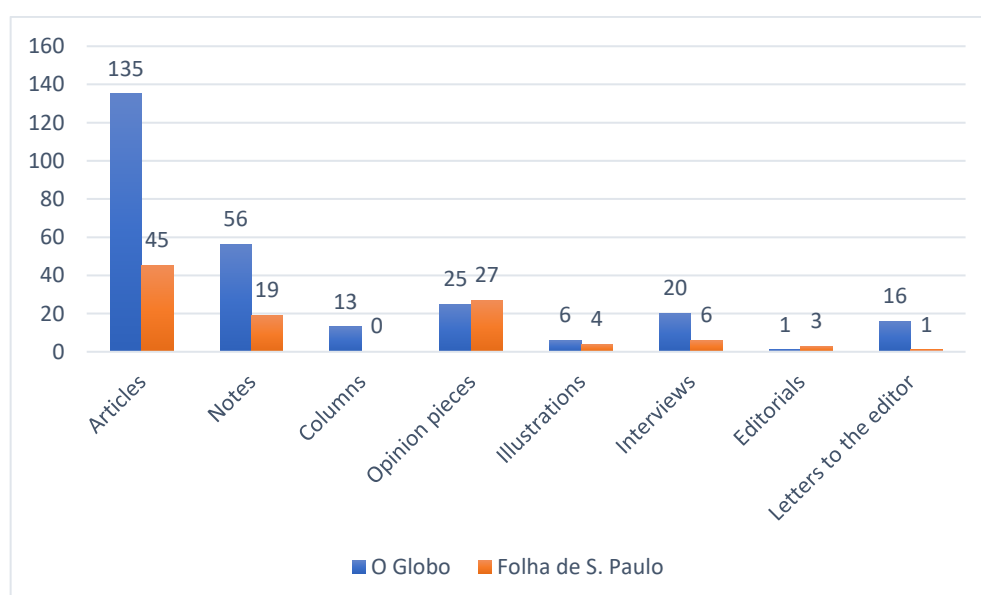
Amid Rio+20, Brazil was ruled by left-wing president Dilma Vana Rousseff (1<sup>st</sup> January 2011 to 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016). During this period, the Brazilian minister of environment was Izabella Teixeira (1<sup>st</sup> April 2010 to 12 May 2016), and the foreign minister was Antonio Patriota (1<sup>st</sup> January 2011 to 26 August 2013). These representatives were accountable for Brazilian environmental policy over this period.

Over the 17 days relating to the content produced as part of Rio+20 coverage, *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* published 377 pieces. The data represents 48% of the 790 texts investigated in this thesis. Referring specifically to the 2012 publications, there are 272 pieces from *OG*, representing approximately 72% of Rio+20 coverage, and 105 pieces from *FSP*, comprising nearly 28% of the data from 2012 (Figure 3.15).



**Figure 3.15:** Distribution in Newspapers during Rio+20

The classification of Rio+20's 377 pieces on sustainable development shows that *O Globo* printed 135 articles, 56 notes, 25 opinion pieces, 20 interviews, 16 letters to the editor, 13 columns, 6 illustrations and one editorial. On the other hand, *Folha de S. Paulo* produced 45 articles, 27 opinion pieces, 19 notes, 6 interviews, 4 illustrations, 3 editorials, and one letter to the editor (Figure 3.16).



**Figure 3.16:** Journalistic Styles during Rio+20

This section concludes the content review of the data representing Brazilian media's coverage of sustainable development in publications produced between 1992 and 2012. The following segment presents the methodological approach of textual analysis utilised in this thesis.

### **3.5 – Thematic textual and content analysis**

This section introduces the method of textual analysis employed in the present thesis. This segment complements the presentation of the methodological framework utilised to investigate *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo*'s coverage of sustainable development in publications produced between 1992 and 2012.

Initially, the thesis will focus on the definitions of sustainable development presented by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* throughout the twenty-year timeframe. The investigation is presented in chapter 4 which aims to identify how Brazilian media recognised sustainable development and explained the notion to the public, matching the second main objective of this thesis mentioned earlier in this chapter. This review intends to identify *FSP* and *OG*'s contribution to the promotion of environment and sustainability awareness in Brazil.

The official concept of sustainable development was presented by the United Nations in the document *Our Common Future*, also known as the *Brundtland Report* which dates from 1987. The report stated that “sustainable development is the development that meets all human needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987:43), thus merging environmental, social, and economic characteristics.

Based on the official concept, this thesis created a six-type categorisation to inspect the different framings of sustainability that emerged in *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage of sustainable development from 1992 to 2012. Ultimately, the classification aims at identifying how *FSP* and *OG* promoted sustainability awareness in Brazil.

According to the classification, type A matches the definition in the *Brundtland Report*, encompassing environmental, economic, and social aspects.

Type B centres on economic factors, excluding social and environmental matters and not precisely relating to the official concept. Type C underlines environmental components, but it does not include social and economic topics. Further, type D offers economic and environment narratives without mentioning social features. Type E employs the *Brundtland Report*'s focus on future generations. Finally, type F reveals critical descriptions, but it does not allude to the official view.

In addition to the assessment of the coverage of the concept, the textual examination includes thematic textual and content analysis, informed by the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis, which aims at promoting qualitative analysis by examining discursive practices and texts (Kress, 1990). Fowler (1991) highlights communication is not a neutral process because media transmit information through their own infrastructure resources which are saturated with social values that generate a specific perspective of an event. Moreover, it is important to take into account that media workers are governed by economic conditions responding to conventions of production, and it is the customary occurrence of events that results in conventional significances (Fowler, 1991) which are accepted as natural and neutral. Texts selected for analysis were chosen for presenting relevant social, economic, and environmental content, respectively matching the third, fourth, and fifth main objectives of this thesis, presented earlier in this chapter. However, small notes and pieces that solely described events in superficial ways were not considered for further investigation.

In summary, this research uses thematic textual and content analysis, informed by the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Regarding key approaches in CDA, Fairclough's methodology (1989; 1995; 2001) was considered most appropriate for this investigation because it associates the study of text, discursive practice, and analysis of social, cultural, and political conjuncture within which the material was developed and consumed. Fairclough's method is divided into three interconnected sections: texts (written or oral), discourse practice (the processes of text production), and sociocultural practice:

- (1) The text analysis is descriptive and intends to verify the content of the coverage, such as topics, sources (specialists, government, politicians, public relations, companies, environmentalists), and terms used by the media.

(2) The analysis of discourse practice is the process of interpretation transpiring in the study of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* processes of text production, distribution, and consumption. To Fairclough (1995), the economics of an institution is an important determinant of its practices and texts. As pre-eminently profit-making organizations, the press and commercial broadcasting make their profits by selling audiences to advertisers. They do this by achieving the highest possible readerships or listeners/viewers ratings for the lowest possible financial outlay. This analysis includes historical background of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo*. It also acknowledges political and economic groups that these newspapers connect with and represent. The contextualization provides background data to the thematic textual and content analysis, informed by the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis, while offering an overview of the system of text production. Understanding the role of Brazilian media in creating sustainability awareness also contributes to mapping the evolution of the coverage of sustainable development over two decades.

It is important to note that this project does not include audience studies. Rather it focuses on studying messages delivered in the Brazilian media's coverage of sustainability. The study investigates the content produced over a span of twenty years by two newspapers that are distributed in Brazil, which means a potential audience of 211 million people spread over 8.5 million square kilometres. Thus, a significant audience study would be a different project given its specific requirements.

(3) The analysis of sociocultural practices probes the relationship between social context and discourse practices. It shows economic, political, and cultural contexts of the period when texts were produced (i.e. economic reality, political debates, and cultural aspects). The sociocultural analysis of a communicative event may cover several levels, including immediate situational contexts to institutional practices, in addition to social and cultural frames (Fairclough, 1995). Within the thesis, this phase links text analysis to explanations of Brazilian economic, political, and cultural backgrounds over a twenty-year period. The following section presents some issues that contributed to this thesis methodological choices.

### 3.6 – Reflections

This section acknowledges issues encountered during this PhD that contributed to methodological choices. My primary research proposal aimed to investigate the media coverage on sustainable development from *Folha de S. Paulo* and *Rede Globo's Jornal Nacional*, which are, respectively, the main national newspaper and the most watched TV news programme in Brazil. As previously mentioned, *Folha de S. Paulo* offers online free access to former editions, however *Rede Globo* does not.

Hence, I started contacting *Rede Globo* on 8 November 2018, and I sent a formal request to *Rede Globo's* research department on 21 November 2018. I maintained contact with the research department for two months. On 22 January 2019, my request was forwarded to *Rede Globo's* content department, which is part of the firm's commercial division, and I was informed that the company would charge me to release any journalistic data. Finally, on 5 February 2019 *Rede Globo* decided that I would be charged 1,000 Brazilian Reais (roughly 210 GBP, according to the exchange rate on that date), per hour of content. However, I did not know the total budget, as *Globo* would only start researching the data once I agreed to the payment. Nevertheless, considering that my study encompasses a 20-year timeframe, the final value could easily reach a few thousand pounds.

After deliberating with my supervisor, I decided to change my initial thesis structure and adjust the methodological aspects. The content restriction led me to develop an alternative plan that includes the investigation of Brazilian newspapers. Eventually, this became my current PhD research.

Another aspect that should be taken into account when analysing this research is that it was developed during the Covid-19 pandemic. On 5 March 2020, I travelled to Brazil to do some of the data gathering at the newspapers' archives. However, less than a week after my trip, on 11 March 2020, the World Health Organisation declared Covid-19 a pandemic, and Brazil went into lockdown. Not only I was prevented from doing field research, but I was also impeded from returning to the UK until October 2020. Moreover, even after I returned to the UK, I was very isolated and my contact with other researchers was scarce and online,

which stopped me from having independent feedback from peers about this investigation.

The isolation caused by Covid-19 was also determinant in not adding interviews to my methodology. In particular, this decision was based on the fact that I would not be able to make face-to-face interviews and that the pandemic was a challenging period to workers worldwide. It was not different with Brazilian journalists who had to face the dangerous virus to inform the population about the circumstances. Thus, I resolved that it would not be reasonable to disturb anyone working in such conditions.

Regarding the material, there were issues to access the content due to the low quality of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* online archives. Both search engines did not provide exact results in the searches, thus I had to read several pieces in order to find the right text. Not only *FSP* and *OG* online archives had deficient search engines, but they also did not allow to save nor to copy the content. Thus, every time that I needed to research some content, I had to access the online archives and redo the search to check the text.

Additionally, there is also the fact that texts analysed in this thesis were originally written in Portuguese. Therefore, I had to translate them into English, in order to analyse them. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that I am not formally a translator. To overcome this issue, I mostly present summaries, instead of literal sentences or words.

Reflections contained in this section aim to justify and explain some methodological choices of this research. Finally, the following segment summarises this thesis' methodological pathway.

### **3.7 – Conclusion**

This chapter presented the methodology utilised in the present thesis for selecting, gathering and evaluating 790 texts published by Brazilian national newspapers *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* between 1992 and 2012. *FSP* accounts for 27% (214) and *OG* for 73% (576) of the material. The disparity is likely to be attributable



to the geographical proximity between *O Globo*'s headquarters and the locations that hosted Rio92 and Rio+20 in Rio de Janeiro, thus garnering wider attention from the *OG* editorial team.

In the context of the twenty-year timeframe, 1992, 2002, and 2012 presented coverage peaks due to the occurrence of three UN international environmental events, namely: Rio92, Rio+10, and Rio+20. Further, the second period in-between conferences (2003 to 2011) demonstrated increasing number of publications about sustainability, more specifically subsequent to 2007. In addition, the analysis foregrounds the year 1997 which did not feature any text about sustainable development, and the year 1998 when *Folha de S. Paulo* also did not publish anything on the topic. These figures reveal a one-year hiatus for *O Globo*, and a two-year hiatus or *FSP* in terms of covering sustainable development. Furthermore, the data analysis shows that *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* deployed 26 synonyms for sustainable development between 1992 to 2012.

In regard to the textual analysis, the initial evaluation considers definitions of sustainability using a seven-type categorisation deployed within this thesis. As presented, type A matches the *Brundtland Report*'s official classification, specifying environmental, economic, and social aspects, whereas type B focuses on economic factors. Type C emphasises environmental components, while type D unveils the economic and environment narrative, and type E covers social and environment aspects. Type F refers to future generations, and type G displays criticisms. The study of definitions contributes to identifying how *FSP* and *OG* promoted awareness of environmental and sustainability in Brazil.

In addition, the thesis will utilise thematic textual and content analysis, informed by the principles of the Critical Discourse Analysis methodology developed by Fairclough (1989; 1995; 2001). It will look into text and discursive practice as well as social, cultural, and political conjunctures. The present study will also focus on identifying characteristics of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo*'s coverage of sustainable development. Additionally, it will help to establish aspects of Brazilian environmental reporting within a broader approach.

Having presented the framework for the research methodology, the thesis now moves forward to chapter 4 in order to inspect definitions of sustainable

development published by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* from 1992 to 2012. The objective of chapter 4, *Definitions of sustainable development*, is to evaluate how the notion of sustainability was introduced by the daily print media coverage in Brazil. The *FSP* and *OG* narratives are compared with the official concept advanced by the United Nations in 1987. After studying how *FSP* and *OG* presented the concept during twenty years, the thesis will investigate how *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo*'s coverage of sustainability related to social, economic, and environmental aspects alludes to the characteristics of sustainable development.

## Chapter 4 – Definitions of sustainable development

This chapter initiates the analysis of Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development. After presenting a literature review about environmental journalism and the explanation of this thesis's methodological approach, the research now investigates 57 definitions of sustainable development that were published by *Folha de S. Paulo (FSP)* and *O Globo (OG)* from 1992 to 2012. The aim is to examine how these newspapers presented sustainable development in Brazil. The official concept was released in 1987 by the United Nations in the document *Our Common Future*, also known as the *Brundtland Report*. It states that “sustainable development is the development that meets all human needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987:43), merging environmental, social, and economic aspects. Based on this definition, the goal of this chapter is to understand how Brazilian media explored nuances of the concept, and which features were emphasised.

Content analysis reveals that, during the coverage of Rio92, *FSP* and *OG* published 23 texts with definitions of sustainable development, roughly 40% of the texts studied in this chapter. Between 1993 and 2001, nine pieces displayed explanations of sustainability, corresponding to about 16% of the material. The coverage of Rio+10 contained eight descriptions, roughly 14% of the content. In this period, all pieces were published by the newspaper *O Globo*. From 2003 to 2011, *FSP* and *OG* published five pieces explaining sustainability, 9% of the 57 pieces analysed in this chapter. *FSP* and *OG* coverage of Rio+20, had 12 descriptions, 21% of the explanatory content. In total, there were explanations in 57 pieces out of the 790 analysed in this thesis, indicating that roughly 7% of the material introduced sustainability to readers. This figure is relevant as it shows that only 7% of the coverage explained the meaning of sustainable development, while 93% of the content, which is the vast majority, did not provide any explanation of the topic, thus assuming that the public had previous knowledge of the subject.

To present this data, this chapter uses a seven-type categorisation specifically created for this thesis to identify the nuances of the explanations about sustainability that were provided by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo*. Type A corresponds to the *Brundtland Report*'s classification, gathering environmental,

economic, and social perspectives. Type B focuses on economic elements, while overlooking social and environmental issues. Type C highlights environmental facets, excluding social and economic subjects. Type D presents economic and environment views, without social elements. Type E spotlights social and environmental aspects but omits economic topics. Type F relates to the *Brundtland Report* focus on future generations without mentioning economic, social, or environmental values. Type G shows critical narratives, not mentioning the official UN perspective.

This seven-type categorisation is useful to detect which aspects of sustainable development were emphasised by Brazilian media coverage. The analysis of definitions of sustainability presented by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* is outlined in seven separate sections, each dedicated to one type of explanation.

#### **4.1 – Type A: economic, environmental, and social values**

This initial section investigates 25 type-A definitions of sustainable development presented by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* throughout the 20-year timeframe. This narrative refers to all three aspects of the sustainability concept that are thoughtfully described in the 1987 *Brundtland Report*, namely: economic, environmental, and social facets.

##### **4.1.1 – Brazilian government**

This segment shows representatives of the Brazilian federal government referring to the *Brundtland Report* definition of sustainable development. It presents seven texts with ministers and presidents defending sustainability and linking the concept to Brazil in a clear attempt to promote the country's image.

The first example comes from the 1995 World Environment Day, when *Folha de S. Paulo* published Brazilian environment minister Gustavo Krause's opinion piece<sup>8</sup>, in which he claimed that the “revolutionary idea of sustainability

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<sup>8</sup> Krause, G. (1995) Meio ambiente e cidadania. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 5 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 11 August 2021).

associates in a balanced and indissoluble way social, environment, and economic dimensions of the development process”<sup>9</sup>. This type-A definition used an emblematic description of ‘revolutionary’, which denoted Krause’s awareness of the importance of sustainability. The minister also defended sustainability as a modern economic notion, suggesting that humanity recognised its necessity. More than two decades have passed since this declaration. Difficulties in implementing sustainable development globally prove that this was a naïve statement from the Brazilian environment minister.

Additionally, Krause argued that the Brazilian federal government had the opportunity to promote the country’s economy internationally and incorporate social and environmental dimensions into Brazil’s development. He added that the government’s ideology aimed at harmoniously integrating humanity and environment to improve quality of life and well-being, stating that social inequality was the country’s main problem. Here, the minister admits the connection between ideology and political interests of the Brazilian government. This discourse also shows that it was advantageous to the government to present itself as environmental-friendly.

In addition, the minister defended Brazil, saying it was not the main environmental villain in the world, but he recognised that the country was also not properly protecting its environment. Krause’s use of ample definitions of sustainability is relevant because he represented an official voice of the federal government, stressing the connection between social, environment, and economic dimensions in the country’s development process. There was also a defence of the Brazilian government. The text was written during the tenure of right-wing president Fernando Henrique Cardoso. Minister Krause used greenwashing and a misleading discourse to try to minimise the responsibility of Brazilian authorities for environmental destruction.

This is the first time that this study finds evidence of the use of the concept of greenwashing. As previously explained on chapter 1, *Introduction*, the term was created in 1986 by an environmentalist who noted that the hotel industry promoted

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<sup>9</sup> Original in Portuguese: *a ideia revolucionária de sustentabilidade associa equilibrada e indissolavelmente as dimensões social, ambiental e econômica do processo de desenvolvimento*

towel reuse with the excuse to save energy and laundry costs, so increasing profits (Orange & Cohen, 2010). As Orange and Cohen (2010:30) explained, the term greenwashing refers to organisations “that spend more time and money advertising that they are green than on actually putting into place environmentally friendly practices”. Therefore, in this thesis, greenwashing discourses refer to any type of disinformation, which is false or inaccurate information, intentionally used (Born & Edgington, 2017) to evoke environmental care.

To illustrate Krause’s opinion piece, *Folha de S. Paulo* published a black-and-white drawing of a tree (Figure 4.1). The image resembled a strong, walking tree, representing nature’s magnitude and importance to human life. In this case, the message corroborated the link between humanity and nature that was displayed both in the article and in the illustration.



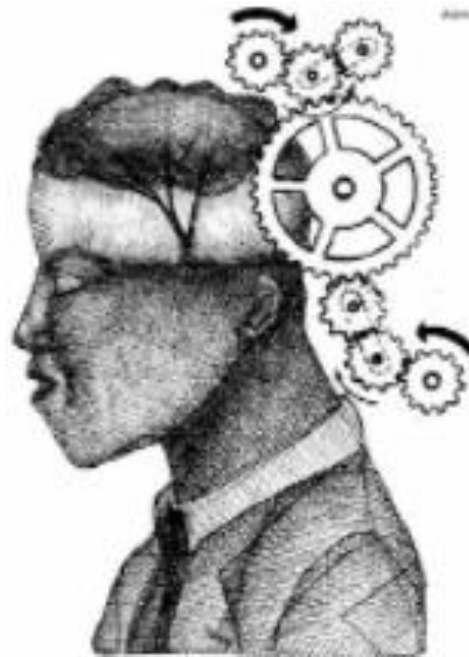
**Figure 4.1:** Image published in *Folha de S. Paulo* on 5 June 1995

Another type-A definition of sustainable development was used seven years later, in 2002, in an opinion piece<sup>10</sup> written by Brazilian foreign minister Celso Lafer in *O Globo*. Lafer explained that sustainable development had three pillars: economic growth, social development, and environmental protection. This was a direct correspondence with the *Brundtland Report*, thus reflecting a type-A category. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the piece showed another member of the Brazilian federal government connecting the country's development to the UN's concept. The repeated discourse was part of the Brazilian government's greenwashing strategy to build its image as an environmentally friendly country.

Adding to the explanation of sustainability, Lafer argued that sustainable development resulted from the dialogue of three generations: Stockholm, Rio, and Johannesburg. Arguably, the 1972 Stockholm Conference initiated debates about the exhaustion of natural resources, while Rio92 connected environmental protection and social-economic development; Johannesburg, Rio+10, would be the moment to implement Rio92's resolutions. *O Globo* also displayed a black-and-white illustration of a man with a tree replacing his brain connected to pulleys (Figure 4.2). The drawing represented interconnections between humans and nature, suggesting that they exist and move in combination. The image and text made associations between society and environment, corroborating the interdependent relationship between elements of Earth's ecosystem.

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<sup>10</sup> Lafer, C. (2002) Um diálogo de gerações. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 26 August. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 9 September 2021).



**Figure 4.2:** Image published in *O Globo* on 26 August 2002

A further description of sustainable development was displayed four days later on 30 August 2002, as part of an *O Globo* opinion piece written by Brazilian science and technology minister Ronaldo Mota Sardenberg<sup>11</sup>. The minister stated that, as requested by President Cardoso, sustainability was part of strategic planning and assurance for future generations of economic, human, and environmental capital at least equivalent to what existed in the present. The explanation was a direct reference to the official *Brundtland Report* definition, corresponding to a type-A classification. Once more, a member of the Brazilian federal government referred to the UN concept and linked it to the president and his strategic plan. Yet again, it was noticeable that by targeting sustainability, the Brazilian government aimed at improving its image by posing as an environmentally friendly country.

Likewise, explaining sustainable development was part of President Cardoso's speech at Rio+10<sup>12</sup>. *O Globo* reported that Cardoso argued that sustainability derived from the balance of economic prosperity, environmental protection, and social justice, a type-A categorisation. According to *O Globo*, the president said that the end of trade protectionism would help to fight poverty and

<sup>11</sup> Sardenberg, R. M. (2002) Invenção e ecologia. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 30 August. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 15 September 2021).

<sup>12</sup> Jungblut, C. (2002) FH critica sovinnice dos ricos. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 3 September. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 10 September 2021).



to promote sustainability, claiming that unjust development could not be sustainable. *OG* also reported that Cardoso complained about the lack of investment by rich nations in sustainable development programmes. *OG* stated that the president claimed that the stinginess of rich countries was unacceptable, as Brazil would forgive debts from poorer countries to assist their development.

Repeated attempts to link Brazil's official discourse to sustainable development indicate the intention to improve the country's image regarding its environmental strategies. Cardoso also tried to promote Brazil, by showing that a developing nation was financially assisting poorer countries. Furthermore, the use of the word stinginess shows that the Brazilian president was a harsh critic of developed nations. Conflicts between developed and developing countries, the North and the South, were very frequent in Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development. All analytical chapters, 4 to 8, present aspects of the dispute. The main cause for disagreement was monetary issues, especially financial compensation for environmental damage and funding to invest in sustainable development.

As for visual aspects, *O Globo* showed a black-and-white picture of President Cardoso produced by the international agency Associated Press (Figure 4.3). In addition, *OG* illustrated the piece by displaying five black-and-white photos of heads of state who participated in the event. On the top of the sheet, Associated Press showed French president Jacques Chirac and *Agence France-Presse (AFP)* presented British prime minister Tony Blair. On the right-hand side, *AFP* displayed Robert Mugabe, President of Zimbabwe; and Reuters presented South African president Thabo Mbeki and UN secretary-general Kofi Annan. In summary, images showcased the importance of politicians in the coverage of Rio+10. Photos also displayed distinct parts of the conflict between North and South, revealing that the summit was attended by different sides. Moreover, use of photographs from international agencies indicated that *O Globo* did not have a photographer covering the UN event in South Africa.



Figure 4.3: Pictures published in *O Globo* on 3 September 2002

Almost ten years later, *Folha de S. Paulo* presented two definitions of sustainable development in an opinion piece written by the Brazilian minister of environment Izabella Teixeira in 2012<sup>13</sup>. The piece was published during the presidency of left-wing President Dilma Rousseff. Focusing on sustainable

<sup>13</sup> Teixeira, I. (2012) Brasil, Rio+20 e a encruzilhada do mundo. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 14 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 16 November 2021).

development, Teixeira claimed that economic growth, social inclusion, and respect for the environment were inseparable. The triad relates to the UN's official classification, which therefore makes it a type-A definition. The minister added that it was natural to fear the loss of a single environmental focus on sustainability. With this claim, Teixeira meant that the world was solely focused on environmental aspects of sustainable development; however global data on environmental destruction contradicts the minister's argument.

Besides, Teixeira defended the Brazilian government for its contribution to environmental conservation, and especially the fight against poverty that improved the lives of millions of people. Here, it is interesting to note that the Brazilian environment minister focused on social aspects of sustainability, which was unprecedented, and can even seem paradoxical to what would be expected from a minister of environment. Additionally, Teixeira redefined sustainable development as "inclusion, participation and public interest as a guide for economy and use of natural resources". Again, the explanation relates to the *Brundtland Report's* triad, making it a type-A definition.

It is also noteworthy to highlight Teixeira's praise of the Brazilian government, indicating a political greenwashing discourse. The minister's tribute to the government is similar to the 1999 opinion piece of the environment minister Gustavo Krause. The similarity shows that in both cases Brazilian environment ministers tried to protect their governments and presidents, promoting greenwashing and disinformation discourses. It also suggests that *Folha de S. Paulo* agreed with the defence, as the newspaper offered space for the ministers.

Four days later, Brazilian economist and former minister of economy Luiz Carlos Bresser-Pereira published an opinion piece about Rio+20 in *Folha de S. Paulo*<sup>14</sup>. He explained that sustainable development was not only about environmental protection, but also about growing and diminishing inequalities. Bresser-Pereira emphasised that sustainability should be economic, social, and environmental. Referring to the UN's triad, this definition matches a type-A categorisation. The economist stated that Rio+20 would occur in a moment of crisis,

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<sup>14</sup> Bresser-Pereira, L. C. (2012) Metas para seres humanos iguais. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 18 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 5 November 2021).

but nevertheless it could still promote advances, especially strengthening the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and defining sustainable development goals. Here it is significant that an economic specialist acknowledged that Rio+20 could be valuable, despite its occurrence during a global financial crisis.

As part of its Rio+20 coverage, *Folha de S. Paulo* reported<sup>15</sup> that the Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff had described sustainable development as a way to grow, include, and protect. The direct reference to the UN's triad makes this a type-A definition, revealing that President Rousseff considered the concept through all its aspects. The description was part of an article that described Rousseff and members of the Brazilian federal government defending the final document of Rio+20. According to *FSP*, Rousseff said the text preserved important advances, introducing significant concepts as poverty eradication and racial equality. *FSP* added Rousseff's claim that Brazil was an example of sustainability for reducing poverty, decreasing deforestation in the Amazon, and creating 18 million jobs.

Additionally, *FSP* displayed a coloured picture of Dilma Rousseff making Rio+20's opening speech to representatives of 193 countries (Figure 4.4). The image related to the article, illustrating the UN conference. It also reflected women's empowerment, as Rousseff was Brazil's first female president. Here, it is important to comment that Brazilian media coverage of sustainability included significant debates regarding women's health and sustainability that were held during Rio+10 and Rio+20. The analysis of this specific content will be presented in chapter 5, *Social narratives in the coverage of sustainable development*.

Reflecting on *FSP* picture of Rio+20, the photograph presented Brazil in a prominent position, suggesting its importance in the global arena of sustainability after hosting two main international events on the topic. The photo corroborates with previous attempts to situate Brazil as a world environmental leader. The coverage revealed that governmental representatives believed that the strategy would improve the country's image and produce positive outcomes for the Brazilian economy.

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<sup>15</sup> Luna, D., Menchen, D. & Rodrigues, F. (2012) Governo afirma que documento final reflete a ambição coletiva. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 21 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 17 November 2021).



**Figure 4.4:** Picture published in *Folha de S. Paulo* on 21 June 2012

This section investigated seven pieces published by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* between 1992 and 2012 with representatives of the Brazilian government providing definitions of sustainable development. The explanations fully corresponded to the triad established by the 1987 *Brundtland Report*, which encompassed social, economic, and environmental aspects. The coverage disclosed a marketing strategy of the Brazilian government that tried to improve the country's image in regard to environmental issues. The coverage revealed that the government's aim was to produce positive outcomes for the country's economy. The following section will analyse *FSP* and *OG* pieces that show international leaders explaining sustainable development.

#### 4.1.2 – International leaders

Further investigation about Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development showed that *O Globo* presented the perspective of two international leaders regarding sustainable development, matching the type-A definition, which focused on environmental, social, and economic narratives.

The first example is *O Globo*'s coverage<sup>16</sup> of Rio+10's opening event when South African president Thabo Mbeki presented his view on sustainability. Mbeki

<sup>16</sup> *O Globo* (2002) Apartheid global. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 27 August. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 14 September 2021).

defined it as a form of progress based on three pilasters: economic growth, social progress, and environmental protection, relating to the type-A perspective. Furthermore, *OG* displayed four black-and-white pictures produced by international news agencies Reuters and Associated Press (Figure 4.5). The photos showed: South African president Thabo Mbeki greeting Rio+10's president, Nitin Desai; Israeli and Palestinian activists; environmentalist Choi Byung-Spp sculpting ice penguins in a protest against global warming; and a boy looking at an image of planet Earth. The images framed how Rio+10 gathered distinct publics with different agendas. Besides, pictures did not necessarily connect to the text, but guaranteed the exhibition of Rio+10's activities, acting as a historical archive of the summit.



Figure 4.5: Pictures published in *O Globo* on 27 August 2002

Ten years later, UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon published an opinion piece in *O Globo* to mark Rio+20's opening day<sup>17</sup>. Ki-moon described sustainable

<sup>17</sup> Ki-moon, B. (2012) Um movimento global de mudança. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 20 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 15 November 2021).

development as an “ancient imperative”, adding that it consisted of balancing the “development needs of the world’s growing population so that everyone could enjoy the fruits of prosperity and economic growth while conserving our planet’s most precious resources: earth, air and water”. Ki-moon presented a type-A characterisation, referring to the sustainability triad. Furthermore, the UN secretary-general called for a “smart” public policy to guarantee economic and social improvements, while respecting the finitude of natural resources. The use of the word “smart” is a clear sign that the UN opposed actions that confronted sustainable development. Nevertheless, in this piece, the defence of sustainable development privileged economic aspects when Ki-moon stated that economic growth would be responsible for social improvements. Additionally, the environment was twice presented as a reservoir of limited resources that needed care due to its finitude; environmental protection was thus presented as a servant of the economy.

This section presented type-A definitions of sustainability, including social, economic, and environmental aspects. The explanations were published by *O Globo* during Rio+10 and Rio+20, also corroborating the political significance of the events. The following segment will display *FSP* and *OG* pieces that included explanations of sustainable development provided by specialists.

#### 4.1.3 – Specialists

The analysis of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage demonstrates that environmental and economy specialists were also responsible for spreading the type-A definition of sustainability, which highlighted economic, environmental, and social aspects. This section investigates five pieces with type-A definitions given by specialists. All of them were produced in 1992, as part of the coverage of Rio92.

Historical perspectives of sustainability were part of *O Globo*’s edition one day before the beginning of Rio92. The piece<sup>18</sup> explained that the notion of sustainable development emerged in 1972 during the first UN environmental

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<sup>18</sup> *O Globo* (1992) Economia e ecologia abrem o programa científico. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 2 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 10 July 2021).



conference in Stockholm. The article provided different economic perspectives on sustainable development based on classic and ecological economy theories. It presented the view of the director of the Paris School of Advanced Studies in Social Sciences, Ignacy Sachs, who argued that sustainable development should consider social justice, ecological protection, and economic efficiency. Based on the triad that constitutes the concept, Sachs' impression corresponds to a type-A definition. This reveals that the term sustainable development was known and used by specialists even before Rio92, the conference that spread its meaning worldwide.

Contributing to the dissemination of the concept, Biologist Crodowaldo Pavan wrote an opinion piece<sup>19</sup> for *O Globo* during Rio92. The specialist supported the link between social and economic development in regard to environmental protection. To Pavan, only through rational development could current generations leave to future generations an environment that would allow the perpetuation of the human species. The biologist's definition of sustainability is very similar to the UN's official description, including all three aspects that represent a type-A classification.

Another news item from the coverage of Rio92 offered a simplified idea of sustainable development. Published in *Folha de S. Paulo*, the article<sup>20</sup> focused on John MacNeill, who participated in the elaboration of the document *Our Common Future*, the *Brundtland Report*, which launched the concept of sustainable development in 1987. *FSP* stated that, to MacNeill<sup>21</sup>, sustainability issues were limited to providing water, a bowl of food, and shelter for the world population, without polluting the air and exhausting soils. Here, the word choice oversimplified basic human needs. The specialist's perception, nevertheless, considered social and economic growth as well as environmental protection, classifying it as a type-A label.

The piece also showed MacNeill's argument that world peace depended on Rio92's success. MacNeill's claims find a basis in the *Brundtland Report* (WCED,

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<sup>19</sup> Pavan, C. (1992) Depois da Rio-92. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 8 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 11 July 2021).

<sup>20</sup> Freire, V. T. (1992) Paz ecológica depende de sucesso da conferência. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 1 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 1 July 2021).

<sup>21</sup> MacNeill, J.; Winsemius, P. & Yakushiji, T. (1992) *Beyond Interdependence: The Meshing of the World's Economy and the Earth's Ecology*. Oxford University Press.

1987:198) that highlighted that “environmental stress is both a cause and an effect of political tension and military conflict”. According to *FSP*, the specialist worried that the increasing world population would force economic activities to produce five to ten times more to satisfy basic needs. MacNeill blamed population growth for future environmental chaos. However, he neglected unsustainable consumption practices emphasised by the current economic system. Nevertheless, the *Brundtland Report* considers that fast population growth and high consumption levels produce severe environmental impacts, thus sustainable development requires better harmony between population size and consumption levels.

The 1992 media coverage of sustainable development also encompassed criticisms. Environmentalist Maurício Waldman<sup>22</sup> wrote an opinion piece arguing that the concept was just a “smokescreen<sup>23</sup>”. By describing sustainability as a smokescreen, Waldman shared disbelief about the concept’s capacity to promote environmental protection, social, and economic equality. Besides, the text exhibited a critical perspective about sustainable development, taking into consideration the existence of a dichotomy between environmental protection and industrialisation. It condemned the concept of sustainable development for relying on the market economy, palliative social measures, and technological advancement.

Additionally, Waldman criticised sustainable development for characterising misery as a deviation from the system that was capable of adjustment and correction, instead of accepting that misery was a result of capitalism, responsible for unprecedented socio-environmental crisis. *FSP* explained that, to the environmentalist, the solution would be popularising the environmental cause and uniting democracy, social justice, and ecology. This text constitutes a rare example of Brazilian media coverage presenting criticisms of sustainability. The piece described sustainable development as a distorted narrative, whose real objective was hiding the exploitation of natural resources. Nevertheless, despite the disbelief of the concept, the opinion piece mentioned the need to develop environmental, economic, and social areas, which relate to the *Brundtland Report*’s characterisation, thus featuring a type-A label.

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<sup>22</sup> Waldman, M. (1992) Desenvolvimento Sustentável. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 11 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 5 July 2021).

<sup>23</sup> Original in Portuguese: *cortina de fumaça*

It is significant to have the explanation from the text matching the *Brundtland Report*, especially because it shows that the author criticised the concept but was aware of all the characteristics encompassing the notion. Moreover, *Folha de S. Paulo* displayed a black-and-white image to illustrate Waldman's opinion piece (Figure 4.6). It revealed a man holding a small plant in his left hand while holding his face with his right hand and acting pensively. Arguably, it symbolised a person wondering about how to promote environmental care. It could even be the representation of the author, who described sustainable development as a smokescreen, doubting its efficacy in protecting nature. The illustration also corroborates with humanity's attempts to save nature.



**Figure 4.6:** Image published in *Folha de S. Paulo* on 11 June 1992

This section analysed five pieces published by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* in 1992, with type-A definitions of sustainability, emphasising economic, environmental, and social aspects. The coverage showed that environmental and economic specialists used the full concept of sustainable development even before

Rio92, which was the event that popularised the notion. The next segment explores type-A definitions announced by the business industry.

#### 4.1.4 – Business industry

During the 20-year timeframe, *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* introduced three views that were linked to representatives of the business sector regarding sustainable development. This passage investigates sustainability perspectives from the business industry that are connected to the type-A definition.

Initial definitions of sustainable development arose five days before the beginning of Rio92. *O Globo* published an opinion piece<sup>24</sup> that described the concept as an economic view and an instrument of industrial innovation, adding that it was not an ethical belief, nor an ecological motto. The assertion was made by the director of the Brazilian Business Council for Sustainable Development<sup>25</sup>, Márcio Fortes. Adding to the initial economic interpretation, Fortes claimed that sustainability represented a new economic and social order; a process that needed to be evaluated within generations, not within years. Moreover, it was considered the best way to achieve lasting development without exhausting natural resources and leaving an environment capable of producing better life conditions for future generations. Therefore, the piece presented a type-A definition of sustainable development, considering all aspects of the concept. This finding is relevant because it reveals that *O Globo* provided full explanations of sustainability even before Rio92, which is known as the event that made sustainable development internationally renowned.

In addition, Fortes' definition of sustainable development matched the UN's interpretations when it claimed that the concept was a long-term process connected to raising living standards and quality of life. Additionally, both Fortes and the United Nations stated that unless economic growth was managed in a sustainable way, it could have severe impacts on the environment. There was a shared belief

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<sup>24</sup> Fortes, M. (1992) Existem fortes ligações entre economia e ecologia. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 29 May. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 13 July 2021).

<sup>25</sup> Original in Portuguese: *Conselho Empresarial Brasileiro para o Desenvolvimento Sustentável*

that sustainable development was not solely an economic instrument, as ecology and economy systems were interconnected (WCED, 1987:37).

After a 16-year gap, in 2008, *Folha de S. Paulo* published an opinion piece written by the president of the Federation of Industries of the State of São Paulo, Paulo Skaf<sup>26</sup>. The entrepreneur claimed that sustainable development consisted of generating wealth with social and environmental responsibility, reflecting a type-A characterisation. Skaf also alleged that São Paulo's industries were committed to sustainable development. He claimed that the Federation was stimulating industries to use creativity to guarantee efficiency and minimum negative impact. Moreover, Skaf argued that society hardly knew about industries' efforts in transforming the concept of sustainable development into reality.

It is significant that Brazilian industries acknowledged the need to be recognised as environmentally friendly. For the industry, implementing environmental practices was not enough if the public was not aware of them, as there would not be any financial compensation for environmental investments. This also indicates the importance that the subject had achieved in the country. Besides, the use of the word “creativity” is indicative of economic rhetoric, as it usually reflects lack of funds to invest in specific areas, or enforcement of alternative ways to implement changes. This implies that industries did not want to spend on environmental measures, so they were looking for creative, ingenious solutions that would not require financial investment.

Another definition of sustainable development arose in *O Globo*, as part of the coverage about the participation of the Brazilian Business Council for Sustainable Development in Rio+20<sup>27</sup>. The piece stated that 70 national companies wanted to help Brazil to achieve sustainable development in three aspects: social, economic, and environmental, within 38 years. The explanation represented the *Brundtland Report's* triad, representing a type-A label.

Moreover, *O Globo* added a coloured picture of wind turbines, relating renewable energy to sustainability. The visual narrative complemented the

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<sup>26</sup> Skaf, P. (2008) Nova consciência ambiental. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 8 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 20 October 2021).

<sup>27</sup> Batista, H. G. (2012) Uma nova agenda para as empresas. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 23 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 8 November 2021).

discussion of sustainable development in the article, as the subtitles explained that wind energy could be an ally in producing less pollution (Figure 4.7). Yet, lack of specific data on sustainable development projects indicates that *O Globo* accepted the Council's discourse without questioning its feasibility. To some extent, the superficial coverage was very similar to a press release. Furthermore, it promoted the business sector, and ultimately worked as greenwashing. The photograph of the wind farm, possibly taken from the newspaper's image bank, reinforces the greenwashing argument, because it was the *OG* editorial team's choice to use this particular image to illustrate the superficial text. The Brazilian Business Council for Sustainable Development did not have any project to support its discourse.



**Figure 4.7:** Picture published in *Folha de S. Paulo* on 23 June 2012

This section investigated three type-A definitions provided by representatives of Brazilian business and industry to *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo*. The explanations were published between 1992 and 2012, linking sustainability to economic, social, and environmental aspects. The next segment will analyse type-A descriptions that emerged in the coverage of religious discourses.

#### 4.1.5 – Religious narratives

This section demonstrates that type-A definitions of sustainable development arose in connection with religious discourses published in *O Globo* in three pieces dating from 1992 and 1995, corresponding to the beginning of the 20-year timeframe studied in this thesis.

In 1992, *O Globo* published an opinion piece<sup>28</sup> written by a member of the Brundtland Commission, Brazilian professor Paulo Nogueira-Neto, who introduced himself as a Christian. Nogueira-Neto explained that sustainable development's objective was eradicating misery, which was both a moral and environmental obligation. The combination of economic, social, and environmental aspects makes this a type-A explanation. Adding to his connection with religion, Nogueira-Neto explained that, during the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil<sup>29</sup> (*CNBB*, the Portuguese acronym), it was decided that sustainable development needed to transcend and grow within democratic contexts that met basic human values, such as respect for local communities. Possibly, the reference to *CNBB* was an attempt to reinforce Nogueira-Neto's connection with the Catholic Church. It is also relevant to have a member of the Brundtland Commission emphasising his relationship with Catholicism – it seems like an effort to justify his work through religion.

Another religious interpretation of sustainable development was provided by Rio de Janeiro's Roman Catholic archbishop Dom Eugênio Sales<sup>30</sup> in 1992. In an opinion piece published by *O Globo*, the archbishop compared sustainability to papal encyclicals that discussed solidarity, development of humanity, equity, and well-being among nations. Claiming that solidarity and mutual help would lead to a better world, Dom Eugênio Sales affirmed that society needed to “recognise the rights of all men to properly enjoy the resources given by the Creator in favour of his creature made in his image and likeness<sup>31</sup>”. The religious approach to

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<sup>28</sup> Nogueira-Neto, P. (1992) Rio-92, aurora de um novo dia. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 1 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 12 July 2021).

<sup>29</sup> Original in Portuguese: *Conferência Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil*

<sup>30</sup> Sales, E. (1992) Solidariedade entre os povos. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 6 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 10 July 2021).

<sup>31</sup> Original in Portuguese: *reconhecer os direitos de todos os homens de usufruir adequadamente os recursos dados pelo Criador em favor de sua criatura feita à sua imagem e semelhança.*

sustainable development considered environmental, social, and economic spheres, referring to a type-A classification.

Three years later, in 1995, type-A definitions of sustainable development reappeared in a second opinion piece<sup>32</sup> written by Rio de Janeiro's Roman Catholic Cardinal-Archbishop Dom Eugênio Sales. In the text, the cardinal-archbishop mentioned religious documents in which the Catholic Church encouraged environmental protection, and reasonable use of natural resources. The piece referred to the 1991 Assembly of the Latin American Episcopate that defined sustainable development as a solution for establishing economic growth within ecologic limits, and ethical criteria that did not promote social exclusion and which was therefore a type-A definition.

Thrice in the text, Dom Eugênio Sales referred to the concept of sustainable development without mentioning the term. First, highlighting the document produced during the 1979 Assembly of the Latin American Episcopate, which recommended to: “preserve the natural resources created by God for all men, in order to pass them on as an inheritance to the generations to come<sup>33</sup>”. The statement clearly resembled the 1987 *Brundtland Report*'s official definition of sustainable development. However, the UN's document was produced eight years after the Church's statement. The finding evidenced that the notion of sustainability was being discussed before its officialization by the UN, indicating widespread awareness of the need to change the global unsustainable development model. Second, Sales argued that it was part of the pastoral work of educating the youth and re-educating adults to “show them the duties of preserving the goods of Creation, with the objective to assure to future generations what God created for all mankind<sup>34</sup>”. Third, he claimed that, during World Environment Day and Environment Week, society should value and preserve nature, and guarantee to future generations “what God granted us<sup>35</sup>”, adding that World Environment Day

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<sup>32</sup> Sales, E. (1995) O homem e a natureza. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 3 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 9 August 2021).

<sup>33</sup> Original in Portuguese: *preservar os recursos naturais criados por Deus para todos os homens, a fim de transmiti-los como herança para as gerações vindouras*

<sup>34</sup> Original in Portuguese: *mostrando-lhes os deveres na preservação dos bens da Criação, tendo em vista assegurar às gerações futuras o que Deus criou para toda a humanidade*

<sup>35</sup> Original in Portuguese: *o que Deus nos concedeu*



and Environment Week were opportunities to “stimulate the conscience of Christians and people of good will<sup>36</sup>” to watch over sustainability.

The piece was filled with religious speech, resembling a sermon. It input moral obligations to Christians, and more specifically Catholics, to promote sustainable development as a form of caring for God’s creation. According to the religious narrative, humanity stood above nature that was created by God to fulfil humankind’s necessities. Thus, the problem was not about exploiting nature but about finding a way to keep using natural resources in the long run. Additionally, social aspects were continuously disclosed in the religious context, and throughout the opinion piece poverty, inequalities, and misery were condemned. These characteristics linked the text of the archbishop to the notion of sustainable development.

This section investigated three type-A definitions of sustainable development that were part of religious discourses presented by *O Globo* in 1992 and 1995. The period related to the beginning of the 20-year timeframe covered by this research. The analysis showed that religious leaders had ample knowledge of the concept of sustainability, and that they were using similar descriptions to the UN official definition even before the publication of the 1987 *Brundtland Report*. The study of type-A definitions of sustainable development continues in the next section with the investigation of *FSP* and *OG* usage of the notion when covering events.

#### **4.1.6 – Events**

This segment demonstrates the investigation regarding *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage of events about sustainable development. It shows that five type-A definitions of sustainability emerged in the coverage produced between 1992 and 2012.

As part of the media coverage of Rio92, *Folha de S. Paulo* presented the *Brundtland Report*’s definition of sustainability in an unsigned piece<sup>37</sup>. *FSP* stated

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<sup>36</sup> Original in Portuguese: *estimular a consciência dos cristãos e pessoas de boa vontade*

<sup>37</sup> *Folha de S. Paulo* (1992) A definição. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 1 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 2 July 2021).

that sustainable development is “UN’s definition – in the report *Our Common Future* – for social, economic, and cultural development that meets present needs without compromising future needs. It is developing without harming the planet’s ecosystems and natural resources available today”<sup>38</sup>. The precise match with the official concept corresponds to a type-A designation of sustainability. Besides, the text indicates *FSP*’s commitment to inform the public about sustainable development, despite lacking space for further information and background data. It can be interpreted as *FSP*’s attempt to promote awareness of the concept in spite of its limited coverage.

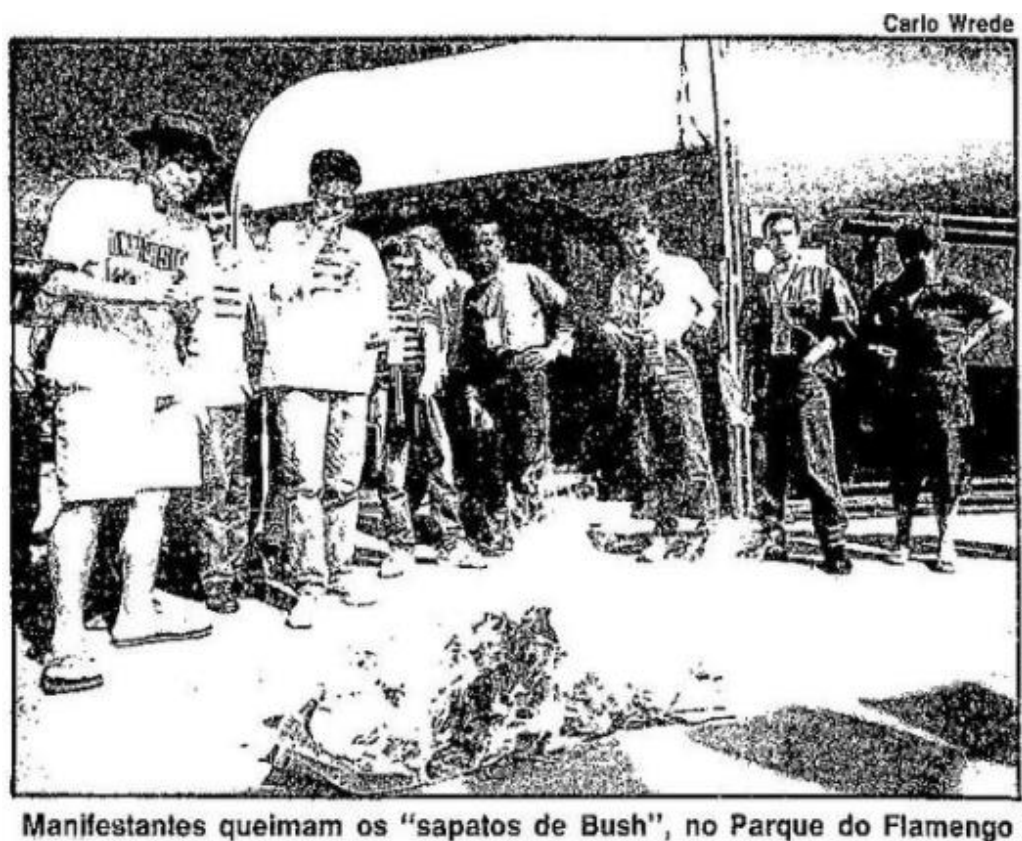
Moreover, on the last day of Rio92, *O Globo* presented<sup>39</sup> “sustained development”<sup>40</sup> as an integration of environmental preservation with economic and social growth. The resemblance with the *Brundtland Report*’s concept characterises it as a type-A label. The use of the expression “sustained development” on the last day of Rio92, after extensive coverage about the topic, indicates that the concept was still being consolidated, even among media workers. Furthermore, *OG* complemented the narrative by publishing a black-and-white picture produced by Carlo Wrede (Figure 4.8). It presented a protest in Rio92 against US president George Bush. The image showed a group of people looking at items on fire, which were described in the subtitle as Bush’s shoes. The photo enlarged the written content with visual text, as the protest was not mentioned in the article. It demonstrated dissatisfaction with Rio92’s results, and a specific attack on the US’s lack of commitment to the conference decisions. Looking in retrospect, Rio92 was the only event about sustainable development that had the presence of the President of the United States, as neither Rio+10 nor Rio+20 managed to attract US presidents. Nevertheless, the image reminds us that the physical presence of a world leader has no impact without additional commitment to the cause.

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<sup>38</sup> Original in Portuguese: *é a definição da ONU – no relatório Nosso Futuro Comum – para o desenvolvimento social, econômico e cultural que atende às demandas do presente sem comprometer as necessidades futuras. É o desenvolvimento sem comprometimento dos ecossistemas do planeta e dos recursos naturais hoje disponíveis.*

<sup>39</sup> Azevedo, A. L. & Alves, J. H. (1992) Rio-92 propõe nova ordem mundial. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 14 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 9 July 2021).

<sup>40</sup> Original in Portuguese: *desenvolvimento sustentado*



**Figure 4.8:** Picture published in *O Globo* on 14 June 1992

*O Globo's* edition on the 1993 World Environment Day offered the classic definition of sustainability. The piece<sup>41</sup> described sustainable development as the one that does not harm the environment and is equal to better income distribution. This is a type-A description as it refers to the *Brundtland Report's* environmental, economic, and social aspects. The explanation was part of the coverage of the First Conference of Cities to the Century 21, Rio93, that gathered 27 mayors from Latin America and Europe. The piece said that politicians defended sustainability and produced a document that criticised development models that increased poverty, marginality, violence, and environmental degradation. To *OG*, the event promoted resource redistribution, quality of life and development, sustainable economies, conservation of natural resources, pollution constraints, environmental preservation, effectiveness of public services, and quality of the urban environment.

<sup>41</sup> *O Globo* (1993) Rio-93: prefeitos fazem acordo de cooperação. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 5 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 5 August 2021).

*O Globo*'s descriptive and superficial coverage resembled a press release. Nevertheless, the article indicates that Rio92 discussions remained on both the political and media agenda after the end of the 1992 conference. In this specific case, Rio92's legacy was evoked by a smaller event that was happening a year after the conference. Not only did it focus on sustainability, but it was also titled Rio93, as a form of preserving Rio92's legacy.

Still as part of the 1993 World Environment Day edition, *O Globo* published a description of sustainable development given by Brazilian ecologist and president of the NGO Pró Natura, Marcelo Carvalho de Andrade<sup>42</sup>. Talking about Pró Natura, Andrade explained that the NGO's work was based on the concept of regional sustainable development, focusing on environmental, social, and economic aspects of each region. The undeniable similarity to the *Brundtland Report*'s description makes this a type-A definition.

Two decades later, *FSP* published an unsigned article<sup>43</sup> in 2012 that disapproved of the Rio+20 final document. The piece said Rio+20's report was weak because Brazil tried to conciliate opposing views. It explained that Brazil was not only criticised by the European Union and by environmentalists, but it was also awarded the 'Fossil of the Day', a prize given by NGOs to countries that jeopardised environmental negotiations. Moreover, the piece stated that Brazil and emergent countries did not support transforming the United Nations Environment Programme into an agency because it only cared for the environmental side of sustainable development, overlooking social and economic issues. Here, the direct reference to the sustainability triad makes the definition type-A.

This section analysed five type-A definitions of sustainability that were published by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* between 1992 and 2012. The investigation revealed that explanations of sustainable development complemented the coverage of environmental events, namely Rio92, Rio93, the 1993 World Environment Day, and Rio+20.

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<sup>42</sup> *O Globo* (1993) Ecologista brasileiro ganha prêmio internacional. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 5 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 6 August 2021).

<sup>43</sup> *Folha de S. Paulo* (2012) Brasil exclui agência ambiental de texto. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 18 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 5 November 2021).

In summary, section 4.1 investigated 25 type-A definitions of sustainable development, which disclosed environmental, social, and economic aspects that emerged in Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development produced between 1992 and 2012. The study continues in the next segment with the analysis of economic definitions of sustainability.

#### **4.2 – Type B: economic definitions**

The segment investigates two type-B characterisations of sustainable development. Here, *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage highlights economic aspects of sustainability. Both narratives are part of the Rio92 coverage, an indicator that the concept gained further meaning through time.

*O Globo* presented an economic characterisation of sustainable development in an opinion piece written by the president of the Brazilian Development Bank<sup>44</sup>, Eduardo Modiano. He suggested that the concept was about acting for change after understanding that the world was going through a decisive moment. He claimed that governments, non-governmental organisations, and the business world needed to work together to promote sustainable development. Nevertheless, despite the piece's initial broader perspective on sustainability Modiano highlighted economic aspects, claiming that sustainable development was an opportunity to grow<sup>45</sup>. Modiano's view corresponds to a type-B label of sustainable development for its focus on economy.

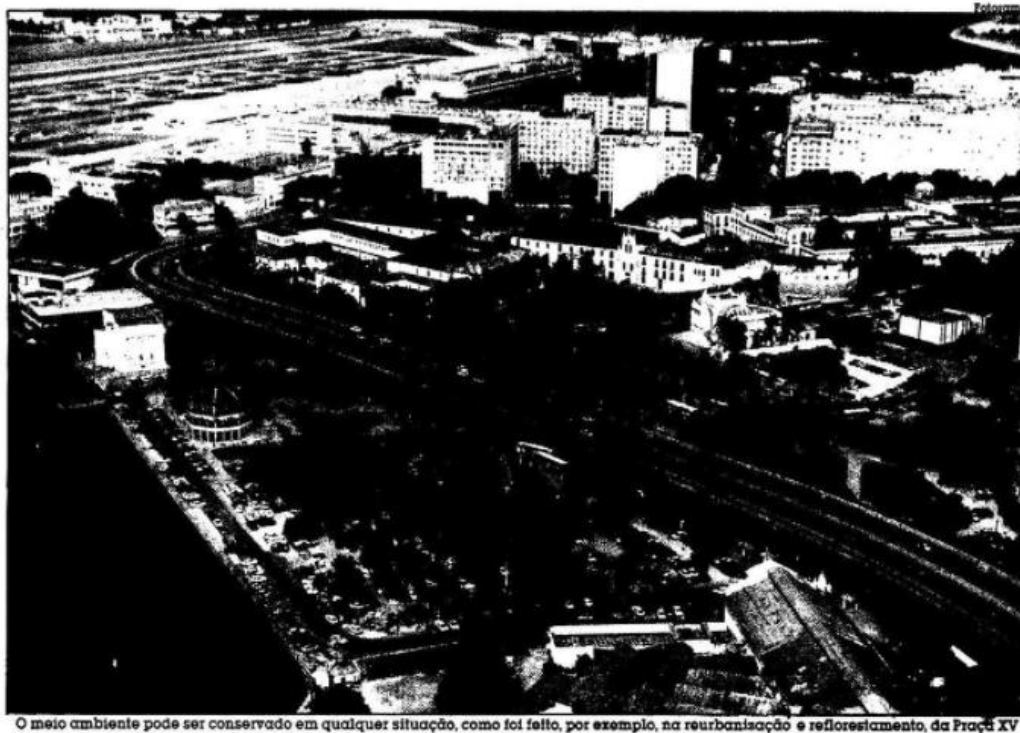
Besides, *O Globo* added a visual narrative to Modiano's opinion piece (Figure 4.9). Despite the low quality of the black-and-white image, it is still possible to notice that it exhibits a park in Rio de Janeiro. The subtitle described that the area was redeveloped and reforested. The picture was not directly connected to the text, but it showed a reforested urban area to exemplify environmental protection, a characteristic of sustainable development that was overlooked by Modiano. In this case, the image expanded the text's concept of sustainability, by referring to

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<sup>44</sup> Original in Portuguese: *Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social*

<sup>45</sup> Modiano, E. (1992) No Encontro do Rio, futuro será decidido. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 29 May. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 13 July 2021).

environmental protection that was not cited by the entrepreneur, despite still missing the social aspect of sustainable development.



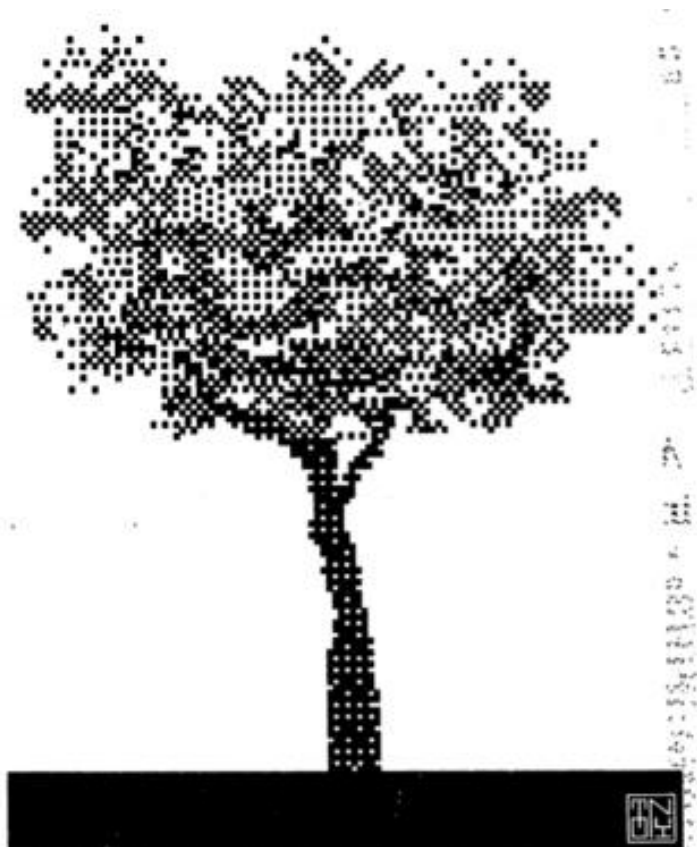
**Figure 4.9:** Picture published in *O Globo* on 29 May 1992

The second economic definition of sustainability was made by a member of the *Folha de S. Paulo* editorial team<sup>46</sup> who described sustainable development as an attractive rhetoric for rich nations. The piece added that the real interest surrounding sustainability was finding a way to maintain the same global energy consumption while the southern hemisphere economy developed. In this case, sustainable development was represented as an economic asset, thus showing a type-B definition.

Furthermore, *Folha de S. Paulo* tried to broaden the economic narrative of sustainable development by exhibiting a black-and-white illustration of a tree (Figure 4.10). Arguably it represented the environment, showing a complementary

<sup>46</sup> Leite, R. C. C. (1992) Ecologia contra o desenvolvimento. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 13 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 6 July 2021).

aspect of the concept that was not mentioned in the text. Clearly, both cases presented in this section attempted to compensate for the lack of environmental narrative in sustainability's definitions, with *OG* and *FSP* illustrating texts with images of trees.



**Figure 4.10:** Image published in *Folha de S. Paulo* on 13 June 1992

This section analysed two definitions of sustainable development that highlighted economic aspects. The examples were printed in *O Globo* and *Folha de S. Paulo* during 1992. The finding revealed that definitions of sustainability that solely focused on economy were part of initial references to the topic. It was also notable that attempts were made by both newspapers to include environmental aspects in the discussion by including images of trees to the pieces. Nevertheless, both elements, texts and illustrations, disregarded social features that also belong to the concept of sustainable development.

### 4.3 – Type C: environmental aspects

This section examines three definitions characterised as type-C explanations of sustainable development, when *O Globo*'s coverage focused on the environmental narrative in Rio+10 and in Rio+20.

One day before Rio+10's official opening, *O Globo* published a column written by politician and journalist Márcio Moreira Alves<sup>47</sup>. It stated that “the definition of sustainable development is the obligation to deliver to the next generation a world with the same environmental conditions as the present generation received”<sup>48</sup>. The description solely focused on environmental aspects, characterising a type-C explanation.

Moreover, the column claimed that the greatest difficulty in achieving sustainability was financial. It recognised poverty as the main cause of environmental degradation, which the rich did not want to eradicate. In the text, Rio+10 was presented as an opportunity to discuss environmental preservation, poverty eradication, and ways to save the planet. The article also argued that threats to the planet were so serious and urgent that environmentalists did not need to invent nor exaggerate. In this example, the columnist arguably showed prejudice against environmentalists, accusing them of creating and exaggerating data. The piece also revealed that the columnist had high expectations regarding Rio+10, suggesting that it could save the world.

Ten years later, *O Globo* published an editorial about Rio+20<sup>49</sup> defining sustainability as the “one that happens with conservation of natural resources, thus ensuring a viable planet for future generations”. This characterises as a type C, for the reference to conservation of natural resources. In addition, *OG* said that since the 1972 Conference on Development and Human Environment in Stockholm, there had been a persistent and painful effort to combine economic growth with a reduction of pollution, poverty, social inequalities, environmental degradation, and

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<sup>47</sup> Alves, M. M. (2002) Salvar o planeta. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 25 August. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 23 May 2021).

<sup>48</sup> Original in Portuguese: *A definição de desenvolvimento sustentável é a obrigação de entregar à próxima geração um mundo com as mesmas condições ambientais que a geração presente recebeu*

<sup>49</sup> *O Globo* (2012) Rio+20 e a mudança de paradigmas. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 13 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 14 November 2021).



promotion of clean energy sources. Interestingly, this description referred to social issues, while the explanation of the concept disregarded the social aspect.

A misleading environmental definition of sustainability emerged in the coverage of Rio+20 when *O Globo* published an interview with the president of the fifth biggest oil company in the world, the French company Total, Christophe de Margerie<sup>50</sup>. He stated that sustainability was initially about the environment. But it evolved to link to the life of the planet, which was at risk; to development; to economic growth; and to the fight against poverty. The viewpoint, however, was wrong. Margerie considered a mistake understanding sustainability as an environmental issue, while regarding as evolution the broader view of the concept. Sustainable development was never a concept that only cared for the environment. Its official definition by the *Brundtland Report* in 1987 delineated three aspects: environment, social, and economic.

Therefore, it is important to highlight that *O Globo* published inaccurate information instead of complementing the data. Margerie was an entrepreneur from the oil business and his definition of sustainability actually revealed how the oil industry fragmentally perceived the notion when it emerged. The focus on the environmental aspect of sustainable development shows the fear the industry had of the concept. Margerie's definition also exposed how the oil industry started to accept sustainability by assimilating its other aspects, namely economic and social facets.

This section analysed three pieces that displayed environmental definitions of sustainable development. The content was published by *O Globo* as part of the coverage of Rio+10 and Rio+20. The following segment will present definitions of sustainability that focused on economic and environmental facets.

#### **4.4 – Type D: economic and environmental definitions**

After studying three different characterisations of sustainability presented by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage produced between 1992 and 2012, this fourth

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<sup>50</sup> Ordoñez, R. (2012) Indústria deve buscar energias mais eficientes. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 21 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 15 November 2021).

section analyses 13 definitions of sustainable development that refer to both economic and environmental aspects, qualifying as type-D narratives.

#### 4.4.1 – Brazilian government

The link between the economy and the environment in sustainability definitions emerged in the discourse of representatives of the Brazilian federal government, in three opinion pieces published in *O Globo* as part of its Rio92 coverage.

The president of Rio92's Brazilian group work, Carlos Garcia, joined economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development in an opinion piece<sup>51</sup> published by *O Globo*. It described “self-sustained development”<sup>52</sup> as an economic development with long-term support without irresponsibly exhausting natural resources. In Garcia's view development and environment were inseparable, representing the type-D characterisation.

Similarly, sustainability's connection between environment and economy was ratified by Brazilian diplomat and economist Roberto Campos in two opinion pieces. published in *O Globo* in 1992. In the first<sup>53</sup>, Campos defined sustainable development as a prospect that did not consider development and environmental protection a dichotomy. In the second piece<sup>54</sup>, Campos affirmed that the conference was successful as it made sustainable development desirable and feasible. Perchance, Campos' credulity on the implementation of sustainable development was a result of the simplified perspective that combating pollution would be satisfactory. In this case, the concept of sustainable development corresponded to a mix of environmental and economic narratives, thus qualifying as a type-D definition.

This section showed three definitions of sustainable development that focused on economic and environmental features, disregarding social aspects. All

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<sup>51</sup> Garcia, C. (1992) O dia seguinte da humanidade. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 31 May. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 11 July 2021).

<sup>52</sup> Original in Portuguese: *desenvolvimento auto-sustentado*

<sup>53</sup> Campos, R. (1992) As eco contradições. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 7 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 11 July 2021).

<sup>54</sup> Campos, R. (1992) Sobre a bioADversidade. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 21 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 13 July 2021).

three explanations were published in 1992, as part of the coverage of Rio92. This suggests that the members of the Brazilian government used incomplete explanations that excluded social views when the concept was still achieving notoriety. The next segment presents specialists making use of the type-D characterisation.

#### 4.4.2 – Specialist

The investigation of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage detected that one environmental specialist utilised the type-D definition of sustainability, highlighting economic and environmental narratives.

On the first day of Rio+10, environmental specialist Carlos Costa Ribeiro published an opinion piece in *O Globo*<sup>55</sup>. The opening paragraph described sustainable development as the one that “meets the needs of our generation without compromising the survival of future generations”, explaining that it had been first utilised by the Brundtland Commission in 1987. Additionally, Ribeiro said that sustainability was such a broad concept and noble to future generations that it encompassed distinct topics and was too open in relation to deadlines and feasibility to achieve it. The text also explained that sustainability was the basis for the creation of five “still unsuccessful” international protocols during Rio92, but that in the real world there was still a debate about how to conciliate development and environmental protection. Based on this narrative, the characterisation of sustainable development considered environmental and economic aspects, thus referring to a type-D classification. Notably, the use of the adjective “unsuccessful” to describe documents created in Rio92 highlighted the author’s dissatisfaction regarding the conference outcomes, as they had not yet been implemented after a decade.

The incomplete explanation of sustainable development was unexpected as it explored the definition offered by a specialist on the environment. Moreover, the text dated from 2002, thus 15 years after the publication of the *Brundtland Report*

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<sup>55</sup> Ribeiro, C. C. (2002) Desenvolvimento sustentável. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 26 August. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 9 September 2021).

that was cited in the text and ten after Rio92, the event that popularised the concept worldwide. The following section will focus on definitions of sustainability that were provided by the business sector.

#### 4.4.3 – Business industry

This section reveals that, during the coverage of Rio92, *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* published two definitions of sustainability used by representatives of the business sector that explore connections between environment and economic growth, relating to type-D characteristics.

“Growing without destroying”<sup>56</sup> was the first type-D description of sustainability presented by *O Globo* in a column about the Business Council for Sustainable Development<sup>57</sup>. It stated that the Council represented the business world during Rio92, aiming at connecting economy and ecology to benefit both areas. Besides, the piece affirmed that environmental protection meant profitability; however, it recognised that the topic only became part of companies’ accountability on the advice of environmentalists. Defending the business sector, the column claimed that ecologists presented problems while entrepreneurs looked for solutions. The statement showed prejudice towards environmentalists while praising the business sector for finding solutions to problems.

*O Globo*’s coverage of Rio92 included the World Bank representative Sérgio Margulis’ view of sustainability<sup>58</sup>. He stated that environmental protection lacked financial compensation, thus resulting in a dichotomy between environmental protection and economic development. Margulis claimed that without financial reward, the only alternative to developing sustainably was to use advanced technology. The World Bank representative’s perception mixed economy and environmental protection, thus resulting in a type-D definition.

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<sup>56</sup> Original in Portuguese: *crescer sem destruir*

<sup>57</sup> Beting, J. (1992) Ainda há tempo. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 29 May. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 6 July 2021).

<sup>58</sup> O Globo (1992) Economia e ecologia abrem o programa científico. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 2 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 10 July 2021).

Likewise, economic and environmental perspectives of sustainable development were presented by the member of the Business Council for Sustainable Development, Erling Lorentzen, in *O Globo*. Lorentzen wrote an opinion piece<sup>59</sup> defining sustainable development as a business opportunity that could be profitable for creative managers. Additionally, Lorentzen claimed that there was no future for any business that harmed the environment, thus industry needed to promote effective sustainable development for its own protection through technological advance, environmental care, and innovation. The entrepreneur argued that the more modern the production, the fewer environmental impacts it would produce.

In summary, Lorentzen defined sustainable development as a profitable business opportunity for those who invested on environmental protection. The junction of economic and environmental approaches resulted in the type-D label of sustainable development. The use of the adjective “creative” was relevant. Once more, the business sector showed a lack of interest in investing in environmental protection, counting on creativity to solve environmental issues. As previously mentioned in this chapter, the use of the word “creativity” usually refers to economic rhetoric that encourages alternative ways to implement changes to avoid financial investment.

This segment referred to three type-D definitions of sustainability, linking economy and environment, which were presented by the business sector. All explanations were published in 1992, still at the beginning of Brazilian media coverage about sustainable development, when the concept was still incipient. The next section will focus on type-D definitions presented by the media sector.

#### **4.4.4 – Media**

Both *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* editorial teams and columnists wrote pieces containing type-D definitions of sustainable development that connected the concept to economic and environmental aspects. This section investigates four pieces published by *FSP* and *OG* between 1992 and 2012.

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<sup>59</sup> Lorentzen, E. (1992) O meio ambiente e o negócio. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 12 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 12 July 2021).

The description of “self-sustained development”<sup>60</sup> as an integration between economy and ecology was part of *O Globo*’s opinion piece written by the newspaper’s editorial team in 1992<sup>61</sup>. The text argued that sustainability led to new ways of production. To *OG*, not only did sustainable development amplify and enrich the notion of environmental protection, it also disclosed that environmental destruction was unprofitable, evidencing the economic importance of conservation. In this piece, sustainable development was framed through an economic view, ignoring social aspects, and subordinating the environment by connecting environmental protection to profitability, which therefore corresponds to the type-D categorisation. Moreover, it is relevant that the newspaper’s editorial team used the expression “self-sustained development” to describe sustainability, corroborating the argument that the concept was still unpopular in 1992.

One year later, in 1993, *Folha de S. Paulo*’s editorial team claimed that sustainability was part of the environmental vocabulary, defining it as economic progress without the exhaustion of natural resources<sup>62</sup>. *FSP* connected economic progress and environmental protection, thus showing a type-D categorisation. The definition also unveiled that despite all the environmental discussion promoted during Rio92, one year after the conference, *FSP* still disregarded social implications of sustainability. Nevertheless, considering the term part of the environmental vocabulary was an acknowledgement of the concept’s increasing popularity.

The explanation was part of a text about a debate in São Paulo, Brazil that connected consumer rights and environmental protection, forming the notion of sustainable consumption. According to *FSP*, the advisor to the State Environment Secretary Antonio Herman Benjamin argued that consumers needed to understand that they were not passive audiences of environmental degradation. Meanwhile, *FSP* stated that the coordinator of the Consumer Protection and Defence Coordination, Marcelo Sodré, claimed that sustainable consumption could be contradictory, for instance a cheaper product could be an environmentally harmful

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<sup>60</sup> Original in Portuguese: *desenvolvimento auto-sustentado*

<sup>61</sup> *O Globo* (1992) Aprender a produzir. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 7 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 11 July 2021).

<sup>62</sup> *Folha de S. Paulo* (1993) Debate tenta conciliar consumo e ecologia. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 2 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 10 August 2021).

product. In summary, while an environmental representative promoted sustainable consumption, an economic agent stated that economic growth and environmental protection could be incompatible. The dichotomy is also an example of the complexity of the sustainable development discourse, since there are distinct interpretations of the feasibility of integrating sustainability's social, economic, and environmental aspects.

In 1996, *O Globo* published a text<sup>63</sup> about the work of the National Soil Research Centre<sup>64</sup> (*CNPS*, the Portuguese acronym), which was part of the Brazilian Agricultural Research Company<sup>65</sup>. *OG* explained that *CNPS*' main goal was creating sustainable development projects, without environmental degradation. The definition corresponds to a type-D characterisation, for highlighting both economy and the environment. It is also a case where the text resembled a press release, as it described and promoted *CNPS* to promote the Centre. Arguably, the piece showed *CNPS*' intention to link its work to sustainable development. The coverage's purpose is relevant because the agriculture industry is usually not an environmentally friendly activity worldwide. It reveals, therefore, *OG*'s intention to promote the Brazilian agricultural sector.

An unexpected definition of sustainability was part of an opinion piece written by former Brazilian football player and *FSP* sports columnist Tostão<sup>66</sup> a few days before the beginning of Rio+20. Tostão stated that it was possible to achieve sustainable development, which he described as development that did not destroy nature. The explanation focused on environmental protection and economic growth, thus representing a type-D label. Having the concept of sustainable development in a football review was surprising. Possibly, the increasing frequency of the concept's use reflected popularity and growing environmental awareness.

This section presented four examples in which the concept of sustainable development referred to economic and environmental aspects, type-D characterisations. The definitions were published by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo*

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<sup>63</sup> *O Globo* (1996) Mostrando em que terra o agricultor está pisando. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 6 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 9 August 2021).

<sup>64</sup> Original in Portuguese: *Centro Nacional de Pesquisa de Solos*

<sup>65</sup> Original in Portuguese: *Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária*

<sup>66</sup> Tostão (2012) Sustentabilidade. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 17 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 30 October 2021).

editorial teams and columnists between 1992 and 2012. The next segment will explore the media coverage of events that displayed type-D definitions of sustainability.

#### 4.4.5 – Events

This segment investigates *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage of events that presented sustainable development, utilising economic and environmental narratives on three occasions. These pieces were produced in 1992 and 1993.

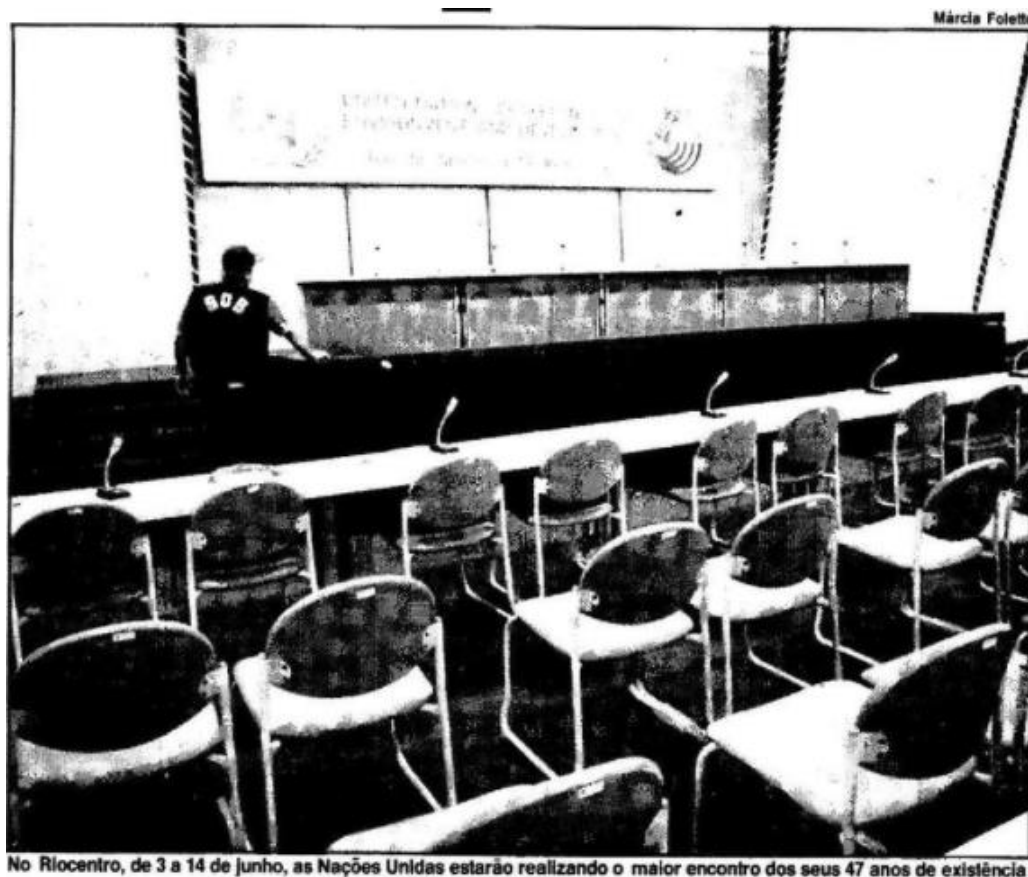
As part of its Rio92 coverage, an *O Globo*'s article<sup>67</sup> defined sustainability as development without destroying the planet's resources and wealth. The type-D explanation linked economy to environmental aspects. The piece also highlighted Agenda 21, stating that the document defined the necessity of partnership between rich and poor nations, highlighting that they should put interests aside to work together in favour of sustainable development. The text exposed the conflict between North and South that was covered by *FSP* and *OG* throughout the 20-year timeframe and which is explored in further chapters.

To complement the textual narrative, *OG* displayed a black-and-white photograph of a man cleaning one of the rooms in which Rio92 would take place (Figure 4.11). The subtitle stated that Rio92 would be the main event that the UN had organised during its 47 years of existence. Arguably, exhibiting one of Rio92's rooms was *OG*'s attempt to show the newspaper's physical proximity to the event's location. Additionally, it connected the environmental discussion with Brazilians and the city of Rio de Janeiro that would host the conference.

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<sup>67</sup> Berlinck, D. (1992) Missão: salvar o planeta Terra. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 31 May. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 8 July 2021).





**Figure 4.11:** Picture published in *O Globo* on 31 May 1992

Environmental and economic narratives were explored in another article published by *Folha de S. Paulo*<sup>68</sup> in 1992. It defined sustainable development as something that does not harm the environment and does not exhaust available resources, a type-D definition. Moreover, the piece argued that Rio92's environmental debates outlined the existence of a universal Berlin Wall at the equator. It stated that during Rio92, distinct positions intensified the existing North–South conflict, which led to an issue: rich countries wanting to discuss environmental topics and poor countries trying to focus on development. The piece suggested that poor nations perceived the environment as a new way of ‘bargaining’ for funds, with Rio92’s discussions focusing on financial resources. According to *FSP*, Rio92 debates resulted in rich countries “giving alms”<sup>69</sup> to poor nations’

<sup>68</sup> Chiaretti, D. (1992) Eco-92 revela Muro de Berlim universal. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 16 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 6 July 2021).

<sup>69</sup> Original in Portuguese: *dar esmolas*

environmental projects. The article showed prejudice when mentioning that poor countries undermined Rio92 for using the environment as an excuse to request investments. Another discrimination was the use of the word “alms”, disclosing that *FSP* produced offensive coverage to justify the behaviour of rich countries towards poor nations.

Another type-D characterisation emerged in *O Globo* during the 1993 World Environment Day<sup>70</sup>. *OG* defined sustainability as a development that does not harm the environment. The explanation referred to economy and environment, without explicitly mentioning social aspects as determined in the *Brundtland Report*, a type-D label. The definition was part of a piece that analysed Rio92’s outcomes. It reported that the UN estimated the need for ten billion dollars to implement sustainable development programmes. The text also made an uncomplete argument as it claimed that poor countries did not want rich countries to finance some obligations listed in Agenda 21, without explaining which projects poor nations did not want to have financed. The statement was also unexpected, as, during Rio92, poor nations demanded financial aid from rich economies to implement Agenda 21 and to invest in sustainable development programmes.

This segment explored three type-D definitions of sustainable development that were provided by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* as part of the coverage of sustainability published in 1992 and 1993. It concludes the analysis of 13 pieces that explained the concept through economic and environmental aspects. The investigation continues in the next section with the study of a publication by *FSP* that focused on social and environmental aspects of sustainable development.

#### **4.5 – Type E: social and environmental features**

This section investigates one definition of sustainable development that mentioned social and environmental aspects in an article published by *Folha de S. Paulo* on the 2011 World Environment Day<sup>71</sup>. The definition of sustainability was offered by

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<sup>70</sup> Berlinck, D. (1993) Heróis e vilões do encontro da ONU trocaram de posição. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 5 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 6 August 2021).

<sup>71</sup> Minns, M. (2011) Virada do avesso. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 5 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 11 October 2021).

the professor of economics at the University of São Paulo, José Eli da Veiga. The specialist said that environmental sustainability was a new form of social value and justice, adding that its main characteristic was that people wanted to live well and in a more organised way. The narrative gathered environmental and social perspectives, as defined by the *Brundtland Report*, thus representing a type-E classification. It is interesting to note that the definition that excluded economic aspects was given by an economist. Moreover, the definition presented by Veiga referred to the idea of quality of life, providing multiple interpretations, as good living and organisation can have different significances depending on personal background.

The description was part of a piece about an event about sustainability hosted in the city of São Paulo. *FSP* included two coloured photographs of an exhibition that was part of the event (Figures 4.12 and 4.13). It explained that the presentation showed volunteers who collected all the garbage they had produced for one week and exposed it in plastic covers. The goal of the display was promoting consciousness of the effect of waste and consumption on climate change. It is also impactful to see volunteers wearing garbage and surrounded by nature. Nevertheless, a criticism about the exhibition is that by trying to promote environmental awareness, the presentation produced even more garbage, as it is very unlikely that the plastic vests that volunteers were wearing would be used elsewhere.



**Figure 4.12:** Picture published in *Folha de S. Paulo* on 5 June 2011



**Figure 4.13:** Picture published in *Folha de S. Paulo* on 5 June 2011

This section analysed one type-E definition of sustainable development that emphasised social and environmental features of the concept. The notion was published in an article produced by *Folha de S. Paulo* on the 2011 World Environment Day. The next section will investigate characterisations printed by *FSP* and *OG* that considered the importance of future generations.

#### 4.6 – Type F: future generations

This section examines nine definitions of sustainable development that connected to the *Brundtland Report* mention of future generations, without referring to the economic, environmental, and social triad. These narratives presented by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* reflect type-F explanations.

The connection between sustainability and future generations started in *O Globo*'s Rio92 coverage, in an opinion piece written by Brazilian professor Paulo Nogueira-Neto who was a member of the Brundtland Commission<sup>72</sup>. He explained that “self-sustainable development”<sup>73</sup> was the one that did not harm present and future generations. The definition related to the UN's report but did not mention economic, social, and environmental aspects, reflecting a type-F style. Besides, it is noteworthy to see a member of the Brundtland Commission, who helped develop the concept, using the term “self-sustainable development” instead of the classic “sustainable development”. The finding showcased the fact that even environmental experts used synonyms for the concept due to its incipient emergence.

The study of Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development unveiled British prime minister John Major applying the type-F explanation when referring to sustainability. *Folha de S. Paulo* provided an international perspective on sustainable development through an opinion piece written by the Major<sup>74</sup>. The text was initially published by the British newspaper the *Sunday Express* on 29 May 1992, then translated into Portuguese and printed in *FSP* on 2 June. In the piece,

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<sup>72</sup> Nogueira-Neto, P. (1992) Rio-92, aurora de um novo dia. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 1 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 12 July 2021).

<sup>73</sup> Original in Portuguese: *desenvolvimento auto-sustentável*

<sup>74</sup> Major, J. (1992) As soluções não podem vir só dos governos. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 2 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 1 July 2021).

Major claimed that society and industry needed to engage in environmental changes, as governments were not the only entities responsible for destruction. According to Major, “in Rio – and in the months and years to come – we need to take steps to ensure that our children, and their children, have the same opportunities to enjoy the wonders and fruits of the planet that we ourselves have inherited and enjoyed”<sup>75</sup>. The statement connected with the official concept of sustainability that specifies the need to protect the environment to maintain “equity between generations” (WCED, 1987:37), consisting of a type-F characterisation. The finding disclosed that the reference to future generations was a concern shared by international politicians, even before the beginning of Rio92, which occurred between 3 and 14 June 1992.

Four years later, the Brazilian minister of environment Gustavo Krause utilised the type-F definition of sustainable development in an opinion piece published in *Folha de S. Paulo*<sup>76</sup>. In the text, Krause presented Brazilian environment specialist Eduardo Viola’s views on sustainability. Viola explained that a sustainable society preserves a significant part of its natural resources, using technological development to allow the development of future generations. Viola’s definition of sustainability matches the reference to future generations presented in the *Brundtland Report*, thus qualifying as a type-F characterisation. Nevertheless, the text may have been confusing for readers as it did not mention the background of Eduardo Viola, who is a Brazilian specialist in environmental studies.

Another type-F characterisation of sustainability emerged in 1996 in an opinion piece written by Haroldo Mattos de Lemos, who worked at the Brazilian Environment Ministry<sup>77</sup>. Lemos explained that in 1987 the World Commission on Environment and Development published the report *Our Common Future*, defining sustainable development as something that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Clearly, the statement is a type-F description for using the *Brundtland Report*’s reference to

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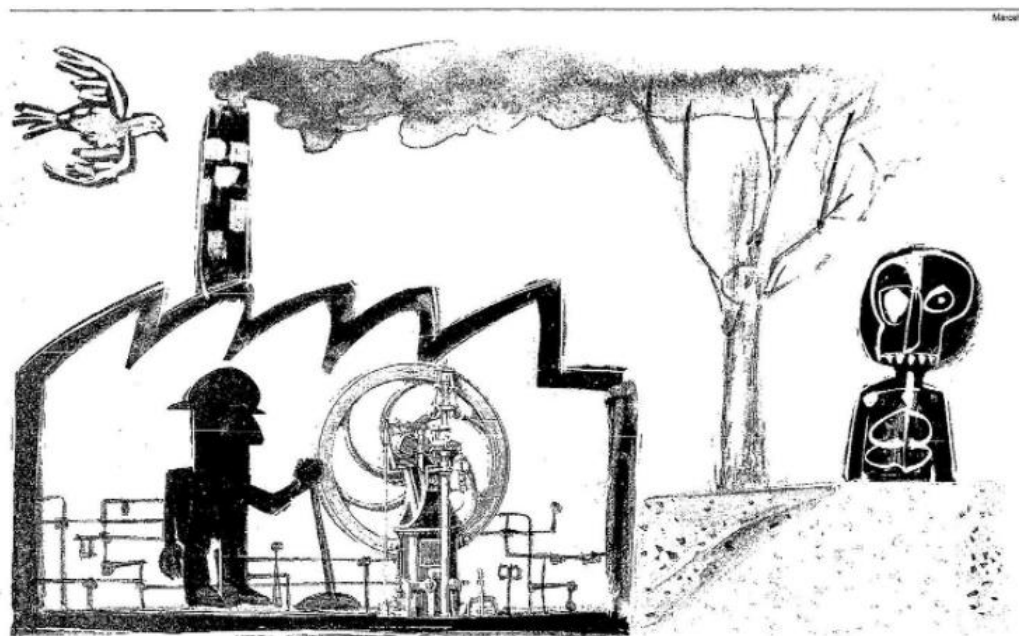
<sup>75</sup> Original in Portuguese: *No Rio - e nos meses e anos a seguir -, precisamos tomar as medidas para assegurar que nossos filhos, e seus filhos, tenham as mesmas oportunidades de usufruir das maravilhas e dos frutos do planeta que nós mesmos herdamos e usufruímos*

<sup>76</sup> Krause, G. (1996) A bússola da subversão ambiental. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 2 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 13 August 2021).

<sup>77</sup> Lemos, H. B. (1996) Produção e consumo sustentáveis. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 5 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 9 August 2021).

generations. Additionally, Lemos said that it was easy to support the concept as it was pure common sense, despite recognising the complexity and difficulty of implementing sustainability, because society would need to apply fundamental changes to its way of life. The text demonstrated that discussions about Rio92 remained present in *O Globo* coverage after the conference. The long-term presence of Rio92's outcomes in the media agenda alludes to the significance of the event.

Additionally, *O Globo* displayed a black-and-white illustration showing a man working in a factory while the smoke produced by the building was destroying life in the surrounding area (Figure 4.14). The destruction was represented by a leafless tree that was touched by the smoke and a skull on the right-hand side of the image, while on the left-hand side, still untouched by pollution, there was a flying bird, possibly symbolising life. The drawing directly connected to the opinion piece as it denoted a type of society that needed improvement to reach sustainable patterns. Portrayal of environmental destruction also corroborates the urgency to implement sustainable development for the benefit of future generations.



**Figure 4.14:** Image published in *O Globo* on 5 June 1996

In 2002, *O Globo*'s coverage of Rio+10 included a glossary<sup>78</sup> that explained that the concept of sustainable development was created in 1987 by the Brundtland Commission, which was directed by the Norwegian Gro Harlem Brundtland. The text presented sustainable development as “the one that meets the needs of the present without compromising future generations”. Despite mentioning the official narrative, the description is a type-F classification for not referring to economic, social, or environmental perspectives.

One day later, as part of *O Globo*'s Rio+10 coverage, the newspaper published 1998 Nobel Prize economist Amartya Sen's explanation of sustainable development: “a requirement to meet all human needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”<sup>79</sup>. The explanation was part of a column<sup>80</sup> written by journalist Joelmir Beting, who added that Sen's definition was based on the *Brundtland Report*, which was described as a “multidisciplinary document that points to the technical feasibility of a physically sustainable, politically correct, socially just and ecologically responsible global economic growth process”<sup>81</sup>. In this text, the concept's description, which was given by Nobel Prize economist Amartya Sen, matched the type-F definition for referring to future generations. It is interesting, however, that the column described the *Brundtland Report* by linking it to social, economic, and environmental characteristics.

Besides, Beting's column utilised an educational approach making use of background data. It explained that sustainable development was the goal of both Rio92 and Rio+10, claiming that environmental impacts depended on political challenge, as they resulted from foolish decisions. By acknowledging that environmental policy required social and political participation, the text presented structured environmental discourse, connected with sustainability spheres. In

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<sup>78</sup> *O Globo* (2002) Glossário. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 27 August. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 6 September 2021).

<sup>79</sup> Original in Portuguese: *desenvolvimento sustentável é a exigência de que se atenda a todas as necessidades humanas do presente sem comprometer a capacidade das gerações futuras de atender às próprias necessidades*

<sup>80</sup> Beting, J. (2002) Ainda há tempo. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 28 August. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 11 May 2021).

<sup>81</sup> Original in Portuguese: *documento multidisciplinar aponta para a viabilidade técnica de um processo de crescimento econômico global fisicamente duradouro, politicamente correto, socialmente justo e ecologicamente responsável*



addition, *O Globo* displayed a black-and-white illustration that showed a distorted image of a man trying to grab the Earth, with trees in the background (Figure 4.15). The drawing portrayed a greedy capitalist trying to capture the planet to make use of its resources. It also displays a comparison between a healthy environment, presented by trees on the top half of the image, and the lack of nature on the bottom half.



**Figure 4.15:** Image published in *O Globo* on 28 August 2002

Six years later, in 2008, *O Globo* published a piece<sup>82</sup> about the results of research developed by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (*IBGE*, the Portuguese acronym). *IBGE*'s study aimed at identifying the development of sustainability in Brazil. One of the research coordinators, João Scandar Neto,

<sup>82</sup> Albuquerque, C. & Menezes, M. (2008) Ambientalmente incorreto. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 5 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 8 October 2021).

described sustainable development as making a pact with future generations. The explanation classified as type F for alluding to future generations, as did the *Brundtland Report*, suggesting increasing concern with the planet's future.

Moreover, the piece mentioned the fact that despite fast economic growth, Brazil was slow in its approach to sustainability. It stated that Brazil was still far from achieving the ideal described in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development, which was meeting the need of the present without compromising future generations. The description referred to the official concept of sustainability, without directly naming sustainable development.

Here, the difference between recurrent governmental discourses, which claimed Brazil was developing sustainably, and the reality presented by *IBGE* proved that Brazil was slow-moving towards sustainability. The contradiction indicated a discrepancy between political rhetoric presented by the media and facts investigated by *IBGE*. It also corroborates the argument that that *OG* and *FSP* coverage lacked criticism of political actors as they were not questioned when presenting greenwashing discourses, thus spreading misleading information.

Additionally, *FSP* explained that *IBGE*'s research revealed significant advances in economy but negative results in the environmental area. The study described the fact that Brazil's main environmental issues were increasing deforestation in the Amazon, high rates of urban pollution, and lack of basic sanitation. *IBGE* claimed that Brazil was developing in an unsustainable way. Regarding social aspects, the study identified the fact that poverty had increased in the country since 1992, despite economic growth. Gender and racial inequalities remained concerns as women earned 33% less than men, and black workers received 47% less than white professionals. Clearly, the data did not represent a sustainable society, showing that Brazil still had a lot to perfect.

Another type-F description of sustainable development was made in 2010 by Luiz Gylvan Meira Filho, a Brazilian astrophysicist who participated in the creation of the Kyoto Protocol. In an opinion piece published by *Folha de S. Paulo*<sup>83</sup>, Meira Filho stated that the definition of sustainability was making sure that

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<sup>83</sup> Meira Filho, L. G. (2010) Ainda falta definir o tamanho da mudança. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 5 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 19 October 2021).

future generations had at least the same conditions as the current generation with which to pursue a better quality of life. This reflects a type-F definition for using the *Brundtland Report's* reference to future generations. The piece did not specify what were the aspects that could lead to a better quality of life. Arguably, this amplifies the concept of sustainability, as quality of life may have different significances according to each environment.

Additionally, the text included discussions about stabilising temperature and limiting CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gas emissions. It also argued that individuals could influence government and companies' decisions, and suggested carbon footprints would be a good instrument to measure environmental impacts. To contribute with the narrative, *Folha de S. Paulo* included six drawings showing the environmental impacts of everyday activities, such as bathing, using public transport, and using air conditioners (Figure 4.16). All images were accompanied by information on the environmental impacts of each activity. The visual text provided a more direct message than the opinion piece, stating the consequences linked to daily activities. The initiative indicates the *FSP* contribution to environmental awareness. While the opinion piece highlighted the need for promoting changes to achieve sustainability, *FSP* delivered objective data through the visualisation of the environmental impacts of daily activities, which could ultimately lead to self-reflection and behavioural change.



**Figure 4.16:** Image published in *Folha de S. Paulo* on 5 June 2010

The last type-F definition emerged in the coverage of Rio+20 in a glossary<sup>84</sup> published by *O Globo*. The text described sustainable development as “the one capable of supplying the needs of the current generation without compromising the

<sup>84</sup> *O Globo* (2012) Traduzindo o meio ambiente. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 13 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 26 October 2021).

ability to meet the needs of future generations”. It related to the *Brundtland Report* despite not mentioning economic, social, or environmental values, thus characterising a type-F label.

In summary, this section investigated nine type-F definitions of sustainable development that explained the concept through its concern for future generations. The pieces were published by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* between 1992 and 2012, revealing that the reference to future generations occurred throughout this thesis’s studied timeframe. The study of Brazilian media definitions of sustainable development continues in the next section with the analysis of critical perspectives.

#### 4.7 – Type G: critical features

The segment investigates critical narratives of sustainable development that correspond to type-G definitions. Four pieces reflect criticisms and all of them were published by *O Globo*. One was produced in 1992, another in 2009, and two in 2012, indicating that critical perspectives emerged throughout the thesis’s timeframe.

As part of Rio92 coverage, *O Globo* criticised sustainable development. The newspaper published a text<sup>85</sup> about an article from *The New York Times* that argued that 20 years after the Stockholm Conference, it had become more difficult to reach international agreement. It listed four difficulties: the world population had increased by 40%, environmental problems aggravated, solutions more complex, and delegations had to deal with the notion of sustainable development.

By presenting sustainable development as part of a list of problems, both *The New York Times* and *O Globo* considered sustainability as a problem. *OG*’s display of critical perspectives corresponds to the type-G definition of sustainable development. In this respect, it is noteworthy to highlight the discrepancy between defining the concept as a problem while reporting on a conference that focused on the relationship between development and environment. The inconsistency

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<sup>85</sup> *O Globo* (1992) Estados Unidos. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 10 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 5 July 2021).

highlighted that both *The New York Times* and *O Globo* had a low level of knowledge of Rio92 discussions.

Seventeen years later, in 2009, *O Globo* reported that the former Brazilian minister of environment, Gustavo Krause, had defined sustainable development as rhetoric<sup>86</sup>. The interpretation was part of Krause's criticism regarding the political isolation of the environmental ministry in Brazil. To *OG*, Krause said that the ministry was responsible for a central issue for humanity but was secondary for the Brazilian government. The discussion emerged due to political difficulties faced by the then current minister of environment, Carlos Minc. The critical definition of sustainable development relates to a type-G characterisation, highlighting political debates surrounding the concept. Media coverage of political connection and environmental policy to guarantee the implementation of sustainability is thoroughly explored in chapter 7, *Sustainability's environmental narratives: superficiality and greenwashing*.

Additionally, the business sector played a significant role in the Brazilian coverage of sustainability. *FSP* and *OG* coverage of economic narratives is part of chapter 6, *Economic narratives: greenwashing sustainable development*. Here, the analysis reveals the sector's contribution to definitions of sustainable development in 2012, during the coverage of Rio+20.

*O Globo* criticised sustainability<sup>87</sup> when reporting on Rio+20. The newspaper presented the concept as a demand of consumers from developed countries and a pretext to create technical barriers to import products. This is part of the type-G category, as it demonstrates critical narratives. The piece added that to survive in the international market, companies needed to attend to sustainability demands. Paradoxically, the piece added that environmentally friendly Brazilian companies had more fidelity from clients, participating in a market "almost armoured by crisis", "even in turbulent moments from the global economy". The statement that environmentally friendly companies did not face financial crisis was simply a supposition, as it was not supported by any figures.

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<sup>86</sup> Alencastro, C. (2009) Meio ambiente: um eterno campo minado. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 4 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 16 October 2021).

<sup>87</sup> Oliveira, E. & Batista, H. G. (2012) Atitude verde que atrai mais negócios. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 17 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 9 November 2021).

The text was signed by two authors. Discrepancies in the argumentation regarding sustainability was so deep that it raised the possibility that the two authors divided their contribution to the piece without reading the full text. Nevertheless, the visual narrative supported the notion of sustainable production by displaying a coloured picture of a smiley Brazilian entrepreneur holding organic cotton (Figure 4.17). The woman's enthusiasm revealed positiveness, apparently in an attempt to encourage Brazilian companies to pursue previously criticised sustainable practices.



**Figure 4.17:** Picture published in *Folha de S. Paulo* on 17 June 2012

Another criticism of sustainable development was made by Indian environmental activist Vandana Shiva as part of *O Globo*'s coverage of Rio+20<sup>88</sup>. Shiva criticised sustainable development saying that it was created with the

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<sup>88</sup> Nóbrega, C. (2012) Não é preciso usar agrotóxicos para aumentar a produção de comida. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 19 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 15 November 2021).

possibility for each community to search for its own development, but, in reality, it was an imposition of dominant groups that wanted to take control of the global economy and natural resources. This critical definition reflects the type-G label. Furthermore, Shiva stated that she did not expect anything from Rio+20 because corporations controlled governments and wanted to destroy local economies. Shiva also criticised the notion of the “green economy”, claiming it was not environmentally friendly, but a disguise to exploit natural resources. Shiva’s claims revealed that the activist was unsatisfied with ongoing environmental discussions for considering that they were focused on economy.

This section presented four type-G explanations of sustainable development, with criticisms that emerged in *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* between 1992 and 2012. Characterisations revealed discontentment with the concept throughout the studied timeframe. The following segment displays the main conclusions about the analysis in this chapter.

#### **4.8 – Conclusion**

This chapter investigated definitions of sustainable development that were published by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* from 1992 to 2012. It presented 57 pieces with distinct explanations of the concept, roughly 7% of the 790 pieces studied in this thesis. The number of pieces with definitions varied as follows: 23 (40%) during Rio92; nine (16%) from 1993 to 2001; eight (14%) in Rio+10; five (9%) from 2003 to 2011; and 12 (21%) during Rio+20.

The investigation reflected on how these explanations related to the 1987 official UN concept, and which subjects were emphasised or neglected. Thus, it classified definitions according to a seven-type categorisation that produced the following result: 25 (44%) listed as type A for matching the *Brundtland Report*’s notion, referring to environmental, economic, and social narratives. Two (3%) qualified as type B, highlighting economic features. Three (5%) corresponded to type C and focused on environmental subjects. Thirteen (23%) referred to type D, with economic and environmental facts. One (2%) was type E and related to social and environmental aspects. Nine (16%) were type F and mentioned future



generations, linking to the *Brundtland Report*, without mentioning the economic, social, and environmental triad. Four (7%) characterised type G, promoting critical views. These figures demonstrate that almost half the descriptions matched sustainability's full concept, indicating moderate knowledge of the topic. Moreover, social aspects were mentioned in 46% of the explanations, economic features in 70%, and environmental issues in 74%, thus revealing that definitions of sustainability usually lacked social characteristics.

Throughout the 20-year coverage, sustainable development was presented as the answer to environmental problems. Initial references to the concept linked it to economic aspects, while social narratives gained more attention in the coverage of Rio+20. Furthermore, open criticism of the topic was rare in both newspapers. Arguably, *FSP* and *OG* disseminated the concept of sustainability, improving Brazilian society's environmental awareness. Is it also noteworthy that 24 explanations (42%) were displayed in opinion articles, while 33 (58%) were part of the journalistic coverage. This finding reveals the importance of opinion pieces to consolidate the concept of sustainable development in Brazil.

Finally, the coverage disclosed Brazilian officials' discursive efforts to promote sustainable development. This indicated government attempts to improve the country's image in regard to environmental practices. Acknowledgement of sustainable practices would potentially turn into economic returns to Brazil.

To further explore *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage of sustainable development, the following chapters will analyse pieces to investigate social, economic, and environmental topics linked to the concept, as well as Brazilian media coverage of the Amazon rainforest.

## Chapter 5 – Social narratives in the coverage of sustainable development

This chapter investigates social stories emergent in the coverage of sustainable development produced by *Folha de S. Paulo (FSP)* and *O Globo (OG)* between 1992 and 2012. The selection of social features is linked to the 1987 *Brundtland Report's* official explanation of sustainability which subsumes social, economic, and environmental aspects.

As previously discussed in chapter 4, *Definitions of sustainable development*, *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* reproduced 26 out of 57 definitions of sustainable development which include social characteristics. Of this number, 46% of the explanations correspond to social aspects, while 74% of the descriptions mention environmental issues, and 70% of the explanations index economic features. The data revealed that the social aspects of sustainable development were underrepresented in Brazilian media. The gap in coverage indicates that *FSP* and *OG* do not seem to consider social characteristics as important as the economy and the environment which are linked to the other two facets of sustainability.

The present chapter analyses 32 pieces displaying social narratives as part of *FSP* and *OG* coverage of sustainable development published from 1992 to 2012. As explained in the methodology, those texts were selected for presenting social content with relevant arguments. Small notes and texts that superficially described events were not considered in this investigation. The material refers to 4% of the 790 pieces collected for representing the coverage of sustainable development. The study of this content suggests that when reporting about sustainability, the Brazilian media produced a superficial coverage of social features, thus failing to contribute to the promotion of environmental awareness in Brazil.

Prominent topics that arose in the investigation of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* social narratives ranged from food security, women's health, environmental education, and indigenous population to poverty. These five topics are further examined in the following pages.

## 5.1 – Poverty

Throughout the investigation of social narratives in Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development, the topic of poverty was found to be recurrent in the *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* texts alike over the twenty-year timeframe. Data analysis identified eight texts linking sustainability to poverty, and more specifically to childhood, inequality, and social projects. These eight pieces are explored in this section.

### 5.1.1 – Childhood

This section investigates two opinion pieces showing connections among poverty, childhood, and sustainable development. Both items were printed in *Folha de S. Paulo* as part of the coverage of Rio92.

The first *FSP* opinion piece linking childhood, poverty and sustainable development was written by Brazilian congressman Fabio Feldmann<sup>89</sup>. It associated sustainability to social inequalities, and especially highlighted the future of homeless children living on the streets of Brazil. Referring to sustainability, Feldmann argues that it is useless to change economic rules and promote environmental protection if future generations remained disregarded. According to the opinion piece, the congressman believes that Rio92 would not have any effective result, instead serving as an opportunity to get to ‘the exposed wounds<sup>90</sup>’ of the sustainable development thesis. Here, criticism towards sustainability emerges in the form of a metaphorical comparison to an open laceration, suggesting that ongoing development is in need of treatment and improvement.

Feldmann’s opinion piece also connects social issues and political ethics in Brazil as the country experienced a political crisis in 1992 in which year Rio92 was held. In summary, the first elected President after the Dictatorial Regime (1964-1985), Fernando Affonso Collor de Mello was accused of corruption by his own brother Pedro Affonso Collor de Mello. Allegations against Fernando Collor were

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<sup>89</sup> Feldmann, F. (1992) Nossos meninos estão todos na rua. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 31 May. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 30 June 2021).

<sup>90</sup> Original in Portuguese: *feridas expostas*

released only four days before the publication of Feldmann's opinion piece on 27 May in a historical edition of the Brazilian magazine *Veja*. The accusations culminated in Collor's impeachment on 29 December 1992 which made him ineligible to ascend to public office for eight years. This was the first impeachment inquiry in Brazil's newly established democracy. It corresponded to a time of political, social, and financial insecurity<sup>91</sup>.

Due to Brazil's unstable political scenario, the author alleged that Brazilians have further serious issues to worry about. Feldman states that in addition to sustainable development, democracy, corruption, and inequalities were key issues for the country. The author's argument seems reasonable when considering Brazil's political history. Fernando Collor was the first elected President in Brazil after 21 years of dictatorship that killed 434 people and subjected over 20,000 individuals to torture. Thus, political uncertainty in the first elected government was unwanted. To some extent, the instability reduced media and popular attention towards Rio92 discussions.

Ultimately, Feldman's opinion piece presents connections between sustainability and social aspects through a broader perspective of the concept. In addition to social narratives endorsing the fight against poverty and corruption, Feldman's perspective adds political paradigms in Brazil, accentuating the promotion of democratic values in a newly established democracy. Feldman mentions the impacts of corruption on society, thus focusing on its effects on childhood. The analysis also considers the intrinsic connection between social development and political ethics. In this broader interpretation, sustainability accrues elements like democracy, ethics, and politics. Thus, it goes beyond the *Brundtland Report's* triad that relates the concept to social, economy, and environmental aspects.

A week later, additional links between sustainability, social issues, and childhood emerged in an opinion piece written by *Folha de S. Paulo* journalist Gilberto Dimenstein as part of the Rio92 coverage<sup>92</sup>. In the text, Dimenstein

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<sup>91</sup> Despite having a turmoil presidency, more recently, in 2007, Collor became senator for the north-eastern state of Alagoas.

<sup>92</sup> Dimenstein, G. (1992) O buraco é mais embaixo. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 7 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 2 July 2021).

contends that Brazil cares more about its forests than about human beings. The journalist notes that it is easier to mobilise Brazilians to save endangered animals than to solve the daily extermination of children, adding that if the situation continued, neither Brazil's environment nor its next generations would have any future. These arguments are illogical. They diminish the urge for environmental care by conflating them with social problems. Dimenstein's comparisons are inconsistent with the notion of sustainable development which considers the interconnection of economic, environmental, and social issues.

Paradoxically, Dimenstein observes that sustainability is the solution for criminality, childhood, and ecology. Here, the author acknowledges social and environmental aspects of sustainable development. Sustainability's economic features are not mentioned in Dimenstein's opinion piece, despite their intrinsic relationship with social inequalities. It is especially significant that social problems in Brazil, as in other developing countries, are historically connected to unequal economic growth that prioritises the well-being of upper classes. However, in this piece, explanations on reasons pertaining to social inequalities are completely overlooked while the blame for poverty is transferred to over attention to environmental care, suggesting that environmental protection is unnecessary or perhaps even a luxury. To some extent, this discourse connects to the ideology of the global hegemony that attempts to diminish the significance of the environmental cause to the world.

The above analysis of two *Folha de S. Paulo* opinion pieces connects childhood to poverty and sustainability, thus highlighting the situation of poor, homeless Brazilian children. While the first piece promotes the interconnection between social, environmental, and economic characteristics to fight social inequalities in Brazil, the second overemphasizes the importance of social aspects over environmental care. The main problem identified here is that while the politician offers a balanced view, a well-known Brazilian journalist with wide access to the media promotes a misleading interpretation which is hazardous given that the journalist's illogical perspectives are likely to be published on other occasions.

The investigation of *FSP* and *O Globo*'s coverage of sustainability and poverty continues in the next section with analysis of narratives about inequalities. The aim is to investigate how the media of a developing country reports a significant social issue and connects this to sustainable development.

### 5.1.2 – Inequalities

Focusing on the social narratives of Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development, this section investigates intersections of sustainability, poverty, and inequalities. Data analysis shows that social inequalities were discussed in four texts produced by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo*. One piece was published during Rio92, and three were published in Rio+20.

The connections between poverty and sustainability are the motto of an opinion piece written by São Paulo's Mayor Luiza Erundina<sup>93</sup>, as part of *Folha de S. Paulo* coverage of Rio92. To Erundina, environmental actions should focus on the social area and entail guaranteeing basic rights and improving living conditions of the poorest. In the piece, the left-wing politician argues that sustainable development cannot be achieved without resolution of social and economic inequalities between First and Third World countries, including technology transfer. In the piece, the mayor argues that it would be necessary to create an environmental culture capable of generating new values and behaviour, while changing how society relates with itself and with nature. According to Erundina, an environmental era can only be achieved through participation of all social sectors, including mass media.

Clearly, the text indicates that Erundina's socialist beliefs shape her interpretation of sustainable development, which focuses on the social aspects of the concept. In this piece, economic perspectives are part of the social sphere, working as a means to solve inequalities, especially extreme poverty<sup>94</sup>. It is also significant that São Paulo's mayor emphasises the importance of mass media and

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<sup>93</sup> Erundina, L. (1992) Eco-92 - consciência e responsabilidade. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 9 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 5 July 2021).

<sup>94</sup> At the age of 86, Luiza Erundina remains a significant political voice in Brazil in 2022, as this thesis is written, having run for São Paulo's vice-governor in the 2020's elections.

public participation in contributing to sustainability through the transformation of the current destructive development model into a more sustainable paradigm.

Despite ever-present social inequalities in Brazil and in the world, it took twenty years to *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* to reconnect the topic to sustainable development. This twenty-year gap supports the argument that social narratives have been neglected by the Brazilian media coverage of sustainability.

After twenty years of silence, the coverage of Rio+20 showcases three pieces linking sustainability, poverty, and social inequalities. The first appearance of the connection is in an article<sup>95</sup> published by *Folha de S. Paulo* on 14 June 2012, wherein President Dilma Rousseff emphasises that social inclusion is part of sustainable development. The text reveals that Rousseff addresses rich countries, stating that it is possible to combine development with environmental protection and social inclusion. According to *FSP*, the President highlights that by respecting the environment and promoting social inclusion, Brazil has grown 40% in the previous 10 years and created 18 million jobs, and that is likely to grow with sustainable development. As for rich countries that resist commitment to environmental goals, Rousseff states that the environmental respect should be considered at all times and not only during the expansion phases of the economic cycle.

It is notable that the President's statement stresses that rich countries should link economy and environment. The advice, however, would work for all countries. The restriction to rich nations suggests Rousseff's support of historic North-South disagreements regarding environmental protection. Besides, it is relevant that the Brazilian President considers economic growth and social inclusion as the main aspects of sustainability, while defending environmental protection. Nevertheless, *Folha de S. Paulo* showcases that Rousseff provides data about economic expansion and social inclusion without mentioning any environmental figures. The lack of environmental data may indicate that environmental figures were not good enough to publicise, indicating that Rousseff's discourse of greenwashing to be a political strategy. It is noteworthy that, as previously explained in the Introduction,

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<sup>95</sup> Luna, D. & Menchen, D. (2012) Em recado a ricos, Dilma diz que país cresce e preserva meio ambiente. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 14 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 31 October 2021).

the term greenwashing refers to the deliberate use of disinformation for supporting unsubstantiated claims of environmental protection.

Returning to the analysis of Rio+20 coverage, *O Globo* published a piece linking poverty and sustainable development just three days after *Folha de S. Paulo*'s article about President Rousseff's viewpoints. The short lapse of time between the publication of *FSP* and *OG* articles reveals that both newspapers considered the discussions on poverty that took place during Rio+20 conference to be important. In this second piece, Brazilian environment minister Izabella Teixeira<sup>96</sup> lauds the linking of environmental preservation and poverty eradication which has allowed the fight against poverty finally to become part of the global sustainability agenda. *O Globo* argues that Rio+20's final document should include the fight against poverty, considering it as one of the bases of sustainable development. The article also criticises Rio+20's discussions of the green economy for privileging economic growth and environmental protection to the detriment of the fight against poverty.

It is noticeable that Teixeira's discourse published in *O Globo* corresponds to Rousseff's arguments addressed in *Folha de S. Paulo* a few days earlier. The similarity indicates the joint political effort of the Brazilian federal government towards unified sustainability discourse. It is also relevant having an environmental minister, arguably an expert in the area, celebrating social improvement and highlighting its connection with environmental protection. *OG*, however, uses the opportunity to criticise green economy's focus on economic growth and the environment, instead of drawing attention to the fight against poverty. In this article, *OG* focuses on the importance of the social pillar of sustainable development, giving the false impression that the *O Globo*'s media conglomerate is not centred on its own economic interests. This piece stands as an example of a Brazilian media outlet promoting and transmitting its own greenwashing discourse with misleading content.

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<sup>96</sup> *O Globo* (2012) Duas ações integradas pelo desenvolvimento sustentável. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 17 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 9 November 2021).



The third confluence between poverty and sustainability is evident in *O Globo*<sup>97</sup> on 21 June 2012. It is part of an interview with French sociologist Edgar Morin who was participating in Rio+20. Morin argued that ecology could not be isolated from social issues. In the interview, the sociologist observes that poverty is a global problem; thus, nations should work together to confront it. Furthermore, Morin shares with *OG* that the fight against poverty and extreme poverty depends on direct democracy, with the participation of poor population and professionals from various areas. Morin's views on sustainability and social participation are similar to São Paulo's mayor Luiza Erundina's perspectives presented two decades earlier in an opinion piece published by *Folha de S. Paulo* in 1992. The similarity between these viewpoints about sustainable development presented twenty years apart indicates that discussions about sustainability have not evolved much, suggesting the sustainability is still the initial phase towards global implementation.

Additionally, it is remarkable that Morin includes developed and developing nations in discussions about poverty and environment. This wider perspective disregards North-South conflicts and dichotomies. Instead of looking for the culprits of environmental devastation, Edgar Morin argues in favour of general participation in an attempt to stimulate worldwide social and political engagement for improving global welfare. Moreover, this discourse overlooks the ideology of hegemony on the public sphere that tried to minimise the importance of environmental protection, which was recurrently reflected on the media coverage of international environmental events that occurred in Brazil.

The investigation of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* pieces on social inequalities and sustainability reveals four texts on the topic, with a twenty-year gap between the publication of an opinion piece in 1992 and of the three texts in 2012. This long period of silence between media productions reveals the newspapers' lack of interest in the subject and consequent low media output. Further analysis of the Brazilian media's coverage of sustainable development is presented in the next section with an examination of the *FSP* and *OG* narratives regarding sustainability projects.

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<sup>97</sup> Moreira, M. N. (2012) Países precisam ser mais solidários. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 21 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 15 November 2021).

### 5.1.3 – Projects

This is the last section of the investigation on Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development that focuses on poverty. The section spotlights projects aimed at promoting social inclusion in Brazil. Data analysis shows that *O Globo* and *Folha de S. Paulo* published two pieces about social projects as part of sustainability coverage produced in 2011 and 2012.

A good example of a social project that connects poverty and sustainability is presented by *O Globo* in 2011. *OG* published an article about the UN Global Compact Cities Programme, arguing that it had changed the life of 800 people in the southern region of Brazil<sup>98</sup>. The piece explains that the programme aimed at promoting innovative and sustainable development in 40 cities around the world. In Brazil, more specifically, the project resettled 800 people who used to live in a slum in Porto Alegre but moved to a village with sanitation, access to water, nursery, and a hangar where 150 people could work with recycling to earn more than the Brazilian minimum wage.

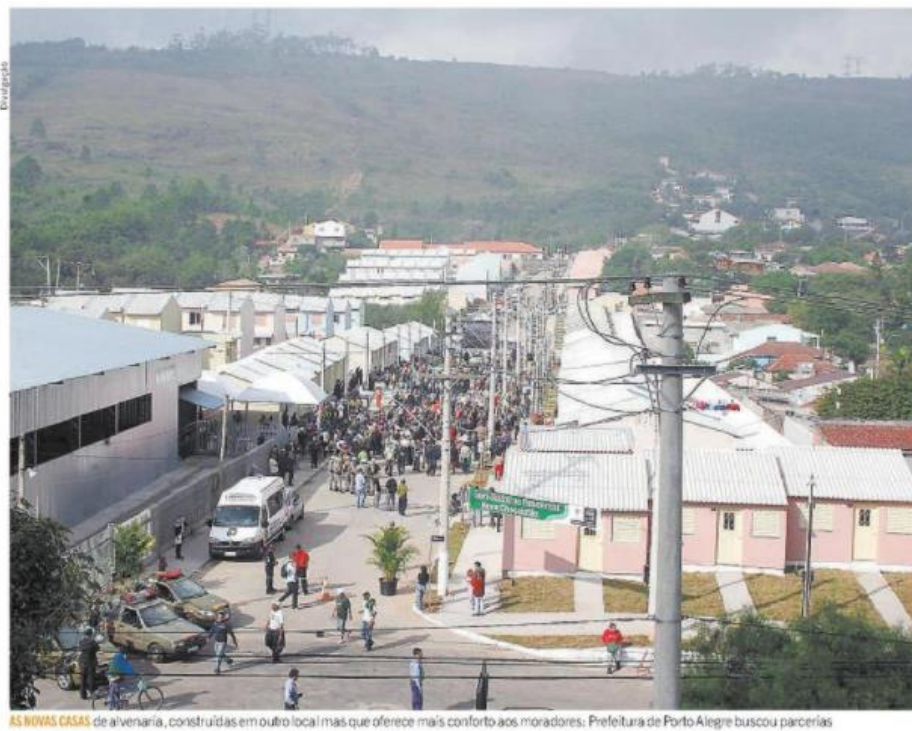
In addition, the article presents the views of a 35-year-old community leader who reveal that they used to live surrounded by animals and sewer, but that they are now living like rich people in brick houses with sanitation. *OG* highlights the leader's statement by illustrating the piece with images of former and current villages, thus revealing differences in living conditions (Figures 5.1 and 5.2). *O Globo's* unsigned coloured photos display social contrasts, while transmitting an optimistic message that it is possible to improve the living conditions of poor groups. In this specific case, both text and images showcase a positive reflection on possible outcomes of sustainable development. In this context, impacts of sustainability projects in a poor community resulted mainly on social and economic improvements, which produced less environmental impacts. The example stands as a defence for sustainable development as it corroborates the assumption that sustainability is feasible and can promote constructive changes in society when properly implemented.

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<sup>98</sup> Gonzalez, A. (2011) Mudança para melhor. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 7 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 15 October 2021).



**Figure 5.1:** Picture published in *O Globo* on 7 June 2011



**Figure 5.2:** Picture published in *O Globo* on 7 June 2011

One year later, *Folha de S. Paulo* presents another social project in a piece that introduces the Brazilian government's initiative to offer financial help to poor families to promote sustainable development<sup>99</sup>. The programme was to be exhibited at Rio+20 by the Brazilian Minister of Social Development Tereza Campello, as an opportunity to fight poverty and improve the situation of the planet. *FSP* explains that the minister wants to implement a global fund to support poor families to protect and restore the environment. In the article, Campello states that it was 'dumb and outdated'<sup>100</sup> to separate poverty from environment.

In this example, by reproducing the content without further examination, *Folha de S. Paulo* supports the use of an informal and offensive adjective to describe the link between poverty and sustainability. This finding reveals the minister's attempt to defend her views by depreciating other opinions, thereby indicating a lack of political tact because any other perspective is considered inferior. The insulting expression used by the minister also undermines dialogue with different sides. *FSP*, nevertheless, does not question the minister about her fierce positions. Furthermore, by focusing on a governmental sustainable social programme, *FSP* contributes to promoting the Brazilian government's greenwashing rhetoric that claims to defend both environment protection and the fight against poverty in the country.

As previously explained in this chapter, greenwashing relates to the intentional use of disinformation to pretend that environmental protection is being promoted. More examples of greenwashing discourses that are part of the Brazilian media's coverage of sustainable development are presented in chapters 6 and 7, which refer to economic and environmental narratives.

The study of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo*'s coverage of sustainable development showcases two examples of projects that corroborate the feasibility of implementing sustainability programmes. The first piece presents an ongoing project that demonstrates good impacts in poor communities, including photos to reinforce positive aspects of sustainability. The second text, nevertheless, showcases a proposal of the Brazilian federal government which transformed into

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<sup>99</sup> Nery, N. (2012) Brasil quer exportar Bolsa Família verde. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 16 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 5 November 2021).

<sup>100</sup> Original in Portuguese: *burro e atrasado*

a political greenwashing narrative. The next section presents the analysis of narratives about food security. The topic was relevant to Brazilian media due to the emergence of global food crises during the thesis' timeframe.

## 5.2 – Food security

This section investigates pieces that focus on food security. The examination of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo*'s coverage of sustainable development shows that five texts link hunger to sustainability in the period between 2002 and 2012. Data analysis reveals that Brazilian media's coverage of food security is more frequent between 2003 to 2008 following recurrent food emergencies in the globe.

Paradoxically, this timeframe coincides with the tenure of the government of left-wing Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, whose leading programme tackled the eradication of hunger in Brazil. The positive outcomes of the programme resulted in the UN World Food Programme (WFP) awarding Lula da Silva the title of Global Champion in the Battle Against Hunger in May 2010.

The coverage analysis starts in 2003 when *O Globo* reveals that famine is affecting 840 million people worldwide<sup>101</sup>. The piece emphasises that Rio+10 had ratified the *1996 World Food Summit's* decision to halve the number of undernourished people in the world by 2015. Notably, figures show how difficult it is to fight global food scarcity.

During the presidency of left-wing politician Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, *O Globo*'s focus changed from global to national food security. This change of focus possibly occurred due to Lula da Silva's social programmes to eradicate hunger in the country. *O Globo* published an opinion piece written by the leader of the Brazilian Landless Workers' Movement<sup>102</sup> Roberto Baggio<sup>103</sup>. The text contended that land reform would promote sustainable development, food sovereignty, and minimise social inequality in Brazil. The piece blamed Brazilian agribusiness and

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<sup>101</sup> Beting, J. (2003) O painel vazio. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 3 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 26 May 2021).

<sup>102</sup> Original in Portuguese: *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra*

<sup>103</sup> Baggio, R. (2004) Terra produtiva? *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 7 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 29 September 2021).

monoculture for social and environmental impacts in the country. It also claimed that small farmers were responsible for most food production in Brazil, while observing that Brazilian legislation defended expropriation of unproductive *latifundia*.

By publishing Baggio's opinion piece, *O Globo* gives voice to a marginalised and unpopular social movement that claimed land for Brazilian landless workers, while also discussing food security. Land concentration is indeed a historical problem in Brazil. It connects to more than three centuries of exploitative colonialism in Brazil, dating from 1500 to 1822. This long-term issue indicates that the country needs to deal with deep-rooted problems to achieve full sustainability.

Between 2007 and 2008, the Brazilian media's coverage of food security encompasses debates about the impacts of biofuel production due to a world food crisis. The analysis of the coverage produced by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo*, during this period, shows that Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva often defends biofuels. Lula da Silva repeatedly promotes Brazilian sugarcane ethanol by claiming that the country's production was sustainable and did not connect to food scarcity.

In June 2007, *Folha de S. Paulo* published an opinion piece<sup>104</sup> written by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva wherein he denies that biofuels affect food security and aggravated climate change. President Lula da Silva observes that he is going to participate in the 2007 G8 meeting. He believes that the event is an opportunity to talk to industrialised economies about climate change, sustainable development, renewable energy sources, and monetary resources to invest in development.

Furthermore, in the opinion piece, Lula da Silva defends the argument that ethanol and biodiesel could help to democratise access to energy, diminish global dependence on finite hydrocarbons reserves, and reduce pollution and climate change effects. The President notes that biofuels are especially relevant to developing countries, where they generate employment, income, and sustainable

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<sup>104</sup> Silva, L. I. L. (2007) Desafios para a cúpula do G8. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 8 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 26 October 2021).

growth. Moreover, the opinion piece points out that humanity needs to eradicate hunger and extreme inequality to achieve global sustainable development, environmental harmony, and lasting security. Additionally, the President argues that Brazil is conscious about its obligations and actively engaged with environmental protection.

In this opinion piece, President Lula da Silva offers a boastful defence of Brazil and its ethanol production. This chapter will present evidence of further support to Brazilian biofuels given by the United Nations, the World Bank, the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), and *O Globo*.

Additionally, Lula da Silva tries to promote environmental protection provided by the Brazilian government. The President's defensive argumentation suggests an attempt to convince the public opinion of Brazil's good performance in protecting the environment. In addition, President Lula da Silva presents Brazil as an environmental-friendly country. This particular claim is repeatedly encountered throughout the thesis. The argument, however, comprises a greenwashing discourse which contrasts with the widely known destruction of the country's main natural environments such as the Amazon rainforest, which is the subject of chapter 8, *The coverage of the Amazon rainforest: a case study*. The piece also reinforces the recurrent position of the Brazilian government that constantly defended the ideology of the South, criticising the fact that the global hegemony underrated the importance of environmental protection on the public sphere.

Despite offering President Lula da Silva space to publish his opinion, *Folha de S. Paulo* illustrates the text ironically. *FSP* displays a coloured drawing that shows a happy fuel station attendant pouring oil in a flowering plant (Figure 5.3). To some extent, the composition emphasises the piece's argument that biofuels are environmental-friendly. Through this intentionally naïve caricature, the drawing makes light of the suggestion that biofuels are so healthy, or even neutral, or that they can be a substitute for water which can be used to nourish plants. However, the contrasting image can only be interpreted as being critical of any rhetoric supporting biofuels as environmentally safe. Basically, it does not matter what type of oil comes out of the pump, any liquid fuel can kill any plant.

Through the ironic illustration, *FSP* criticises President Lula da Silva's piece by arguing that fuels destroy nature. Historically connected to the right-wing, *Folha de S. Paulo* demonstrated its discontentment through light ironic art, which is open to interpretation. While *FSP* disguises its political critiques behind a dubious drawing, the ambiguity seems convenient to the newspaper because it protects the publication from possible criticisms that could be made by supporters of President Lula da Silva.



**Figure 5.3:** Image published in *Folha de S. Paulo* on 8 June 2007

*O Globo* continues to make connections between biofuels and food security as part of social aspects of sustainable development. in 2008. *OG* linked sustainability and food production in an article that supported Brazilian ethanol<sup>105</sup>. The text stated that the UN and the World Bank blamed biofuels for the food crisis that was taking place, but they defended Brazilian ethanol for having an improved

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<sup>105</sup> *O Globo* (2008) ONU e Banco Mundial defendem explicitamente o etanol brasileiro. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 4 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 7 October 2021).



and sustainable type of production. The article presents a study carried out by the Food and Agriculture Organisation that shows how Brazilian ethanol is the only competitive biofuel in the world. *OG* states that the FAO's report makes claims that subsidies and tax exemption for biofuels are responsible for market distortions and increasing food price. *OG* suggests that most criticisms towards biofuels are too general and wrongly treat Brazilian ethanol like other less environment-friendly biofuels.

It is important to consider that media narratives linking sustainability to Brazilian ethanol were particularly relevant to *FSP* and *OG* coverage. These pieces merged environmental concerns with a pertinent economy and social activity in Brazil. The analysis discloses that *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* when reporting on Brazilian ethanol production considered all characteristics of sustainable development, namely economic, social, and environmental aspects. This finding reveals that the coverage of biofuels manages to explore all facets of the concept of sustainability. The effort suggests that *FSP* and *OG* also decided to advertise Brazilian biofuels as environmental-friendly products. Moreover, this particular coverage possibly promoted more interest in the Brazilian public for linking sustainability to a practical issue that directly affected the country.

The discussion regarding biofuels, food security, and sustainability continued two days later as *O Globo* covered a meeting promoted by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)<sup>106</sup>. The text cites that about 850 million people in the world were living in extreme hunger. It also states that the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and 183 nations attended FAO's meeting but did not reach an agreement on subsidised agricultural and trade barriers, which were considered essential for containing the ongoing food crisis. Additionally, *O Globo* states that FAO defined Brazilian ethanol sugarcane is environment-friendly but does not explain how the Organisation reaches this conclusion. The piece outlines FAO's arguments that biofuel production should take into account food security, energy, and sustainable development. The article argues that further research is

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<sup>106</sup> *O Globo* (2008) ONU: reunião acaba sem ação concreta. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 6 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 8 October 2021).

necessary to guarantee that biofuel usage and production occurs in accordance with the three pillars of sustainability.

There are two highlights in this piece. First, it presents FAO's defence of Brazilian ethanol. Second, it acknowledges that more scientific studies on the topic are necessary. This demonstrates that the organisation relied on scientific data to support its conclusions. *O Globo's* article, nevertheless, does not explain that FAO's opinion regarding the Brazilian biofuel is based on a study made by the organisation which considered Brazilian ethanol the only competitive biofuel in the world. FAO's investigation was announced in another article published by *OG* two days earlier.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that *OG* mentions three pillars of sustainability without citing or explaining them. The newspaper assumes that its readers already understand the concept. Furthermore, *O Globo's* repeated defensive coverage of Brazilian biofuels in a time of food crisis suggests that the newspaper supports the national ethanol industry.

The visualisation complements *O Globo's* text. The newspaper displays a coloured photograph produced by Andrew Medichini from the international news agency Associated Press (Figure 5.4). The image shows half the face of FAO's director Jacques Diouf, while the caption adds that the meeting's resolution has proved disappointing to the poor countries. Given that the organisation did not achieve important objectives during the international meeting on food scarcity, a possible interpretation of concealing half of FAO's director face and focusing on his wondering eyes is that the director is frustrated. This probability supports the piece's contention that the event did not produce effective results in solving the ongoing worldwide famine affecting 850 million people. Additionally, Diouf seems engulfed by UN colours and symbols. The impression of imprisonment assays a helpless disappointed manager drowning in political bureaucracy as 850 million people starve. A Senegalese politician, Diouf possibly understood the impacts of food shortage in developing economies, thus expressing disappointment regarding the lack of solution to the crisis.



**Figure 5.4:** Picture published in *O Globo* on 6 June 2008

The investigation of pieces focusing on food security shows that *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* produced five pieces linking hunger and sustainability in the years between Rio+10 and Rio+20. *FSP* and *OG*'s coverage especially focused upon the impact of Brazilian ethanol on global food scarcity, thus indicating President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's recurrent defence of Brazilian biofuels' production. The analysis of social narratives continues in the following section. In the next section, the investigation focuses on pieces on women's health emergent in *FSP* and *OG* coverage of sustainable development, which was produced between 1992 and 2012.

### 5.3 – Women's health

This section proceeds with the study of texts that focus on social aspects of the Brazilian media's coverage of sustainable development. The pieces analysed in this

section link sustainability to women's health. This specific coverage emerged during Rio+10 and Rio+20. Debates on the topic occurred following conflicts among western societies and the Vatican, Arab countries, and other conservative nations. According to the investigation, only *O Globo* covered women's health in Rio+10. However, in Rio+20, both *OG* and *Folha de S. Paulo* reported the banishment of the term reproductive rights from the conference's final document. This section introduces ten examples that relate to *FSP* and *OG* coverage, with one dating from 2002 and referring to Rio+10, and nine being published in 2012, during Rio+20.

The only article that mentions women's health in the coverage of Rio+10 is a piece<sup>107</sup> published in *O Globo*. It contends that the lack of consensus between European and Islamic countries regarding women's health threatened Rio+10's results. The piece states that diplomats worked until the last minute to achieve unanimity on supporting women's health. According to *OG*, only then did the representatives of over 100 countries sign an intentions plan on sustainable development. The article reveals that the main problem in the event about sustainability related to a social aspect. It is significant to observe the importance of women's health to the conference. Divergences on the topic almost endangered Rio+10's report because the document could only be signed if there were consensus on every subject.

Additionally, *OG* illustrated the story by displaying a black and white picture produced by international news agency *Agence France-Presse* (Figure 5.5). The image shows the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson participating in a demonstration held to support women's rights. The photograph endorses the alignment between the UN and society.

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<sup>107</sup> O Globo (2002) Rio+10 aprova plano para a Terra. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 4 September. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 6 September 2021).



**Figure 5.5:** Picture published in *O Globo* on 4 September 2002

The link between women's health and sustainability only re-emerges ten years later as part of *O Globo* and *Folha de S. Paulo* coverage of Rio+20. The Brazilian media's coverage of Rio+20, however, shows that conservative powers removed the reference about reproductive rights from the conference's final document. The act was considered prejudicial to women's rights and a setback to human rights policy.

*O Globo* published an opinion piece written by the executive director of the United Nations Population Fund Barbatunde Osotimehin<sup>108</sup>, who defended universal access to services for sexual and reproductive health, arguing that more than 200 million women lacked access to contraceptives. Osotimehin endorsed that women and youth education and empowerment would promote equality and social justice, improve people's lives, and create opportunities to sustain the planet. The piece mentions the challenge of attending to global necessities while protecting the planet's complex natural equilibrium that sustains life. It also advocates that social equity and slower population growth could contribute to sustainable development.

<sup>108</sup> Osotimehin, B. (2012) Sustentabilidade em um mundo de 9 bilhões. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 17 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 10 November 2021).

On this occasion, *O Globo* supports women's health, while corroborating environmental preservation and the notion of finite natural resources. By mentioning global necessities, the opinion piece also touches on the link between consumption and sustainability. Furthermore, Osotimehin strongly emphasises that social inequalities hinder families from contributing to sustainable development, specifically referring to birth control as a way to diminish environmental impacts.

Notably, women's rights and reproductive health achieved prominence in Rio+20's discussions. The topics were the motto of two pieces published in *Folha de S. Paulo* with the director of UN Women and former Chilean President Michelle Bachelet. In the first text<sup>109</sup>, Bachelet argues that Rio+20's final report should emphasise female responsibilities towards sustainable development, while stating that women could contribute to all areas of sustainability. The claims are repeated in an interview<sup>110</sup> wherein Bachelet argues that Rio+20 should recognise that women are vital for global sustainable development. Through endorsing women's importance to sustainability in both pieces, Bachelet confirms the perception that sustainability may only be achieved through social engagement.

Furthermore, *FSP* illustrates the interview displaying a coloured image of Michelle Bachelet during Rio+20 (Figure 5.6). The picture was taken by *FSP* photographer Jorge Araújo. It showed Bachelet in a prayer-like pose as she displays with her hands clasped together while she looks upwards. The visual narrative aligns with Bachelet's requests directed towards political representatives for supporting women's rights, and more specifically females' reproductive health. Ultimately, recurrent coverage about the topic indicates *Folha de S. Paulo*'s support for women's rights.

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<sup>109</sup> Folha de S. Paulo (2012) Mulher sustentável. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 19 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 26 October 2021).

<sup>110</sup> Menchen, D. (2012) Ataques aos direitos femininos são inaceitáveis, diz Bachelet. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 21 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 26 October 2021).



**Figure 5.6:** Picture published in *Folha de S. Paulo* on 21 June 2012

Likewise, *O Globo* reported<sup>111</sup> that the United Nations lay emphasis on the importance of women to sustainable development. The piece states that women need power, information, and inclusion in the global economy to contribute to sustainability. *OG* interviewed Michelle Bachelet and Gro Brundtland, who commented that 250 million women did not have access to family planning. In addition, they stated that women's contributions to sustainability had to permeate all areas like ocean protection, poverty, and sustainable cities. *OG's* article presents equivalent claims to the ones presented in *Folha de S. Paulo* pieces about Bachelet. It also corroborates arguments presented in *O Globo* two days earlier in the opinion piece written by executive director of the United Nations Population Fund Barbatunde Osotimehin. The texts' similarity supports the assumption that the

<sup>111</sup> Gonzalez, A. (2012) ONU quer mais poder para as mulheres. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 19 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 10 November 2021).

coverage of sustainable development in both newspapers was based on identical argumentation. This finding is significant because it confirms that Brazilian public had access to analogous information through national media. It proves that Brazilian national newspapers presented a single discourse about sustainability, suggesting similar political editorial lines. It also indicates that journalists from both newspapers had similar environmental knowledge.

The analysis of data reveals harsh critique levelled at the Vatican by Mary Robinson, integrant of the Elders, former Ireland President and former UN Human Rights Commissioner<sup>112</sup>. Robinson was previously cited in this section for her participation in a demonstration held to support women's rights during Rio+10. In 2012, Robinson was interviewed by *O Globo* and criticised the Vatican's pressure to remove from the final document of Rio+20 references to sex, sexuality, and family planning. She also argued that women were essential to sustainable development, highlighting that women's empowerment was essential for sustainability and the development of all countries. Additionally, *OG* highlighted Robinson's contention that reproductive health was linked to poverty and food insecurity. *OG's* interview followed up on the Rio+20 conference's coverage of the advocacy of women's health. Frequent pieces on the topic established a pattern of the coverage of Rio+20, which reflects the relevance of social narratives in the conference.

Conservatism in Rio+20 is the motto of a critical opinion piece written by *Folha de S. Paulo* journalist Claudia Antunes<sup>113</sup>. According to the text, Rio+20 revealed a more conservative world. The journalist mentions that the Catholic Church and its supporters removed the reference to reproductive rights from the conference's final report. The opinion piece also recollects that women's autonomy to decide when to have children has been supported by the UN 18 years earlier, showing that conservatism had increased over time.

Once again, the coverage highlights issues in Rio+20 regarding women's rights. Another opinion piece runs parallel to former UN Human Rights

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<sup>112</sup> Jansen, R. (2012) Que sabem os celibatários sobre as mulheres? *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 20 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 2 November 2021).

<sup>113</sup> Antunes, C. (2012) O conservadorismo do mundo. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 21 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 17 November 2021).



Commissioner Mary Robinson's critiques against the Vatican, published one day earlier in *O Globo*. The similarity of arguments encountered in both texts indicates that supporters of women's rights had analogous perspectives on Rio+20 discussions about women's health.

Two days later, *Folha de S. Paulo*<sup>114</sup> and *O Globo*<sup>115</sup> report that US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton defended women's rights in her speech in Rio+20's plenary. Both newspapers state that the Secretary of State spent less than 24 hours in Rio de Janeiro to participate in Rio+20. Additionally, they claim that US involvement in Rio+20 was very discreet. Interestingly, both *FSP* and *OG* use the term discreet to refer to the US participation in Rio+20. The use of the same word in both publications indicates that the US contribution to the conference was indeed subtle. Particularly, the *FSP* article notes that the reserved behaviour was especially different from that exhibited during Rio92. *FSP* highlighted that in 1992 the US President George Bush attended the event, lending visibility to the country's interests.

This discreet participation that focused on women's rights shows the USA strategy to silencing its weak environmental policy and highlight another important issue. This connects with the USA plan to fight for the maintenance of its economic and political hegemony in the world. The silencing regarding environmental protection also indicates that the US ideology was not focused on the environmental cause, thus it was the country's intention to minimise the importance of the topic on the public sphere, by changing the agenda of global events and their media coverage.

Once again, both newspapers report a topic in a similar way, indicating convergence on the Brazilian media's coverage of sustainability. Furthermore, *OG* added that Todd Stern who led US negotiations in Rio+20 made an odd declaration saying that sustainable development was one of the three pillars of the US government, alongside diplomacy and defence. Paradoxically, *FSP* and *OG* coverage of Rio+20 demonstrated that the USA did not support any project that

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<sup>114</sup> Rodrigues, F. (2012) Apagados, EUA mandam Hillary só no último dia. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 23 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 17 November 2021).

<sup>115</sup> Godoy, F. & Lima, M. (2012) Hillary encerra participação tímida dos EUA. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 23 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 11 November 2021).

required funds nor new environmental obligations. The coverage produced by *FSP* and *OG* clearly contradicted Stern's argument. The discrepancy indicates that Stern's allegation was intended to promote the USA as an environmental-friendly country. The finding showcases another example of political greenwashing left unchallenged by Brazilian journalists.

Both newspapers illustrate their articles with Clinton's image, once more aligning with the premise of similar coverage of sustainable development. *FSP* publishes a coloured picture of Clinton talking in Rio+20 plenary, with the logos of Rio+20 and the UN in the background (Figure 5.7). The photo was taken by José Araújo from Folhapress to mark the presence of the USA in the event. *OG*'s photo showed half of Clinton's face with her eyes open wide and the name Rio+20 on the background (Figure 5.8). The image was produced by the Associate Press photojournalist Victor R. Caivano. The photo is very similar to the photo taken by AP's Andrew Medichini showing FAO's director Jacques Diouf (Figure 5.6), which was displayed on the previous section about food security. A possible interpretation for covering half of Clinton's face is shielding the USA. The shelter provided by AP reinforces *O Globo*'s argument that during Rio+20, USA avoided the spotlight and acted in the background to achieve its objectives.



**Figure 5.7:** Picture published in *Folha de S. Paulo* on 23 June 2012



**Figure 5.8:** Picture published in *O Globo* on 23 June 2012

Following the coverage criticising conservative conduct towards women's health, *O Globo* published a small piece<sup>116</sup> showing the Vatican's position. It reports that the Vatican's representative Odilo Scherer defended a sustainable development model that maintained traditional family values and focused on human life. *OG* explained that the statement was part of Scherer's discourse in Rio+20 and clearly referred to the veto on women's reproductive rights. According to *OG*, the discourse also opposes abortion, reinforcing the belief that health care could not relate to death of vulnerable lives. The Vatican's harsh opposition represents Catholic views on the topic, running parallel nevertheless to a significant setback on women's rights that was not alluded to in the article. *OG's* text focuses solely on the speech of Vatican's representative, presenting traditional religious viewpoints. No further perspectives are cited.

<sup>116</sup> *O Globo* (2012) Vaticano usa discurso para condenar aborto. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 23 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 3 November 2021).

The investigation of ten pieces that linked women's health to sustainable development reveal that coverage from *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* gained traction specifically during Rio+10 and Rio+20. Media texts displayed conflicts involving Western societies and the Vatican, Arab countries, and other conservative nations. Research on the Brazilian media's coverage of sustainable development is presented in the next section. It analyses pieces that highlighted the importance of education to sustainable development in 2011 and 2012. The aim of the next section is to understand how Brazilian national newspapers positioned themselves with regard to the significance of education to global sustainability.

#### 5.4 – Environmental education

This section investigates links between sustainability and education. Data analysis identified one article produced by *O Globo* in 2011, and two opinion pieces published by *Folha de S. Paulo* in 2012. The finding reveals a significant coverage gap insofar as it took Brazilian media almost twenty years to produce a news piece linking education and sustainable development.

The first piece was part of a series of articles about the Amazon rainforest's Mamirauá Sustainable Development Reserve, published by *O Globo*, on 7 June 2011. *OG* described a project of environmental education in the Amazon rainforest, showing the impact of books based on local culture<sup>117</sup>. According to the newspaper, spelling books would be distributed to more than 5,000 children from the Mamirauá Sustainable Development Reserve. *OG* stated that the material had been developed through a partnership between Brazilian public universities and local communities. *OG* also reported that local teachers were excited about the new material as they believed that students would give more value to the Amazon. The article explains that the books were part of a larger project about environmental education that was teaching Amazon residents to use the forest in a sustainable way. *OG* also mentioned that the programme was supported by Exxon Mobil and the Brazilian Ministry of Education.

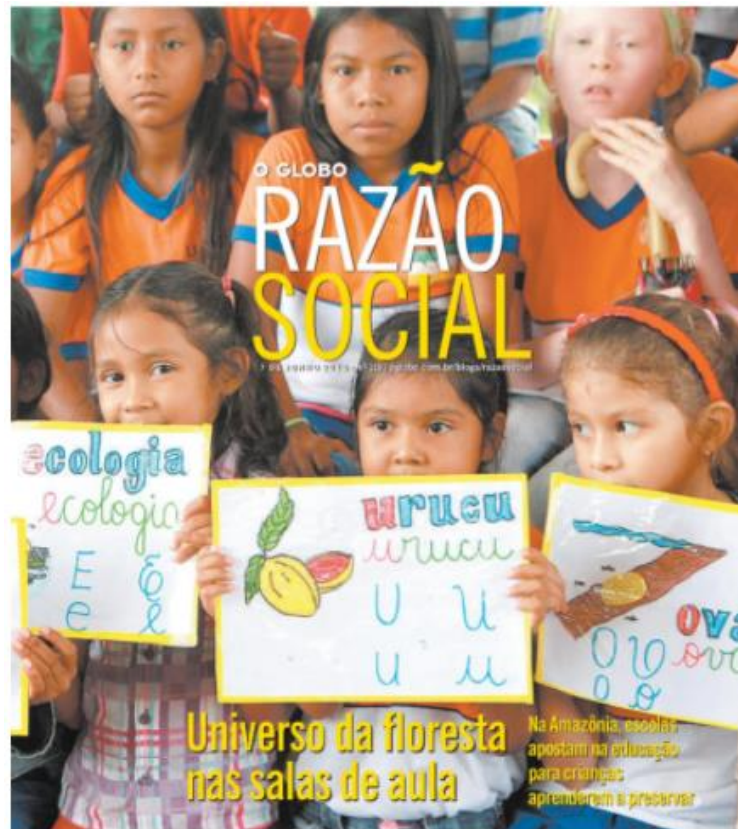
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<sup>117</sup> Nóbrega, C. (2011) Nos livros, a floresta. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 7 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 15 October 2021).

The piece focuses on informing the existence of an educational project within the Amazon, without offering much data about it. The text functions as a marketing strategy to promote the USA multinational oil and gas corporation Exxon Mobil and the Brazilian Ministry of Education. It is intriguing why *O Globo* did not choose to probe the reason for a multinational oil and gas corporation from the USA to seek to invest in an educational project in the Amazon. The superficial text displays a greenwashing narrative connected to environmental education.

Additionally, *O Globo* published two coloured images linking to the article. The first photo is on the coverage of the newspaper section and exhibits local schoolchildren holding plaques used to learn the alphabet (Figure 5.9), and the second picture shows the Mamirauá Sustainable Development Reserve (Figure 5.10). Both photographs show that environmental education was being invested in within the community. The focus on schoolchildren who lived in the Amazon rainforest particularly corroborates the importance of environmental education to future generations. Notably, the concern with future generations connects to the UN definition of sustainable development as “the development that meets all human needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987:43).

It is noteworthy that *O Globo* produced more articles about the Mamirauá Sustainable Development Reserve on the edition of 7 June 2011. The analysis about this additional content can be found in chapter 8, *The coverage of the Amazon rainforest: a case study*.



**Figure 5.9:** Picture published in *O Globo* on 7 June 2011



**Figure 5.10:** Picture published in *O Globo* on 7 June 2011

The only news article about environmental education is followed by two opinion pieces that are part of the coverage of Rio+20. The first text endorses investing in education to promote sustainable development<sup>118</sup>. The piece was published by *Folha de S. Paulo* and written by UNESCO's General-director Irina Bokova, Swedish Environment Minister Lena Ek, and Japanese Minister Hirofumi Hirano. The group of specialists lay emphasis on the importance of education. The authors argue that educational strategies should include review of curricula, creation of professional qualifications, new educational programmes, assurance of adequate education and training.

The opinion piece indicates that education is a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development. The strategy would require international efforts to be implemented. Ideally, basic environmental knowledge would support social participation. The educational project, however, could possibly inspire future generations, but would not have short-term impact on the current environmental urgency.

Likewise, *Folha de S. Paulo*'s second opinion piece emphasises the importance of education for sustainability. The piece is written by education specialist Alice Setubal<sup>119</sup>, who argues that Rio+20 debate on sustainability points to the strategic role of education. Moreover, the text argues that it is urgent to achieve quality education capable of responding to global sustainable development challenges.

The role of education to sustainability, however, is not part of the journalistic coverage produced by *O Globo* nor by *Folha de S. Paulo*. Both texts that mention the importance of education to sustainable development are opinion pieces written by education and environmental specialists who perceive intersections between the topic and discussions in Rio+20. Journalistic coverage could have promoted public awareness about the importance of environmental education in Brazil.

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<sup>118</sup> Bokova, I., Ek, L. & Hirano, H. (2012) Depois da Rio+20. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 24 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 17 November 2021).

<sup>119</sup> Setubal, M. A. (2012) O papel estratégico da educação. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 29 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 16 November 2021).

The dearth of journalistic texts on environmental education reveals a pivotal gap in the Brazilian media's coverage of Rio+20. It also indicates that Brazilian journalists do not understand the importance of education for improving environmental awareness. The limited reference to education supports the argument that when analysing the aspects that compose the sustainability triad, social topics are under-represented than environmental and economy subjects in *FSP* and *OG*'s coverage of sustainable development.

The coverage gap also relates to Sousa Santos' (2002, 2007) studies about the process of media selectiveness and the impacts of the current mediated view of the world. Through the Sociology of Absences, Sousa Santos argues that reality as shown through media is actually a representation of the economic elites' interests. The theory is particularly problematic in Journalism as it produces manipulation and distorted framing. Indeed, absences are part of a historical process of hegemonic representation. The history of the humankind, for instance, reveals the side of the conquerors, silencing a variety of potential versions that are also truthful. Thus, the analysis of silencing helps in understanding society and the interests behind it.

Accordingly, the investigation of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo*'s coverage of sustainability reveal that the absence of discussions on the relationship between education and sustainable development may have contributed to the low quality of sustainability awareness in Brazil. Arguably, the Brazilian media's coverage gap also impacted on the lack of social mobilisation to push for investments on environmental and sustainability education in the country. The analysis of social narratives emergent in *FSP* and *OG* coverage of sustainability is summed up in the following section with the analysis of pieces that shed light on the participation of indigenous communities in discussions about sustainable development. The objective of the next section is to identify characteristics of Brazilian media's coverage related to indigenous groups.



## 5.5 – Indigenous population

This section concludes the analysis of social narratives emergent in the Brazilian media's coverage of sustainable development. In this section, the investigation will focus on six pieces that highlight the connection between indigenous communities and sustainability. The content was produced by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* between 1992 and 2012.

The coverage started in Rio92 with *Folha de S. Paulo* arguing that a unique social perspective on sustainable development was presented in an exhibition about the Kayapó indigenous tribe<sup>120</sup>, which was part of the conference. The piece states that the exhibition focused on a study, which had begun in 1977, about Kayapó's adaptability to tropical forests, showing the tribe's relationship with the environment. According to *FSP*, the event intended to show that indigenous tribes like the Kayapó had been connected to sustainable development, biodiversity, and ecology, much earlier than the emergence of these concepts.

Notably, the piece aims at promoting the exhibition and does not provide information about the study that generated the event. Moreover, it does not cite practices that link the Kayapó to sustainable development, biodiversity, and ecology. Possibly the article's aim was to promote the event and to attract the public. It resembles a press release about the event. Moreover, it lacks information about the research on the Kayapó. Moreover, the group's environmental and sustainability practices are not explored, and the piece could also have been written to attract visitors to the exhibition.

The coverage gap on the Kayapó's research and environmental practices relates to the Sociology of Absences (Sousa Santos, 2002; 2007). As elaborated earlier in this chapter, the theory refers to the impacts of media selectiveness. In this article, *FSP* coverage on the Kayapó is manipulated so that an exhibition based on academic research is valued only for its entertainment potential. The outcome of this coverage is that the Kayapó community and knowledge remained subjugated to the Brazilian media and public.

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<sup>120</sup> Bonalume Neto, R. (1992) Ciência dos caiapós é tema de exposição. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 14 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 5 July 2021).

Connections between sustainability and indigenous people only re-emerge in Brazilian media ten years later, as part of the coverage of the Indigenous Peoples' World Summit, a parallel programme of Rio+10. *O Globo*<sup>121</sup> reported that the event gathered representatives from several countries and environmentalists. According to *OG*, the environmentalists believed that Rio+10 was doomed to fail because the US President George W. Bush would not participate in the discussions. The piece argues that one of the main goals of Rio+10 was to implement decisions and commitments made ten years earlier during Rio92. It claims that Rio+10's lack of focus could generate too much debate and few decisions. The text also explains that the summit intended to emphasise sustainable development and poverty reduction. Nevertheless, *OG* informed that transfer of resources to poor countries is not expected to occur as the world would need a fairer international market.

Briefly mentioning the Indigenous Peoples' World Summit, the piece focuses on repercussions of Rio+10. The article argues that the conference is likely to fail even before its beginning. Additionally, *OG* blamed the absence of the US President for the events' failure, highlighting the political importance of the USA. The argument also reveals a simplistic journalistic article that does not investigate further aspects of Rio+10. The newspaper also did not discuss the US intention to minimise the importance of the topic on the public sphere, which seems a repetitive strategy of the country to maintain its political and economic hegemony, through spreading its ideology in the world, which underestimates the importance of environmental protection. Such incomplete coverage results in disinformation, ultimately affecting public engagement.

Regarding the visual aspects of the narrative, *O Globo* displayed a black and white unsigned photo produced by the international news agency *Agence France-Presse* (Figure 5.11). Its caption was a literal description of *AFP*'s picture, stating that representatives of tribes from the USA and South Africa participated in the Indigenous Peoples' World Summit. Serious faces of indigenous representatives reflect the gravity with which they treat environmental protection and sustainability. The photo's mixture of tribes from different continents and distinct generations also serves as a validation of collective interests towards a healthier planet, and a global

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<sup>121</sup> *O Globo* (2002) Ambientalistas criticam Rio+10. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 21 August. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 7 September 2021).

sustainable development model. Nevertheless, the photograph also suggests post-colonialist discrimination, as it presents indigenous groups as different, still non-participant or not fully accepted by the westernised society. In that sense, even the event itself, the Indigenous Peoples' World Summit, characterises segregation and exclusion of indigenous communities. Indigenous people dominated a specific summit but did not have similar powerful influence in Rio+10.



**Figure 5.11:** Picture published in *O Globo* on 21 August 2002

Nine years later, the Brazilian indigenous population is mentioned in *O Globo*'s coverage about the celebrations of the 2011 World Environment Day<sup>122</sup>. The text informs that Brazilian government aims to promote sustainable development of communities from the Xingu region to support the construction of Belo Monte Dam, in the Amazon. The piece states that according to Brazilian Minister of Mines and Energy Edison Lobão, Belo Monte's construction is unlikely to affect or harm 1,600 indigenous who live in the region.

Nevertheless, the piece acknowledges that the sustainable development programme in Xingu is part of the federal government's attempt to minimise bad

<sup>122</sup> Góis, C. (2011) Ações para minimizar repercussão negativa. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 2 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 7 October 2021).

repercussions regarding the construction among indigenous and community leaders. The text is superficial as it only covers the government's perspective about the construction of Belo Monte. *O Globo* disregards the indigenous communities and does not mention possible environmental impacts that the dam would produce in the Amazon rainforest. Without balancing governmental claims with independent investigation, *O Globo* reinforces the government's greenwashing discourse, and to some extent supports it. Once again, the Brazilian media's coverage of sustainable development links to greenwashing and disinformation.

The analysis of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage of sustainable development suggests that the Brazilian federal government continually used environmental commemorative dates, especially the World Environment Day, to announce environmental projects. Chapter 8, *The coverage of the Amazon rainforest: a case study*, presents further evidence to reinforce the argument that using the date for environmental announcements has become a vital pattern for the Brazilian government. The strategy also matches the government's attempt to self-promote Brazil as an environmental-friendly country. In the piece published by *O Globo* in 2011, it can also be inferred that the announcement of the sustainable development programme in the Xingu region serves as a greenwash scheme to disguise the environmental and social impacts of the construction of Belo Monte, which would be built inside the Amazon rainforest.

Only two days later, *O Globo* produces another article that associated sustainability to the Belo Monte Dam and the indigenous population<sup>123</sup>. The piece alludes to the indigenous group Xipai. According to *OG*, the Xipai had previously defended the construction of the dam but changed its opinion and aligned with eight further ethnicities against Belo Monte. To *OG*, the Xipai community did not feel represented in the committee responsible for implementing a sustainable development plan in the Xingu region. *O Globo* also reported that local entities denounced violations about the plant licensing to the United Nations Human Rights Council.

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<sup>123</sup> Tavares, M. & Melo, L. (2011) Belo Monte: consórcio avalia como evitar atraso. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 4 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 17 October 2021).

On this occasion, *O Globo* exposes the dissatisfaction of local indigenous groups regarding the construction of the Belo Monte Dam. The finding corroborates with the argument that the governmental sustainability programme in the Xingu region comprises a greenwashing strategy. In summary, it is an attempt to cover-up environmental impacts in the Amazon rainforest. The article also shows social mobilisation, mostly of indigenous communities, towards environmental protection. Even though it is not explored in the coverage, the social engagement indicates that sustainable development is important to these groups, and thus considered worth fighting for.

One year later, in 2012, *O Globo* reported that Rio+20's parallel event, the People's Summit started with a Kaiowá indigenous leader discussing with Brazilian foreign minister Antonio Patriota<sup>124</sup>. *OG* defines the event as lively, while claiming that the Kaiowá indigenous leader is surprised by the repercussions. According to *OG*, the indigenous leader defended himself against accusations of being rude to the minister, explaining that it was his way of talking. To *OG*, the indigenous leader also discloses that his life is in danger as 245 chiefs from his community have been killed by farmers.

The data provided by the indigenous leader evidences continued violence towards indigenous communities in Brazil. Besides, it suggests that there are further aspects that need to be considered in sustainability talks with indigenous people, which could impact on their own security. *O Globo*, nevertheless, does not explore the subject.

By reporting the indigenous' act through a westernised lens, the text is also violent and disrespectful towards indigenous communities due to its cultural misinterpretation. The cultural violence towards the Kaiowá leader continues with the newspaper's illustration of the article. *OG* displayed a frame from a video made by Ludmila Curi. The image shows the exact moment when the indigenous leader talked to the Brazilian foreign minister (Figure 5.12). The picture highlights the Kaiowá indigenous leader pointing his finger at the minister's face, in short distance. The photograph demonstrates the exact attitude described in the article,

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<sup>124</sup> Mazzacaro, N. (2012) Cobrança de líder indígena a ministro marca o início da Cúpula dos Povos. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 16 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 9 November 2021).

which emphasises the gesture. At the same time, it depreciates other arguments made by the leader, which had more relevance than the act itself. The photo is also aggressive towards the indigenous leader for emphasising an unfamiliar gesture to the newspaper's readers that could easily be misinterpreted.



© INDIO Nãnoeva e Kaiowa e o ministro das Relações Exteriores, Antonio Patriota: integrante da comissão Atayaguasu diz que aproveitou a vinda da autoridade para falar sobre a questão da demarcação de terras

**Figure 5.12:** Picture published in *O Globo* on 16 June 2012

During Rio+20, *O Globo* published an interview with the indigenous leader Almir Suruí, representative of the people Paiter Suruí<sup>125</sup>. *OG* highlights that Suruí has created a fifty-year sustainable development management plan and a carbon credits plan with international validation. According to *OG*, Suruí explains that his tribe has only had 42 years of contact with Brazilian society. *OG* notes that the leader states that his projects use GPS technology to study viability of forest conservation. The newspaper also reveals that the tribe is looking for partners to develop sustainability programmes. *OG* reports that one of the projects could make 4 million dollars, and 10% of this amount would be spent outside Suruí's territory to generate jobs and incomes within the region.

Unlike previous coverage, *O Globo*'s piece promotes an indigenous community. The text promotes sustainable development projects by correlating them to updated technology and positive environmental, social, and economic

<sup>125</sup> Milhorce, F. (2012) Usamos GPS para trabalhar, estudar e conservar a floresta. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 18 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 1 November 2021).

outcomes. To some extent, it is a free advertising for the group's initiatives. Additionally, *O Globo* publishes two images with the text (Figures 5.13 and 5.14). One shows Brazil's map and the area where the Suruí tribe is located. The second depicts an unsigned picture of Almir Suruí talking on a microphone, while exhibiting plumed headdress and traditional face painting. The subtitle states that while his Portuguese is weak, he is eloquent when talking about sustainability.

Once again, *O Globo* publishes a disrespectful comment about an indigenous community, more specifically towards the Suruí leader. It is an attempt to compare the group to the rest of the westernised, colonised Brazilian society that communicates through a European language. By doing so, *OG* suggests that Suruí's low level of Portuguese proficiency should be overlooked because of his high knowledge of sustainability. As a consequence, *O Globo* defends a colonialist position by suggesting that the leader needs to be excused for lacking proficiency in Portuguese. *OG* does not take into account that Portuguese is a foreign language to the Suruí and belongs to a society responsible for colonising and destroying indigenous cultures and groups. By criticising the indigenous leader, *OG* considers that speaking Suruí's language is not enough.

*O Globo*'s colonialist position regarding language proficiency is connected to research by Sippola and Perez (2021:12) which argues that the status and role of European colonial languages in the Americas has endangered and extinguished local languages. The authors observe that the extermination of Americas' indigenous communities and cultures resulted in "the most extreme case of cultural colonization by European cultures." Essentially, Sippola and Perez (2021) emphasise that it is not sensible nor seemly to have a Brazilian mass media outlet continue to support cultural imperialism in 2012.



**Figure 5.13:** Image published in *O Globo* on 18 June 2012



O LÍDER Almir Surui: ele odeia ser chamado de cacique, pois diz que 'é coisa de americano'. Como seu povo só tem 42 anos de contato, alega que seu português é fraco, mas é eloquente ao falar de sustentabilidade

**Figure 5.14:** Picture published in *O Globo* on 18 June 2012

The study of social narratives that were part of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo*'s coverage of sustainable development identified six pieces about indigenous communities. The most significant finding of this section was *O Globo*'s prejudice



against indigenous groups which reflected post-colonial characteristics evident in hostile texts and images. Arguably, *O Globo*'s racist coverage has contributed to increasing discrimination against and cultural violence towards indigenous communities in Brazil. The present section concludes the analysis of the social aspects of *FSP* and *OG* coverage of sustainability between 1992 and 2012. The following section presents conclusions arising from the investigation of social narratives that emerged in the Brazilian media's coverage of sustainable development.

## 5.6 – Conclusion

This chapter investigated social aspects of the coverage of sustainable development produced by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* between 1992 and 2012. To facilitate the presentation, the material was organised into five main topics, namely poverty, food security, women's health, environmental education and indigenous population.

The investigation focused on 32 pieces that represent less than 4% of the 790 texts collected in this research. The data supports the claim that social subjects are not very often represented in *FSP* and *OG* coverage of sustainable development. Besides, this finding indicates that the Brazilian media's coverage does not consider social aspects as important as the two other characteristics of sustainability, namely the environment and the economy. Additionally, similarities in the *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo*'s text production confirm that both newspapers present analogous narratives when reporting on sustainability. The equivalence also reveals that Brazilian public have access to similar content.

Regarding the section on poverty, the emphasis is on the visualisation of a sustainability project improving life conditions of a formerly miserable community. The pictures prove the feasibility of sustainable development and document the positive impact on people's lives. In the coverage of food security, the spotlight is on the defence of Brazilian biofuel, by FAO, the UN, the World Bank, Brazilian President Lula da Silva, and the newspaper *O Globo*. In contrast, with *OG*'s support

for the country's biofuel production, *FSP* publishes a critical illustration along with Lula da Silva's opinion piece, thus treating his advocacy with sarcasm.

The analysis of the media coverage of women's rights underlines the use of female advocates, presenting powerful women advocating female empowerment. The study identifies a coverage gap as the topic is only covered during Rio+10 and Rio+20. A coverage gap of almost twenty years is discernible in the coverage of education. This absence may have influenced the lack of demand for investment in environmental and sustainability education in Brazil.

Moreover, *O Globo's* coverage of indigenous population reveals prejudice and post-colonial characteristics. Texts and images are hostile and disrespectful towards indigenous communities. *OG* appears to support segregation and exclusion of indigenous groups, depreciates arguments, emphasises unfamiliar gestures that could cause misinterpretation, and emphasises lack of proficiency in a foreign language instead of valuing distinct local knowledge.

This concludes the analysis of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage of the social aspects of sustainable development produced between 1992 and 2012. The thesis now moves on to investigate economic and environmental narratives, which are also part of the sustainability pillars.

## Chapter 6 – Economic narratives: greenwashing sustainable development

The principal objective of this chapter is to investigate the economic narratives that emerged in *Folha de S. Paulo (FSP)* and *O Globo (OG)* coverage of sustainable development. The focus on economic stories relies on the triad that corresponds to the official concept of sustainability, namely social, economic, and environmental features. The relevance of this study is analysing how Brazilian media covered sustainability's main characteristics for 20 years, to comprehend the relationship between media coverage and environmental protection in Brazil.

Economic narratives analysed in this chapter were published between 1992 and 2012, representing roughly 7% of *FSP* and *OG* coverage of sustainability, amounting to 57 texts out of the 790 studied in this thesis. This is a significant amount, especially considering that the main pieces emphasising social aspects corresponded to less than 4% of the material, as presented in the previous chapter, titled *Social narratives in the coverage of sustainable development*. As explained in the methodology, pieces selected for analysis present relevant content that connects to economic aspects. Furthermore, small notes and texts superficially describing events were not considered for this investigation.

The premise that this current chapter aims to address is that when covering economic aspects of sustainability, *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* reinforced greenwashing narratives and contributed to the misinforming of the Brazilian public. Additionally, this chapter reflects on the increasing use of the concept of sustainable development in Brazil during the studied timeframe. The notion of sustainability became part of businesses' and governments' marketing strategies, resulting in political propaganda and insubstantial articles produced by *FSP* and *OG* from 1992 to 2012.

Another objective of this chapter is to confirm that the coverage of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* have similar discourses when writing about sustainability. This aspect is relevant to the thesis because 1) these publications are the two main Brazilian national newspapers, and 2) if their coverage is similar, they can thus be used to identify some of the main patterns in Brazilian environmental journalism. Analysis will help identify the style of sustainability media coverage in Brazil, in

addition to topics and discussions linked to the coverage. It is also noteworthy that *O Globo*'s content is more noticeable in this chapter, with the newspaper being responsible for 37 out of a total 57 texts on sustainability from an economic angle, which corresponds to 65% of the material, while *Folha de S. Paulo* published 20 pieces or 35% of the data.

Initial analysis of Brazilian media coverage of sustainability's economic narratives revealed four main concerns: 1) greenwashing; 2) consumerism, 3) monetisation of natural resources; and 4) conflicts over money. The study of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage of these topics is outlined in four sections that are devoted to each main narrative below.

## 6.1 – Greenwashing

The Brazilian media's coverage of economic aspects of sustainable development produced and replicated greenwashing narratives throughout the 20-year timeframe analysed in this thesis. This initial section will investigate 36 pieces published in *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* between 1992 and 2012 that contain greenwashing narratives. Greenwashing discourses are not exclusive to this section and can be observed throughout the study of the economic coverage of sustainability.

### 6.1.1 – Rio92

The investigation of collected data showed that economic aspects of sustainable development emerged in Brazilian sustainability coverage a week before Rio92, when *O Globo* reported accusations of multinationals distorting the concept of sustainable development to profit from it<sup>126</sup>. *OG* described how the NGO Greenpeace International published a document titled *Greenwash* revealing a pervasive behaviour of multinationals that misrepresented sustainable development by using ecological language and images to hide the fact that they were responsible for causing the greenhouse effect and the hole in the ozone layer. In another article, *OG* stated that the Greenpeace also presented a study of multinationals that claimed to be environmentally friendly but which were actually responsible for

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<sup>126</sup> Motta, P. (1992) Multinacionais na mira do Greenpeace. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 27 May. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 6 July 2021).

environmental disasters and devastation<sup>127</sup>. It is worth highlighting the fact that after the publication of Greenpeace's document, the term greenwashing became popular and started to be used globally to define organisations that pretended to be environmentally friendly but were in reality destroying the environment. In fact, this was a great contribution by both Greenpeace that developed the study and media outlets that reported it.

The coverage of Rio92 continued with *Folha de S. Paulo* mentioning that the participation of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)<sup>128</sup> in the conference was an example of greenwashing. *FSP* explained that during Rio92, the ICC claimed to work with ecological approaches even before the creation of the UN Environment Programme. However, *FSP* highlighted the paradox presenting the ICC's claim that customers should pay all costs of environmental adjustments necessary to the business sector. This article introduced the type of empty arguments used by business groups and governments that pretended to be environmentally friendly but which were greenwashing. Without further analysis of the ICC, *FSP* coverage showed that to the ICC, investment in environmental protection was not its responsibility and environmental preservation could occur as long as it did not interfere with business profits. Even though *FSP* displayed evident ICC contradictions, it did not shed light on incongruities, leaving to readers the work of interpreting ICC's antagonistic statements and identify the greenwashing discourse.

Another contradiction of the ICC was spotted by *O Globo*<sup>129</sup> one day later. In an article published on 28 May 1992, the ICC stated that customers should manage the companies' environmental performance, thus leaving the whole responsibility to society instead of acknowledging companies' liability. Notably, the ICC position supported the business sector, defending the free market, few governmental interventions, technology transfer on commercial bases, and the connection between environmental protection and sustainable development. *OG* coverage demonstrated that both the ICC and the business sector had a misguided

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<sup>127</sup> O Globo (1992) Relatório denuncia falso esverdeamento. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 27 May. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 6 July 2021).

<sup>128</sup> O Globo (1992) Indústria fará balanço de atuação. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 27 May. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 6 July 2021).

<sup>129</sup> O Globo (1992) Empresários defendem livre mercado em Fórum. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 28 May. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 7 July 2021).

perception of sustainability, as to them environmental protection was not their responsibility. *O Globo*, however, behaved as a passive spectator, solely informing readers of ICC's view of sustainable development, but lacking further analysis of the perspective of the ICC.

Despite the business sector's lack of will to contribute to sustainable development, *O Globo* reported that Rio92's Secretary-General Maurice Strong advocated for the participation of the business sector in the conference as an opportunity for emphasising the importance of implementing sustainable development<sup>130</sup>. This may indicate that Strong wanted to underline the need for the participation of all groups to effectively implement global sustainable development.

Furthermore, *OG* displayed a black-and-white photograph produced by photojournalist Guilherme Bastos (Figure 6.1). It showed Strong tying his shoelace. By focusing on this ordinary act, the photo framed Strong as a common person who faced everyday issues like everybody else, possibly to infer that his concern for sustainable development should also be a similarly widespread matter. As the image also displayed a man standing by Strong and paying careful attention to his act, the suggestion was that that all of Strong's acts were being closely watched during Rio92, as his performance would have global impacts.

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<sup>130</sup> O Globo (1992) Maurice Strong visita sede do Fórum Global. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 28 May. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 7 July 2021).



**Figure 6.1:** Picture published in *O Globo* on 28 May 1992

In other articles, *Folha de S. Paulo* suggested that the economy was the essence of Rio92. For instance, this argument was presented in an opinion piece written by *Folha de S. Paulo* journalist Janio Freitas<sup>131</sup>. The text explained that the conference's focal point was maintaining and increasing economic production without degrading the environment nor degenerating humanity's health and Earth's biodiversity.

A harsh criticism of the relationship between the business sector and environment was made by designer Pier Bernard<sup>132</sup> in a *FSP* piece published in 1992. The designer claimed that companies invested in the environmental area because they had learned that ecology had become a spectacle. Bernard was participating in an international posters exhibition that linked environment and

<sup>131</sup> Freitas, J. (1992) Eco da conferência. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 4 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 2 July 2021).

<sup>132</sup> Brandão, M. (1992) Designers debatem comunicação e consciência ecológica no MASP. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 5 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 2 July 2021).

development, as part of the Rio92 events. It is possible that Bernard's incredulity on the intentions of the economic sector towards the environment resulted from the fact that, as a designer, he may have dealt with transactions through which companies wanted to promote forged environmental policy to practice greenwashing.

This section revealed that greenwashing news narratives arose in *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage of Rio92. Seven texts contributed to the discourse of companies and institutions that pretended to protect the environment while destroying it. The following segment will show that greenwashing discourses continued throughout the 20-year study timeframe, suggesting that economic development remained the priority for the business sector, regardless of environmental and social impacts.

### 6.1.2 – Between conferences

Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development continued to be relevant in the period between the 1992 and 2012 conferences that occurred in Rio de Janeiro. This relevance indicates a long-term vitality and the increasing popularity of the concept. In 2001, nine years after Rio92, *O Globo* highlighted the popularity of sustainable development with the columnist Joelmir Beting<sup>133</sup> writing that sustainability was discussed in Brazilian homes and bars. The statement revealed the popularisation of the concept, as it was part of the daily conversations of Brazilian civil society. Especially regarding greenwashing discourses, the coverage of sustainability only re-emerged in 2004, two years after Rio+10, with a total of 15 pieces. These are studied in this section.

In 2004, *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* published two stories that contained greenwashing narratives. On 6 June, *FSP* reported that lack of financial incentives jeopardised the development of the recycling business sector<sup>134</sup>. The article mentioned that a representative of the Brazilian Ministry of Environment had said that the government had projects on sustainable credit that should be implemented

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<sup>133</sup> Beting, J. (2001) Dia mundial do juízo. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 6 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 26 May 2021).

<sup>134</sup> *Folha de S. Paulo* (2004) Recicladores reivindicam incentivos fiscais. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 6 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 1 October 2021).



by the end of the year. One day later, *OG* interviewed the businessman Luiz Eduardo Osório, leader of Ambev, the Americas' Beverage Company<sup>135</sup>, who claimed that corporate social responsibility was linked to sustainable development<sup>136</sup>. Both newspapers showed that by 2004 the Brazilian business sector recognised the importance of sustainable development. Nevertheless, lack of data on investments and initiatives demonstrated that Brazilian media coverage allowed the business sector to promote greenwashing narratives that had been created to promote themselves. This descriptive pattern of texts also reveals a passive and relaxed behaviour of Brazilian media companies in regard to data gathering and content analysis.

Links between the business sector and sustainability arose again in the coverage of the 2006 World Environment Day, when *O Globo* published a piece about the subject<sup>137</sup>. It stated that entrepreneurs from developing countries such as Brazil usually had doubts about sustainable development and provided explanations on the topic. In this article, *OG* shows ideological conflicts between the South and the North that connect to dissatisfaction with global hegemony and its influence on the public sphere, minimising the impacts of environmental destruction.

Moreover, the article suggested that sustainability was a response from companies to social demands and should not be considered a risk, but instead an opportunity to access new markets. It said that sustainability was a necessary investment and should become a basic characteristic of products and services, having equal importance to price and quality. Also, the piece highlighted that sustainability and social responsibility were not philanthropy but instead were related to companies' strategies, assuring quality relationship with different sectors of the public, as employees, clients, and shareholders.

The article was condescending and revealed prejudice, by assuming that entrepreneurs from developing countries did not know about sustainability. Nevertheless, it employed a fragmented discourse, praising sustainability but not

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<sup>135</sup> Original in Portuguese: *Companhia de Bebidas das Américas*

<sup>136</sup> *O Globo* (2004) Corpo-a-corpo. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 7 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 28 September 2021).

<sup>137</sup> *O Globo* (2006) Mitos sobre sustentabilidade e argumentos em prol de seus reais benefícios. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 5 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 6 October 2021).

necessarily explaining what it meant to be sustainable. Furthermore, it tried to convince companies that sustainability would be good for business, not really mentioning that it would have positive impacts not only in economic growth, but also in broader areas such as the environment and society.

Greenwashing stories were back in 2007, when *O Globo* explained that the Brazilian Federation of Banks <sup>138</sup> (*FEBRABAN*, the Portuguese acronym) had published a sustainability report showing better environmental management in banks based in the country<sup>139</sup>. *OG* stated that the Brazilian bank system was one of the most advanced in the world in terms of sustainability, with 45% having environmental management, 50% having specialists in environmental risk and opportunities, 63% reducing resource consumption and waste generation, 63% tracking the destination of garbage, 75% saving electricity, and 63% saving water. *OG*'s article showed that in comparison to 2005, there was an increase from 10% to 33% in the number of banks that performed audits related to environmental practices.

Even though *FEBRABAN*'s sustainability report displayed a positive picture of Brazilian banks' environmental initiatives, information did not specify the real environmental impact of alleged improvements. For instance, the piece stated that 75% of banks saved electricity, but it did not state the amount of electricity saved. Lack of analysis regarding alleged improvement shows that *FEBRABAN* promoted a greenwashing discourse through *O Globo*, with the newspaper disseminating inaccurate information in a careless way.

On the 2007 World Environment Day, *O Globo* published a greenwashing article highlighting a Chinese plan to tackle climate change that focused on economic growth and the fight against poverty<sup>140</sup>. The article explained that China was the second main producer of greenhouse gases, only behind the US. According to *OG*, China argued that global warming was a development issue not only an environmental problem, promising to change its development to a self-sustainable model focused on quality. The piece stated that China intended to increase its

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<sup>138</sup> Original in Portuguese: *Federação Brasileira de Bancos*

<sup>139</sup> Medeiros, F. (2007) Bancos brasileiros também têm gestão sustentável. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 4 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 5 October 2021).

<sup>140</sup> Scofield Jr., G. (2007) China: crescer é prioridade. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 5 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 6 October 2021).

renewable energy sources to 10% of total energy generation and increase the area of its forests by 20% within three years. *OG* revealed that China's complained that since the Industrial Revolution rich countries were mainly responsible for emissions and shouldn't now expect that countries that also wanted to grow and reduce poverty should develop less to reduce emissions.

Investigation shows that, once more, *O Globo* gave space to a government that used World Environment Day to promote a greenwashing environmental proposal. The Chinese plan to tackle climate change was actually a project to promote economic growth. The piece also highlighted China's complaint about rich countries, which moved the focus of the responsibility for environmental destruction out of China, despite the initial mention that it was currently the second highest global producer of greenhouse gases. Once more, *OG* coverage was passive and superficial, contributing to the transmission of misleading or inaccurate data.

Additionally, *OG* published two black-and-white pictures to illustrate the text (Figure 6.2). The photos were produced by international agencies Reuters and Associated Press. Both photographs showed polluted Chinese streets, with people wearing masks to protect themselves from the smoke. This clearly displayed environmental problems in China, and spotlighted the need for China to recognise the global impacts of its destructive economic development. The smoky pictures highlighted the problem of China's refusal to recognise its impacts and continue to solely blame industrialised nations for environmental destruction. In reality, both images undermined the greenwashing narrative presented in the article. The critical concentration of pollution in China was an outcome of its unsustainable development, but even so, the country continued to solely consider sustainable development as a tool to produce economic growth, while refusing to care for its environment.

# China: crescer é prioridade

## Segundo maior poluidor anuncia plano climático sem arriscar desenvolvimento

**Gilberto Scofield Jr.**  
PEQUIM Correspondente

**A** China anunciou ontem seu primeiro Programa Nacional sobre Mudanças Climáticas destacando que, apesar de reconhecer a importância dos esforços de redução da emissão de gases do efeito estufa, sua prioridade atual é o crescimento econômico e a erradicação da pobreza.

O crescimento acelerado faz do país o segundo maior emissor de gases do efeito estufa do mundo, superado apenas pelos EUA, mas alguns cientistas afirmam que a China assumirá a desonrosa liderança já no ano que vem ou, no máximo, em 2009. A previsão não foi negada por Ma Kai, presidente da poderosa Comissão Nacional de Desenvolvimento e Reforma, que fez o anúncio do plano.

Segundo dados de 2004, as emissões de dióxido de carbono — o principal gás do efeito estufa — na China somam de 6,1 bilhões de toneladas. Mas, em vez de estabelecer limites de emissão, o país anunciou a redução do consumo de energia por unidade gerada de PIB (Produto Interno Bruto) em 20% até 2010. Se alcançada, a meta — estabelecida, na verdade, no Plano Quinquenal 2006-2010 — representaria uma redução de 950 milhões de toneladas de CO2.

O problema é que, até agora, as metas de redução de energia não foram atingidas e o consumo aumenta na proporção do crescimento do país.

— Cerca de 75% da produção de CO2 de origem fóssil advém do uso de energia. Acreditamos que um corte no uso de energia pode reduzir a emissão dos gases — disse Ma Kai.

Os EUA também se recusam a estabelecer um teto para a emissão de gases e isso foi destacado pelos chineses como um dos pontos em comum entre os dois maiores poluidores do mundo.

— O problema do aquecimento global é também o desenvolvimento, não apenas do meio ambiente — disse Ma Kai. — Desde a Revolução Industrial até os anos 50, 95% do CO2

UMA CHINESA cobre o rosto diante de um caminhão de carvão (alto) e a ciclista usa uma máscara contra a poluição

**Figure 6.2:** Pictures published in *O Globo* on 5 June 2007

One year later, in 2008, *O Globo* reproduced the greenwashing discourse of the company *HP Brasil*<sup>141</sup>. This time, *OG* reported *HP*'s claim that it was investing in environmental protection by recycling ink cartridges, without providing any data about the project's environmental impact. The article resembled a press release or an advertisement piece and could have been a commercial for the company. It was not the only time that *OG* used its pages to advertise companies through its journalism.

A review of analyses in this chapter shows that *OG* repeatedly promoted greenwashing speeches, which resulted in misleading coverage, making even more explicit *OG*'s intention to promote companies by publishing two promotional pictures (Figure 6.3). Unsigned and coloured images showed the director of *HP Brasil* and a product made with recycled paper, advertising the company.

<sup>141</sup> Soares, O. (2008) No caminho da preservação ambiental. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 2 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 5 October 2021).



**Figure 6.3:** Pictures published in *O Globo* on 2 June 2008

A few days later, *O Globo* published an opinion piece written by Marcio Mattos de Oliveira, who was the legal advisor of Petrobras<sup>142</sup>. It said that not long before, environmental measures were not welcomed by companies, as they were considered with scepticism and seen as an impediment to growth. Nevertheless, the piece noted that after society started retaliating against harmful companies, businesses started to prioritise sustainable growth, with reforestation and conservation projects. The article stated that the green economy was a reality and companies needed to reformulate their administrative and environmental policies to remain competitive.

The presentation of widespread greenwashing narratives shows that the piece was either naïve or malicious regarding its optimism about companies' environmental strategies. In fact, it consisted of another greenwashing discourse about the green economy and companies' environmental consciousnesses. Even though some businesses recognised the importance of sustainable development, only a few invested in environmental issues. In this case, the greenwashing discourse was indirectly supported by *O Globo* – it did not compose it but printed the opinion piece, thus being co-responsible for its content.

<sup>142</sup> Oliveira, M. M. (2008) Onda verde e empresas. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 6 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 8 October 2021).

Greenwashing narratives re-emerged one year later, in 2009, when *Folha de S. Paulo* stated that 43% of Brazilian entrepreneurs were willing to reduce business' profitability to preserve the environment<sup>143</sup>. *FSP* explained that the data referred to an investigation by Grant Thornton International that interviewed 7,200 companies from 36 countries. Once more, the lack of connection between figures and ongoing environmental initiatives reflected greenwashing narratives from the investigation and from *Folha de S. Paulo*, which unreflectively published it.

*O Globo* produced two pieces about the link between the business sector and sustainability in 2010. In the first text, *OG*<sup>144</sup> focused on the automotive industry and sustainability, claiming that companies were developing sustainable vehicles by using green fuel, sustainable tyres, and by reducing oil consumption. The second piece<sup>145</sup> highlighted Brazilian pulp production saying that it was considered the best in the world, with 100% of paper produced in the country deriving from planted forests in industrial areas. *OG* said that Brazil had the best forest management in the world. Both articles propagated discourses elaborated by the business sector. Lack of reflection and investigation resulted in *FSP* reproducing greenwashing narratives and contributing to the misinforming of the Brazilian public about sustainability.

Likewise, *Folha de S. Paulo* published two texts with greenwashing narratives in 2010. An opinion piece written by businessman Carlos Brito about sustainability and the beer industry<sup>146</sup> explained that the beer company that he directed was investing in continuous and sustainable growth, by reducing 30% of water use. It also said that the company was committed to stimulating responsible consumption, environmental sustainability, and had commitment to the community. Moreover, in the following edition, on the 2010 World Environment Day, *Folha de S. Paulo* mentioned sustainability on the cover of a special section about the shoes industry and sustainability<sup>147</sup>. The *FSP* coverage in 2010 published descriptive texts

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<sup>143</sup> Barros, G. (2009) Sustentável. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 4 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 28 September 2021).

<sup>144</sup> Nogueira, D. (2010) Movido a cana. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 2 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 7 October 2021).

<sup>145</sup> Sarmiento, C. (2010) O papel da celulose brasileira na China. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 6 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 29 September 2021).

<sup>146</sup> Brito, C. (2010) Sustentabilidade como parte do negócio. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 4 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 19 October 2021).

<sup>147</sup> *Folha de S. Paulo* (2010) A vez do sapato velho. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 5 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 28 September 2021).

promoting companies but lacking data analysis. Both narratives reproduced companies' discourses without reflection or investigation, perpetuating greenwashing narratives.

Further greenwashing narratives emerged in 2010, as *FSP* announced investments in sustainability by the Brazilian agricultural sector<sup>148</sup>. The article said that under the Brazilian national agribusiness plan relating to 2010/2011 116 billion reais would be invested in the sector, and that two billion reais would be used for recovering degraded areas, planting forests, and further measures linked to sustainable production. Besides, *FSP* claimed that the government aimed to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> by 176 million tons within ten years.

The article was a typical example of Brazilian media coverage promoting the government's greenwashing approach with superficiality and advertising. Investments in sustainability referred to less than 2% of the total amount that would be spent in the agricultural sector. Nevertheless, *Folha de S. Paulo* did not inquire about the amount of funding destined for sustainability, nor did it examine how the funds would be deployed and possible impacts. Additionally, *FSP* displayed a coloured photo produced by photojournalist Sérgio Linn (Figure 6.4). The photograph showed left-wing President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva happily socialising with other politicians and businessmen. The image corroborates the argument that *FSP*'s article acted as a marketing tool for the federal government. Both text and picture could well have been produced by the government's public relations team, thus suggesting that *FSP* journalism was simply supporting and promoting the government.

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<sup>148</sup> Rodrigues, E. & Amato, F. (2010) Produtores rurais terão R\$ 100 bi na próxima safra. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 8 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 18 October 2021).



**Figure 6.4:** Picture published in *O Globo* on 8 June 2010

Use of journalism to advertise companies and products was more frequent in *O Globo*, but it was also present in *Folha de S. Paulo*. Nevertheless, both newspapers also produced more engaging coverage. For instance, pieces about the recycling industry re-emerged on the 2011 World Environment Day, when *FSP* defended the proper disposal of objects<sup>149</sup>, producing more positive coverage to mark an environmental event. The article argued that correct disposal could help sustainability, because it would lead to the economical use and reuse of resources. *FSP* gave the example of recycled tyres that were used to make asphalt. Moreover, it claimed that 40 million tons of electronic waste were produced every year but only 10% were properly recycled. *FSP* also listed companies and programmes that recycled distinct objects in Brazil. The article was informative and promoted environmental proactivity by informing readers about recyclable materials and how to properly dispose of them. This was a good example of a quality piece that was

<sup>149</sup> Freitas, R. F. (2011) Cemitério de objetos. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 5 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 11 October 2021).



part of Brazilian media coverage of sustainability. Not only did the text inform about recycling impacts, it also encouraged readers to contribute to recycling. Arguably, it was a proactive piece, as the journalist wrote about the topic and gathered a list of organisations that were responsible for recycling different types of material.

Another positive viewpoint about sustainable development appeared two days later in *O Globo*. The newspaper published an opinion piece<sup>150</sup> written by sustainability expert Ricardo Voltolini who said that sustainable development was a trendy topic in São Paulo. Voltolini wrote a motivational message explaining that companies needed to include sustainability in their daily practices. In the text, he defined sustainability leaders as free and independent individuals with a collective spirit, moral solidity, passion for what they did, and the ability to convey that passion to others. The piece defended coherence between discourse and practice, and stated that the best businesses had achieved an equilibrium between profit, environmental protection, and social justice. The statement was a reference to the broader concept of sustainable development, which encompasses social, environmental, and economic aspects.

In this opinion piece, Voltolini defended sustainability in companies and praised leaders who practised sustainable activities. Nevertheless, the sustainable development expert utilised greenwashing narratives to defend sustainability, while demanding coherence between discourse and practice from entrepreneurs. The opinion piece was naïve in stating that leaders should not be interested in how sustainability would positively impact the value of their products and that instead they should invest in sustainability for the sake of the planet and future generations. This motivational thinking seemed disconnected from reality, showcasing a fruitless discourse to engage the business sector, which is usually more interested in financial gain.

When compared to an article published on the same day in *Folha de S. Paulo* Voltolini's views seem especially arbitrary. *FSP* presented research about Brazilian companies and sustainability showing that 97% of entrepreneurs believed that it

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<sup>150</sup> Voltolini, R. (2011) Sustentabilidade em alta e o modelo de atuação de seus líderes. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 7 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 15 October 2021).

was fundamental to invest in innovation to achieve sustainability; that 70% believed that companies were concerned but did not invest in sustainability; and that 22% believed that sustainability was the main concern of companies<sup>151</sup>.

These numbers displayed a similar scenario presented in the 1992 coverage of sustainable development, which indicated that companies were not willing to invest their own capital in sustainability. Through this article, *FSP* revealed that almost 20 years later, sustainability still did not have as much investment as it should have or needed. However, in this piece, companies' denialism was worse than in 1992, because by 2011 the importance of environmental protection was widely known. Even so, *FSP* did not explore Brazilian businesses' refusal to invest in sustainability. Nevertheless, figures reinforced findings on the constant use of greenwashing strategies by businesses and media. They also unveiled the fact that Brazilian media repeatedly covered sustainability in a malformed and misinformed way, without fully engaging the Brazilian public.

This section showed 17 greenwashing narratives that emerged in *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage of sustainability from 2004 to 2011, a period between two international environmental conferences held in Rio de Janeiro. Analysis displayed recurrent greenwashing stories in both newspapers, indicating that they spread disinformation in Brazil when covering sustainable development. Greenwashing narratives in Brazilian media coverage of sustainability continued to emerge during Rio+20. The following segment investigates the media content produced during this period.

### **6.1.3 – Rio+20**

Narratives that contributed to the dissemination of greenwashing continued to be produced in Brazilian media coverage of business and sustainability in 2012, as newspapers focused on discussions about Rio+20. This section investigates 12 texts published by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* during Rio+20.

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<sup>151</sup> Frias, M. C. (2011) Contradição. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 7 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 28 September 2021).

Audiences reading *O Globo* on 13 June 2012 were exposed to conflicting data. In one article, *OG* reported<sup>152</sup> that the Federation of Industries of the State of São Paulo<sup>153</sup> (*FIESP*, the Portuguese acronym) and the Federation of Industries of the State of Rio de Janeiro<sup>154</sup> (*Firjan*, the Portuguese acronym) presented an environmental proposal during Rio+20. *OG* explained that *FIESP* and *Firjan* represented 75% of Brazilian industry. The piece also stated that Brazilian industries alleged that they were responsible for 4% of the country's emissions and polluted proportionally less than industries based in other countries. Moreover, *O Globo* interviewed the president of *FIESP* Paulo Skaf, who mentioned that Brazil was an example of clean energy production, adding that the hydroelectric sector needed incentives to increase, even, if necessary, in the Amazon region.

Arguably, the piece revealed a positive shift in Brazilian industry regarding sustainability. There was, nevertheless, propaganda about the Brazilian industrial sector, which resembled greenwashing narratives. *O Globo* reposted the statement that Brazilian industry polluted less than others, without further data to support the argument. Once again, *OG* was reckless with the information as it did not confirm its veracity before publishing it. It is, though, significant to analyse the opinion of *FIESP*'s president, who appealed for incentives for hydroelectric production, even if it meant flooding the Amazon rainforest. This statement betrayed the real interest behind industries' greenwashing discourse, which was guaranteeing economic development in Brazil regardless of its environmental impacts.

On the same day, *O Globo* reported<sup>155</sup> that the Brazilian steel sector expanded despite causing environmental problems. The piece highlighted a study promoted by the Ethos Institute, which denounced the fact that the charcoal used to produce steel was connected to slavery and environmental destruction in Brazil. *OG* stated that, according to the study, 60% of Brazilian charcoal originated from forest destruction, slavery, or poor work conditions. It also revealed that in 2010, 53 of the 220 companies connected to slavery were charcoal producers. Figures linked the economy to environmental and social impacts, showing the importance of

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<sup>152</sup> Batista, H. G. (2012) Indústria quer conciliar mais produção e meio ambiente. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 13 June Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 27 October 2021).

<sup>153</sup> Original in Portuguese: *Federação das Indústrias do Estado de São Paulo*

<sup>154</sup> Original in Portuguese: *Federação das Indústrias do Estado do Rio de Janeiro*

<sup>155</sup> Gonzalez, A. (2012) Siderurgia, um setor que desmata e escraviza. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 13 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 27 October 2021).

sustainability to industrial development in Brazil. While the piece denounced environmental exploitation, it did not promote further social engagement.

In summary, this article destroyed the argument presented in the previous text that attempted to show a positive shift by Brazilian industry in promoting sustainability. The pieces were completely discrepant. Forest destruction, slavery, and poor work conditions are directly incompatible with sustainable development. *OG* presented both articles separately, but the incompatibility of the content published in the same edition indicated editorial disconnection in the newspaper. Besides, greenwashing findings corroborate the argument that *OG* repeatedly misinformed the Brazilian public in regard to sustainability. It is hard to know whether *O Globo*'s spread of inaccurate information was intentional or a result of lack of awareness about environmental issues and sustainable development. However, as part of Latin America's main media conglomerate, it can be assumed that the company could have invested in the environmental education of its communication workers, or hired journalists specialising in environmental coverage to join its team. The negligence in the quality of the content suggests *O Globo*'s lack of priority regarding its environmental coverage.

One day later, on 14 June 2012, *O Globo*<sup>156</sup> stated that 93% of Brazilian companies had sustainable development as a main premise when investing in innovation. *OG* highlighted the fact that the data was revealed by a study by the National Confederation of Industries<sup>157</sup>, which also said that Brazilian entrepreneurs acknowledged that the future of their businesses depended on offering sustainable products at competitive prices. The coverage unveiled greenwashing narratives because *O Globo* did not connect figures to practical examples. The study was passively reported, indicating that *OG* remained inert throughout the studied timeframe. By doing so, *OG* helped companies to disseminate greenwashing discourses, while producing passive and uncritical coverage.

Moreover, this investigation supports the assumption that continuously misleading coverage throughout the 20 years studied in this thesis resulted in the

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<sup>156</sup> Oliveira, F. (2012) Inovação sustentável na indústria. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 14 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 25 October 2021).

<sup>157</sup> Original in Portuguese: *Confederação Nacional da Indústria*

Brazilian public being repeatedly subjected to wrong or incomplete data regarding sustainable development. Recurring inaccurate information may have prevented Brazilians from demanding effective environmental protection and policy. This finding corresponds to the conclusions reached in the analysis about the coverage of environmental education in the previous chapter, *Social narratives in the coverage of sustainable development*. There, it was suggested that the coverage gap in education and sustainable development may have resulted in low sustainability awareness and the absence of social mobilisation towards efficient environmental policies.

In contrast to its former articles reinforcing greenwashing narratives, on 15 June, *O Globo* published an opinion piece written by *OG* journalist Agostinho Vieira who was alarmed by companies' greenwashing practices<sup>158</sup>. Vieira highlighted the need to differentiate discourse from practice, referring to businesses' sustainability reports. This argument recognised that companies used greenwashing data in official documents, such as sustainability reports. Moreover, Vieira suggested that businesses should incorporate to their reports simple, clear, and transparent goals, present annual sustainability reports, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Once again, the journalist linked companies' sustainability reports to greenwashing. The recommendation to use clear data indicated that businesses needed to be more honest in regard to their environmental practices. Vieira's opinion piece was a call for companies to improve sustainability reports and to turn them into credible environmental tools. However, it could also be a call for journalists to stop replicating information without analysing the veracity of the content.

Continuing the investigation on greenwashing narratives reproduced by Brazilian newspapers in 2012, *Folha de S. Paulo* published an article saying that only 21% of Brazilian companies published sustainability reports, on 18 June<sup>159</sup>. One day later, *O Globo* printed an editorial<sup>160</sup> stating that the business sector had asked the United Nations to support a recommendation to make mandatory for

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<sup>158</sup> Vieira, A. (2012) O discurso e a práticas das empresas na Rio+20. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 15 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 9 November 2021).

<sup>159</sup> Sciarreta, T. (2012) Empresas não fazem relatório ambiental. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 18 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 16 November 2021).

<sup>160</sup> Gonzalez, A. (2012) Editorial. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 19 June, Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 10 November 2021).

companies the publication of sustainability reports. The editorial complained that most corporations transformed reports into self-promotion pieces. It criticised the idea of making such documents mandatory, which showed that sustainability reports were still regarded as a marketing instrument and not as an evaluation of management values.

Both pieces highlighted problems related to sustainability reports in Brazil, a subject that had been previously addressed by *OG* journalist Agostinho Vieira. The coverage showed that the low number of companies publishing these reports and the need to ask for UN support were a demonstration that sustainable development was still not considered an essential element for the business sector. Nevertheless, it is significant that *FSP* and *OG* considered sustainability reports a problem. *FSP* highlighted the low number of Brazilian companies publishing the documents. Surprisingly, *OG* was more critical, describing the reports as self-promotion and a marketing tool. This editorial from *O Globo* diverged from previous irreflective articles published by the newspaper, which repeatedly made and communicated greenwashing and misleading discourses in careless ways.

Just a week after *O Globo*'s edition from 13 June 2012 that displayed misleading content, *OG* readers were again submitted to antagonistic information in the 20 June 2012 paper. First, *OG* wrote that the Brazilian Service of Assistance to Micro and Small Enterprises<sup>161</sup> (*Sebrae*, the Portuguese acronym) was offering credit for companies that wanted to reduce environmental impacts<sup>162</sup>. *OG* also stated that a study made by *Sebrae* revealed that 79% of Brazilian micro and small entrepreneurs realised that adopting environmental protection measures could attract more clients, while 46% considered sustainability to be an income source.

Paradoxically, in the same edition, *O Globo* released<sup>163</sup> research data from the National Industry Confederation. Findings from this investigation diverged from the previous text published in *OG*. Results displayed by the newspaper showed that 39% of Brazilian executives believed that lack of sustainable actions could

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<sup>161</sup> Original in Portuguese: *Serviço Brasileiro de Apoio às Micro e Pequenas Empresas*

<sup>162</sup> Barreto, D. (2012) Novas linhas de crédito para investimentos sustentáveis. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 20 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 2 November 2021).

<sup>163</sup> Gonzalez, A. (2012) Futuro e imagem da indústria ligados a uma economia verde. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 20 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 2 November 2021).

endanger companies, while 18% trusted that it could produce negative impacts. *OG* also mentioned that 69% of entrepreneurs thought that sustainability involved additional expense. According to *OG*, investing money in sustainability was considered a problem by 30% of interviewees, while 27% confirmed that their companies lacked sustainability.

These pieces were expository and lacked data analysis, corroborating with the argument that *O Globo*'s coverage was passive and careless. *O Globo*'s edition of 20 June subjected readers to incongruent data. Research findings were divergent, and the newspaper published them without questioning the content. Repeated discrepancy within a week indicated that *OG*'s editorial team worked disconnectedly; *OG*'s newsroom behaviour improved the probability of creating and reproducing contradictory information. The *OG* edition dated 20 June 2012 supported the assumption of greenwashing and disinformation narratives in Brazilian media coverage. The mixture of greenwashing data with careless production by *O Globo*'s editorial team resulted in the newspaper offering divergent information to readers.

In the same edition, *O Globo* produced three texts about companies' greenwashing initiatives. It reported that Nestlé paid for a study of biofuels by the International Institute of Sustainable Development (IISD)<sup>164</sup>. According to the newspaper, the research showed that biofuels were unsustainable due the high consumption of water, leading to a 75% food price increase. *OG* highlighted that the study, nevertheless, praised Brazilian ethanol that was considered more efficient and sustainable. One day later, *OG* published an article about Coca-Cola<sup>165</sup> saying that Brazil was a strategic market for the company in regard to sustainability. It stated that in Brazil, Coca-Cola had created innovations such as plant and recyclable packaging, and social projects that produced jobs and inclusion for thousands of Brazilians. *OG* even produced an article<sup>166</sup> about a small business that was building

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<sup>164</sup> Batista, H. G. (2012) Água, um recurso limitado. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 20 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 2 November 2021).

<sup>165</sup> Ribeiro, F. (2012) Coca-cola: Brasil lidera programas sustentáveis. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 21 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 8 November 2021).

<sup>166</sup> Alexandrino, R. (2012) O planeta agradece. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 24 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 3 November 2021).

surfboards from wood to help sustainability. The piece explained that the product was an innovation as surfboards were usually made from oil-based products.

These three examples showed *O Globo*'s support for the marketing discourses of international companies that only used the notion of sustainable development as greenwashing discourse. Such superficial coverage worked as corporate promotional pieces while raising questions about the quality of *OG*'s journalism. This chapter revealed a repetitive pattern of journalistic texts that did not engage with the content, simply reporting data without further investigation or interpretation.

Meanwhile, *Folha de S. Paulo* published an opinion piece written by the director of environmental affairs at the Brazilian Mining Institute, Rinaldo César Mancin<sup>167</sup>. The text focused on the relationship between the mining industry and sustainability. It referred to a study of the main mining companies operating in Brazil that showed that there was a growing commitment towards the adoption of management practices related to environmental, economic, and social impacts. This time, *FSP* publicised the greenwashing discourse of a representative of the Brazilian Mining Institute. As it was an opinion piece, the newspaper could not interfere with the content. However, *FSP* could have rejected it. Despite the misleading narrative, this opinion piece showcased the attempt by different types of industries, including environmentally destructive sectors, to publicly connect to sustainable development. Further analysis of the environmental impacts of mining activities in the Amazon is presented on chapter 8, *The coverage of the Amazon rainforest: a case study*.

This section investigated 12 pieces that revealed that *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo*'s coverage of companies' sustainability projects repeatedly described greenwashing narratives. Passivity was also recurrent in the media coverage, as journalists did not engage with the content by producing further investigation and data analysis. Both newspapers frequently offered space for businesses to present sustainable development initiatives without checking their environmental impacts or their results. Coverage of businesses narratives worked as merchandising strategies and turned journalistic pieces into advertisements. The analysis of this

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<sup>167</sup> Mancin, R. C. (2012) Pesquisas retratam avanços sustentáveis na mineração. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 20 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 16 November 2021).



material corroborates with the theory that *O Globo* and *Folha de S. Paulo* intentionally produced greenwashing coverage, clearly creating misleading content throughout the 20-year timeframe of this research. Continuing the study of the economic aspects of *FSP*'s and *OG*'s coverage of sustainable development, the following section will investigate articles that focused on consumerism.

## 6.2 – Consumerism

This segment continues investigating controversies between poor and rich nations that arose in Brazilian media coverage of sustainability. Now, the spotlight is on seven texts that focused on the relationship between consumerism and sustainable development. Pieces examined in this section were produced by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* between 1992 and 2012.

Considering the thesis's 20-year timeframe, the coverage of consumerism and sustainability can already be witnessed in 1992, when *O Globo* printed the opinion piece of Brazilian federal congressman and economist Aloizio Mercadante, who criticised unfeasible production and consumption standards<sup>168</sup>. The left-wing politician said humanity was far from moving from unbearable to a sustainable development, but he hoped that Rio92's discussions would help the world achieve a bearable level of development. Mercadante stated that irrational exploitation of natural resources, high pollution levels, and environmental damage resulted from a widespread disease within society. The metaphorical comparison suggested that the economist considered that society related to the planet in such an inappropriate way that it could be understood as an illness.

Furthermore, Mercadante commented about problems related to population growth, income concentration, and financial difficulties in promoting environmental protection. The high number of subjects cited by Mercadante reflected the complexity of sustainability and its impacts in several areas. These viewpoints corroborated with the *Brundtland Report*'s (WCED, 1987:25) explanation that sustainability is “a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological

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<sup>168</sup> Mercadante, A. (1992) Desenvolvimento suportável. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 13 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 8 July 2021).

development, and institutional change are made consistent with future as well as present needs”. Therefore, both the opinion piece and the UN defined the achievement of global sustainable development as depending on profound changes in societies’ infrastructure, principles, and behaviour.

Sixteen years later, in 2008, *Folha de S. Paulo* printed a conflicting piece displaying the pretence of a non-consumerism discourse while encouraging consumption and promoting brands<sup>169</sup>. *FSP* stated that the 13<sup>th</sup> Rio Fashion Week focused on sustainability, asking consumers to think about the environment when buying new clothes. The message was confusing as it encouraged using recycled clothes but specified that it did not mean reusing items from previous years but buying new products that were recycled by brands. In summary, it promoted consumerism by indicating that new clothes should be bought. *FSP*’s narrative was conflicting and greenwashing. It endorsed consumption, while falsely promoting fashion week as an environmentally friendly event. In addition, *Folha de S. Paulo* displayed illustrations of bikinis and summer clothes (Figure 6.5), advertising the brand of each piece. These images emphasised the greenwashing discourse of the article as they exhibited new pieces from famous brands, encouraging consumerism.

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<sup>169</sup> Mesquita, L. (2008) Por um biquíni sustentável. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 7 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 1 October 2021).

III FASHION RIO

# POR UM BIQUÍNI SUSTENTÁVEL

Semana de moda começa hoje com tema ecológico



Os biquínis e maiôs de Lenny Niemeyer têm como inspiração o NINETISMO, o fundo do mar

LIÇA MISSQUITA  
FOTOS: DAU/ARTISTBYNAME

A palavra de ordem é cuidar, mas não vale "menos cuidar" o mesmo biquíni de uma semana no próximo verão. O lance é pensar no ambiente na hora de renovar o guarda-roupa.

A 13ª edição de Fashion Rio, que acontece de hoje até esta-feira na Marinha da Glória, no Rio, tem como tema "Espensar, Reciclar, Renovar". E a reflexão sobre sustentabilidade paira sobre mais uma semana de moda brasileira — o assunto já foi tratado em mais de uma edição do São Paulo Fashion Week.

Entre as novidades da semana de moda carioca estão o retorno do estilista Carlos Tufvesson, que há quatro anos não desfila no Rio, e a chegada da grife Espaço Fashion.

A imaginação dos estilistas não se prende ao tema sustentabilidade. Na linha mais "cibique", a coleção da Maria Bonita Extra é inspirada em "uma personagem de Margherita Duran que vive um romance intenso na Indochina durante os anos 50". Já a "relação das pessoas com o tempo e o destino" é o tema de Rita Warner. Uma "espécie de virgem de Audrey Hepburn à Clima" é o que norteia a criação de Walter Rodrigues para o verão. Lenny Niemeyer fez sua moda praia inspirada no "mimetismo".

Com propostas menos complexas, a Camilla Area para as passadeiras uma coleção baseada nas flores do Pacífico enquanto a Beiley mergulha no mundo das nuvens esportivas e investe, nesta edição, na coleção feminina.



A clássica ESTAMPADA FLORAL hawaiana aparece em diferentes versões na passarela da Camilla



A SANDÁLIA DE COURO é destaque da próxima coleção da Maria Bonita Extra

A mimetiza >>> Graça Ottieni vai de ANOS 70 e vestidos longos



Figure 6.5: Images published in *Folha de S. Paulo* on 7 June 2008

Analysis of Brazilian media coverage of consumerism and sustainability continued on the 2011 World Environment Day, when *Folha de S. Paulo* produced three pieces linking sustainable development to consumption. One text stated that the fashion industry noticed the potential and importance of sustainable production, mentioning brands that were developing sustainable products<sup>170</sup>. Another piece advertised energy-efficient products<sup>171</sup>, advising consumers to look for information regarding energy efficiency when buying products. It called special attention to new televisions that consumed 50% less energy and mentioned companies that were developing energy-efficient products. In addition, *FSP* displayed images of a TV and a washing machine (Figure 6.6), exhibiting products and brands in the same

<sup>170</sup> *Folha de S. Paulo* (2011) Mundinho fashion sempre no clima. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 5 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 11 October 2021).

<sup>171</sup> Mota, D. (2011) Sorria, este produto consome menos energia. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 5 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 11 October 2021).

way as a marketing advertisement. These articles could hardly relate to journalism, as their objectives were closer to those of commercials.



**Figure 6.6:** Pictures published in *Folha de S. Paulo* on 5 June 2011

Finally, the third piece in the *Folha de S. Paulo* edition about the 2011 World Environment Day covered a study on the green economy and consumers<sup>172</sup>. It stated that researchers from the Technical University of Berlin and the Federal University of Paraná had established four consumer profiles and their relationships with sustainable products. *FSP* explained that these archetypes would help connect green products to consumers. Additionally, the article claimed that the number of studies of sustainable consumption was increasing in the world, without providing

<sup>172</sup> Varella, M. (2011) Um perfil para cada produto. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 5 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 11 October 2021).

data to support this. Moreover, the article announced the titles of two academic articles, which was unusual in mass media news coverage.

In summary, the *Folha de S. Paulo* pieces promoted consumerism while spotlighting more sustainable products and consumerism practices. The main contradiction in these articles is that promotion of consumerism does not link to environmental or sustainability principles. Therefore, it should not be commemorated or highlighted on World Environment Day.

Likewise, in 2012, *O Globo* continued to report on the link between sustainable development and consumerism. On 17 June, *OG* published two articles about the topic. The first text covered a supermarket campaign that lent reusable bags to help its clients lead a more sustainable life<sup>173</sup>. The second article promoted a clothing store that was selling items that were 100% made from old collections<sup>174</sup>. These pieces expressed narratives that were greenwashing marketing campaigns promoted by companies. In both cases, *O Globo* printed uncritical and descriptive texts that resembled press releases. In addition to the merchandise, pieces also showed companies' intentions to appear environmentally friendly. This objective indicates that companies desired to link the concept of sustainability to their products and brands, while announcing the linkage to consumers with the aim of increasing sales.

Investigation of Brazilian media coverage of consumerism and sustainability revealed seven texts with greenwashing discourses that encouraged consumerism and promoted companies, products, and brands, while using the label of sustainable development. Both *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* endorsed merchandising strategies through journalistic pieces filled with greenwashing narratives. The next section will analyse texts that revealed monetisation of natural resources as part of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage of sustainable development.

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<sup>173</sup> O Globo (2012) Sustentabilidade. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 17 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 25 October 2021).

<sup>174</sup> O Globo (2012) Sustentabilidade está na moda. (2012). *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 17 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 25 October 2021).

### 6.3 – Monetisation of natural resources

This section investigates how monetisation of natural resources emerged in Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development. Preliminary findings showed that *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* monetised natural resources. This segment presents four articles produced between 2002 – as part of the coverage of Rio+10 – and 2008.

Initial examples of the environment being reported as a financial resource emerged in *O Globo*'s coverage of Rio+10 and focused on discussions about oceans. *OG* published an article<sup>175</sup> about the first agreement established in Rio+10, which referred to the restoration of fishing areas. The text stated that representatives of 189 countries had approved an agreement establishing goals and deadlines for recovering fishing stocks all over the world. It stated that, according to the UN, 70% of fish stocks were over-exploited. Moreover, *OG* explained that the agreement established that marine protection areas would be created until 2012, and that by 2015, commercial fishing areas would have recovered. It is noticeable that, despite primarily intending to discuss ocean health, the article focused on fish stocks and the recovery of fishing areas. The economic emphasis indicated that countries were concerned about oceans as financial resources but not so much about the oceans' environmental importance, aligning with the assumption of the monetisation of nature by Brazilian media.

Furthermore, the piece displayed two black-and-white pictures produced by international news agencies Reuters and *Agence France-Presse* (Figure 6.7). The upper photo showed a man walking in front of an image of planet Earth. The lower picture showed African women protesting against agricultural subsidies from rich nations, highlighting social participation in sustainability discussions. This demonstration also revealed how economic topics were a priority for social groups and not only for nations' representatives participating in Rio+10. Both images related to Rio+10 activities but did not connect to the piece's subject which was the restoration of fishing areas. This suggests that the newspaper prioritised showcasing aspects of Rio+10, focusing on the event rather than illustrating the content that was

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<sup>175</sup> 'O Globo (2002) Rio+10: acordo para restaurar áreas de pesca. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 28 August. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 14 September 2021).

discussed in the text. The image's change of focus indicated *OG*'s attempt to move the emphasis from the harsh subjects discussed in the piece – ocean health.

**CIÊNCIA E VIDA**

## Rio+10: acordo para restaurar áreas de pesca

Primeiro acordo firmado na conferência de Johannesburgo é enfraquecido por pressão dos Estados Unidos

● **REPRESENTAÇÃO:** Representantes de 189 países chegaram ontem ao Cúpula Mundial sobre Desenvolvimento Sustentável, a Rio+10, a primeira grande reunião da conferência, estabelecendo metas e prazos para a recuperação de áreas de pesca em todo o mundo. Atualmente, segundo dados da ONU, 70% das estoques pesqueiros marinhos negativas ou são superexplorados. Por pressão dos Estados Unidos, no entanto, foi acrescentado ao acordo um trecho segundo o qual haverá recuperação apenas "onde for possível", sob a alegação de que algumas áreas seriam irreversíveis.

Apesar do otimismo, que abre uma janela para que se retomem a exploração das áreas, o acordo foi considerado como uma vitória porque estabelece metas para recuperar a vigoria. Os EUA viriam se opor à fixação de prazos para os acordos.

O acordo será incorporado ao Plano de Ação Global a ser apresentado ao fim da conferência, cujo principal objetivo é transformar as ações concretas em metas da Agenda 21.

**Serão criadas áreas de proteção marinha**

O documento prevê a recuperação das áreas de pesca comercial até 2015, por meio da redução da produção "ao nível máximo sustentável". Ou seja, até onde a atividade não comprometer o nível ambiental ou for prejudicial à sustentabilidade dos peixes, garantindo a pesca das espécies de definhamento.

Ficou acordado também que até 2012 serão criadas áreas de proteção marinha, o que poderá dar a muitas espécies ameaçadas de extinção a chance de recuperação.

Será mais difícil alcançar acordos sobre agricultura, um dos principais temas debatidos ontem. Líderes de países



Um participante da conferência de Rio+10 passa por um guia turístico montado próximo ao local da reunião.

### Johannesburgo tem uma cúpula sem estrelas

Astros e realizações esnobam festa

● **REPRESENTAÇÃO:** Jean-François Revel e Shirley Maebriem também vão. Porém sem outras participações e o final não conseguiu visto de entrada. Comparada com a Rio 92, que reuniu o papa João Paulo II e o Bush Jovem, a cúpula de Johannesburgo sofre com a total ausência de celebridades. Leonardo DiCaprio já, em alguns momentos, contrasta com o EIA para encerrar a viagem. Nem mesmo o vice de Bush, o polêmico dos casos ambientais e de luta contra a pobreza, Dennis Cofer. A ausência do grande nome pode ser um problema para os organizadores do evento, acadêmicos, por conseguir o índice de cobertura de imprensa possível para os temas discutidos. E a falta de nomes famosos encoraja a saída. Mas, visto do Rio de Janeiro, o cancelamento da presença não é visto como uma perda. Para alguns, a presença de um representante dos Estados Unidos é o suficiente para garantir a credibilidade do evento.

— Em 92 as pessoas achavam que podiam mudar o mundo — disse Mário Sérgio, do grupo Amigos da Terra. — Agora as expectativas são de que não haverá grandes avanços.

● **REPRESENTAÇÃO:** Um participante da conferência de Rio+10 passa por um guia turístico montado próximo ao local da reunião.



Um participante da conferência de Rio+10 passa por um guia turístico montado próximo ao local da reunião.

● **AFRICANOS:** Deram um protesto contra a política de ajuste dos preços dos produtos agrícolas.

### Magistrados pela Terra

Juízes prometem aplicar leis ambientais

● **REPRESENTAÇÃO:** Os esforços para melhorar a proteção ambiental em todo o mundo ganharam o selo de um grupo de mais de cem importantes magistrados de tribunais superiores de 17 países reunidos num simpósio internacional. Eles concordaram em tentar mais vezes a aplicação de leis ambientais, desde que elas estejam em vigor. Os juízes criam que existe legislação eficiente no interior dos países, mas que é difícil por ela.

Entre os participantes que apresentaram os Principais de Johannesburgo sobre o Papel da Lei e do Desenvolvimento Sustentável foram juízes dos Estados Unidos, do Brasil e da Rússia. Enfatizaram que o sigil estado do novo ambiente global requer que o Judiciário, com o auxílio do Inquérito de lei, implemente de forma rápida e desburocratizada as leis nacionais e internacionais que (...) permitirão aliviar a pobreza e sustentar uma civilização duradoura", disse um participante. A iniciativa do encontro de juízes pertence ao Programa Ambiental da ONU.

Figure 6.7: Pictures published in *O Globo* on 28 August 2002

A week later, still during Rio+10, *O Globo* published a special supplement on oceans, continuing the coverage that centred on the monetisation of natural resources. The supplement's editorial<sup>176</sup> underlined the need for the sustainable exploitation of oceans and the protection of ocean wealth. Despite citing the biological and scientific importance of oceans, the editorial highlighted oceans' economic significance, stressing the existence of chemical compounds and mineral reserves in oceans. Investigation shows that *OG* did not provide background data

<sup>176</sup> Azevedo, A. L. (2002). Planeta Terra. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 4 September. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 3 June 2021).

and contextualisation to improve environmental knowledge, for instance in referring to the importance of oceans in combating global climate change. This background information gap constituted another missed opportunity for *O Globo* to improve Brazilians' environmental awareness.

Regarding visualisation, *OG* displayed two small images of fish and a large picture of a fisherman repairing a net (Figure 6.8). Illustrations utilised in this section corroborated the text's economic focus, portraying oceans as a fountain of resources. It can be inferred that *OG*'s images displayed sections of a business: fish that are products and a worker whose livelihood depends on the ocean.

*O Globo*'s editorial and images clearly focused on the economic value of oceans. The text showed that *OG* supported the economic exploitation of ocean resources. The special edition considered ocean protection a way to safeguard incomes by exploiting natural resources; essentially, oceans should be protected to guarantee further profits.



**Figure 6.8:** Images published in *O Globo* on 4 September 2002

As part of the special supplement about oceans, *O Globo* published a two-page illustration<sup>177</sup> showing the connection between oceans and sustainability (Figure 6.9). The piece mentioned that oceans were so important to the global

<sup>177</sup> *O Globo* (2002) Mares: riquezas e ameaças. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 4 September. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 15 September 2021).



economy and the climate that it would be impossible to achieve sustainable development without healthy seas. *OG* presented a coloured image of planet Earth focusing on oceans, specifying areas of mangrove, coral reefs, pollution, nuclear waste, depletion of fish stocks, and aquaculture. In addition, it displayed basic economic and environmental data, informing readers that: oceans provided 21 trillion dollars of goods and services; about 1.5% of the deep sea was explored; two thirds of marine mammals were threatened with extinction; and that oceans absorbed half of global CO2 and were essential to climate regulation.

The content made explicit connections between oceans’ natural resources and their economic values. Once more, the piece emphasised the need to preserve oceans due to their economic importance, exemplifying *OG*’s monetisation of natural resources. In relation to environmental aspects, the text mentioned the link between oceans and climate regulation, as well as the exploitation of animals that could lead to extinction. Despite claiming that sustainability would not be possible without healthy oceans, the piece mentioned the importance of caring for the oceans to keep exploring them. This viewpoint coincides with the perspective of *OG*’s editorial, previously analysed, which considered oceans as a source of natural reserves to be exploited.

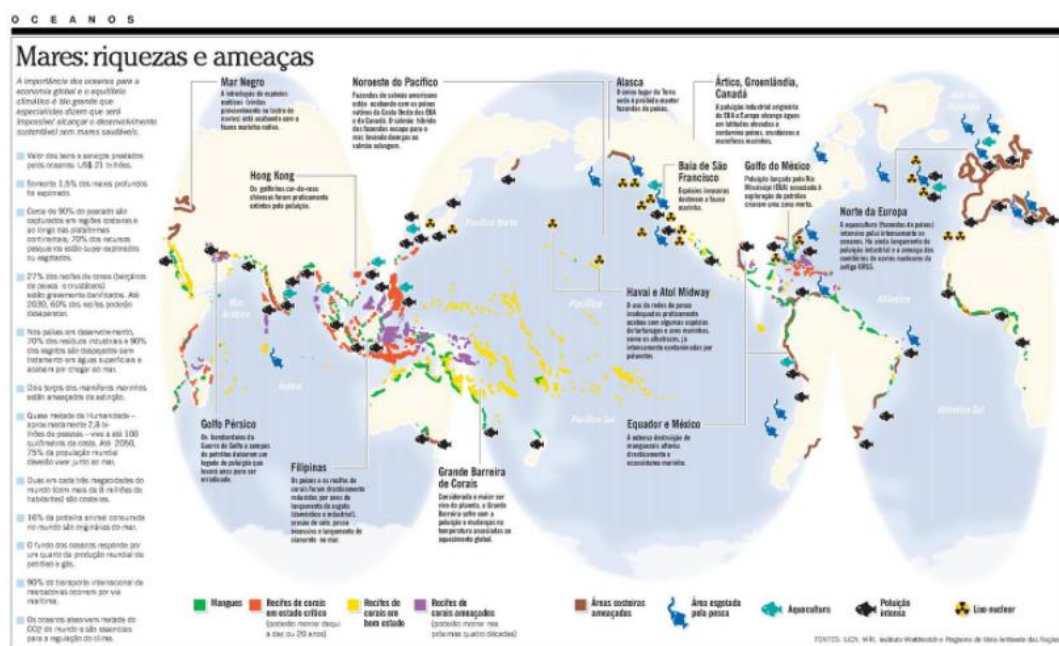


Figure 6.9: Image published in *O Globo* on 4 September 2002

Another example of the monetisation of natural resources emerged in *Folha de S. Paulo* on the 2003 World Environment Day<sup>178</sup>. *FSP* mentioned the launch of a new environmental policy in Brazil regarding mahogany exploitation. It explained that mahogany could only be exploited under sustainable forest management. Additionally, *FSP* stated that the policy forbade for five years the commercialisation of mahogany extracted from areas of deforestation. The objective was to stop it from competing with mahogany from sustainably managed forests, which would be more expensive. The article also mentioned that Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva donated 14,000m<sup>3</sup> of illegally extracted mahogany, worth roughly seven million reais, to NGOs that would invest the resources from the sale in sustainable development projects; a further 26,000m<sup>3</sup> of illegally extracted mahogany would also to be donated.

This article was purely descriptive and demonstrated that the Brazilian government considered the commercial values of natural resources to be as important as environmental protection and sustainable exploitation. Analogously to *O Globo*'s coverage of oceans, *Folha de S. Paulo* described forest resources as mere products, hence monetising nature. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the strategy on mahogany exploitation was the centre of the Brazilian federal government's celebrations on the 2003 World Environment Day. This shows that the government used the data to promote itself as environmentally friendly with the help of national media coverage. *FSP*, though, did not explain how sustainable forest management occurred in the Amazon. In fact, the piece resembled a press release from the Brazilian government to promote its environmental strategies. Without further data to support statements, *FSP* contributed to the spread of greenwashing narratives from the Brazilian authorities.

This segment focused on the analysis of four texts produced by Brazilian media that monetised nature. The coverage revealed that Brazilian authorities produced weak environmental policies and greenwashing practices, while supporting environmental destruction and economic growth in the country. The media was passive in its coverage and did not investigate the impacts of ineffective environmental policies. The investigation of economic narratives that are part of

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<sup>178</sup> Silveira, W. (2003) Lula pede revolução contra individualismo. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 6 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 14 October 2021).

the Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development continues in the next section with the analysis of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* pieces produced from 1992 to 2012, which exposed conflicts over money between rich and poor nations in discussions about sustainability.

#### **6.4 – Conflicts over money**

Conflicts between rich and poor nations emerged throughout the 20-year period of Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development. Investigation of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage of sustainability revealed that discussions on financial resources for sustainable development projects were the reason for several clashes between rich and poor countries throughout this timeframe. This section examines ten pieces that presented debates about monetary issues.

##### **6.4.1 – Discussions in Rio92**

Analysis has disclosed that Brazilian media coverage of conflicts over money between the Global North and South began even before the opening of Rio92. *O Globo* published the opinion of former Rio de Janeiro's Mayor Israel Klabin<sup>179</sup>, who highlighted the fact that countries from the South suffered the consequences of environmental problems caused by nations from the North. Klabin suggested economic changes in developed states and access to technology and funds to improve living conditions in developing nations. Klabin's opinion piece highlighted the dispute between developed and developing countries and blamed the North for climate-related concerns. Nevertheless, Klabin gave suggestions to both sides. This more neutral viewpoint spotlighted the fact that all nations could make amendments and participate in the promotion of a more sustainable future.

Investments in sustainability were the focal point of a 1992 *Folha de S. Paulo* editorial<sup>180</sup> that presented a disappointing prospect for the outcome of Rio92. The text stated that the main problem of environmental protection was its estimated

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<sup>179</sup> *O Globo* (1992) Comportamento de países ricos tem que mudar, diz ex-prefeito. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 28 May. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 7 July 2021).

<sup>180</sup> *Folha de S. Paulo* (1992) Expectativas limitadas. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 2 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 20 April 2021).

cost of 1.3 trillion dollars, which needed to be invested until the year 2000. The *FSP* editorial claimed that rich and poor nations (the North and the South; the developed and the developing) disagreed on financial ways to compensate for environmental damage. The piece presented a catastrophic perspective for the future based on an unnamed UN study, mentioning species extinction, full devastation of the Amazon rainforest by 2100, and the disappearance of cities due to rising sea levels.

This alarmist approach also spotlighted the contrast with greenwashing coverage that attempted to minimise the probable impacts of environmental devastation. The *FSP* editorial was very pessimistic about global environmental protection. It solely emphasised negative aspects, criticism, and fears for future. Such fatalistic viewpoints contribute to spreading discredit and discouraging social engagement. As Hackett *et al.* (2017) explain, media coverage that produces general pessimism usually results in disengagement and cynicism. In that way, the *FSP* piece was a good example of unwanted environmental coverage. Moreover, *Folha de S. Paulo* stated that economic issues were responsible for disputes between rich and poor nations over environmental issues. It did not explain the different positions, just underlined the conflict. Clearly, the superficial description did not contribute to improving awareness of sustainable development.

A different perspective of Rio92 discussions arose in a couple of articles that focused on solutions instead of displaying tensions between the Global North and South. First, *O Globo* described the views of US economist Hazel Henderson, who defended using a quarter of the money spent on weapons for investment in sustainable development<sup>181</sup>. According to *OG*, Henderson explained that developed countries spent 1 trillion dollars on the arms trade; less than 20% of this amount would be enough to guarantee the whole world clean water, energy and homes, to tackle erosion, and pay the external debts of developing nations. However, *OG* stated that Henderson recognised that environmental protection needed to become a global priority beforehand. In the same week, Henderson's viewpoint gained support from the President of the International Monetary Fund Michael

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<sup>181</sup> *O Globo* (1992) Economista propõe prioridades nos gastos. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 4 June, Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 10 July 2021).

Camdessus<sup>182</sup>. *Folha de S. Paulo* reported that Camdessus argued that the end of military investment and protectionism could provide funds to invest in sustainability in developing nations.

It is evident that these articles were more thoughtful in reporting disagreements between poor and rich nations than previous coverage analysed in this chapter. Instead of emphasising tensions between rich and poor countries, *O Globo* and *Folha de S. Paulo* provided suggestions that could help solve the dispute. These media narratives also revealed that if environmental protection was indeed a global priority, there would be feasible and relatively simple solutions to deal with sustainability issues worldwide.

As discussions about environmental funds continued during Rio92, *O Globo* highlighted the fact that Sweden's Environmental Minister Olof Johanson<sup>183</sup> had guaranteed financial assistance to promote sustainable development in developing countries. According to *OG*, Johanson suggested that rich nations should contribute with 0,7% of their GDP to develop sustainability projects in poor nations. *OG* emphasised that Sweden's contribution acknowledged that developed nations were largely responsible for environmental degradation. *OG* explained that the money would be mainly used to fight poverty and promote sustainable development in developing countries. Additionally, *OG* stated that Johanson believed that, in the long run, the amount of money destined to the fund could increase through taxation of non-renewable fuels and pollution.

The piece revealed that Sweden, a rich European country, was admitting that developed nations were largely responsible for environmental degradation. Sweden's acknowledgement was an important mark in discussions between developed and developing nations, because responsibility for environmental destruction was a recurring, discordant theme. Nevertheless, *OG*'s focus was not on the disagreement but on Sweden's vow to financially assist sustainability projects in poor countries. The article presented Sweden as an environmentally friendly country that was engaged in promoting sustainable development. However, the newspaper did not provide any data about Sweden's environmental impacts.

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<sup>182</sup> Folha de S. Paulo (1992) Camdessus quer fim de gastos militares. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 8 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 2 July 2021).

<sup>183</sup> O Globo (1992) Suécia sai na frente na ajuda financeira a países pobres. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 9 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 8 July 2021).

Lack of data and contextualisation about Sweden prevented Brazilian readers from analysing the Nordic country's real contribution to sustainable development. This article is a rare example where Brazilian media shows a country from the North questioning the global hegemony position towards the environment, which usually disregards the importance of the environment on the public sphere.

Media coverage of negotiations about investments in sustainability continued as *Folha de S. Paulo* published an article on how the US representative at Rio92, Curtis Bohlen, complained about excessive expectations from developing nations at the conference<sup>184</sup>. According to *FSP*, Bohlen stated that Rio92 was not about bargaining for money but to formulate the foundations of sustainable development. The statement emerged almost a week after Sweden's commitment to provide financial aid to developing countries. In contrast, Bohlen provided a clear and direct explanation of the US standpoint: the US did not want to contribute with financial support to promote sustainable development in poor nations. *FSP*, nevertheless, passively reported the subject, without analysing the US position or its global impacts. Additionally, *FSP* was submissive by replicating the US hegemony discourse that disregards environmental protection, thus contributing to maintain US ideology unquestioned on the public sphere and agenda. Ultimately, this text was a disservice to environmental protection and to develop environmental public awareness.

Finally, analysis of Brazilian media coverage produced in 1992 revealed six pieces containing Rio92 debates about investments in sustainability focused on conflicts between rich and poor nations. *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* pieces showed that developing and developed countries disagreed on the ways to invest in sustainable development projects, especially in poor countries, and on financial compensation for environmental damage. Continuing the investigation, the following segment examines conflicts over money that emerged in Brazilian media coverage of sustainability in the period between Rio92 and Rio+20, thus between 1993 and 2011.

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<sup>184</sup> Berlinck, D. (1992). Dinheiro longe do bolso dos pobres. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 15 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 12 July 2021).

#### 6.4.2 – Controversies between the conferences

The analysis of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage of sustainable development demonstrated that after Rio92, rich countries tried to enforce sustainable practices through environmental protectionism, or eco-protectionism. The notion can be described as trade barriers based on environmental practices. Brazilian media coverage continued to represent financial disagreements in two pieces that were published in the period between Rio92 and Rio+20, two international environmental conferences that occurred in Rio de Janeiro. More specifically, articles presented in this section date from 1993 and 2007.

In 1993, *Folha de S. Paulo* published an opinion piece signed by the Brazilian ambassador Rubens A. Barbosa<sup>185</sup>. Barbosa explained that environmental protectionism emerged after Rio92 under the claim that free trade promoted economic growth. The piece highlighted the creation of the ‘green seal’, an environmental certification and commercial advertising that was being elaborated by six European countries: Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Holland, and the UK. According to the text, requirements to obtain the ‘green seal’ were still unknown, but Barbosa was concerned on how the certification would affect commercialisation of Brazilian products to the European Community.

The ambassador explained that even though the certification was not mandatory, it could eventually become compulsory, having had all environmental criteria unilaterally defined by a few rich European countries. Barbosa also argued that without considering specific conditions of developing countries, the certification could damage Brazilian trade market and even cease it. The opinion piece explained that along with the possibility to appeal to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was studying the feasibility for the country to develop its own ‘green seal’. Barbosa described that the idea was based on the experience of Sweden, Canada, and Norway who developed their own environmental certification.

The opinion piece showed a representative of the Brazilian government interpreting national environmental protection and sustainability in regard to their

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<sup>185</sup> Barbosa, R. A. (1993) Os riscos do protecionismo ambiental no Brasil. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 2 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 11 August 2021).

economic impacts. The piece subjugated the importance of environmental care to avoid interference in Brazilian international trade. According to the narrative, economic growth prevailed over the environment in Brazil. Nevertheless, the text referred to the importance of establishing global environmental specifications to promote sustainable development. It was evident that the ambassador feared that six European nations would intentionally create unattainable environmental criteria to disguise economic protectionism. Depending on the complexity and value of environmental requirements, developing countries could be prevented from selling products to European countries.

Investigation showed that the North–South conflict surfaced in Brazilian media coverage in 2007, when *O Globo* referred to Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's participation in a G8 meeting in Germany<sup>186</sup>. The piece explained that emerging countries, especially Brazil and India, would try to include in the agenda of rich nations discussions about climate change and alternative energy, notably Brazilian ethanol. Moreover, *OG* mentioned that developing countries aimed to discuss the reduction of agricultural subsidies in rich nations. *O Globo* stated that Lula da Silva would promote Brazilian ethanol and propose financial compensation from rich countries to poor nations that avoided deforestation. According to *OG*, in Brazil, this compensation would be used to pay for sustainable development projects.

The piece revealed that the conflict between North and South persisted through time. Persisting coverage on the topic reveals that developed countries continuously refused contributing financially for the implementation of sustainable development in poor nations. This article from 2007 showed that different priorities resulted in developing countries trying to add environmental topics in talks with rich nations. Media spotlight on the independent behaviour of developing countries indicated defiance as they insisted on proposing additional topics to a meeting where they were secondary participants. Nevertheless, the text lacked analysis, basically describing the G8 meeting and the agenda of Brazilian president in the event. In essence, the article did not contribute to the proliferation of critical

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<sup>186</sup> Fernandes, D. (2007) Brasil e emergentes querem incluir etanol na agenda das nações do G-8. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 6 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 6 October 2021).



perspectives about international debates on sustainability. *O Globo* shows the reiterated attempt of the Brazilian government to position itself as representative of the Global South by questioning the ideology of the economic and political hegemony of the world, which constantly minimised the importance of the environmental cause.

To illustrate this article, *O Globo* published a black-and-white picture produced by international news agency Associated Press. It displayed clashes between German police and protesters who were demonstrating against globalisation (Figure 6.10) during the G8 meeting. The newspaper also exhibited a map showing the location of the G8 meeting. The visualisation focused on propagating up-to-date coverage of the event, revealing a similar focus to the article. The photograph, however, was critical as it reflected unfolding social dissatisfaction with globalisation. The photograph did not focus on historical North–South tensions cited in the piece. However, the image still touched on the key theme of exploitation and dissatisfaction in covering demonstrations against globalisation’s impacts worldwide.



**Figure 6.10:** Images published in *O Globo* on 6 June 2007

In this section, analysis of Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development revealed two pieces showcasing conflicts between poor and rich nations. Analysis displayed that the coverage regarding financial investments in sustainability projects continued between Rio92 and Rio+20. Texts from *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* unveiled different agendas in regard to the implementation of sustainable development. In summary, developing nations claimed for economic aid and developed countries avoided financial commitment while engaging in greenwashing narratives by attempting to force weaker economies to behave sustainably. The study continues with the examination of Rio+20's disagreements over financial investments presented in Brazilian media coverage of sustainability produced during 2012.

### 6.4.3 – Disputes in Rio+20

Investigation revealed that during Rio+20 Brazilian media continued to cover divergences between rich and poor economies, particularly in relation to monetary aid to implement sustainable development in underdeveloped countries. This section studies two articles produced by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo*, spotlighting disagreements during 2012.

Financial discordances became so problematic in Rio+20 that money blocked the last negotiating round of the conference, according to the coverage of *Folha de S. Paulo*<sup>187</sup>. *FSP* described the scenario: in one room, the US, supported by Canada and the EU, did not accept a proposal of a mandatory contribution to a 30 billion dollar annual fund projected by the G-77, and in retaliation, developing countries left the room in which the concept of the green economy was under discussion. This political impasse is an example of different ideologies surrounding developed and developing nations. Moreover, it highlights US political and economic hegemony, and its strategy to interfere in the public sphere to undermine topics that are not interesting to the US developmental agenda, such as environmental protection.

*FSP* interviewed Brazilian ambassador Luiz Alberto Figueiredo Machado, who claimed that the ongoing economic crisis did not justify rich countries no longer thinking about the future. The statement indicated that the Brazilian government supported the establishment of a sustainable development fund in spite of global economic problems. *FSP* coverage also revealed that Rio+20 was not very different to Rio92. Despite occurring after an interval of 20 years, both conferences tried to promote sustainable development, while developing countries asked for financial aid and developed nations refused to contribute. This recurrent impasse displays opposing ideologies in the international arena. As developed nations tried to preserve their hegemony, developing economies pushed for different agendas in the global public sphere. Findings disclosed that disputes over economic support marked the history of the United Nations' environmental conferences in Brazil.

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<sup>187</sup> Antunes, C. (2012) Dinheiro trava a última rodada de negociações. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 15 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 5 November 2021).

One the same day, *O Globo* reported<sup>188</sup> that the transition to a green economy could take 1.3 billion people out of extreme poverty, according to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). *OG* revealed UNEP initiatives in poor and developing countries. The article mentioned UNEP's projects in agriculture and power generation that proved the possibility to achieve large scale sustainability, even without financial assistance from developed countries. In this case, *OG*'s descriptive coverage solely promoted UNEP's discourse, without adding further data or investigation to the Programme's claims nor impacts. These initiatives would change the global hegemony and fight economic ideologies that try to silence environmental needs, thus diminishing the environmental importance on the public sphere. *O Globo* published superficial coverage of UNEP's arguments, not explaining nor exemplifying the projects in poor countries that promoted large-scale sustainability without aid from rich nations. These unfounded arguments seemed like greenwash allegations, but it is very unlikely that UNEP, the main environmental agency in the world, promoted disinformation. Thus, it is more likely that the resemblance with greenwashing narratives resulted from the superficiality of *OG* coverage.

This section analysed two pieces displaying financial conflicts between poor and rich nations presented in Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development during Rio+20. The investigation showed that 20 years after the UN's first environmental conference, economic disputes remained the focus of disagreements between developed and developing countries, with the first group asking for monetary aid and the second refusing to make contributions. The next passage examines *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* articles about consumerism and sustainability uncovering tensions between developed and developing nations from 1992 to 2012, which stressed dissatisfaction towards the ongoing economic and political hegemony and attempts to influence the public sphere.

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<sup>188</sup> Jansen, R. (2012) Economia verde como receita contra a pobreza. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 15 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 4 November 2021).

## 6.5 – Conclusion

This chapter investigated economic narratives in Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development. Fifty texts produced by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* between 1992 and 2012 matched the criteria and were studied in this chapter. The material was analysed through three main subjects: greenwashing; monetisation of natural resources; and conflicts over money.

From the 790 pieces studied in this thesis, a total of 57 were selected to represent economic discourses in the coverage of sustainable development. This content refers to roughly 7% of the examined material.

There was a recurrent use of greenwashing, merchandising, and superficial discourses by both *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo*, which resulted in offering passive, incomplete, and misleading information to the Brazilian public. The investigation revealed that *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* often produced submissive and greenwashing narratives that contributed to inaccurate information about sustainable development in Brazil. In regard to the economic coverage of sustainability, *OG* and *FSP* produced similar content, even though *O Globo*'s production was more visible because the newspaper published more texts, 37 out of 50 (65%), while *Folha de S. Paulo* was responsible for the remaining 20 (35%) pieces.

Investigation of greenwashing narratives highlighted that the pieces produced in 1992, marking the beginning of the studied timeframe, showed that investments in environmental protection were not well received by companies. The business mindset changed over time to the point that sustainability became a significant marketing tool by the end of the thesis timeframe, in 2012. The analysis revealed that, especially in the second decade of the studied timeframe, between 2002 and 2012, companies promoted themselves as environmentally friendly. Even so, most sustainability discourses were part of greenwashing strategies superficially covered by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* without further analysis. The lack of identification of misleading content resulted in the Brazilian media producing recurring inaccurate information regarding sustainable development throughout the 20 years.

Moreover, the section about consumerism revealed that *FSP* and *OG* constantly reproduced the greenwashing narratives of companies that wanted to promote consumerism by misusing the notion of sustainable production. The coverage occurred without specifying the environmental impacts of continuous consumption, once again focusing on description and lacking analytical data. This partial coverage indicates that *FSP* and *OG* defended companies and economic growth and disregarded environmental protection.

The segment about monetisation of natural resources disclosed that the Brazilian media produced incomplete and confusing texts that lacked background information and treated nature and money as equals. Moreover, analysis of media coverage of conflicts over money confirmed that international environmental conferences, particularly Rio92 and Rio+20, were marked by disputes over financial support to promote sustainable development projects. *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* also showed that environmental protection was never a priority on the international agenda. In addition, the link between consumerism and sustainability was repeatedly used in greenwashing stories.

This concludes the analysis of economic narratives in Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development. The material examined in this chapter was produced by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* between 1992 and 2012. The following chapter contains the investigation concerning environmental aspects of Brazilian media coverage of sustainability.

## **Chapter 7 – Sustainability’s environmental narratives: superficiality and greenwashing**

This chapter investigates environmental narratives in the coverage of sustainable development produced by *Folha de S. Paulo (FSP)* and *O Globo (OG)* between 1992 and 2012. As explained in chapter 3, *Methodology*, texts analysed in this chapter were chosen for providing relevant perspectives of sustainable development, framing environmental concerns in specific ways. Selected pieces present relevant environmental content, thus small notes and short pieces that only superficially describe events were not chosen for further examination.

The coverage of environmentally sustainable development corresponds to roughly 7% of the *FSP* and *OG* coverage of sustainability, corresponding to 58 texts out of the 790 examined in this thesis. This figure shows environmental concerns comprising a large amount of *FSP* and *OG* coverage of sustainable development, with previous chapters indicating that social and economic aspects related to 4% and 6% of the material, respectively.

Study of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage of environmentally sustainable development intends to identify the historical evaluation and characteristics of the coverage. Additionally, the analysis aims to detect topics and discussions linked to the coverage, and to prove the similarity of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* sustainability stories. As previously mentioned in chapter 3, *Methodology*, the relevance of confirming the resemblance of *FSP* and *OG* is that it can reveal patterns in Brazilian environmental journalism.

Also in this chapter, material produced by *O Globo* is more visible because the newspaper published 46 out of the total of 58 pieces that focused on environmental aspects of sustainable development. This figure corresponds to 79% of the texts analysed here. Meanwhile *Folha de S. Paulo*’s share corresponds to 12 pieces, that is, the remaining 21%.

Two main environmental topics emerged in the initial investigation of the material on Brazilian media coverage of sustainability: 1) Environmental topics that were subdivided into: discussions during Rio92, and before Rio+20; and 2) Environmental policy, which was presented through international and Brazilian

characteristics. The analysis of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage of these topics is outlined in two sections dedicated to each main subject.

## **7.1 – Environmental topics**

Environmental aspects of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* sustainability coverage emerged in 1992 and continued throughout the 20-year timeframe studied in this thesis. This section examines 16 texts that highlighted environmental aspects of sustainability in *FSP* and *OG* coverage.

### **7.1.1 – Discussions during Rio92**

This section highlights initial talks regarding the promotion of sustainable development that occurred during the 1992 UN environmental conference. The coverage of Rio92 presented 11 pieces about environmental aspects of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage of sustainability.

The first piece that focused on the environment was published by *O Globo* as part of the coverage of Rio92. The newspaper revealed a meeting between Brazilian President Fernando Collor de Mello and US biologist Thomas Lovejoy, who had been a scientific advisor to the US presidency for 27 years<sup>189</sup>. According to *OG*, President Collor de Mello defended the concept of sustainable development and promised that Brazil would soon use biodiversity techniques for the economic occupation of the Cerrado and other regions of the country. Basically, this short article wanted to present the Brazilian president as an environmentally friendly politician, as the country was preparing to host a significant international environmental conference. Nevertheless, the text spotlighted the president's intention to economically exploit Brazilian biomes. On the other hand, *O Globo*'s coverage ignored the sustainability expert by not giving him space to express any viewpoints, and solely mentioned him to promote the president's image as he was meeting an environmental expert.

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<sup>189</sup> O Globo (1992) Collor defende tese do desenvolvimento. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 29 May. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 6 July 2021).



US biologist Lovejoy was interviewed by *Folha de S. Paulo*, five days after his meeting with Collor de Mello<sup>190</sup>. *FSP* presented the biologist as the world's leading Amazon expert, but the interview focused on Lovejoy's views on environmental policy, without any mention of the Amazon, a fault of the coverage. *FSP* showed that Lovejoy wanted Rio92 to define clear goals and deadlines and criticised the US for not defending tougher positions at the conference. According to *FSP*, the biologist praised Brazil for improving environmental policy, adding that the country should develop energy efficiency, forest protection, infrastructure programmes, and make an inventory of its biological diversity. In the interview, *FSP* could have increased readers' awareness about the Amazon by interviewing the rainforest's leading expert, but instead the newspaper did not ask Lovejoy a single question about the forest. *FSP* coverage of Lovejoy's praise for Brazil's improving environmental policy seemed like greenwashing, as there was no data about the advancements. Besides, Lovejoy's suggestions to Brazil were presented as a list of things that could improve environmental protection in the country, lacking contextualisation on how these aspects could result in positive environmental impacts for the country and the planet.

Brazilian President Fernando Collor de Mello was again in the media spotlight when *O Globo* covered his speech in the opening of Rio92<sup>191</sup>. According to *OG*, the president stated that Brazil was interested in hosting an international environmental protection institution. *OG* claimed that Collor's proposal was endorsed by the UN, which stated that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) would support the implementation of an international centre for sustainable development in Brazil. According to *OG*, the centre would be aimed at adapting sustainability programmes for different countries and regions, developing research, and promoting professional training. This piece showed that the Brazilian president made use of a project proposal to make the country seem environmentally friendly to world leaders participating in Rio92. Lack of data on the feasibility of the project and on the real intentions of Brazil to implement the proposal make it very similar to the political greenwashing strategy of President Collor de Mello.

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<sup>190</sup> Silva, C. E. L. (1992) Biólogo vê erro em posição dos EUA. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 3 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 22 June 2021).

<sup>191</sup> Berlinck, D. (1992) ONU apóia plano de o Brasil sediar órgão ambiental. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 5 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 10 July 2021).

Nevertheless, it is interesting that the Brazilian proposal gained support from the UN, despite its resemblance to greenwashing.

Brazilian media coverage of Rio92 continued on June 8 when *O Globo* reported that President Collor de Mello signed a pilot programme to protect tropical forests while aiming to create a sustainable development model for Brazilian tropical forests<sup>192</sup>. Another article published by *O Globo* on the same day showed US biologist Thomas Lovejoy affirming that the main issue regarding the implementation of sustainable development programmes in the Amazon and other tropical forests was weak surveillance, instability of environmental institutions, and lack of resources<sup>193</sup>. With two articles about sustainable development in the same edition, *O Globo* publicised Rio92's environmental contents. *OG* promoted President Collor de Mello by presenting a greenwashing narrative about the exploitation of tropical forests in one article, while in the other piece it reinforced the need for surveillance, strong institutions, and funding for sustainability initiatives to work properly. The pieces presented complementary stories, showing multiple perspectives on the same concerns.

One day before the end of Rio92, on 13 June, *O Globo* reported that forest exploitation was a topic of disagreement at the conference. *OG* published the fact that the conference decided that sustainable development should be the basis of any project for exploiting forest resources, recognising that those projects needed financial incentives<sup>194</sup>. *OG* reproduced Rio92 discussions without further analysis. By doing so, *OG* superficially informed its public, and ignored part of its purpose, which was to provide the critical interpretation of data. Arguments presented in this article were not different from viewpoints expressed by US biologist Thomas Lovejoy one week earlier. Nevertheless, the newspaper did not connect Rio92's results to Lovejoy's claims. Moreover, *OG* did not comment on how financial incentives to invest in sustainable development programmes would emerge, nor how to guarantee funds for fair distribution worldwide.

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<sup>192</sup> *O Globo* (1992) Collor cria programa para a preservação de florestas. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 8 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 11 July 2021).

<sup>193</sup> Azevedo, A. L. & Tartaglia, C. (1992) Troca de dívida não é a única opção. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 8 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 11 July 2021).

<sup>194</sup> *O Globo* (1992) Temas que causaram divergências. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 13 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 12 July 2021).

During Rio92, environmental coverage linked to political discussions. *FSP*<sup>195</sup> and *OG*<sup>196</sup> announced that diplomats defended the formation of a committee to oversee the implementation of Rio92 decisions. On another occasion, *FSP* stated that Brazilian diplomacy supported the creation of the UN Council for Sustainable Development in Brazil<sup>197</sup>, while *OG* covered delegations discussing the creation of the Sustainable Development Commission, which would act to mobilise public opinion to pressure countries to adopt environmentally friendly policies<sup>198</sup>. Articles summarised in this paragraph presented political viewpoints of the environmental coverage of sustainability, and the importance of political actors in supporting sustainable development. Nevertheless, both *FSP* and *OG* narrated those political perspectives without reflecting on them, or on their feasibility or importance. Once again, Brazilian media coverage lacked critical interpretation of data. This unreflective coverage provided, therefore, greenwashing political narratives.

*O Globo* followed up on the creation of an international centre for sustainable development in Brazil, which was earlier referred to during President Collor de Mello's speech at the opening of Rio92. *OG* reported that, despite previous support from the UN, four days after President Collor's speech indicating Brazil's intention to host the centre, the UN Development Programme launched a programme to assist developing countries to implement sustainability projects in partnership with Canada<sup>199</sup>. *OG* explained that the programme already had 8 million dollars and planned to gather 100 million dollars by the end of 1992. According to *OG*, the programme would offer help to formulate projects and legislation, professional training, information, and technology exchange. The programme was very similar to the one that Brazil wanted to implement, but it was set without Brazil's participation. Arguably, this occasion demonstrated that Brazil was not as powerful as it hoped. Brazil's wish to host the programme was ignored by the UNDP days after the UN's public announcement of assistance for Brazil's proposal.

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<sup>195</sup> Folha de S. Paulo (1992) Diplomatas querem grupo fiscalizador. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 8 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 2 July 2021).

<sup>196</sup> O Globo (1992) Pesquisadora defende fiscalização. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 27 May. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 5 July 2021).

<sup>197</sup> Greenlees, A. (1992) Brasil quer sediar comissão. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 11 June Folha de S. Paulo. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 5 July 2021).

<sup>198</sup> O Globo (1992) Comissão para fiscalizar o cumprimento de contratos. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 8 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 11 July 2021).

<sup>199</sup> O Globo (1992) Pnud cria programa de ajuda aos pobres. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 13 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 10 July 2021).

It is interesting that this political incident was covered by *O Globo* in a detached way, without any mention of the previous reports on the subject.

Analysis presented in this section revealed that Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development during Rio92 was superficial and highlighted political discussions about sustainability. The investigation continues in the following segment with the study of environmental topics covered by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* between 2009 and 2011.

### 7.1.2 – Discussions before Rio+20

This section investigates six texts produced by *O Globo* and *Folha de S. Paulo* between 2006 and 2011, which belong to the last period of the 20-year timeframe studied in this thesis, specifically from 1992 to 2012. Pieces analysed in this segment revealed environmental aspects of the Brazilian media coverage of sustainability.

*Folha de S. Paulo* revealed that the Brazilian federal government planned to invest in national parks to promote tourism in natural areas<sup>200</sup>. The article mentioned that 4.5 million reais would be invested in six regions: three national parks and three areas of environmental protection. The piece stated that the money would be used for infrastructure and studies to measure the capacity of tourists that those places could receive and still maintain environmental sustainability. *FSP* highlighted that Brazilian environment minister Marina Silva claimed that more visits to the areas would not result in environmental damage. Moreover, *FSP* stated that, from the total of 60 national parks, 23 had been selected to be promoted by the ministries of tourism and environment. The piece also explained that the government's goal was to increase the number of tourists from 2.8 million to 10 million within two years, which was considered a modest rise.

The article revealed the interest of the Brazilian government in exploring the country's natural resources through tourism. It was paradoxical, though, having the minister of environment promoting increasing tourism in protected areas. Even more illogical was the minister's claim that tourism would not have environmental

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<sup>200</sup> Balazina, A. (2006) Governo federal irá investir R\$ 4,5 milhões em parques. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 7 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 14 October 2021).

impacts, even before knowing the results of the research that would analyse this specific aspect. The contradictory data resembles greenwashing discourses, reflecting the superficiality of the coverage and the minister's arguments. In this piece, the spotlight is on the fact that *FSP* did not question the minister of environment about the greenwashing data used to support the tourism strategy of the Brazilian federal government. Additionally, *FSP* published a picture on one of the areas that would receive investments (Figure 7.1). The coloured image was produced by *FSP* photographer Silvio Cioffi. It showed an aerial view of an isolated sandy beach and green mountains, located in a national park. The remoteness of the region corroborated the argument that the increasing number of tourists in the area have negative impacts on the natural biome, despite governmental claims otherwise.



**Figure 7.1:** Picture published in *Folha de S. Paulo* on 7 June 2006

On the 2009 World Environment Day, *O Globo* published a very informative article about water consumption and waste<sup>201</sup>. It stated that agriculture was the sector with highest water consumption, about 70%, followed by industry with 20%, and urban activities, including domestic use, with 10%. It observed that

<sup>201</sup> Albuquerque, C. (2009) Desperdício e desinformação. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 5 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 18 October 2021).

the growing world population meant a higher demand for water, thus sustainable consumerism was a matter of survival for humanity. Particularly in regard to Brazil, *O Globo* added that there was about 40% of water waste in the country, while the percentage internationally accepted was 20%. Besides, *OG* mentioned that Brazilians consumed five times more water, 200 litres per day, than the figure the World Health Organisation considered sufficient, 40 litres per day. The newspaper blamed lack of information for water waste, interviewing the coordinator of WWF Samuel Barreto who asked for investments in advertising campaigns to contribute to saving water.

*O Globo* promoted environmental awareness with informative data. However, despite acknowledging that agriculture and industry were the main sectors responsible for wastefulness, the text disregarded this data and focused on combating water waste in domestic use, which only corresponded to 10% of consumption. Even so, the text showed that *O Globo* tried to inform and integrate the public in the sustainable use of water. The aim to incorporate readers in water conservation was supported by coloured illustrations that displayed consumption rates of daily activities and production processes (Figure 7.2). In this example, *OG* used its own resources to campaign for the sustainable consumption of water, indicating that the newspaper was offering more engaging environmental coverage by the end of the studied timeframe.



three million premature deaths every year. This is the type of data that reflects global inequalities and are a consequence of the current economic and political hegemony. *OG* also stated that Brazil had 3% of the world population, and 13% of global water, with 74% of this amount located in the Amazon region. Nevertheless, about 80% of residences in the country did not have sanitation. Once again, *O Globo* showed claims for sustainable use of water made by a researcher from the International Food Policy Research Institute, Claudia Ringler, and the WWF coordinator Samuel Barreto. *OG* also repeated Barreto's request for marketing campaigns to promote sustainable consumption of water.

As *O Globo* announced UNESCO's study about water consumption and sanitation, it provided pessimistic data on current and future perspectives. The article was very descriptive and displayed coloured maps to illustrate water distribution worldwide (Figure 7.3) and in Brazil (Figure 7.4). The superficiality of *OG* coverage was ratified by the repeated use of the WWF coordinator's appeal to encourage sustainable water consumption. In this broader coverage about the sustainable use of water, *O Globo* could have promoted a more plural debate, but instead the newspaper used the same source in two pieces, publishing the same comment made by the interviewee.

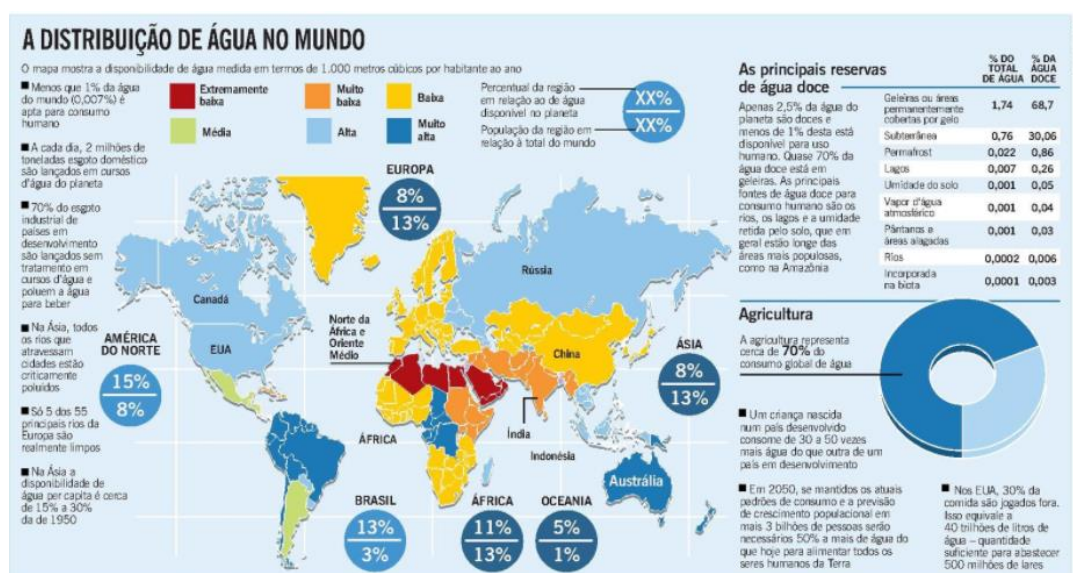


Figure 7.3: Images published in *O Globo* on 5 June 2009



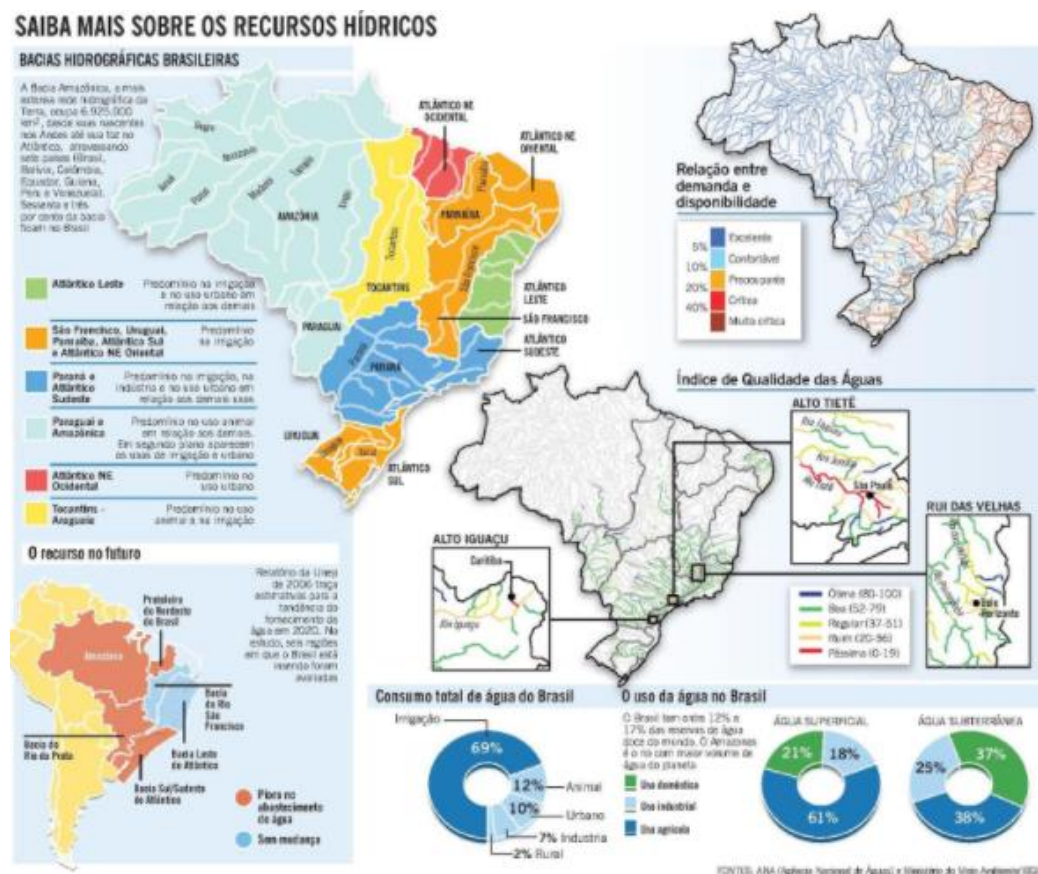


Figure 7.4: Images published in *O Globo* on 5 June 2009

Media coverage of environmental topics continued two days later, on 7 June 2009, as *O Globo* published an opinion piece written by former president Fernando Henrique Cardoso<sup>203</sup>. In the text, he mentioned the fact that despite the serious global financial crisis, global warming was a more severe and long-lasting calamity that should be the focus of the international meeting that was going to occur in Copenhagen. Cardoso reinforced the North–South conflict over environmental destruction by stating that developed countries had a historical responsibility for the greenhouse effect. Nevertheless, he argued that the development of emerging economies such as Brazil, India, and China was aggravating the situation. The former president was hopeful about changes saying that Brazil only needed political will to improve, and that it could make China and India commit to decreasing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Cardoso also seemed naïve in claiming that Brazil and Europe could force the US to make bigger commitments regarding environmental protection. In

<sup>203</sup> Cardoso, F. H. (2009) Mudança climática: decisão já! *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 7 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 16 October 2021).

fact, Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development showed that the US had historically avoided taking environmental responsibility.

Cardoso also defended zero deforestation in Brazil and explained the need to establish an agropastoral zone to avoid deforestation. He emphasised that the country had enough land to grow sugarcane, soy, and farm cattle, thus it was needed to destroy forests. Listing these specifics shows that Cardoso had some knowledge of the topic, as they were the main factors responsible for deforestation of the Amazon. A more specific analysis about Brazilian media coverage that referred to the impacts of economic activities in the Amazon rainforest is part of chapter 8, *The coverage of the Amazon rainforest: a case study*.

Former Brazilian president Fernando Henrique Cardoso wrote this piece when he was participating in The Elders, a group created by Nelson Mandela, which gathered together world leaders interested in contributing to global demands. Cardoso was very diplomatic, making suggestions to developed and developing countries, indicating an attempt to minimise the disagreements between the Global South and North. This is also a different perspective to the period of his presidency when he often requested international funds to invest in sustainable development in Brazil, blaming developed economies for global environmental destruction, when Cardoso represented the ideology of the South, which attempted to influence the public sphere and change global economic and political hegemony. Examples of Cardoso's complaints about developed economies highlighted by the Brazilian media are further explored in chapter 8, which focuses on the coverage of the Amazon rainforest.

Nevertheless, the knowledge acquired during the presidency made it possible for Cardoso to recommend linking environmental protection and economic growth in Brazil. *O Globo* illustrated the opinion piece with an image of planet Earth being consumed by fire (Figure 7.5), signed by Claudio Duarte. Interestingly, the fire was consuming the southern hemisphere, starting in Antarctica. The illustration corroborated the urgency to tackle global warming, mentioned in the text, which would be the focus of the Copenhagen meeting.



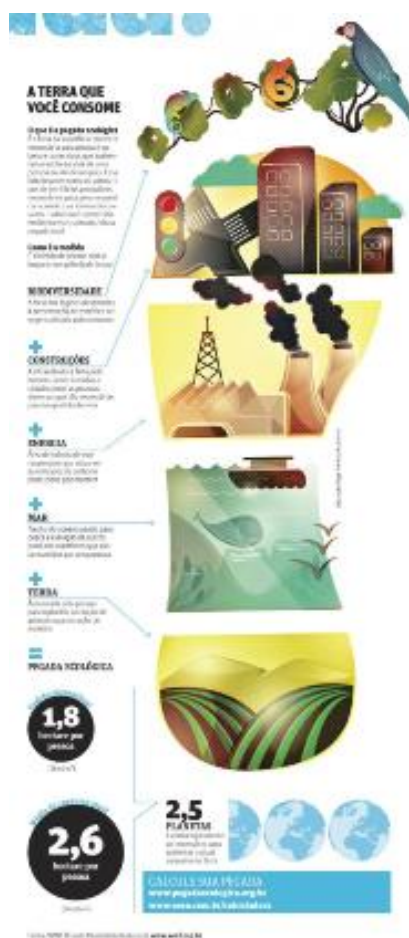
**Figure 7.5:** Image published in *O Globo* on 7 June 2009

Misuse of natural resources re-emerged in Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development in 2010, when *Folha de S. Paulo* produced an article about humanity's environmental impacts, arguing that humanity was using 45% more natural resources than it should<sup>204</sup>. *FSP* introduced the concept of an ecological footprint, explaining that it had been created to estimate the unsustainability levels of modern life, with the intention to avoid scarcity and conflict that could derive from it. The piece also claimed that current consumerism standards were unsustainable because consumption levels did not allow natural resources to recover. According to *FSP*, it would be necessary to have 3.5 planet Earths to sustain the current consumerism of Europeans and US citizens.

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<sup>204</sup> Lopes, R. J. (2010) Já imaginou qual é o impacto da sua pegada? *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 5 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 19 October 2021).

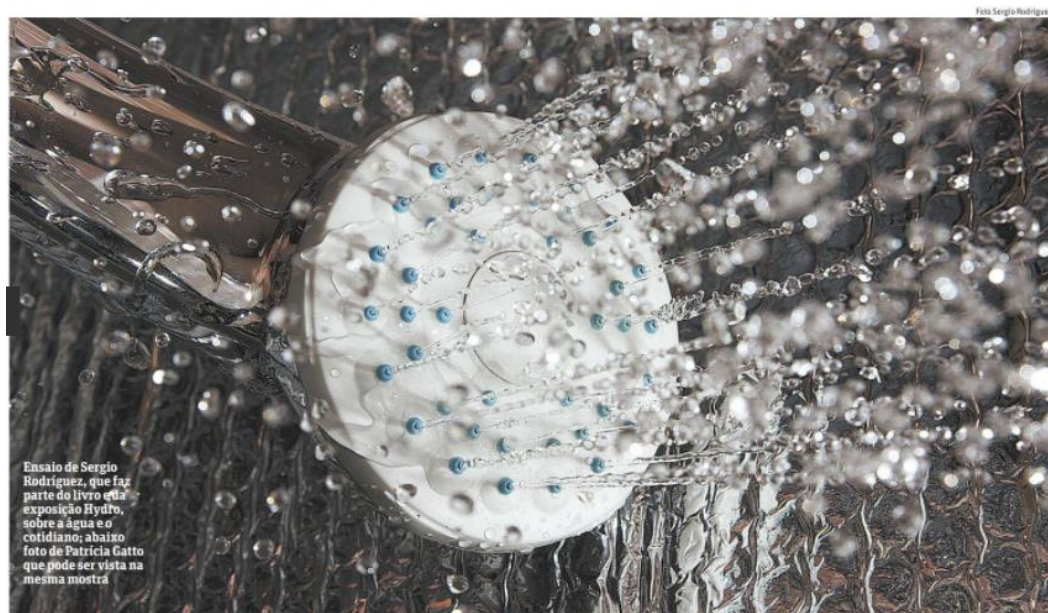
*FSP's* article was explanatory, introducing the concept of the ecological footprint and its impacts on the planet. It also emphasised the need for sustainable development by exposing unsustainable consumerism patterns. Additionally, the newspaper added an illustration of a footprint showcasing nature and economic activities (Figure 7.6). Arguably, it was a strategy used by *FSP* to provide more data to readers through visual elements. The design showcases the development of Brazilian newspapers, which made their content more appealing and comprehensible. Interestingly, *FSP* announced two websites that could calculate individual footprints. This announcement corroborated the newspaper's aim to promote readers' environmental awareness and self-reflection. It is also noteworthy that the article reemphasised the North–South conflict regarding environmental protection, blaming the population of rich nations for unsustainable consumerism. However, despite making this reference, *FSP* tried to also promote a sustainable lifestyle among its readers in Brazil.



**Figure 7.6:** Images published in *Folha de S. Paulo* on 5 June 2010

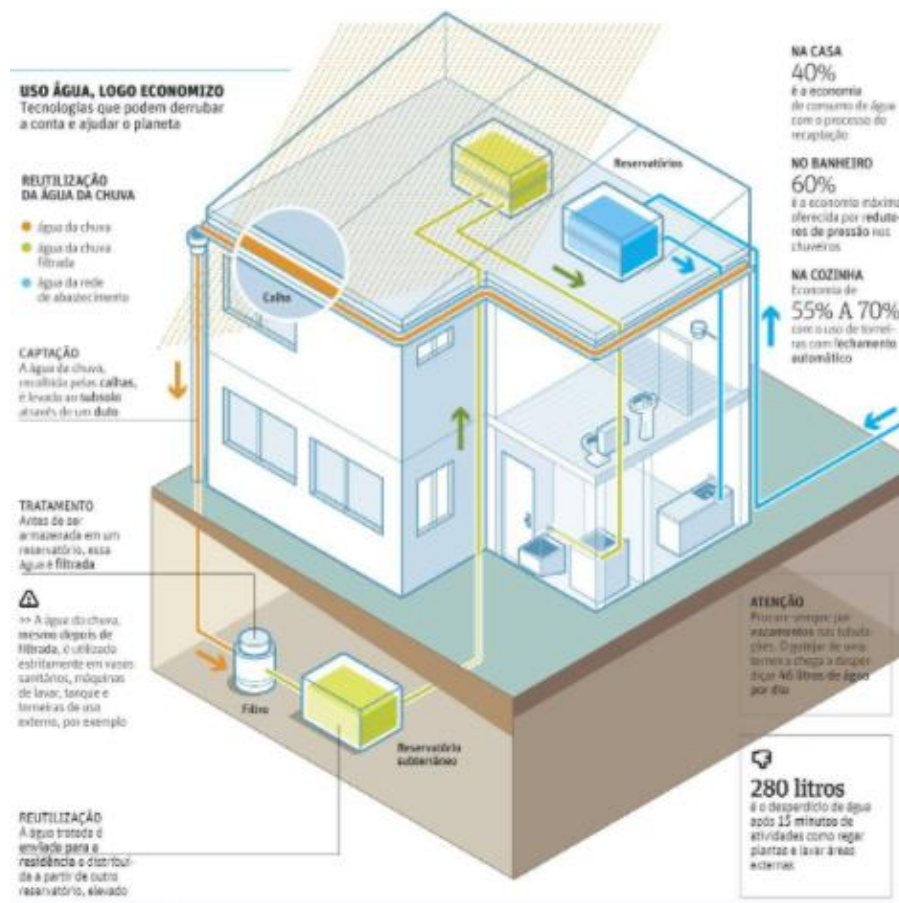
Sustainable water consumption returned to the media spotlight on the 2011 World Environment Day, exactly two years after *O Globo*'s coverage of the topic. This time, *Folha de S. Paulo* produced an article with tips on how to reduce water consumption<sup>205</sup>. *FSP* stated that adjustments to toilet valves could reduce water consumption by 80%, while the regulation of shower pressure could bring about a reduction of between 32% and 62%. *FSP* also suggested reutilising rainwater and repairing leaks to minimise water consumption.

The article showed *FSP*'s aim to educate readers on water consumption by revealing that basic changes could make significant impacts. Additionally, *FSP* illustrated the narrative with a coloured picture of a shower releasing water, which was produced by Sergio Rodriguez (Figure 7.7), and which displayed a drawing of a house indicating percentages of water economy in different rooms (Figure 7.8). The illustration demonstrated the evolution of Brazilian newspapers' design, which made the content more pleasant and intelligible. *FSP*'s images corroborated claims regarding water saving presented in the article, particularly because they attempted to teach readers how to improve sustainable consumption in a house, showcasing examples of water reutilisation.



**Figure 7.7:** Picture published in *Folha de S. Paulo* on 5 June 2011

<sup>205</sup> Geraque, E. (2011) Prejuízo líquido. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 5 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 11 October 2021).



**Figure 7.8:** Image published in *Folha de S. Paulo* on 5 June 2011

This segment analysed the presentation of general environmental topics that emerged in *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage of sustainability. Pieces examined here contained aspects that arguably attempted to promote environmental awareness by highlighting the use of natural resources. The study continues in the next section with a review of discussions regarding environmental policy in Brazilian media content between 1992 and 2012.

## 7.2 – Environmental policy

Initial investigation showed that the subject of environmental policy was addressed in 41 texts published in *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage of sustainable development produced between 1992 and 2012. The aim of this passage is to analyse those pieces to elucidate how Brazilian media connected sustainability to international and national environmental policy.

## 7.2.1 – International environmental policy

Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development produced 30 pieces related to international environmental policy throughout the 20-year timeframe. This section analyses the 30 texts that displayed perspectives concerning international environmental regulations. The investigation will be divided according to two periods: Rio92 and Rio+10 and beyond.

### 7.2.1.1 – Rio92

Media coverage of international environmental policy was initiated in 1992 as part of the coverage of Rio92. The first piece was published by *O Globo* and referred to Agenda 21, an international environmental regulation that was under discussion at the conference<sup>206</sup>. *OG* stated that Agenda 21 had several points without consensus. The article cited that Arab countries criticised the chapter about air pollution, while Mexico did not agree with legislation about biological resources; the US disagreed on holding responsible suppliers of improved products for damages caused in buying countries. In another piece, two days later, *OG* also highlighted the need to reach an agreement during Rio92 so that international laws could promote global sustainable development<sup>207</sup>.

In these examples, *O Globo* presented initial political discussions regarding the creation of international environmental policy during Rio92, displaying how national interests clashed with global concerns. Pieces were descriptive and superficial as they merely described Rio92 debates without reflecting on the environmental impacts of the establishment of international policy. For instance, there was no explanation of environmental and health impacts related to air pollution, which was a topic criticised by Arab countries.

Analysis of media coverage of Rio92 showed that up until the last minute of the conference there were discussions about international environmental policy in regard to forests protection and about financial resources to invest in environmental protection. *O Globo* covered political debates that arose during the

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<sup>206</sup> *O Globo* (1992) Comitê Principal mostra agilidade. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 9 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 11 July 2021).

<sup>207</sup> Alves, J. H. (1992) Divergências na Agenda 21 têm que ser resolvidas hoje. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 11 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 9 July 2021).

final approvals of Rio92 documents, mentioning that when talks finished, Singaporean diplomat Tommy Koh, who was responsible for negotiations, received a two-minute standing ovation<sup>208</sup>. Once again, *OG* focused on describing political negotiations to approve Rio92's documents, rather than explaining the global gain of establishing environmental protection and sustainable development. The piece, therefore, highlighted the conference's political efforts, missing the opportunity to promote the contextualisation of environmental issues.

The explanation of Agenda 21 only occurred after Rio92, when *O Globo* explained that it was a programme to adopt sustainable development through a global partnership that united development and environment, improving quality of life in all nations<sup>209</sup>. The explanation was offered late and was insufficient. First, political discussions to develop the document had already finished and public opinion could not contribute to the production of the document. And second, the piece did not contribute to environmental awareness as it provided very general definitions of the concept instead of explaining its implications.

Media coverage of international environmental policy re-emerged when *O Globo* produced a piece about Rio92's Climate Convention<sup>210</sup>. The article explained that it was aimed at reducing the emission of greenhouse gases, which should be controlled in order to guarantee sustainability as part of economic development. *OG* also stated that countries should adopt the sustainable development model, without clarifying its significance. This text represented another example of insufficient information as it referred to sustainable economic development without explaining its meaning. It suggested a superficial narrative. Additionally, the newspaper published an unsigned black-and-white picture of Brazilian president Collor de Mello smiling and being applauded after signing the Climate Convention (Figure 7.9). The image corroborated the idea of superficiality and the political focus of the coverage.

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<sup>208</sup> Berlinck, D. & Alves, J. H. (1992) Impasse continua depois de noite de negociação. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 12 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 9 July 2021).

<sup>209</sup> Alves, J. H. (1992) Agenda 21 tenta unir ecologia e desenvolvimento. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 15 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 12 July 2021).

<sup>210</sup> *O Globo* (1992) Convenção do Clima: sem fixar prazos. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 15 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 12 July 2021).





**Figure 7.9:** Picture published in *O Globo* on 15 June 1992

In the same edition, dated 15 June 1992, *O Globo* published two further pieces about international environmental policy. One explained that the Forest Principles intended to encourage countries to deploy sustainable development to exploit forest resources and make environmental laws<sup>211</sup>. Another stated that the *Rio Declaration*, which was the title of Rio92's final document, referred to the right to develop, taking into account the responsibility for environmental damage<sup>212</sup>. The article defended the claim that poverty eradication and the abolition of unsustainable consumerism and production patterns were essential for sustainable development. Additionally, *OG* stated that developed countries had more responsibility to promote sustainable development as they had produced more pollution and had more financial resources and technology. Both pieces revealed that *O Globo's* coverage of international environmental policy during Rio92 was superficial and brief, not exploring the significance of the creation of global environmental agreements and their possible impacts for the planet. The recurrent superficiality also indicated that in 1992, Brazilian journalists lacked the

<sup>211</sup> *O Globo* (1992) Florestas têm documento avançado, mas sem valor legal. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 15 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 12 July 2021).

<sup>212</sup> *O Globo* (1992) Os direitos da Terra na Declaração do Rio. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 15 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 12 July 2021).

environmental background to explore the topics in broader contexts, as they were very focused on political statements and did not connect discussions of Rio92 to real-life situations.

This section revealed that sustainability became part of Brazilian media coverage of political debates in Rio92, the event that popularised the concept worldwide. *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* produced recurring superficial pieces that lacked analysis of impacts of international environmental policy, suggesting a lack of environmental background among Brazilian journalists who were not able to explore the topic through an environmental perspective. The coverage about international environmental legislation continued during Rio+10.

### 7.2.1.2 – Rio+10 and beyond

Discussions about international environmental policy gained notoriety in the Brazilian media during 2002, as part of the coverage of Rio+10. One day before the beginning of the summit, *O Globo*'s editorial team published an opinion piece<sup>213</sup> about its expectations. On a positive tone, *OG* stated that Rio+10 could be the beginning of a global environmental protection programme, despite the absence of the US. The piece explained that environmental impacts caused by humans were already evident. *OG* argued that the fact that damage to the ozone layer had been reversed showed that there were no insuperable obstacles, and that governments needed to think like this to find solutions for current problems.

Arguably, *OG*'s opinion piece was too optimistic, as it expected Rio+10 to be the launch of an international transformation, despite recognising the fact that the absence of the US president was significant opposing evidence. The text mentioned, but did not debate, that Rio+10 was occurring with the intention to implement plans that had been made ten years earlier at Rio92. The ten-year gap between the creation and discussions to promote the implementation of international environmental programmes also indicated a global lack of will in prioritising the environment.

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<sup>213</sup> *O Globo* (2002) Alcance da Rio+10. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 25 August. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 9 September 2021).

In the same edition, published on 25 August 2002, *O Globo* printed an article<sup>214</sup> showing discontent towards Rio+10. The different tones of the pieces demonstrate divergent interpretations between *O Globo*'s editorial board and journalists covering the event. This may have occurred because editors are usually more experienced journalists, thus often produce more critical pieces. In this case, the article claimed that the only good news that could emerge from Rio+10 would be the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, which was aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but as it had been postponed by Russia, Rio+10 would be a failure from the beginning.

The newspaper then argued that the summit intended to raise awareness to the fight against poverty and to environmental protection, having as its main goal the implementation of Agenda 21, created in Rio92. It also stated that rich countries did not want to establish deadlines for the implementation of Agenda 21, but planned to talk about responsibilities for environmental destruction, something that was not acceptable to developing countries. This is an example of a failed attempt to impose the ideology of the developed world on developing economies, stressing the dissatisfaction towards the contemporary hegemony.

The passage spotlighted recurring divergences between rich and poor nations in regard to the establishment of international environmental policy. It showed that during Rio+10 poor nations considered it essential to acknowledge the fight against poverty as a priority among global sustainability strategies. *OG* also highlighted Brazil's intention to present a proposal for every country to have at least 10% of its energy matrix based on renewable sources, adding that the proposition already had the support of Caribbean and Latin American countries.

This section revealed Brazil's attempt to gain global prominence on environmental protection during the summit. On a global scale, the suggestion would have an environmental impact, but locally, it was a greenwashing marketing strategy, as Brazil's renewable energy matrix already corresponded to more than 10%. The figure suggests that Brazil was more interested in gaining international attention than in making considerable efforts in regard to environmental protection.

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<sup>214</sup> Jansen, R. (2002) O desafio planetário. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 25 August. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 9 September 2021).

Moreover, *O Globo* emphasised the difficulties of Rio+10, listing the lack of focus of the event, the absence of the US President George W. Bush, and the need for resources to invest in the fight against poverty, which related to conflicts between rich and poor nations. Discussions involving money emerged throughout the 20-year Brazilian media coverage of sustainability. These debates were particularly addressed in chapter 6, *Economic narratives: greenwashing sustainable development*, which revealed that Brazilian media covered economic disputes over financial aid to invest in sustainable development programmes throughout the 20-year timeframe.

In this piece from 2002, also noteworthy is the importance Brazilian media often gave to the US on the coverage of sustainable development. Recurring focus on the US suggests Brazilian media's dependency on the US, as journalists often believed the country could save the global environment. This is an interesting and unexplainable characteristic, because the coverage also showed that the US repeatedly undermined environmental projects and policy.

In addition, *O Globo* exhibited two coloured images produced by NASA satellites (Figure 7.10). The bigger photo positioned in the centre of the page showed the high temperatures of oceans, and a smaller picture displayed environmental degradation in the Amazon rainforest. Both images presented environmental issues that linked to Rio+10 discussions and to the piece. Climate change and deforestation were among the problems that would be discussed in Rio+10, and their visualisation through coloured images not only illustrated difficulties mentioned in the text, but also possibly attracted the public to read the article due to the impact of the images that highlighted Brazil.

40 25.08.2002 Domingo, 25 de agosto de 2002

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**O MUNDO**

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# O desafio planetário

## Rio+10 começa amanhã sem consenso sobre clima e combate à pobreza

**Subsídios**

**A**inda não está claro se o planeta já está suficientemente aquecido para limitar o crescimento populacional, mas a maioria dos países já está se preparando para o pior caso. O Brasil, por exemplo, já está se preparando para o pior caso, segundo o relatório do Painel Intergovernamental sobre Mudanças Climáticas da Organização das Nações Unidas (ONU). O relatório, que é o primeiro de uma série de relatórios que serão publicados ao longo do ano, afirma que o aquecimento global já está afetando o clima em todo o mundo, e que os impactos serão ainda mais graves se o aquecimento continuar a aumentar.

— O Brasil está se preparando para o pior caso, segundo o relatório do Painel Intergovernamental sobre Mudanças Climáticas da Organização das Nações Unidas (ONU). O relatório, que é o primeiro de uma série de relatórios que serão publicados ao longo do ano, afirma que o aquecimento global já está afetando o clima em todo o mundo, e que os impactos serão ainda mais graves se o aquecimento continuar a aumentar.

**COMO É COMO**

### Mar de dificuldades

— O Brasil chegou à Rio+10 com uma agenda cheia de desafios, desde a questão do clima até a da pobreza. O ministro do Meio Ambiente, José Carlos Carvalho, afirmou que o Brasil não tem condições de lidar com o aquecimento global, e que o país precisa de ajuda internacional para enfrentar o problema.

— O Brasil chegou à Rio+10 com uma agenda cheia de desafios, desde a questão do clima até a da pobreza. O ministro do Meio Ambiente, José Carlos Carvalho, afirmou que o Brasil não tem condições de lidar com o aquecimento global, e que o país precisa de ajuda internacional para enfrentar o problema.

**Brasil propõe meta de energia renovável**

— O Brasil propôs uma meta de 10% de energia renovável em sua agenda para a Rio+10. O ministro do Meio Ambiente, José Carlos Carvalho, afirmou que o Brasil quer liderar a luta contra o aquecimento global, e que o país precisa de ajuda internacional para enfrentar o problema.

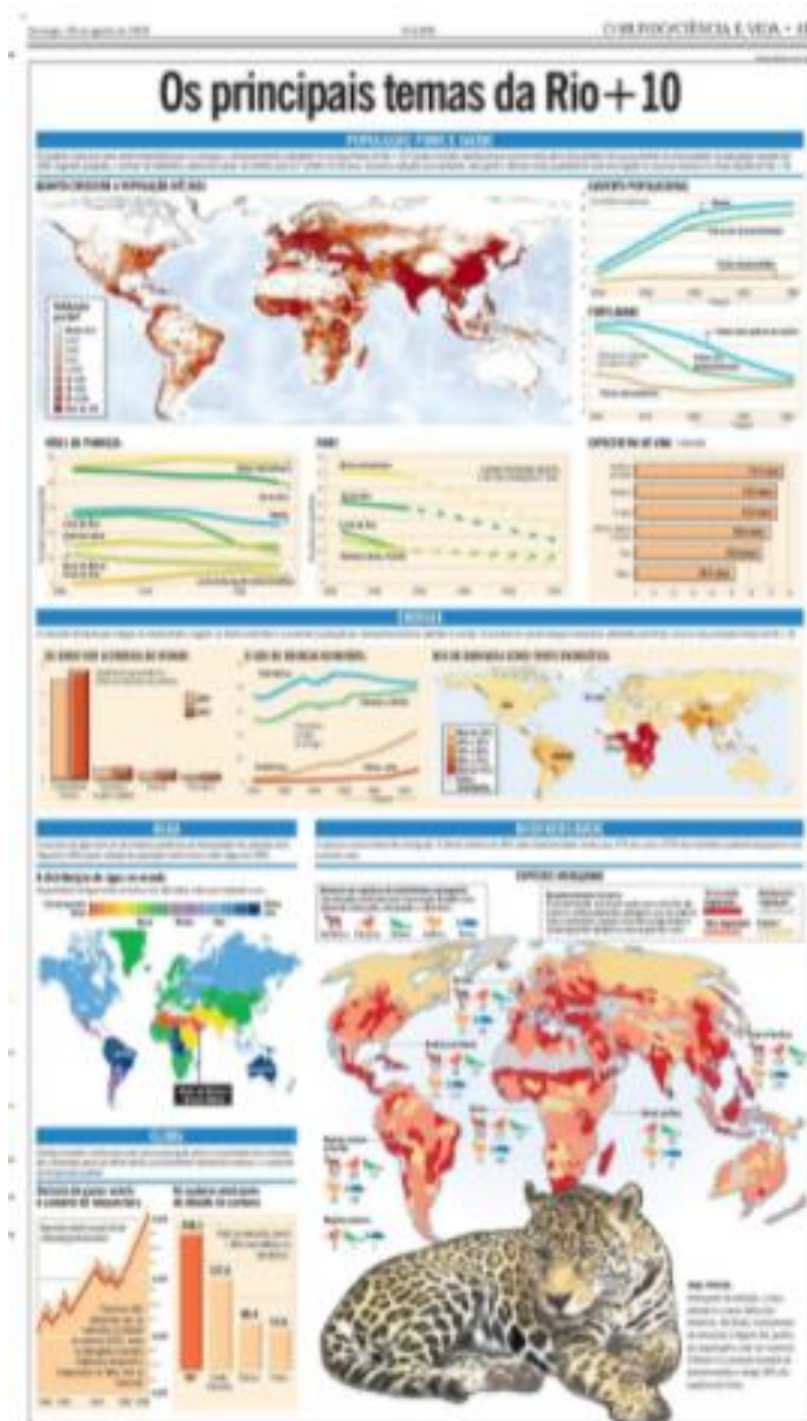
**COMO É COMO**

— O Brasil chegou à Rio+10 com uma agenda cheia de desafios, desde a questão do clima até a da pobreza. O ministro do Meio Ambiente, José Carlos Carvalho, afirmou que o Brasil não tem condições de lidar com o aquecimento global, e que o país precisa de ajuda internacional para enfrentar o problema.

Figure 7.10: Images published in *O Globo* on 25 August 2002

Furthermore, the article displayed a whole page containing follow-up data with maps and charts about Rio+10's main topics (Figure 7.11). The illustration stated that Rio+10's main goal was to promote the fight against poverty as part of sustainable development. It also showed data about population growth, fertility rates, life expectancy, poverty levels, and hunger. Halfway down the page, *O Globo* claimed that rising energy demand tended to deplete fossil fuel sources and increase pollution. Then the newspaper claimed that Brazil supported the use of renewable energy sources. At the bottom of the page were displayed figures about the world's distribution of water and biodiversity, and emissions of greenhouse gases. *OG* also highlighted the jaguar, the largest wild cat in the Americas, stating that Brazil sheltered 20% of the world's biodiversity.

Figures, illustrations, and maps complemented the article from the previous page. Arguably it was a strategy used by *O Globo* to continue providing data to readers through visual elements. The page's design indicates that Brazilian newspapers evolved their visualisation to make the content more comprehensible to readers, making its publications more attractive to the public.



**Figure 7.11:** Images published in *O Globo* on 25 August 2002

On the first day of Rio+10, 26 August, *O Globo* published a piece<sup>215</sup> about Brazil's participation in the event. It presented Brazil's proposal to increase renewable sources in the global energy matrix to 10% by 2010. Besides, it stated that the Brazilian energy sector was responsible for 1% of global greenhouse emissions, having 38% of its energy matrix based on renewable sources. *OG* considered these figures a great result, especially comparing Brazil's resourcefulness to the US, which was responsible for emitting 25% of global greenhouse gases.

*OG* defended the claim that Brazil's proposal could be a decent outcome for the summit, after failed attempts to establish deadlines and the transfer of funds. *OG* also reported that Greenpeace's political director Remi Parmentier had complained about the summit's focus on economic debates. The piece stated that Brazil's proposal was supported by 33 Latin American and Caribbean countries. The text highlighted that Brazil's main environmental problem was deforestation, which was responsible for 2% of global greenhouse gas emissions, but that this was still a much lower figure than emissions from rich countries.

In this piece, it became clear that *O Globo*'s strategy was to compare Brazil's data to the US in an attempt to upgrade Brazil's image. As the world's most polluting country, the US made Brazilian environmental figures look not only acceptable but extremely good, as if the country was protecting its environment. The text supported this argument by not presenting Brazil's complete figures regarding the production of greenhouse gases. *OG* said that the Brazilian energy sector was responsible for 1% of emissions and deforestation for 2%, but it did not make clear if there were other sources of emissions, nor their contribution. Meanwhile, the US's full data was presented, which corresponded to 25% of global emissions. Thus, *OG* unfairly compared the US's greenhouse gas emissions to the data from a specific sector in Brazil.

Additionally, *OG* presented five black-and-white pictures produced by international news agencies Reuters, *Agence France-Presse*, and Associated Press (Figure 7.12). Four photos showed Rio+10's opening ceremony, including the participation of South African president Thabo Mbeki. Images, nevertheless,

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<sup>215</sup> Jansen, R. (2002) Impasse na Rio+10. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 26 August. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 14 September 2021).

displayed the event, but did not connect to the article's main topic, which related to Brazil's renewable energy proposal. Differences between photographs of cultural events and the seriousness of data discussed in the article suggest that *O Globo* tried to minimise the severity of Rio+10's environmental discussions by displaying cultural activities.



Figure 7.12: Pictures published in *O Globo* on 26 August 2002

As part of the coverage of Rio+10, *O Globo* published a piece about international environmental policy<sup>216</sup>. The article stated that judges from 17 countries, including Brazil, the US, and Russia, compromised on environmental

<sup>216</sup> *O Globo* (2002) Magistrados pela Terra. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 27 August. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 9 September 2021).



protection during Rio+10. *OG* argued that judges agreed that most countries had a sufficient environmental policy but that laws needed better implementation. Additionally, it added that the execution of environmental legislation could assist the fight against poverty and contribute to an improved civilisation. The article highlighted global concerns regarding the establishment of environmental policy, stating that many countries already had laws but did not implement them properly.

*O Globo* printed a follow-up about the Brazilian proposal on renewable energy during Rio+10<sup>217</sup>. The text reported that the proposition was presented as the only agreement on climate and energy that could be approved in the summit. It mentioned that NGOs and Latin American, Caribbean, and European nations supported the idea. *OG* also stated that the US, Japan, and Australia were against setting goals and implementation dates. The article emphasised Brazil's attempt to become a world leader in environmental protection, but instead of focusing on the environmental gains of the proposal, *OG* underlined political discussions, indicating the importance of political support in regard to the definition of global environmental policy.

Furthermore, *O Globo* displayed three black-and-white pictures produced by *Agence France-Presse* (Figure 7.13). Two of the photos showed cultural events that took place during Rio+10. The other photograph presented former president Nelson Mandela and two men smiling and apparently opening a water pipe, as Mandela claimed for fairer water distribution in South Africa. Nevertheless, none of the images related to the article's main topic, which was the discussion about Brazil's renewable energy proposal in Rio+10. Once again, the use of positive photographs indicates that *O Globo* attempted to minimise the seriousness of the article by connecting it to optimistic images.

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<sup>217</sup> *O Globo* (2002) Proposta brasileira é bem recebida na Rio+10. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 29 August. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 9 September 2021).

## CIÊNCIA E VIDA

## Proposta brasileira é bem recebida na Rio+10

Meta de energia limpa é apontada como único plano viável já apresentado na cúpula das Nações Unidas

• JOHANNESBURGO. A proposta brasileira para o aumento do uso da energia limpa em todo o mundo foi apresentada nesta terça-feira na Cúpula Mundial sobre Desenvolvimento Sustentável, na Rio+10, encabeçada como a única esperança para a aprovação de um acordo sobre clima e energia durante a conferência. Apresentada pelo secretário de Meio Ambiente de São Paulo, o físico José Goldemberg, a proposta prevê que todos os países se comprometam a ter 10% de sua energia provenientes de fontes renováveis até 2010.

A proposta brasileira vem recebendo cada vez mais apoio em Johannesburg, inclusive de países europeus, entre eles a Noruega. A proposta é apoiada também pelos 33 países em desenvolvimento que formam a Iniciativa Latino-Americana e Caribeína, além de estar sendo recebida com entusiasmo por praticamente todos os OICs da proteção ao meio ambiente.

— Foi a única meta concreta proposta até agora — afirmou Kate Harston, da ONG Amigos da Terra. — É a maior esperança de progresso.

Mais de um bilhão não terão eletricidade em 2022

Atualmente, apenas 2% da matriz energética mundial são consideradas renováveis — eólica, oceânica e solar. A União Europeia também havia apresentado uma proposta — aparentemente mais ambiciosa que a brasileira — de aumento dos percentuais de energia limpa para 15% entre 2010 e 2015. Mas, para sustentabilistas, a proposta europeia não representa um avanço significativo porque inclui a opção de fontes não renováveis de energia, incluindo-se essas métodos, 14% da energia usada atualmente no mundo já vêm de fontes renováveis. A proposta brasileira exclui essas fontes, embora inclua hidrelétricas.

Segundo Goldemberg, a quarta do mundo e entre os responsáveis por altos níveis de poluição e causa graves pro-



FESTA E APELO: crianças japonesas (ao lado) e outras crianças se apresentam na Rio+10, onde Nelson Mandela (à esquerda) fez um apelo pela distribuição mais justa de água



blemas de saúde. Em sua avaliação, não se trata de energia limpa.

Estados Unidos, Japão e Austrália vêm se posicionando contra o estabelecimento de metas e datas de implementação das propostas, sob a alegação de que cada nação deveria ser livre para estabelecer seus próprios planos.

A Agência Internacional de Energia informou ontem que 1,4 bilhão de pessoas não terá acesso a eletricidade daqui a 30 anos. Atualmente, 1,6 bilhão não tem energia. O presidente da África do Sul Nelson Mandela fez um emocionado discurso ontem, no qual pediu uma distribuição mais justa da água no país. ■

## Briga de Davi e Golias

Tuvatu ameaça processar EUA

• O governo das Ilhas de Tuvatu ameaça entrar, na Cúpula Mundial sobre Desenvolvimento Sustentável, que vai processar os Estados Unidos, responsabilizando-os pelo aquecimento global. Tuvatu é um pequeno arquipélago no Pacífico, que poderá submergir em razão da elevação das águas decorrente do efeito estufa. O posto mais alto do país fica a quatro metros do nível do mar.

— Estamos lutando contra um gigante — disse o ministro da Economia de Tuvatu, Sikeliu Paniau. — Mas essa é uma das poucas opções que temos.

Representantes do governo tuvaluano pretendem arrastar líderes de outros países ameaçados para participarem da ação, que deverá ser apresentada dentro de um ano. A ideia é processar não apenas os EUA, mas também a Austrália, que costuma se aliar com os americanos.

Os EUA são considerados os maiores poluidores do mundo, responsáveis por 25% das emissões dos gases do efeito estufa. As regiões mais baixas de Tuvatu já foram alagadas e o governo busca abrigo para a população de dez mil habitantes em outros países.

## OPINIÃO

## MAIS, OU MENOS

• O PRIMEIRO acordo importante firmado na reunião de cúpula Rio+10 foi marcado por duas circunstâncias.

reduzir o número de áreas protegidas e para impedir a fixação de prazos para as ações necessárias.

PRIMEIRA: O tema era de alta relevância. Tratava-se de estabelecer metas e prazos para a recuperação de áreas de pesca em todo o mundo. De acordo com a ONU, 70% dessas áreas estão degradadas ou são superexploradas.

SEGUNDA: OS Estados Unidos foram o possível para

SEGUIR: O ministro de Meio Ambiente de Tuvatu, Sikeliu Paniau, lamentavelmente trocando de nome para "Rio mais limpo". ■

Figure 7.13: Pictures published in *O Globo* on 29 August 2002

One day later, on 30 August 2002, *O Globo* followed up discussions regarding Brazil's proposal to establish 10% of renewable resources on the global energy matrix<sup>218</sup>. It mentioned that Brazilian representatives believed that the proposal would be approved with restrictions due to the resistance of the US and oil-producing countries. *OG's* recurrent coverage of Brazil's proposal to establish 10% of renewable energy in the global energy matrix suggests that the newspaper supported the idea. In addition, *OG* reflected again on political conjecture regarding the proposal, stressing the importance of a global connection to support international environmental policy.

<sup>218</sup> Berlinck, D. (2002) Rio+10: aliança em torno da meta brasileira. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 30 August. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 14 September 2021).

In the same edition, *O Globo*'s columnist Joelmir Beting continued to cover Rio+10's environmental policy discussions<sup>219</sup>. The piece reported the existence of a 3,100m-thick lead cloud that could kill 500,000 people. According to *OG*, the cloud was first identified in 1995 in Southeast Asia and covered a quarter of humanity. The column affirmed that the cloud portrayed humanity's foolishness, describing it as a cumulative and irreversible environmental aggression. Notably, chapter 2, *Environmental journalism in context*, referred to this type of alarmist coverage as low-quality journalism, especially in accordance with Rögener and Wormer (2017), who argued against pessimistic and reductionist pieces, to prevent the publications of misleading information.

Rio+10's talks over pollution led to the event itself wanting to offer a good example to the world. *O Globo* stated<sup>220</sup> that Rio+10 would recycle about 20% of the 400 tons of garbage that would result from the summit. Despite reproducing the event's environmental marketing strategy, *OG*'s text was a greenwashing narrative because it tried to promote Rio+10 as an environmentally friendly event. Nevertheless, the reality behind the recycling initiative was that 80% of the 400 tons of garbage produced during the event would not be recycled. The remaining 320 tons of garbage were not addressed by the UN nor by *OG*. *O Globo*, therefore, contributed to the dissemination of the UN's greenwashing discourse. *OG* also displayed a black-and-white picture produced by AP (Figure 7.14). The photo showed a UN worker with sheets of paper that were going to be recycled, which illustrated and promoted Rio+10's greenwashing narrative, and reinforced *O Globo*'s support of the UN's misleading marketing strategy.

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<sup>219</sup> Beting, J. (2002) A sombra asiática. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 30 August. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 26 May 2021).

<sup>220</sup> Berlinck, D. (2002) Cúpula tenta dar exemplo verde. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 31 August. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 9 September 2021).



**Figure 7.14:** Picture published in *O Globo* on 31 August 2002

*O Globo* continued to follow up Brazil's proposal on renewable energy on 1 September 2002<sup>221</sup>. The article stated that the original project was rejected by oil-producing countries. It reminded readers that the initial proposition suggested 10% of renewable sources in the global energy matrix, while the adapted plan recommended regional and voluntary goals. *OG* claimed that Brazilian foreign minister Celso Lafer was acquiescent, while Brazilian environment minister José Carlos Carvalho was disappointed and still trying to negotiate a minimum global goal. The follow-up piece explained Rio+10's negotiations and emphasised the effort of Brazilian representatives to approve an international goal regarding renewable energy. *OG's* recurrent coverage of the topic suggests that the newspaper supported the Brazilian proposal, while trying to underline Brazil's participation in the summit.

<sup>221</sup> Jungblut, C. & Berlinck, D. (2002) Pressão faz Brasil alterar proposta na Rio+10. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 1 September. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 15 September 2021).

*O Globo* reported Brazil's first victory in Rio+10<sup>222</sup>, on 2 September 2002. The piece stated that after much discussion, more than 100 countries agreed to create a goal to reduce global biodiversity destruction by 2010. It noted that because it had 20% of the world's biodiversity Brazil celebrated the agreement as its big, and only, victory in Rio+10. *OG* highlighted the fact that the deal would include the division of financial benefits from the exploitation of biologic resources, helping the fight against biopiracy. The text stressed *O Globo*'s disappointment regarding the failure of Brazil's renewable energy proposal. The newspaper coverage of Rio+10 basically focused on the Brazilian energy project. It is also noteworthy how *OG* considered the international agreement a victory for the Brazilian economy, instead of a global environmental triumph. The finding indicates that even when covering environmental subjects, *O Globo* considered economic aspects more important. Moreover, the newspaper was acclaiming Brazilian achievements, not worldwide gains.

*O Globo* reported a meeting<sup>223</sup> between Brazilian president Fernando Henrique Cardoso and former South African president Nelson Mandela during the World Forest Congress, a parallel event at Rio+10. *OG* stated that both presidents were applauded by 500 environmentalists after Cardoso's speech that defended the Kyoto Protocol and the creation of a global fund to fight poverty. The piece argued that Cardoso praised Mandela in his speech but that Mandela left the event without waiting for Cardoso to finish his presentation. On this occasion, the newspaper focused on the political importance of Cardoso meeting Nelson Mandela, but neglected to cover Cardoso's speech defending the Kyoto Protocol, which was the reason why environmentalists applauded him. The text also resembled a gossip text when it stressed that Mandela left the event during Cardoso's speech. The spotlight on this incident corroborates the argument that *OG* coverage of Rio+10 was more concerned with political networks than environmental aspects.

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<sup>222</sup> Jungblut, C. & Berlinck, D. (2002) Brasil consegue sua primeira vitória no encontro. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 2 September. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 10 September 2021).

<sup>223</sup> Jungblut, C. & Berlinck, D. (2002) Fernando Henrique reencontra Mandela. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 3 September. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 10 September 2021).

In the same edition, *O Globo* described the defeat of Brazil's renewable energy proposal at Rio+10<sup>224</sup>. The article stated that Brazilian proposition was defeated a few hours after President Cardoso's highlighted the project during his speech at the summit. *OG* stated that the proposal was a matter of honour to Brazil but mentioned that the project was opposed by Japan, the US, and oil-producing Arab countries. Besides, the piece stated that Brazil was a natural leader in sustainable energy, as 40% of its matrix relied on renewable sources. It said that the Brazilian environment minister José Carlos Carvalho had tried to establish deadlines for voluntary and regional actions up until the last minute, but had failed in his attempts. *OG* argued that Brazil's consolation prize was signing an agreement with the European Union on renewable energy, without specifying anything about the programme.

The article reinforced *O Globo*'s disappointment regarding the rejection of Brazil's renewable energy proposal. *OG* referred to the project as a matter of honour, suggesting that Brazil's reputation relied on its approval. The newspaper also praised Brazil by defining it as a natural leader in sustainable energy, due to its extensive use of renewable sources. *OG*'s frustration was highlighted when it named an energy agreement between Brazil and the European Union a consolation prize. The article displayed the repetitive use of vocabulary that linked the Brazilian proposal to a defeat. The recurring connection to failure corroborated the argument that *O Globo* considered Brazil a disappointment in Rio+10.

As part of the follow-up on the failure to approve Brazil's proposal on renewable energy, *OG* interviewed Brazilian environment minister José Carlos Carvalho in the same edition<sup>225</sup>. *OG* revealed that the minister was frustrated with Rio+10's results. It noted that Carvalho criticised the defeat of the Brazilian's proposal on renewable energy, arguing that Rio+10 was unsatisfying because it did not define goals nor deadlines. The interview revealed that the Brazilian government was displeased with Rio+10's results on establishing international environmental policy, suggesting that the topic was not relevant to many nations,

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<sup>224</sup> Jungblut, C. & Berlinck, D. (2002) Proposta do Brasil para energia é derrotada. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 3 September. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 10 September 2021).

<sup>225</sup> Berlinck, D. (2002) O sistema ONU está superado. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 3 September. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 10 September 2021).

as the event was not able to approve a global strategy to implement sustainable development worldwide.

In the following edition, on 4 September 2002, *O Globo* reported that Cardoso was frustrated with the defeat of the Brazilian proposal regarding renewable energy in Rio+10<sup>226</sup>. According to *OG*, President Cardoso claimed that global leaders who agreed with the proposal would remain fighting for it, to embarrass and shame rich countries. With this statement, the Brazilian president highlighted the old conflict between poor and rich nations in regard to environmental protection. Besides, Cardoso solely blamed rich economies, even though some of the countries that disagreed with the proposal were developing nations, especially oil producers.

Brazilian president Fernando Henrique Cardoso remained in *O Globo*'s spotlight as the newspaper revealed that UN secretary-general Kofi Annan had invited Cardoso to participate in a special mission after his presidential mandate in Brazil<sup>227</sup>. The article explained that the mission would focus on globalisation and the development of poor countries. *OG* reported that Cardoso was honoured but said that he needed to think before replying to Annan because he needed to rest after his mandate. This piece unveiled the backstage of international political negotiations and reinforced Cardoso's importance in the international arena. This chapter previously presented an opinion piece written by Cardoso in 2009, when he was participating in Annan's group named The Elders. It is interesting to notice that seven years after Cardoso's participation in Rio+10, he had a more moderate discourse, trying to integrate the Global North and South in environmental discussions.

Still in the edition from 4 September 2002, the disapproval of Brazil's renewable energy proposal during Rio+10 re-emerged in a column written by *O Globo* journalist Joelmir Beting<sup>228</sup>. Following up Brazil's participation in the summit, Beting explained that the proposal was objected to by the US, Japan,

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<sup>226</sup> Jungblut, C. (2002) FH se diz frustrado com derrota na conferência. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 4 September. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 14 September 2021).

<sup>227</sup> Jungblut, C. (2002) Annan convida FH para missão na ONU. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 4 September. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 14 September 2021).

<sup>228</sup> Beting, J. (2002) Boicote ao futuro. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 4 September. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 27 May 2021).

Australia, two thirds of Europe, and all countries that produced or were heavy consumers of oil. The text connected the resistance to diminish oil production and consumption to the Kyoto Protocol, explaining that the agreement was aimed at promoting the reduction of pollutants. It stated that the protocol had been proposed during Rio92 but that it was still waiting for the decision of 112 nations in 2002 to be implemented. It highlighted the fact that after Rio92, global oil consumption expanded and could result in an increase of 5.6 degrees Celsius in the planet's temperature. *OG* emphasised that Rio+10 did not manage to establish mandatory targets or compulsory deadlines. The column reminded readers that the Kyoto Protocol allowed polluting countries to purchase carbon credits to comply with the agreement, which could turn into an economic benefit for Brazilian sugarcane ethanol production.

The column linked economic and environment issues, showing interconnections between the oil market and environmental impacts, as major oil producers and consumers were not among the Kyoto Protocol's supporters. Additionally, it promoted environmental awareness by explaining the Kyoto Protocol's objective and the reason why most countries did not agree with Brazil's Rio+10 proposal to increase to 10% the amount of renewable or sustainable sources in the global energy matrix.

Regarding the results of Rio+10, *O Globo* reported that environmentalists were unsatisfied with the summit<sup>229</sup>. *OG* stated that Rio+10's report did not have objectives nor advances in any essential topic, highlighting the fact that the only new goal of the summit was the plan to reduce by 50% the number of people without access to sanitation. *OG* added a black-and-white picture produced by international news agency Reuters (Figure 7.15). The photo showed French environmentalists protesting against global corporations. *OG*'s coverage of Rio+10 solely linked environmentalists to dissatisfaction with Rio+10, whereas there were several political leaders and representatives of civil society who were also unsatisfied with the event. Arguably, the spotlight on environmentalists suggests *O Globo*'s prejudice towards eco-activists because they were not the only ones unsatisfied with the event's outcomes.

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<sup>229</sup> Berlinck, D. (2002) ONGs: cúpula deu migalhas a pobres. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 4 September. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 14 September 2021).





**Figure 7.15:** Picture published in *O Globo* on 4 September 2002

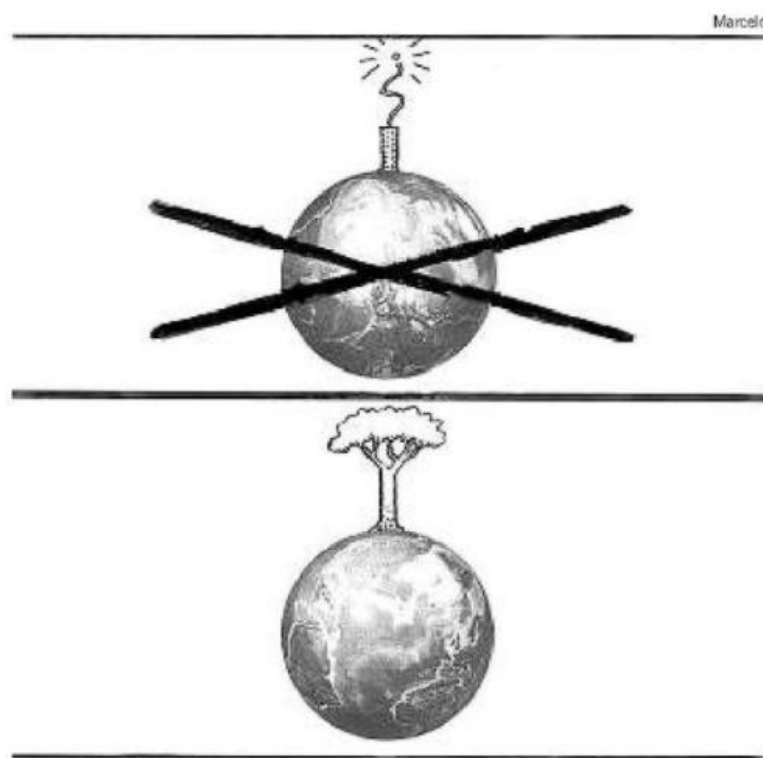
The coverage of international legislation continued nine years later, in 2011, as *O Globo* published an opinion piece written by philosophy professor Denis Lerrer Rosenfield suggesting the creation of an international environmental code<sup>230</sup>. Rosenfield reminded readers that Rio de Janeiro was going to host the UN Conference on Sustainable Development within one year and that the event would be a unique opportunity to enforce international environmental rules, not just impositions on developing countries. Rosenfield suggested that all countries should have forest reserves, voluntarily preserving 20% of their forests and natural vegetation. He also complained about the omission of NGOs and social movements regarding environmental protection in developed countries. The professor defended equal parameters for all nations, claiming that developed countries should ensure coherence between discourse and practice. On a more critical note, Rosenfield argued that Rio+20 could “lift the veil of hypocrisy”<sup>231</sup>.

The opinion piece presented hard critiques of developed nations, NGOs, and social movements that were labelled hypocrites. Most criticism was directed at rich nations that wanted to impose environmental legislation on developing nations

<sup>230</sup> Rosenfield, D. L. (2011) Código Ambiental Internacional. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 6 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 18 October 2021).

<sup>231</sup>Original in Portuguese: *levantar o véu da hipocrisia*

while they did not intend to be subjected to the same rules. The text also underlined the conflict between North and South, emphasising differences between discourse and practice. Moreover, noteworthy was the criticism of NGOs and social movements that focused their work on developing countries instead of caring for the environment worldwide. *O Globo* illustrated the opinion piece with a black-and-white image showing two drawings of planet Earth (Figure 7.16). The first compared the planet to a bomb, while in the second the planet supported a tree. Illustrations indicated that the right choice for humanity was to avoid conflicts, to nurture a planet that held life. To some extent, the images argued against the opposing stands of countries from the North and the South, suggesting the need for global interconnection to promote environmental care.



**Figure 7.16:** Image published in *Folha de S. Paulo* on 6 June 2011

Following discussions about the development of international environmental policy during Rio+20, *O Globo* announced that Brazilian foreign minister Antônio Patriota had said that developing countries had a fundamental role

to play in the process of conducting sustainability policy<sup>232</sup>. According to *O Globo*, Patriota claimed that 20 years earlier, during Rio92, an economic crisis had affected developing countries, but that in Rio+20 these nations had become central to international debates. *OG* stated Patriota's view that the current economic crisis could affect short-term solutions to implement sustainable development but would not be an issue in the long term. The article showed that the Brazilian foreign minister had positive expectations about the outcomes of Rio+20, minimising impacts of an ongoing economic crisis despite previous experiences in Rio92 and Rio+10 showing that economic adversities damaged the events. Moreover, it reinforced that the Brazilian government recurrently disseminated the ideology of the South, an attempt to question the global hegemony by influencing the public sphere.

In regard to global environmental policy, *Folha de S. Paulo* showed that New York mayor Michael Bloomberg claimed that cities were implementing sustainable development policy, often without the help of federal governments<sup>233</sup>. The emergence of international mayors in the media coverage of sustainable development spotlights the increasing importance of the topic. In this piece, *FSP* stated that Bloomberg stressed that, with the help of federal governments, cities could do much more, guaranteeing a better and more sustainable future for citizens. According to *FSP*, Bloomberg also acknowledged that private initiatives were also contributing to the implementation of environmental policy.

The piece reinforced the connection between environmental policy and politics. It also resembled greenwashing political discourses, promoting cities for sustainable projects that were not specified in the article. Moreover, *FSP* displayed a coloured picture of Bloomberg and Rio de Janeiro mayor Eduardo Paes visiting a slum in Rio de Janeiro (Figure 7.17). The photo seemed to be an attempt to show that Bloomberg and Paes cared about social issues. However, both politicians were photographed away from the slum, looking at the area from a building. The interpretation of the visit actually offered the opposite impression, demonstrating how disconnected from the population those mayors were.

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<sup>232</sup> Oliveira, E. & Riberio, F. (2012) Patriota: A periferia está trazendo respostas. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 13 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 27 October 2021).

<sup>233</sup> Fornetti, V. (2012) Prefeito de NY quer resultado tangível. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 20 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 5 November 2021).



**Figure 7.17:** Picture published in *Folha de S. Paulo* on 20 June 2012

Continuing the coverage of Rio+20, *O Globo* reported that the establishment of global environmental legislation concerning ocean protection should be a priority at the conference<sup>234</sup>. The piece stated that oceans were in great danger, due to pollution, unsustainable fishing, and gaps in international policy. It reminded readers that oceans covered 70% of Earth but that only 36% were protected by national laws and less than 1% was part of marine conservation areas. *OG* claimed that global sustainable development depended on healthy oceans but that the time to save oceans was ending. The article presented *OG*'s support of the creation of environmental policy specifically in regard to oceans. The text explained

<sup>234</sup> Motta, C. (2012) Só 36% dos oceanos são protegidos por lei. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 14 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 28 October 2021).

the main causes of environmental damage to oceans, emphasising the fact that the effort to protect oceans needed international input.

*O Globo*'s reference to ocean health linked to the newspaper's economic coverage of Rio+10, when it attempted to highlight the importance of oceans by focusing on their financial relevance. This investigation was thoroughly presented in chapter 6, *Economic narratives: greenwashing sustainable development*, which detected that Brazilian media often monetised natural resources. Here, the investigation shows that the coverage evolved from an economic perspective in Rio+10 to a broader sustainability perception that emphasised the creation of international environmental policy focused on the protection of marine areas.

Following Rio+20 discussions, *O Globo*'s economy columnist Miriam Leitão<sup>235</sup> acknowledged that the conference's final document would be weaker than expected in the worst-case scenario, due to the current economic crisis. Leitão said that governors had agreed to commit to sustainable development goals in the future, but the details of this proposal were still unknown. Additionally, the columnist stated that negotiations on marine policy in international waters remained uncertain. The piece explained that to reach an agreement in the conference, Brazil removed the following from the document: redundances, controversies, and unsolved topics. The column was critical about the Rio+20 document, and of Brazil's resourcefulness as a negotiator. It claimed that the economic crisis and countries' interests prevented environmental discussions, yet Rio+20 acknowledged that international environmental policy needed updating.

Leitão's critique of Rio+20 continued two days later in a column<sup>236</sup> dating from 21 June. Once more, the piece was very critical of the Rio+20 document and Brazilian diplomacy. *OG*'s text connected political and environmental topics, elucidating Rio+20 results and maintaining environmental discussion in the public agenda. Leitão's column showed policy makers' political backstage and disapproved of countries' apathy towards the establishment of international environmental legislation. The columnist also mentioned that the US and France represented opposing sides at the conference, with President François Hollande

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<sup>235</sup> Leitão, M. (2012) O risco do vazio. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 19 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 29 May 2021).

<sup>236</sup> Leitão, M. (2012) A palavra-chave. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 21 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 30 May 2021).

cited in several passages as reaffirming France's interest in creating global environmental policy.

In brief, the investigation of Brazilian media coverage regarding international environmental policy displayed difficulties in creating and implementing global legislation to protect the environment throughout the 20-year timeframe. *FSP* and *OG* showed that, in all international events to discuss environmental policy, economic crises prevented the achievement of global agreements. Moreover, conflicts between the Global North and South re-emerged in the coverage, revealing that the main problem in creating and implementing international environmental policy related to economic factors. The finding connects to arguments presented in chapter 6, *Economic narratives: greenwashing sustainable development*, which concluded that debates at international environmental conferences focused on the search for financial aid to implement global sustainable development. Such discussions reinforced disagreements between developed and developing nations, spotlighting the fact that economic interests dominated conversations at UN environmental events. It also highlighted the dissatisfaction with global hegemony that recurrently minimised the importance of the environmental agenda on the public sphere. The text analysis will progress in the next section with the study of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage of sustainability centred on Brazilian environmental policy.

### **7.2.2 – Brazilian environmental policy**

After exploring the Brazilian media coverage of international environmental policy, this section analyses the national environmental legislation displayed in *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage of sustainable development. The investigation revealed that the national environmental legislation was a significant topic, with 11 pieces produced between 1992 and 2012, including two opinion pieces specifically about the Brazilian Forest Code.

The first article that focused on Brazilian environmental legislation was published by *Folha de S. Paulo* in 1992<sup>237</sup>. It described a special report that defined

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<sup>237</sup> *Folha de S. Paulo* (1992) Saulo Ramos faz análise da legislação do meio ambiente. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 4 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 1 July 2021).

Brazilian policy as innovative and as a vanguard in relation to the environmental field, claiming that the country was able to develop in a sustainable way. It also praised Brazil for committing to international treaties. Arguably, the piece could work as an advertisement for the Brazilian government. It showed a sequence of vague compliments of Brazil and its environmental legislation without providing facts to support that praise or the policy's effectiveness. These characteristics refer to greenwashing political discourses, often detected in *FSP* and *OG* coverage of sustainable development.

Two years later, *O Globo* published an opinion piece<sup>238</sup> written by Brazilian professor Fernando Almeida about the transposition of the river São Francisco<sup>239</sup>, located in northeast Brazil. The professor wondered if the project would lead the region to sustainable development, and especially promote social equality. The text stated that the project would cause unprecedented deforestation in the region and could ultimately leave the land uncultivable. Nevertheless, it defended the transposition due to its economic and social importance.

The opinion piece showed an example of a distorted interpretation of the concept of sustainability that did not take into consideration environmental aspects, solely focusing on economic and social features. Despite mentioning possible environmental impacts such as deforestation and soil infertility, the piece considered the transposition to be a sustainable development project for promoting economic and social gains. The 1987 *Brundtland Report* includes environmental concerns as part of sustainability, thus a project that would undoubtedly promote devastation could not be considered sustainable. It is notable that by publishing a piece that misused the concept of sustainable development, *O Globo* contributed to the process of disinformation, especially in terms of environmental communication.

Several examples of disinformation and greenwashing emerged in chapter 6, *Economic narratives: greenwashing sustainable development*, showcasing recurring misleading information about sustainability. *FSP* and *OG* economic coverage attempted to disguise environmentally destructive companies and governmental projects as environmentally friendly. Chapter 6's detected attempts

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<sup>238</sup> Almeida, F. (1994) O sertão vai virar mar. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 2 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 6 August 2021).

<sup>239</sup> The transposition of the river São Francisco began in 2007 and is still under construction.

to cover up environmental impacts connects to the opinion piece about the transposition of the river São Francisco, which made use of the notion of sustainable development to suppress attention on environmental devastation.

Still in 1994, *Folha de S. Paulo* published an opinion piece written by Brazilian environmentalist and right-wing congressman Fabio Feldmann<sup>240</sup>. The text criticised Brazilian environmental legislation following the construction of a hydroelectric dam in the south-eastern state of São Paulo. Feldmann argued that the Ministry of Environment did not analyse the project's environmental impacts, leaving the work to state governments. To the congressman, this was a concerning example that could set a precedent to other states, resulting in the implementation of hydroelectric dams in the Amazon basin. Feldman called for the restructuring of Brazilian environmental regulation and for its integration into sustainability.

Feldmann's opinion piece criticised Brazilian environmental legislation, showing that it needed more connection with sustainable development. It stressed that environmental policy required accurate execution to guarantee the development of sustainable infrastructure projects in the country. It also warned about environmental policy misapplication, speculating how it could impact future projects. It is relevant that neither *FSP* nor *OG* wrote about the environmental problems related to the hydroelectric dam in São Paulo, suggesting that both newspapers overlooked environmental problems in the country.

One year later, in 1995, *O Globo* published an opinion piece about Brazilian environmental policy written by sociologist Aspásia Camargo<sup>241</sup>, who was then working for the Brazilian Ministry of Environment. Camargo argued that President Fernando Henrique Cardoso's main challenge was including environmental policy in governmental policy, including the use of Agenda 21 as a national and international political instrument. Camargo also presented an optimistic view of the topic. She wrote that Brazil produced the "cleanest" energy, protected the "biggest" forests, preserved the "largest" number of indigenous communities, and gave them the "largest" lands.

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<sup>240</sup> Feldmann, F. (1994) Dia Mundial do Meio Ambiente e Tijuco Alto. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 6 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 11 August 2021).

<sup>241</sup> Camargo, A. (1995) Meio ambiente: novo pacto social? *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 3 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 9 August 2021).



Nevertheless, Camargo's claims did not correspond to reality. The use of superlatives to describe environmental protection in Brazil indicated an attempt to convince readers of her claims. The narrative tried to minimise Brazil's environmental problems, as if not citing issues in the text would neutralise well-known problems such as deforestation in the Amazon. The text can be interpreted as an example of disinformation, for its deliberate effort to cover up environmental destruction in Brazil, thus intentionally spreading false data referring to forest protection, defence of indigenous communities, and land distribution to these groups. Further considerations of subjects relating to the Amazon rainforest are displayed in chapter 8, *The coverage of the Amazon rainforest: a case study*.

Media coverage of Brazilian environmental policy continued three years later, in 1998, when *O Globo* reported that environmentalists had concluded that the Brazilian government did not have a suitable environmental regulation, adding that the environmental movement did not have a defined strategy<sup>242</sup>. *OG* presented the opinion of the Brazilian environmental journalist Washington Novaes, who argued that these gaps resulted in Brazilian society not engaging with the environmental cause. *OG* highlighted Novaes' claim that environmental aspects needed to be better communicated to disseminate the concept of sustainability, which could possibly improve environmental awareness and protection. According to *OG*, Novaes observed that most people were still unable to perceive the relationship between environment and quality of life.

In regard to *O Globo*'s coverage, it is significant to have the newspaper reporting the view of a group of environmentalists, reinforcing the fact that Brazil lacked a proper environmental policy. Also noteworthy is the opinion of an environmental journalist about the work of Brazilian environmental media. According to the communication specialist, both the environmental cause and sustainable development needed to gain popularity in the country. The argument exposed the dissatisfaction of an expert regarding Brazilian environmental coverage.

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<sup>242</sup> Beting, J. (1998) Discurso sem recurso. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 2 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 26 May 2021).

In the same year, *O Globo* published an opinion piece produced by its editorial team about the devastation of the Atlantic Forest in Rio de Janeiro<sup>243</sup>. It stated that Rio de Janeiro was the Brazilian state responsible for most of the Atlantic Forest's destruction. The text blamed real estate speculation and cattle farms for the devastation. The text detailed that the destruction of the Atlantic Forest was twice as quick as the devastation of the Amazon rainforest. The piece also explained that the destruction occurred in spite of environmental legislation, adding that people who promoted illegal activities usually used the argument that they needed to support their families. *OG* highlighted the fact that clandestine logging companies disrespected the balance between development and preservation, destroying a collective heritage and reducing the quality of life of future generations. Moreover, *OG* stated that the NGO SOS Atlantic Forest<sup>244</sup> predicted that the Atlantic Forest was going to disappear in 50 years if the devastation continued at such a rate. *OG* stated that it was clear that the Rio de Janeiro authorities were not doing enough to prove this prediction wrong.

The coverage suggests that *O Globo* endorsed sustainable development, as it condemned activities that disregarded the equilibrium between development and environment. *OG*'s support shows the complexity of the concept of sustainability, as other coverage produced by *OG* supported economic growth in spite of environmental devastation. In this opinion piece, it is also noticeable that *OG* discussed the inefficacy of Brazilian environmental legislation, as regulations did not prevent the destruction of Brazilian forests. Furthermore, it stressed that deforestation was considered a subsistence activity for some. Illegal loggers disrespected environmental policy and devastated areas, thus promoting long-term impacts that could possibly result in further impoverishment and emigration, as explained in the *Brundtland Report* (WCED, 1987:26) as a "vicious downwards spiral: Poor people are forced to overuse environmental resources to survive from day to day, and their impoverishment of their environment further impoverishes them, making their survival ever more difficult and uncertain."

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<sup>243</sup> *O Globo* (1998) O maior inimigo. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 7 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 9 August 2021).

<sup>244</sup> Original in Portuguese: *SOS Mata Atlântica*

It is also significant that the coverage of devastation in the Atlantic Forest had similarities to the coverage of deforestation in the Amazon, which was further explored in chapter 8, *The coverage of the Amazon rainforest: a case study*. *FSP* and *OG* coverage of the Amazon also disclosed that illegal logging, agricultural expansion, cattle farms, and infrastructure projects to improve the conditions of the local population were responsible for deforestation.

Three years later, *Folha de S. Paulo* published an opinion piece written by the secretary-general of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Rubens Ricupero, on 3 June 2001<sup>245</sup>. UNCTAD's secretary-general wrote about governability in Brazil, and discrepancies between political candidates' promises and their actual achievements once elected. Ricupero argued that, during political campaigns, candidates should explain their plans in regard to political reforms, social changes, and sustainable development, stating which political associates would support those initiatives after the elections. Ricupero's opinion piece suggested that sustainability should be considered one of the main points of political programmes in Brazil, with advice for candidates to focus on environmental propositions before and after elections. Arguably, Ricupero aimed at guaranteeing the applicability of environmental policy in Brazil by encouraging political leaders.

Brazil's efforts to implement sustainable development was covered on the 2001 World Environment Day, when *Folha de S. Paulo* produced a piece revealing that Rio92 commitments were still being applied in Brazil. *FSP* stated that the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistic (*IBGE*, the Portuguese acronym) was going to produce a report about sustainable development guidelines in Brazil<sup>246</sup>. *FSP* explained that the document would present data on greenhouse gas emissions, desertification, water quality, and biodiversity. According to *FSP*, the president of *IBGE*, Sérgio Besser Vianna, had stated that there was little environmental data in the world, adding that there was a lack of information about the biodiversity crisis. Additionally, *FSP* stated that the report was part of Rio92's commitments, so *IBGE*'s plan was to update the data every year. The piece reflected Brazil's delay

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<sup>245</sup> Ricupero, R. (2001) O ano em que vivemos perigosamente. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 3 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 13 August 2021).

<sup>246</sup> Folha de S. Paulo (2001) IBGE vai produzir indicadores ambientais. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 5 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 12 August 2021).

in fulfilling Rio92 agreements. It took the country nine years to start organising a report that would gather environmental data, revealing that sustainable development was not a priority in Brazil. The article also stressed the importance of the document in helping to investigate the global biodiversity crisis. Lack of environmental data was a problem

*O Globo* interviewed the director of the NGO Institute Living Forest<sup>247</sup>, Rui Rocha, about sustainable development in northeast Brazil<sup>248</sup>. *OG* reported that Rocha, with the support of other NGOs, had managed to halt a mining project in an area of environmental protection. According to *OG*, the project also included the construction of a port that would affect reefs, mangroves, fishing, and tourism activities. In the interview, Rocha said that development needed to guarantee the existence of natural systems because they generated jobs and could increase incomes. He also commented that 80% of the remaining Atlantic Forest was located in Bahia, and that it generated profits that could be better exploited in a sustainable way.

The interview showcased the effort of NGOs to save an area of environmental significance, highlighting a positive example of Brazilian environmental policy. It also displayed a successful attempt to promote sustainable development in a region that was almost destroyed by the mining industry, which could suggest improvements in Brazilian environmental policy effectiveness. The impacts of mining activities in the Amazon rainforest are explored in chapter 8, *The coverage of the Amazon rainforest: a case study*. In comparison to Bahia, the coverage showed that mining in the Amazon was not positive.

Besides, *O Globo* published four coloured pictures showing the NGO director and the protected area (Figure 7.18). Aerial pictures of the region exposed the forest, corroborating the aim to develop the region in a sustainable way, ensuring environmental protection.

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<sup>247</sup> Original in Portuguese: *Instituto Floresta Viva*

<sup>248</sup> Gonzalez, A. (2011) Desenvolver e preservar é um falso dilema. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 7 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 15 October 2021).



**Figure 7.18:** Pictures published in *O Globo* on 7 June 2011

This section unveiled *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage of sustainability that linked to Brazilian environmental policy. The content displayed by the ten pieces studied in this segment revealed the continuing devastation and recurrent attempts to promote sustainability through the creation and implementation of a national environmental policy. The study continues in the next segment, which analyses the coverage of the Brazilian Forest Code.

### 7.2.2.1 – Brazilian Forest Code

The Brazilian Forest Code was the focus of two opinion pieces published in 2011. The first was written by agronomist and right-wing congressman Paulo Piau, and printed by *Folha de S. Paulo* on 4 June 2011<sup>249</sup>. Piau explained that previous Brazilian environmental legislation resulted in conflicts, because it lacked social participation, but in 2009, the Forest Code was debated in 20 Brazilian states in 70 public events, resulting in a balanced report. According to Piau, the new legislation, which was about to be voted on in the congress, would allow Brazil to support the productive sector, while preserving 500 million hectares of native vegetation to maintain its biodiversity.

<sup>249</sup> Piau, P. (2011) Entre Conflitos e interesses. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 4 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 11 October 2021).

Piau's opinion piece defined the new Brazilian Forest Code as a socially constructed policy that could strengthen democracy and sovereignty in Brazil. It reflected social and political negotiations that arguably resulted in a policy that matched environmental protection and support for the economic sector. Considering Piau's description, the Brazilian Forest Code was democratically constructed and based on sustainable development. *FSP* illustrated the opinion piece with a coloured drawing made by Fernando Real (Figure 7.19), showing a tree made of paper emerging from a book with blank pages. The tree can be interpreted as the lives of plants and animals that depend on the environmental code. The interpretation corroborates the opinion piece's argument that the policy promoted environmental protection in Brazil.



**Figure 7.19:** Image published in *Folha de S. Paulo* on 4 June 2011

The Brazilian Forest Code proposal re-emerged four days later, on 8 June 2011, as the central point of an opinion piece written by left-wing congressman Alessandro Molon in *O Globo*<sup>250</sup>. Contrary to the analysis published in *Folha de S. Paulo* earlier, Molon criticised the new proposal for the Forest Code, claiming that it would endanger 100 million hectares, producing negative impacts on biodiversity

<sup>250</sup> Molon, A. (2011) Rio+20 e o Código Florestal. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 8 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 18 October 2021).

and even on agriculture. Molon asked society to participate in the debate, stating that the code needed to guarantee agricultural production without harming Brazil's rich biodiversity, which he considered strategic for the future.

Different perspectives displayed in opinion pieces about the Brazilian Forest Code demonstrated conflicts regarding the update of Brazilian environmental policy. Political representatives presented different arguments, with the right-wing politician supporting a weaker environmental law to benefit the agricultural sector and the left-wing congressman more focused on the environment. As Molon highlighted, agriculture and environment were the two areas in dispute, but they needed to reach a deal to guarantee sustainable development in Brazil.

It is also noteworthy that both pieces about the Brazilian Forest Code were written by politicians, indicating that the discussion about national environmental legislation was political and lacked the participation of specialists. It is significant a journalistic coverage gap is identified in both newspapers. Neither *Folha de S. Paulo* nor *O Globo* published a journalistic piece about the sustainability of the Brazilian Forest Code during the 193 days analysed for this thesis.

With the investigation of Brazilian environmental policy and the Forest Code the analysis about environmental narratives that emerged in Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development has reached its end. The following segment presents conclusions about the investigation.

### **7.3 – Conclusion**

This chapter examined environmental aspects of the coverage of sustainable development published by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* between 1992 and 2012. The content was presented as two main subjects: environmental topics and environmental policy, divided in international and national legislation.

The study presented 58 pieces with a particular focus on environmental narratives. This refers to 7% of the 790 texts collected for this thesis. This chapter shows that *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* produced a similar amount of coverage of environmentally sustainable development, revealing that readers of both newspapers accessed similar content throughout the 20-year timeframe.

The section about environmental topics revealed the fact that Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development during Rio92 was superficial and that it highlighted political debates, while the content produced after the conference focused on the scarcity of natural resources, attempting to promote environmental awareness.

The investigation of the coverage of international environmental policy discussed the difficulties in elaborating global legislation, especially due to conflicts between North and South and the lack of financial aid to implement sustainable development worldwide. It also revealed that recurring economic crisis and national interests prevented countries from agreeing on a specific proposal and implementing international legislation.

Regarding the coverage of Brazilian environmental policy, the study underlined the systematic devastation occurring at the same time as politicians were debating the creation and implementation of national environmental policy. An example of the focus on political debates emerged in the coverage of the Brazilian Forest Code, which was presented through opinion pieces written by politicians. This example also suggests lack of participation by specialists and civil society in the coverage, while highlighting a coverage gap due to the absence of pieces produced by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* on the topic.

This concludes the analysis of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage of environmentally sustainable development produced between 1992 and 2012. Chapter 7 is the last document that focused on one of the three pillars of sustainability, namely, social, economic, and environmental aspects, which correspond to chapters 5, 6, and 7, respectively. The next chapter explores a case study about Brazilian media coverage that linked the Amazon rainforest to sustainable development.



## **Chapter 8 – The coverage of the Amazon rainforest: a case study**

This chapter investigates a series of articles about the Amazon rainforest, one of the most frequently addressed topics in the Brazilian media's coverage of sustainable development. The case study examines 36 texts published by *Folha de S. Paulo* (*FSP*) and *O Globo* (*OG*) between 1992 and 2012. This figure refers to roughly 5% of *FSP*'s and *OG*'s coverage of sustainability that was identified in this research. Here, the aim is to disclose the characteristics of the coverage by *FSP* and *OG* of the Amazon rainforest, based on previous analysis presented in chapters 5, 6, and 7 that respectively studied social, economic, and environmental aspects of the Brazilian media's coverage of sustainable development.

As previously described in the methodology, the selected texts reveal relevant content about the Amazon rainforest. Particularly, small notes and pieces that only superficially describe events were not considered for further examination as they do not contribute to establishing a narrative pattern concerning the Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development.

The following sections of the chapter present the main subjects that emerged in the investigation of *Folha de S. Paulo*'s and *O Globo*'s coverage of the Amazon rainforest linking to sustainable development, which are World Environment Day and Environment Week, deforestation, and economic activities.

### **8.1 – World Environment Day and Environment Week**

Analysis of *Folha de S. Paulo*'s and *O Globo*'s coverage of sustainability revealed that both World Environment Day, celebrated every year on 5 June since 1974, and Environment Week were frequently used by Brazilian national and local governments to announce projects to promote environmental protection. This recurring tactic resulted in a marketing strategy to improve Brazil's image in regard to environmental care. This section investigates eight pieces that referred to sustainable programmes in the Amazon rainforest.

On the 1999 World Environment Day, *O Globo* reported that Brazilian president Fernando Henrique Cardoso endorsed the nationalisation of the Amazon

rainforest<sup>251</sup>. According to *OG*, Cardoso restated his claims that the Amazon rainforest was Brazilian, and that Brazilians were the ones who cared the most about the forest. The text showed that the president wanted the forest to be sustainably explored and not to be left untouched. Besides, *OG* stated that to celebrate Environment Week, President Cardoso had planted a sucupira tree in the northern state of Amazonas. *OG* informed readers that Cardoso was celebrating an agreement to extract natural gas in the Amazon region, through Petrobras, a state-owned Brazilian multinational corporation, which is part of the petroleum industry.

In this piece, *O Globo* showcased an attempt by the Brazilian president to protect the Amazon rainforest from international interests, through claims that Brazil protected the forest and intended to use its resources in a sustainable way. *OG* did not mention, though, whether Cardoso's statement was directed at a specific nation or group. The article tried to highlight the president's care for the environment by spotlighting the fact that he planted a native tree in the Amazon region. It added, however, that the president was celebrating an agreement to extract natural gas from the region, which seemed incompatible with environmental protection of the rainforest. *O Globo* did not provide further information on the project, not mentioning its environmental impacts on the forest. As this was an article commemorating a contract to explore a fossil fuel within the forest, published during Environment Week, *O Globo's* article could be perceived as a greenwashing and disinformation narrative, replicating the president's claims of environmental protection of the Amazon to cover up the exploitation of fossil fuels within the rainforest.

In the following edition, *O Globo* published Fernando Henrique Cardoso's speech to mark the 1999 World Environment Day<sup>252</sup>. *OG* reported that, to celebrate the date, the president visited the Mamirauá Sustainable Development Reserve, an area that encompassed 1,124 million hectares of the Amazon rainforest. Further articles about ecotourism in the Mamirauá Sustainable Development Reserve are analysed in the section about economic activities in this chapter. Additionally, an environmental education project in the reserve was investigated in chapter 5, *Social*

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<sup>251</sup> Gugliano, M. (1999) Cobiça sobre a Amazônia preocupa. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 5 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 10 August 2021).

<sup>252</sup> Gugliano, M. (1999) FH diz que Amazônia é e sempre será de brasileiros. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 6 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 10 August 2021).

*narratives in the coverage of sustainable development*. On this occasion, the thesis identified a coverage gap regarding environmental education as the text was a greenwashing strategy to promote the US multinational oil and gas corporation Exxon Mobil and the Brazilian Ministry of Education.

Returning to the analysis of the article produced on the 1999 World Environment Day, *O Globo* stated that Cardoso recognised that the country needed more research, resources, and environmental consciousness as part of its self-sustained development. It is significant that *OG*'s use of the term self-sustained referred to sustainability. It occurred in 1999, 12 years after the *Brundtland Report* and seven years after Rio92, the event that propagated the concept in Brazil and in the world. The inaccurate terminology suggests careless usage of the concept by *O Globo*'s journalists and editorial team.

Moreover, the article emphasised the fact that the president repeated the assertion that the Amazon rainforest belonged to Brazil, defending that Brazilians needed to be more aware of the importance of the forest in order to better protect it. Cardoso's reinforcement of the need to protect the Amazon rainforest underlined the importance of the forest to Brazilian government and society. It is also significant to draw attention to the government's environmental discourse during World Environment Day. As the thesis previously highlighted in chapter 5, *Social narratives in the coverage of sustainable development*, the Brazilian federal government frequently used the date to promote environmental discourses, mostly greenwashing projects, which use the sheen of environmental-friendliness to support alternative agendas.

The Amazon rainforest was back in Brazilian news coverage one year later, during the 2000 Environment Week, when *O Globo* published a piece about a programme supported by the federal government to fight fires and restore degraded areas in the forest<sup>253</sup>. Brazilian president Fernando Henrique Cardoso claimed that sustainability could open doors to international markets for Brazilian products. Similarly, *OG* disclosed that the minister of agriculture, Pratini de Moraes, had restated his claim that a combination of quality, technology, and environmental protection would contribute to the export of Brazilian products. The text showed

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<sup>253</sup> Macedo, A. P. (2000) FH lança campanha de combate a queimadas. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 8 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 10 August 2021).

that both the president and the minister agreed that fighting fires was mandatory and complex, highlighting that in 1999 there were 300,000 fires in Brazil of which 35% occurred in the Amazon region.

This piece argued that supporting Brazil's economic growth, and mainly exportation, was the real intention behind the Brazilian government's sustainable development programmes. President Fernando Henrique Cardoso was very clear about his economic focus, through transmitting the message that sustainability was a means to improve Brazil's visibility in the international market. Likewise, it is notable that President Cardoso launched an environmental programme during the Environment Week with the minister of agriculture, instead of the minister of environment. This reflection corroborates the argument that the Brazilian government's focus was on economic development rather than environmental protection or sustainable development. Furthermore, *O Globo* displayed the economic focus without reflecting on it. The supportive coverage suggests that *OG* agreed with the government's strategy and principles.

The Amazon rainforest returned to Brazilian media spotlight as *Folha de S. Paulo* published a piece about the creation of the fourth largest national park in Brazil on the 2006 World Environment Day<sup>254</sup>. *FSP* explained that the Juruena's National Park was part of a group of protected lands aimed at halting agriculture expansion on the Amazon's southern frontier. The article celebrated the fact that, with the area of Juruena, constituting roughly 48.3 million hectares of the Amazon, about 10% of the rainforest was protected, excluding indigenous land. In the same text, *FSP* mentioned that the government had also authorised the asphaltting of a highway, BR-163, that was criticised for causing deforestation in intact areas of the Amazon. The piece added that the highway asphaltting project would contain a sustainable development plan for the area surrounding the road; this included implementing a pilot project to exploit timber under forest management policy.

It is contradictory that *Folha de S. Paulo* joined in a single article such paradoxical topics: the creation of a national park and the construction of a highway within the rainforest. Even though both projects had been signed off by the federal government as part of the celebrations of World Environment Day, they were

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<sup>254</sup> *Folha de S. Paulo* (2006) Lula anuncia novo parque e velha estrada na floresta. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 6 June Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 14 October 2021).

clearly distinct. The establishment of a national park was indeed an attempt to promote environmental protection in the Amazon. However, paving a provisional highway to perpetuate its environmental impacts, while trying to minimise the destruction with a plan to promote sustainable exploitation of timber, had all the characteristics of a greenwashing project. First, organising a sustainability plan to exploit timber was a recognition that environmental impacts would intensify along the highway. Second, the project to exploit timber was very specific and insufficient, as it would not tackle further environmental impacts caused by the highway's paving.

Clearly, the Brazilian government announcing a project that would promote devastation during a celebrative environmental event was a vicious greenwashing strategy, especially because it was presented alongside projects that were indeed environmentally friendly. In this article, the main problem was that *Folha de S. Paulo* accepted the government's greenwashing narrative without further enquires, reproducing disinformation to the public. It is noteworthy that the recurring reproduction of greenwashing disinformation narratives reveals a pattern of Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development.

To accompany the text, *Folha de S. Paulo* published a coloured picture of Juruena National Park and a map specifying its location (Figure 8.1). The photograph showed an aerial view of the Amazon giving a sense of the rainforest's infinitude. The wide perspective corroborates *FSP's* exhilaration with the government's safeguarding of 10% of the rainforest, instead of considering that the vast majority of the forest was unprotected. Regarding the map, it displayed the government's project to control agriculture expansion in the Amazon's southern frontier through the establishment of protected areas. The illustration indicated that, in theory, protecting new areas would be a good strategy as it would prevent agricultural production on rainforest lands. However, both the piece and map lacked explanation as to how these safeguarded areas would be monitored to guarantee the halt of agricultural expansion.



**Figure 8.1:** Images published in *Folha de S. Paulo* on 6 June 2006

One day later, on 6 June 2006, *O Globo*'s economic specialist, Miriam Leitão, followed up the issuing of the licence to asphalt BR-163<sup>255</sup>. The columnist described the highway as “the most desired by soy producers and the most feared by environmentalists”<sup>256</sup>. The piece considered the asphaltting of the highway an “audacious”<sup>257</sup> attempt to prove that it was possible to conciliate environment and economy through a sustainable development project developed with all parts involved. Besides, the column claimed BR-163's sustainability could be an advancement regarding environmental issues in Brazil.

*O Globo*'s column provided a clear picture of the government's attempt to integrate economic development and environmental protection, providing examples of ongoing projects in Brazil's northern region, despite political difficulties in improving national environmental policy. It is notable that the columnist considered

<sup>255</sup> Leitão, M. (2006) Acordo de paz. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 6 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 27 May 2021).

<sup>256</sup> Original in Portuguese: *a mais desejada pelos produtores de soja e a mais temida pelos ambientalistas*

<sup>257</sup> Original in Portuguese: *ousado*

“audacious” the implementation of a sustainable development programme, which highlights Brazil’s unfamiliarity with sustainability initiatives.

Covering celebrations of the 2007 World Environment Day, *O Globo* announced the creation of a forest fund to fight deforestation in the Amazon region<sup>258</sup>. *OG* explained that the fund had been created by the government of Amazonas, a state in the northern region of Brazil. *OG*’s piece clarified that the proposal would offer 50 reais, which was then equivalent of 25 dollars, to each of the 8,500 families who lived in forest conservation areas. Moreover, *OG* explained that the project’s goals were achieving zero deforestation in 17 million hectares of a forest protected area and assisting 60,000 families by 2010. According to the article, resources would come from the donations of private companies, NGOs, national and international governments. The piece also stated that the plan would use satellite surveillance to guarantee zero deforestation.

In this article *OG* displayed an environmental project that would help Amazona’s government seem environmentally friendly. One more time, *OG* coverage could be compared to a press release or to a marketing campaign. The piece’s superficiality resulted in it lacking data about the project. There were no details about its implementation and feasibility, which diminished the importance of the programme. The narrative can be interpreted as a greenwashing initiative and a marketing campaign for the government of Amazonas.

Greenwashing narratives re-emerged one year later in another misleading narrative in *Folha de S. Paulo*. The newspaper covered President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva’s speech during the celebrations of the 2008 World Environment Day<sup>259</sup>. According to *FSP*, the president complained about the volume of opinions regarding the management of the Amazon rainforest. The article spotlighted Lula da Silva’s response to criticisms towards government environmental policy, as he said that both government and society knew that there was no incompatibility between development and environmental protection. To *FSP*, the president

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<sup>258</sup> Jansen, R. (2007) Criada Bolsa Floresta. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 6 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 7 October 2021).

<sup>259</sup> Sander, L. (2008) Floresta é como os vidros de água benta, diz Lula. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 6 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 14 October 2021).

defended the need to be very vigorous in tackling forest fires and illegal deforestation.

*FSP* coverage presented left-wing President Lula da Silva defending the Amazon against international interests, similarly to right-wing president Fernando Henrique Cardoso nine years earlier, as previously presented in this chapter. This was the second time that Brazilian media considered it important to highlight a president going public to declare that the Amazon belonged to Brazilians. In both cases, presidential announcements were accompanied by the defence of environmental protection and sustainable development. Nevertheless, *Folha de S. Paulo*'s article replicated greenwashing statements, as the president's declarations were not confirmed. The superficial coverage shows resemblances in *Folha de S. Paulo*'s and *O Globo*'s usual apathetic media coverage, which repeatedly resulted in both newspapers either creating or spreading greenwashing and disinformation narratives.

In the same edition that celebrated the 2008 World Environment Day, *Folha de S. Paulo* published an article celebrating the expansion of protected areas in the Amazon rainforest<sup>260</sup>. The text showed that, according to a study developed by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (*IBGE*, the Portuguese acronym), forest reserves corresponded to 8.3% of Brazilian territory, showing an increase from 6.5% in 2003. *FSP* claimed that one of the reasons for the expansion was the demarcation of indigenous land that increased from 172 to 405 areas between 1992 and 2006. Nevertheless, *FSP* stated that deforestation remained the main obstacle to sustainable development in Brazil. It highlighted the fact that deforestation was responsible for 75% of Brazil's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, placing Brazil as a top five polluter, alongside China, the US, India, and Germany.

The *FSP* piece presented *IBGE*'s findings regarding sustainability in Brazil, highlighting the most positive environmental aspect of the research. The rest of the text, nevertheless, showed that Brazil was far from achieving sustainable development due to negative environmental and social issues, while the Brazilian economy was the most developed area of the study. It is relevant that *Folha de S. Paulo* focused on a positive aspect of the research despite having so much critical

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<sup>260</sup> Soares, P. & Toledo, M. (2008) Reservas crescem, apesar de desmatamento. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 5 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 14 October 2021).



data to explore. The finding suggests that *FSP* chose to promote a greenwashing aspect of the country's environmental situation to use the research as a celebratory narrative on World Environment Day. By promoting misleading and greenwashing content, *Folha de S. Paulo* revealed a conduct analogous to the Brazilian government during the 2008 World Environment Day.

This section analysed how Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development linked the Amazon rainforest to commemorations of World Environment Day and Environment Week. The study revealed that *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* disseminated Brazilian federal and local government strategies to announce sustainability projects in an attempt to seem environmentally friendly, despite solely focusing on the promotion of economic growth. Governments made repeated use of greenwashing and disinformation narratives, while *OG* and *FSP* aided the strategy. The following segment will investigate *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage of sustainability that unveils deforestation of the Amazon rainforest.

## 8.2 – Deforestation

This section discloses that the deforestation of the Amazon rainforest was in the spotlight of Brazilian media coverage of sustainability between 1996 and 2012. During this timeframe, *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* produced 17 pieces about the topic, linking deforestation to sustainable development. This material will be analysed in this segment.

The first article about deforestation in the Amazon rainforest emerged in 1996, when *O Globo* published a piece about the world's main sustainability project in tropical forests, the Agricultural and Forestry Program of Rondônia<sup>261</sup> (*Planofloro*, the Portuguese acronym)<sup>262</sup>. The article explained that the programme protected 56% of the 24 million hectares of the Amazon rainforest located in the Brazilian northern state of Rondônia. *O Globo* reported that *Planofloro* was supported by the World Bank's International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), but the project could end for lacking the support of local

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<sup>261</sup> Original in Portuguese: *Plano Agropecuário e Florestal de Rondônia*

<sup>262</sup> *O Globo* (1996) Uma ameaça para a floresta. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 2 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 9 August 2021).

groups. *OG* stated that representatives of the IBRD and the Rondônia government had organised a three-day meeting with landless groups, indigenous populations, loggers, and farmers in order to ask for support to continue for the project. According to *O Globo*, IBRD's representative in Brazil, Dennis Mahar, argued that the concept of sustainable development was in the spotlight, because, if *Planoflora* failed, all similar projects in the world would fail too. *OG* stated that, according to the Rondônia government, the main pressure to end the programme was from logging companies, but the agriculture investors and businessmen were also supporting the end of the project.

*O Globo*'s article superficially described a sustainable development programme in the Amazon that aimed to fight deforestation. It presented the project's supporters and opponents. *OG* however focused largely on official sources, showing the perspective of the local government and of the IBRD representative. The newspaper did not interview anyone opposing the initiative to understand whether the demands from oppositionists were reasonable. The finding revealed *O Globo*'s preference for interviewing official sources while dismissing local groups.

Deforestation in the Amazon was the central point of an opinion piece written by Brazilian left-wing senator Marina Silva in *O Globo* on the 1999 World Environment Day<sup>263</sup>. The senator stated that deforestation was a menace to the country's biodiversity, highlighting that, within 30 years, 532,000 kilometres of the Amazon rainforest had been devastated without producing economic growth. Additionally, the text explained that over 30 years 166,000 families had been placed in forest areas to promote subsistence farming. Silva compared the families' placement to a colonisation policy. Silva also specified that, in 1998, Amazon fires were responsible for 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Moreover, Silva claimed that local governments were promoting sustainable development projects without giving further examples of those initiatives. The text also criticised the effectiveness of Brazilian environmental policy. Nevertheless, Silva did not explain why the Brazilian policy was not effective in promoting environmental protection in the country.

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<sup>263</sup> Silva, M. (1999) Meio ambiente: são outros quinhentos. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 5 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 10 August 2021).

In the opinion piece, Marina Silva provided more environmental data than most journalistic articles analysed in this thesis. This finding stresses the importance of background knowledge in media coverage, as previously mentioned in chapter 2, *Environmental journalism in context*. Still in chapter 2, Arnold (2018) underlined communication challenges for environmental topics, due to the complexity of environmentally specialised subjects. Silva's opinion piece provided contextualisation about the deforestation rate in the Amazon, by presenting data about the lack of connection between deforestation and economic growth in Brazil. Silva also wrote about government initiatives that promoted devastation of the rainforest, providing analyses about the environmental impacts of deforestation, including the percentage of greenhouse gas emissions related to Amazon fires.

Three years after Silva's criticisms about the efficacy of Brazilian environmental policy, *O Globo* covered the creation of the Tumucumaque Mountains National Park, the world's biggest tropical forest national park, in 2002<sup>264</sup>. The newspaper underlined the fact that Brazilian president Fernando Henrique Cardoso had celebrated the fact that the new protected area of the Amazon rainforest encompassed 3.8 million hectares, which was larger than the area of Belgium.

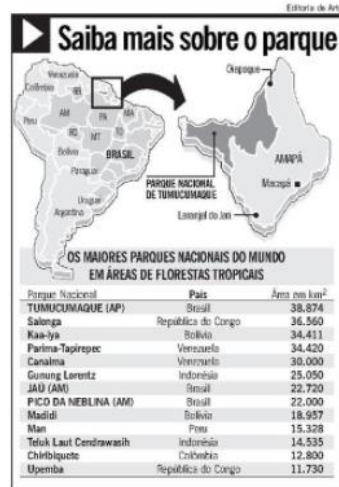
Furthermore, *O Globo* presented Brazil's map (Figure 8.2), highlighting the area of the national park, which is located in the northern region of the country, on the border with French Guyana. The map directly linked to the article, showing the size of the park. It is also noteworthy that the Brazilian government usually made announcements of environmental projects on World Environment Day, or during Environment Week, as presented in the previous section of this chapter, 8.1 – *World Environment Day and Environment Week*. Here, the exception reported by *O Globo* referred to Rio+10, which occurred between 26 August and 4 September 2002 in South Africa.

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<sup>264</sup> Jungblut, C. (2002) FH cria hoje maior parque da América do Sul. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 22 August. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 7 September 2021).

# FH cria hoje maior parque da América do Sul

Com 3,8 milhões de hectares, reserva no Amapá protegerá área com quase o tamanho do Estado do Rio



Cristiane Jungblut

BRASÍLIA. O presidente Fernando Henrique cria hoje o maior parque nacional da América do Sul, com 3,8 milhões de hectares. O Parque Nacional da Serra do Tumucumaque no Amapá, também será o maior parque nacional do mundo em área de floresta tropical.

O novo parque vai proteger mais de 1% da Floresta Amazônica, quase o tamanho do Estado do Rio. Até agora, o maior parque do Brasil era o do Jari (AM), com 2,2 milhões de hectares. A maior parte da área do Parque do Tumucumaque está localizada no Amapá, na fronteira do Brasil com a Guiana Francesa. Uma pequena área fica no Pará, na margem direita do Rio Jari. Com a criação da área de preservação ambiental, o Brasil terá 49 parques nacionais.

A área que será protegida foi considerada pelos técnicos de grande importância biológica, dentro do projeto de conservação da Amazônia brasileira. O local foi identificado num trabalho do Iama, órgão do Ministério do Meio Ambiente, e da organização não

governamental WWF-Brasil. Agora, a ONG vai destinar US\$ 1 milhão para a demarcação da área, a elaboração do plano de manejo, a implementação de infra-estrutura básica e a aquisição de equipamentos.

Essas despesas de implementação serão cobertas pela Fase I do Projeto Áreas Protegidas da Amazônia (Arpa), que vai destinar US\$ 68 milhões para a criação e a implantação de áreas protegidas na Amazônia até 2005.

Como tem uma grande área de fronteira, a criação do parque passou pela aprovação do Conselho de Defesa Nacional. O local abriga as nascentes de todos os principais rios do Amapá, com destaque para o Oisipoque, o Jari e o Araguari. O Oisipoque faz a fronteira do Brasil com a Guiana Francesa. O Rio Jari constitui a divisa entre os estados do Pará e do Amapá. Além disso, chamam a atenção a Serra do Tumucumaque e morros residuais que lembram o Pão-de-Açúcar, além de espécies de animais que só podem ser encontradas na região.

Fernando Henrique participou ativamente das negocia-

ções para viabilizar o parque, porque havia resistências de prefeitos da região.

— Só numa penada, o governo estará criando uma Bélgica, protegida, na Floresta Amazônica. Estamos avançando na direção do nosso compromisso de termos, pelo menos, 10% do nosso território sobre área reservada — disse Fernando Henrique, na semana passada, ao participar da reunião preparatória da Cúpula Mundial sobre o Desenvolvimento Sustentável, a chamada Rio-10.

## Forças Armadas construirão posto

Na cerimônia de hoje, Fernando Henrique assinará uma série de atos que permitirão a criação do Parque do Tumucumaque. Além do decreto criando o parque, será editada uma medida provisória permitindo que a madeira apreendida na área seja leiloadada e outro ato prevendo que as Forças Armadas tenham livre circulação na área protegida. Como se trata de área de fronteira, os militares exigiram ter amplo acesso

ao parque, construindo inclusive um posto na região.

— Houve uma certa resistência por parte dos militares devido ao fato de o parque estar na faixa da fronteira. Eles quiseram garantir na região uma infra-estrutura de defesa. Alguns militares achavam melhor ter projetos de colonização na área para reforçar a presença brasileira no local. A criação do parque foi uma luta — disse Fábio Feldman, representante do Brasil na preparação da Rio-10.

Segundo o Ministério do Meio Ambiente, o Tumucumaque também será o maior parque nacional do mundo em área de floresta tropical. Até agora, o primeiro lugar era do Parque Nacional Salonga, da República Democrática do Congo, na África, com cerca de 3,6 milhões de hectares. Além disso, ele tomará o lugar do Parque Nacional Kálya, na Bolívia, que com 3,4 milhões, era o maior da América do Sul.

Com a criação do novo parque, o total de Floresta Amazônica protegida sobe de 135,6 mil km<sup>2</sup> para 174,5 mil km<sup>2</sup>.

Figure 8.2: Image published in *O Globo* on 22 August 2002

Environmental protection in the Amazon rainforest re-emerged one day later, on 23 August 2002, when *O Globo* reported that Brazilian president Fernando Henrique Cardoso planned to request financial support during Rio+10 to invest in conservation projects<sup>265</sup>. According to *OG*, Cardoso acknowledged that the Amazon rainforest was important for the whole planet and thus that it was fair for rich nations to fund environmental projects in the rainforest. Besides, the article showed that Cardoso blamed developed nations for global environmental destruction, while reinforcing the fact that Rio+10 would be an opportunity to pressure rich countries to assume their responsibilities.

In this news piece from the coverage of Rio+10, the Brazilian federal government blamed developed countries for environmental destruction. It was a similar discourse to the one adopted by President Collor de Mello in Rio92. In both cases, Brazilian presidents were representatives of right-wing parties. *O Globo* also mentioned that President Cardoso intended to demand investments to protect Brazil's environment. Such pressurising behaviour from the Brazilian government also connected to the strategy to improve the country's environmental image

<sup>265</sup> Jungblut, C. (2002) FH diz que vai passar o pires na Rio+10. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 23 August. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 7 September 2021).

globally. The demand intended to show that Brazil was looking for financial resources to invest in environmental projects, especially in the Amazon.

The monetisation of Brazilian natural resources was thoroughly analysed in chapter 6, *Economic narratives: greenwashing sustainable development*. More specifically, Section 6.3 concluded that the Brazilian media considered economic and natural resources as equals on several occasions. The analysis also revealed that Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development repeatedly showed Brazilian authorities' greenwashing narratives that covered up environmental destruction to promote economic growth.

Continuous destruction of the Amazon rainforest reappeared in the media coverage one year later, when *Folha de S. Paulo* published an opinion piece written by ecology specialist Adalberto Veríssimo about sustainable exploitation of the Amazon rainforest in 2003<sup>266</sup>. Veríssimo stated that about 15% of the Amazon had already been deforested, stressing that road constructions and agribusiness expansion could provoke 50% deforestation by 2020. To avoid this destruction, the ecologist suggested the creation of national forests<sup>267</sup> (*Flonas*, the Portuguese acronym), which he described as a type of conservation unity that could promote rational use of forest resources with sustainable management. The piece mentioned that *Flonas* represented 2% of the Amazon and should reach 10% by 2010. It stated that *Flonas* offered forest products, conserved biodiversity, protected the forest from illegal land-grabbing, and contributed to the Amazon's economic stability. The opinion piece also acknowledged that the implementation of national forests needed to involve local communities and governments, while financial outcomes should be divided between governments and local communities.

The opinion text written by an ecology expert presented an informative defence of the implementation of *Flonas* to fight deforestation in the Amazon. Similar to the opinion piece of environmentalist Marina Silva, previously analysed in this section, Veríssimo's text was instructive, providing more information than many journalistic pieces. Once again, this corroborates the importance of environmental knowledge in the production of quality journalistic texts. The idea

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<sup>266</sup> Veríssimo, A. (2003) Flonas para uma Amazônia florestal. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 7 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 14 October 2021).

<sup>267</sup> Original in Portuguese: *Florestas Nacionais*

of quality environmental journalism was further explored in chapter 2, *Environmental journalism in context*. Abbati (2019) defined quality environmental reporting as presenting detailed and contextualised facts with fluency and clarity, while Rögner and Wormer (2017) added to the list transparency, connection with further issues and areas, and indications of probable solutions when possible.

Analysis of Veríssimo's opinion piece also reveals that it emphasised the importance of implementing sustainable exploitation to promote environmental protection. Despite focusing on *Flonas*, the text also called for the expansion of protected areas, rational use of forests under private ownership, recovery of degraded areas, and intensification of agriculture in areas already devastated. It is interesting to highlight the specialist's call for governments and local communities to participate in an attempt to guarantee the implementation and viability of sustainability projects. This claim corroborates the argument that the implementation of global sustainability needs collective participation.

The investigation detected a two-year gap in Brazilian media coverage about the destruction of the Amazon rainforest. The devastation of the Amazon re-emerged in the media coverage on 3 June 2005, when *O Globo* presented the view of World Bank directors Vinod Thomas and John Redwood III<sup>268</sup>. Authorship was the most noteworthy aspect of this text. Having two World Bank directors defending the preservation of the Amazon rainforest indicates that by 2005 environmental protection had become a popular subject defended even by representatives of the international economy. The opinion piece stated what seemed obvious: reducing deforestation was essential to avoid greater ecological, climate, and socio-economic losses. Furthermore, the text criticised high deforestation rates in the Amazon, stating that that between 2003 and 2004 more than 26,000km<sup>2</sup> were destroyed, which corresponded to the second highest deforestation rate in history. The data was also important to this research as it alluded to the period referring to the Brazilian media coverage gap already mentioned in this paragraph, thus helping to understand the context of Amazon deforestation in the two-year period without journalistic coverage.

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<sup>268</sup> Vinod, T. & Redwood III, J. (2005) Um novo recorde na devastação. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 3 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 29 September 2021).

Two days later, on the 2005 World Environment Day, *Folha de S. Paulo* published an opinion piece written by four sustainable development specialists about deforestation in the Amazon<sup>269</sup>: the president of the Brazilian Foundation for Sustainable Development<sup>270</sup>, Israel Klabin, and three members of the foundation's council, Rubens Ricupero, Henri Philippe Reichstul, and Maria Silva Bastos Marques. The text mentioned that Brazil was going to lose the largest tropical forest in the world within a small period due to high deforestation rates. The opinion piece especially complained about Brazilian environmental policy, highlighting the lack of priority in fighting deforestation, the lack of monitoring, investments in highways, the underestimation of strategic plans with countries that shared the Amazon, and not using degraded area for land reform. The specialists also stressed that Brazil's greenhouse gas emissions had increased, notably due to forest fires, which could result in the country not gaining resources from carbon credits.

This opinion piece was very critical of Brazil and its environmental policy, underlining the fact that deforestation was destroying the Amazon. It mentioned all the main problems regarding the country's environmental policy. Such negative perspectives could lead to a sense of hopelessness and despair. This is the type of pessimistic coverage that Hackett *et al.* (2017) criticised in chapter 2, *Environmental journalism in context*. According to Hackett *et al.* (2017) the media framing of risks, disasters, and governmental divergence led to pessimism and detachment.

The 2005 coverage of deforestation in the Amazon rainforest continued with *O Globo*. The newspaper published an opinion piece written by the director of the Brazilian Foundation for Sustainable Development, Eneas Salati, and the researcher for the National Institute for Space Research, Carlos Nobre<sup>271</sup>. The text recollected that until 1970, about 1% of the Amazon had been deforested, but that within three decades 17% of the Amazon was destroyed by infrastructure projects financed by multinational banks. The piece mentioned that Brazil's international relations could be affected by environmental impacts caused by development programmes in the Amazon. The text added that increasing greenhouse gas emissions had put Brazil

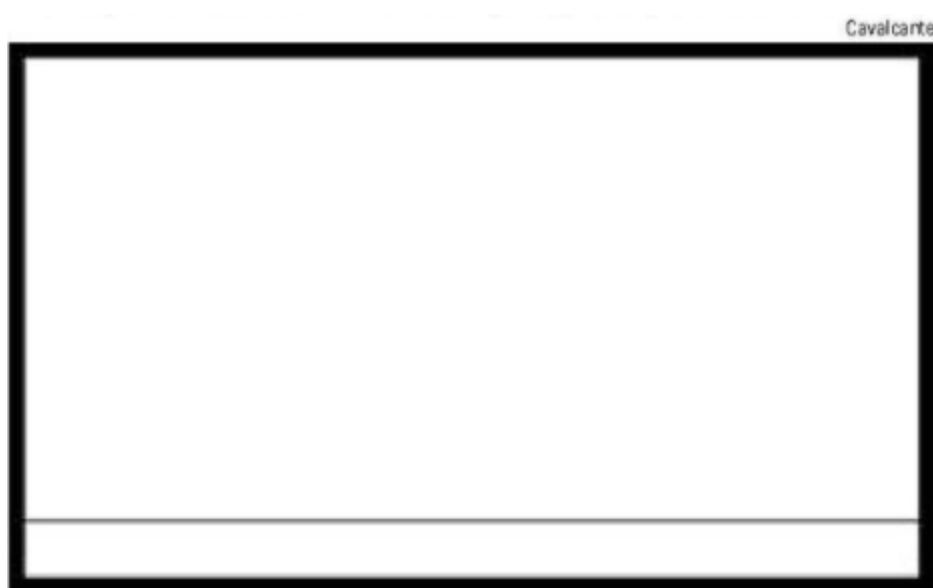
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<sup>269</sup> Klabin, I., Ricupero, R., Reichstul, P. & Marques, M. S. B. (2005) O futuro da Amazônia é o nosso futuro. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 5 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 14 October 2021).

<sup>270</sup> Original in Portuguese: *Fundação Brasileira para o Desenvolvimento Sustentável*

<sup>271</sup> Salati, E. & Nobre, C. (2005) Um novo recorde na devastação. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 7 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 29 September 2021).

among the five highest emission-rate countries. Moreover, specialists suggested reducing deforestation by implementing and improving environmental protection policy, vigilance, penalties, and making sustainable use of deforested areas. The piece emphasised the fact that without action it would be hard to predict how much of the Amazon would survive. To illustrate these arguments *O Globo* displayed a rectangular white area probably representing the forest in a disconcerting future (Figure 8.3). This interpretation corroborates the catastrophic perspective presented by specialists in the opinion piece.



**Figure 8.3:** Image published in *O Globo* on 7 June 2005

It is notable that the opinion piece published by *O Globo* resembled the previous text published by *Folha de S. Paulo*. Both examples displayed the viewpoints of environmental specialists about deforestation in the Amazon. They equally criticised the current ineffective Brazilian environmental policy. They also argued that the Amazon rainforest would cease to exist without governmental interference to halt the devastation. Additionally, pieces highlighted increasing deforestation rates linked to rising greenhouse gas emissions in Brazil. The similarity of the arguments revealed a connection among environmental specialists, who agreed on the acknowledgement of deforestation issues and possible solutions.



After a three-year gap, Brazilian media coverage continued covering deforestation in 2008. *Folha de S. Paulo* published an opinion piece written by economist and left-wing senator Aloizio Mercadante<sup>272</sup>. The text stated that the Amazon biome had significant environmental relevance to a devastated world. Mercadante blamed developed countries for anthropogenic climate change. He said that industrialised nations owed an environmental debt to countries of the Amazon basin, but still they insisted on transforming the Amazon into a sanctuary to compensate for the depredation that enriched them. The senator described the behaviour of developed countries as absurd, worrying, and a colonial nonsense. Additionally, he suggested that Brazil and other Amazon countries needed to defend the region and involve the international community in the Amazon's sustainable development. According to Mercadante, Brazil did not want to repeat the mistake of industrialised nations and devastate the Amazon, but it needed to promote the well-being of 24 million people who lived in the rainforest, assuring the region's sustainable development. Finally, Mercadante proposed the creation of a global environmental fund to finance sustainable development programmes. The senator explained that the fund could generate 100 billion dollars per year, of which 1.2 billion dollars would go to Brazil to weaken neo-colonial delusions.

The senator's opinion piece displayed a very critical perspective regarding the responsibility of developed countries regarding global environmental destruction. It is noteworthy that Mercadante utilised terms like absurd, colonial nonsense, and neo-colonial delusions to refer to developed countries that wanted to influence the Brazilian administration of the Amazon. The piece was very defensive of the territory reminding readers that the Amazon belonged to Brazil and that colonialism had ended. The protective position of the Amazon rainforest as a property of Brazil was previously referred to by right-wing president Fernando Henrique Cardoso and left-wing President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. The finding suggested that, regardless of political positions, Brazilian politicians defended the country's sovereignty over the Amazon. Mercadante, however, used harder-hitting terms than the presidents when referring to developed countries. Additionally, the senator demanded financial compensation from developed countries for previous

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<sup>272</sup> Mercadante, A. (2008) Neocolonização da Amazônia. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 4 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 20 October 2021).

environmental destruction. The money would be used to invest in sustainability programmes, as an attempt to engage other nations in promoting sustainable development in the rainforest.

Moreover, *Folha de S. Paulo* emphasised the idea that the rainforest was being robbed. It illustrated Mercadante's opinion piece with a coloured drawing that showed a disproportionate big hand of a well-dressed man grabbing a tree (Figure 8.4). The illustration aligned with Mercadante's argument that developed nations wanted to steal the Amazon and to interfere in the rainforest's management, as they had with colonialism.



**Figure 8.4:** Image published in *Folha de S. Paulo* on 4 June 2008

Four days after *Folha de S. Paulo* presented the opinion of Brazilian senator Mercadante about deforestation in the Amazon, *O Globo* published the opinion of ecologist Evaristo de Miranda about the same topic<sup>273</sup>. The expert claimed that

<sup>273</sup> Aggege, S. (2008) É preciso cuidar mais das cidades. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 8 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 28 September 2021).

Amazon deforestation was linked to social and economic issues. The ecologist linked agriculture to deforestation, explaining that agriculture and livestock needed to double their productivity to achieve the region's demand but should avoid further deforestation. Miranda also mentioned that Brazil still had 69.7% of native vegetation, while Europeans, who had destroyed 99.7% of their forests, should pay for planetary environmental projects.

The expert's piece was superficial, providing a general view of Amazon deforestation. It did not emphasise the ecological impacts of devastation, which would be expected in a piece produced by a specialist. Instead, Miranda wrote about economic aspects that reverberated in the protection of the rainforest. The ecologist also focused on the impacts of the agriculture and livestock sectors in the Amazon, which contributed to increased devastation in the forest. Besides, it is interesting the plea for international aid to protect the remaining global environment. The appeal was especially directed to European countries which destroyed most of their vegetation. Financial requests to rich countries were frequently presented in Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development. Most were formulated by Brazilian presidents and other politicians.

Deforestation was portrayed on the 2009 World Environment Day, as *Folha de S. Paulo* published a critical article disclosing difficulties with developing environmental policy during the mandate of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva<sup>274</sup>. The text mentioned that the president's aim was fighting deforestation, which was then the main sector responsible for greenhouse gas emissions in Brazil. *FSP* stated that, nevertheless, the government's environmental agenda was controversial. It cited agribusiness supporters wanting changes to environmental policy, the approval of the Belo Monte Dam, and the paving of a highway in the Amazon. The piece complained that two years earlier, in 2007, President Lula da Silva promised that the production of biofuel would not become a threat to the environment nor to the Amazon, pledging to establish a production zone for sugarcane. However, the proposal had not yet been authorised despite being ready for more than six months.

The *Folha de S. Paulo* article unveiled difficulties regarding environmental protection during the mandate of the left-wing President Lula da Silva. It mentioned

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<sup>274</sup> Solomon, M. (2009) Tensão constante atravessa governo Lula. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 5 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 12 October 2021).

controversial projects that had been approved during his government's term, while an environmental proposal aimed at diminishing deforestation in the Amazon was still undefined. The piece showed obstacles to improve environmental protection in Brazil. It revealed how powerful businesses, especially the agribusiness sector, interfered in the country's policy making, despite apparent interest from the president in protecting the environment.

Also during the 2009 World Environment Day, *O Globo* published an opinion piece written by the president of the Brazilian Foundation for Sustainable Development Israel Klabin<sup>275</sup>. The text was addressed to President Lula da Silva and praised the work of the environment minister Carlos Minc. The piece evoked that in the past 30 years, 600,000km<sup>2</sup> of the Amazon rainforest had been deforested; nevertheless, Brazil still had the main forest reserves on the planet, along with a vast territory that could be sustainably exploited, as forests could generate funds. The text also explained that the Amazon's southern frontier had been deforested by farmers and highway building, while in the east, disastrous land reform had provoked deforestation.

Klabin's opinion piece reinforced the fact that despite all the destruction in the Amazon, Brazil still had the main forest reserves on the planet. The text did not mention any consequences of deforestation, but it linked environmental protection to financial profits, as it emphasised that forest reserves could create funds. Also noteworthy is the concept of preserving the rainforest through exploring it in a sustainable way that would generate financial income, rather than conserving the Amazon for its environmental importance. The argument disclosed the notion of environmental protection once again being made secondary to economic interests.

Following the publications that criticised environmental policy on the 2009 World Environment Day, one day later, *O Globo* published an article describing President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's viewpoints regarding forest protection<sup>276</sup>. *OG* stated that the president blamed developed countries for pollution and criticised those who required a stiffer posture from Brazil regarding environmental

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<sup>275</sup> Klabin, I. (2009) Lula, Minc e nós? *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 5 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 16 October 2021).

<sup>276</sup> Talento, B. & Pitombo, J. P. (2009) Lula volta a cobrar de países ricos ajuda para preservação das florestas. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 6 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 16 October 2021).

protection. According to the newspaper, Lula da Silva argued that the onus of global environmental preservation could not be on countries that were trying to develop. To corroborate this, *OG* outlined how the president had stated that rich countries who had already deforested their environment needed to pay for the preservation. To *O Globo*, Lula da Silva said that he wanted to preserve the Amazon, but reminded readers that he also needed to care for the 25 million people who lived in the region.

The article demonstrates that *O Globo* passively covered the discourse of Brazilian president Lula da Silva. There were no reflections on the president's arguments nor debates regarding data presented by Lula da Silva. The text resembled an opinion piece, solely revealing Lula da Silva's viewpoints. The president also blamed developed countries for environmental destruction and demanded international investment in sustainability programmes. He exposed Brazil's intention to develop the Amazon to improve the life conditions of 25 million people from the region. Neither the president nor *O Globo* reflected on the current destruction of the Amazon, and how development projects in the area could impact both the local and global environment. Repetitive arguments used in this article disclosed cyclical tensions in Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development throughout the 20-year timeframe. Similar explanations were previously presented in this thesis. In the current chapter, senator Aloizio Mercadante, President Lula da Silva, and President Fernando Henrique Cardoso called for environmental compensation from developed countries. Moreover, in chapter 6, *Economic narratives: greenwashing sustainable development*, *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* displayed conflicts between poor and rich nations over financial resources to invest in sustainable development projects. Analysis of *FSP* and *OG* cyclical coverage revealed repetitive arguments and recurring problems, suggesting that sustainable development was never a priority.

Likewise, in the following year, *Folha de S. Paulo* published an opinion piece written by left-wing congressman Aldo Rebelo about the Brazilian Forest Code on the 2010 World Environment Day<sup>277</sup>. Rebelo presented similar arguments to those of President Lula da Silva's about environmental protection. For instance,

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<sup>277</sup> Rebelo, A. (2010) Legislação atual é inaceitável. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 5 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 19 October 2021).

Rebello was severely critical of rich countries, claiming that after destroying their environment they wanted to condemn entire continents to poverty. The congressman argued that the development of poor countries had been halted by economic barriers mounted by rich nations. The politician also defined subsidized agriculture in rich countries as a type of inhuman and egoistic reactionism. Moreover, Rebello criticised rich nations for blaming poor countries for environmental destruction and for wanting to maintain the Amazon rainforest intact.

The piece described the Amazon as Brazil's body and soul, reinforcing the claim that the rainforest belonged to Brazil. Acknowledgement that the Amazon is Brazilian was a recurrent argument previously presented in this chapter, which corresponded to opinions expressed by Brazilian right-wing president Fernando Henrique Cardoso and left-wing president Luis Inácio Lula da Silva. Additionally, Rebello defended the Amazon people having the right to see their region developing – again a similar social concern that was already introduced in this chapter by both Brazilian presidents. Finally, it is important to spotlight that Rebello considered maintaining the Amazon intact a fancy idea of rich nations. The definition demonstrated Rebello's disapproval of the international policy of developed countries that attempted to interfere in developing states. This observation was discussed in previous texts that linked such political interferences from rich economies to their desire to revive colonialism. It especially referred to the 2008 opinion piece of left-wing senator Aloizio Mercadante<sup>278</sup> who harshly defined attempts at external interference in the administration of the Amazon rainforest as absurd, colonial nonsense, and neo-colonial delusions. This discourse criticises the ideology of the current global hegemony that repeatedly tries to diminish the importance of environmental protection.

Despite persistent media coverage discussing deforestation of the Amazon throughout the years, *O Globo* reported the aggravation of land issues in the Amazon in 2011, when the newspaper covered a police operation in the rainforest<sup>279</sup>. The article stated that Brazilian left-wing President Dilma Rousseff

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<sup>278</sup> Mercadante, A. (2008) Neocolonização da Amazônia. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 4 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 20 October 2021).

<sup>279</sup> Góis, C. (2011) Governo iniciará mega-ação policial na Amazônia. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 3 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 15 October 2021).

had announced a massive police action in three states of the Amazon to try to contain violence that had led to the murders of environmental leaders. According to *O Globo*, police forces were working to avoid new homicides and investigate crimes in the region. *OG* argued that governors approved of the action, but also called for a sustainable development policy, particularly land regularisation, as police forces would not be enough to solve the situation.

The article revealed that escalating deforestation of the Amazon culminated in violence and the assassination of environmental leaders. *O Globo* covered the social emergency through a political angle showing the president's initiative and governors' viewpoints. The opinion of people affected by violence, however, was not included in the piece. The recurrent use of politicians' perspectives indicates that *O Globo's* coverage of environmental issues prioritised official voices, offering little or no space to communities and specialists. In addition, unreflective replication of official sources often resulted in Brazilian newspapers offering insufficient data and promoting greenwashing and disinformation coverage of sustainability.

Exposure of Amazon deforestation continued in 2012, during Rio+20, as *O Globo* reported that right-wing governor of Pará Simão Jatene had announced a zero-deforestation policy for the state to be reached until 2020<sup>280</sup>. *OG* explained that the northern Brazilian state of Pará had 33 million hectares deforested and that most of this area was exploited by the livestock industry. According to *OG*, Pará was the third largest cattle-producing state in Brazil, but it needed to modernise the sector to become more productive utilising less land. *OG* stated that Pará had recently adhered to a national agreement to reduce deforestation by 80%, yet it intended to reach 100%. Regarding deforestation in the Amazon, *OG* argued that the right-wing governor of Amazonas, Omar Aziz, had claimed that Brazil did not need international resources and that the first step towards implementing sustainability in the state of Amazonas was guaranteeing land regularisation.

The piece was a greenwashing environmental strategy of a regional government located within the Amazon rainforest. The article linked deforestation

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<sup>280</sup> Tardáguila, C. (2012) Governador do Pará promete desmatamento zero até 2020. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 15 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 4 November 2021).

to cattle farms, stressing land misutilisation. However, it did not clarify how the problem of deforestation would be solved. Promises made by the governor of Pará corresponded to political greenwashing discourses. There was no explanation of Pará's strategies to reach zero deforestation within eight years. The political promise seemed like a marketing strategy to promote the governor. It was relevant, however, the claim made by Amazonas governor Omar Aziz regarding land regularisation. It was the second time that the issue had emerged in the media coverage of deforestation within two years. The previous mention occurred in 2010, referring to the police action to prevent violence in the region. The recurring references to regularise land occupation in the Amazon indicated that land problems were linked to social and environmental crises in the region.

Moreover, *O Globo* exposed deforestation in the Amazon. It displayed a coloured photo produced by *Agence France-Presse* photojournalist Evaristo Sá. The image showed the devastation caused by a highway that had been built within the rainforest (Figure 8.5). The photograph corroborated repetitive requests encountered throughout this chapter to promote environmental protection and guarantee the rainforest's survival to future generations.



**Figure 8.5:** Picture published in *O Globo* on 15 June 2012



The last piece studied in this section is an editorial published by *Folha de S. Paulo* on 25 June 2012<sup>281</sup>. In the only editorial about deforestation the text displayed *FSP* viewpoints about a sustainability report produced by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics. *FSP* observed that the report could be interpreted in different ways, depending on personal interests. For instance, results showing a diminishing deforestation rate in the Amazon could be interpreted as a good point. However, only 80% of the forest remained untouched. *FSP* called especial attention to two aspects. First, the destroyed 20% of the forest corresponded to 800,000km<sup>2</sup>, which was more than twice the size of Germany. Second, most of the destruction had occurred within 40 years, from 1970 to 2012. In summary, a large amount of the forest had been destroyed within a short period, suggesting accelerated devastation of the rainforest.

Moreover, the editorial highlighted that the attention given to the Amazon ended up overshadowing devastation of other equally important environments in Brazil, which included 90% of the Atlantic Forest, 49% of the Cerrado, and 54% of the Caatinga and the Pampa. Incongruently, after having presented a list of significant environmental problems, *FSP* made a biased assertion that Brazil was not among the main global environmental destroyers. This unsourced statement clashed with previous information. *FSP*'s assumption that Brazil was not one of the main global environmental predators not only minimised consequences of environmental destruction, but also disseminated misinformation.

Finally, *FSP* demanded more realism from the Brazilian government and less emphasis on environmental pride. This harsh claim suggests that the newspaper acknowledged that the government had failed to protect the rainforest even as it was conducting repetitive attempts to promote itself as environmentally friendly, mostly through greenwashing discourses.

Throughout this thesis *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* replicated greenwashing narratives made by governments, companies, institutions, and individuals. This repeated finding indicates that the frequent reproduction of misleading content was intentional. *Folha de S. Paulo* was aware of the government's failures in environmental protection. The conclusion that

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<sup>281</sup> *Folha de S. Paulo* (2012) Nem lá, nem cá. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 25 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 21 April 2021).

governmental greenwashing and disinformation narratives were deliberately supported by the Brazilian media discloses the media's lack of interest in protecting the Brazilian environment, investing in environmental communication, or even producing better environmental content.

This segment analysed how *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* covered deforestation in the Amazon rainforest. The content highlighted the main causes of devastation, attempts to avoid deforestation, and deliberate use of greenwashing and disinformation narratives to promote federal and regional governments. The next passage investigates nine texts produced as part of Brazilian media coverage of sustainability that exposed economic activities in the Amazon.

### 8.3 – Economic activities

The investigation of Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development that highlighted the Amazon rainforest revealed that economic activities was a significant theme. This section analyses 11 articles published by *O Globo* and *Folha de S. Paulo* that displayed the impacts of mining, cattle farms, construction, and ecotourism in the forest. In brief, this segment will examine two pieces on mining in the Amazon region in 2007, three articles about cattle farms published between 2008 and 2009, four texts referring to the Belo Monte Dam in 2011, and two about ecotourism in the Amazon's Mamirauá Sustainable Development Reserve, also dating from 2011.

Media coverage of the impacts of economic activities in the Amazon started in 2007, with *O Globo* reporting a controversy regarding the mining activities of the US company Alcoa<sup>282</sup>. *O Globo* explained that the small city of Juruti, in the northern region of Brazil, was facing social and environmental impacts due to the installation of an Alcoa project. *OG* stated that the company blamed the public sector for not being able to guarantee “sustained development”<sup>283</sup>, while local authorities argued that Alcoa should have helped the city to prepare for impacts. According to *OG*, federal prosecutors claimed that the project disregarded social and environmental impacts and provided insufficient compensatory measures. The

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<sup>282</sup> Awi, F. (2007) A chegada de um gigante na pequena Juruti. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 3 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 5 October 2021).

<sup>283</sup> Original in Portuguese: *desenvolvimento sustentado*

article mentioned that there was a 30% population increase, and a 56% increase in numbers needing hospital care. *O Globo* also interviewed Juruti's mayor, who claimed that local hospitals and schools were overcrowded, while crimes, prostitution, diseases, and unemployment soared because the unemployed from the region had moved to the city.

The piece disclosed an example of disorderly economic growth in a developing region, citing environmental and social impacts that were affecting the city where the US company Alcoa was building a factory. It is notable that *O Globo* presented Alcoa's claims that local authorities were to blame for not promoting sustainable development, but the newspaper did not question the company regarding its culpability, despite all problems emerging after its establishment in the city. This indicates that *O Globo* deliberately chose not to pressure Alcoa. Additionally, it is significant that *OG* used the term "sustained development" when referring to sustainability in 2007. The inaccurate definition occurred 15 years after the Rio92 conference that had disseminated the notion to the world, and 20 years after the publication of the *Brundtland Report*, the document that established the concept of sustainable development. The definition's inaccuracy suggests careless usage of the term by *O Globo*'s journalists and editorial team, as previously spotted in this chapter when referring to the analysis of an article also published by *OG* in 1999.

In the same edition, Alcoa replied<sup>284</sup> to accusations claiming that the company was the real victim. *O Globo* reported that Alcoa accused the government of negligence. According to *OG*, the company said that it was investing to help the government to promote sustainable development in Juruti. *OG* mentioned that Alcoa's projects had employed 2,700 people of whom 60% were from the region. It also stated that the company intended to invest 50 million reais in building a hospital drainage system and water wells, but the town hall argued that little had been done. The newspaper stated that Alcoa replied that it would not invest 1.7 billion reais to implement a mine and harm the project, claiming that all projects caused disorders at the beginning but that it would be good for the local economy.

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<sup>284</sup> Awi, F. (2007) Não podemos fazer papel de poder público, diz empresa. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 3 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 5 October 2021).

It is noteworthy that *O Globo* gave space for the company to reply to accusations expressed in the first article, when Alcoa was criticised by the public sector, and then it wrote a whole piece with Alcoa's version of the facts. This suggests that *OG* was more concerned about protecting Alcoa, as it gave the company space to produce greenwashing and disinformation narratives. While the first article had figures to prove Alcoa's current environmental and social impacts on the region, the second text displayed Alcoa's future intentions for the area, which did not help resolve ongoing problems.

Additionally, *O Globo* exhibited two black-and-white pictures produced by journalist Felipe Awi who wrote both pieces (Figure 8.6). One photo showed the local population demonstrating against Alcoa. The other displayed the forest devastated to give space to a railway to connect with Alcoa. Images linked with the first article, indicating that the journalist agreed with accusations against Alcoa. However, Awi probably had to emphasise Alcoa's perspective due to a demand of *O Globo*.

Domingo, 3 de junho de 2007 O PAÍS • 13

Direto da Amazônia

## A chegada de um gigante na pequena Juruti

Empresa americana leva empregos para cidade da Amazônia, mas MP e prefeito reclamam de danos

**Felipe Awi**  
*Estado especial*

• JURUTI (PA). Para chegar à pequena cidade do Pará banhada pelo rio Amazonas, o progresso chapinou o barco. Mas parece estar provocando um cataclismo. De um lado, a maior empresa de alumínio do mundo de outro, o Ministério Público e a prefeitura, num conflito que reproduz, em outras proporções, o embate em torno da construção de hidrelétricas no Rio Madeira, também na Amazônia. Desde que conseguiu a instalar uma mina de bauxita no pequeno município de Juruti, a companhia americana Alcoa, apesar dos empregos que já levou e que vai gerar, enfrenta a resistência de uma parte da população, de procuradores e do atual prefeito.

Para começar a extrair 2,6 milhões de toneladas do minério por ano a partir de junho de 2008, a empresa trouxe milhares de funcionários, gente de fora em busca de empregos, e também novos problemas para Juruti. Seria apenas a mudança na rotina piscada dos moradores se não viesse acompanhada, segundo o Ministério Público Federal e do Pará, da contaminação da água, da invasão de as-



Foto de Felipe Awi

MORADORES DE JURUTI protestam contra chegada da empresa à cidade

ÁREA DESMATADA para a passagem de uma ferrovia, que levará à mina de bauxita da empresa americana



ÁREA DESMATADA para a passagem de uma ferrovia, que levará à mina de bauxita da empresa americana

### 'Não podemos fazer papel do poder público', diz empresa

Companhia se diz em meio a disputa política na cidade

— Se chegarem duas pessoas no hospital hoje em situa-

**Figure 8.6:** Pictures published in *O Globo* on 3 June 2007

After studying the media coverage of mining impacts on the Amazon, analysis of economic activities in the rainforest continues with the investigation of three pieces displaying the impacts of cattle farms on the forest. The content was published by *O Globo* and *Folha de S. Paulo* between 2008 and 2009.

*O Globo* linked beef production to social and environmental issues in 2008<sup>285</sup>. *OG* reported that the Brazilian Institute of Consumer Protection<sup>286</sup> was mounting a campaign for customers to track back the meat that they consumed to make sure that the production did not involve deforestation or slavery. *O Globo* added that, in accordance with the NGO Friends of Earth, from the 72 million hectares deforested in the Amazon, 50 million were occupied by cattle. The newspaper also stated that the Ethos Institute acknowledged that cattle farms corresponded to 62% of companies that used slave work, and forest fires for cattle farms produced 12 billion tons of carbon dioxide yearly.

In this article, *O Globo* covered Amazon deforestation in regard to the impact of beef production. It is significant that the newspaper considered consumers an important part of the beef chain that was responsible for deforestation, which seemed an attempt to promote public awareness and engagement regarding environmental protection. Moreover, the newspaper offered incorrect information given by the NGO Friends of Earth. In this piece, the NGO stated that cattle farms occupied 50 million hectares out of the 72 million hectares deforested in the Amazon. This figure corresponded to 69% of deforested areas. However, on the previous day, *Folha de S. Paulo* had reported that a very accurate system based on satellite images notified that cattle farms were responsible for 52% of deforestation. Thus, the NGO augmented the responsibility of cattle farms for deforestation by 17%. *OG* also provided shocking information when mentioning the use of slave work in cattle farms. Nonetheless, the newspaper did not offer any comments regarding the persisting existence of slavery in 2008, 120 years after its abolition in Brazil.

Cattle farms returned to Brazilian media coverage one year later, in 2009, due to the link to deforestation in the Amazon region. *O Globo* stated that the

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<sup>285</sup> Casemiro, L. (2008) Sabe de onde vem o bife que você come? *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 4 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 7 October 2021).

<sup>286</sup> Original in Portuguese: *Instituto Brasileiro de Defesa do Consumidor*

Federal Public Ministry<sup>287</sup> was prosecuting 21 cattle farms and companies that were responsible for illegal deforestation of the Amazon rainforest<sup>288</sup>. *OG* said that companies were accused of destroying 157,000 hectares; some were repeat offenders that should have been closed or received several fines for environmental crimes. Additionally, the text mentioned that supermarkets and companies that bought products from the accused were notified and would be penalised if they continued to trade with environmental offenders. *OG* also interviewed Greenpeace, which accused the Brazilian Development Bank (*BNDES*, the Portuguese acronym) of financing ranchers who were responsible for 80% of the deforestation. According to *OG*, *BNDES* replied that the bank was committed to sustainable development; thus it would suspend loans to ranchers linked to deforestation.

*O Globo*'s article emphasised the fact that environmental protection in the Amazon rainforest was linked to economic issues. *OG* showed that there was a chain of sectors linked to deforestation, starting with banks funding cattle ranchers, followed by cattle farms, supermarkets, and companies that sold the products from deforested areas. Even though clients were not included in this piece, as they were in the previous text, customers were also part of the sequence. Arguably, consumers were the most important piece, as the whole chain only existed because of their demand. The article also revealed that development funds could be misused, causing environmental destruction instead of protection. However, *O Globo* did not investigate the topic, thus contributing to the *BNDES* greenwashing narrative, as the bank was claiming to invest in sustainability but was financing deforestation.

One day after *O Globo*'s complaint about the deforestation caused by cattle farms in the Amazon, *Folha de S. Paulo* revealed the creation of a database about the region<sup>289</sup>. The piece explained that the system had an unprecedented level of detail, showing that 15% of the region had been modified with pastures, which represented more than half of these modifications. *FSP* stated that the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources<sup>290</sup> was against to

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<sup>287</sup> Original in Portuguese: *Ministério Público Federal*

<sup>288</sup> Passos, J. M. (2009) MP processa 21 fazendas por desmatamento. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 2 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 16 October 2021).

<sup>289</sup> Menchen, D. (2008) Pastagem soma 7,8% da área da Amazônia Legal. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 3 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 1 October 2021).

<sup>290</sup> Original in Portuguese: *Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e dos Recursos Naturais Renováveis*

making the data public as it could benefit illegal loggers, but the government decided to publicise it to improve transparency. Moreover, *FSP* revealed that the Ministry of Environment considered the data important to create sustainable development programmes in the Amazon. While *Folha de S. Paulo* unveiled deforestation details in the Amazon and displayed concerns about increasing devastation in the area, it also replicated the Ministry of Environment's greenwashing discourse. The Ministry argued that the information provided by the system would help create sustainable development programmes. This statement implied the creation of sustainability projects in the Amazon; however, it was an insubstantial pledge without further data on the viability or authority of sustainability proposals.

Another significant economic activity in the Amazon that was covered by *O Globo* and *Folha de S. Paulo* was the construction of Belo Monte Dam. In 2011, *FSP* and *OG* published three pieces about the construction of Belo Monte that are analysed in this section.

The coverage started on 2 June 2011, when *O Globo* produced a brief greenwashing content about Belo Monte Dam on its front page<sup>291</sup>. The piece mentioned that that Brazilian federal government had allowed the construction of Belo Monte, while launching a sustainable development programme in the Xingu region. Here, *OG* displayed on its cover a brief greenwashing discourse that tried to cover up the impacts of a dam in the Amazon rainforest, with the launching of a sustainability programme in the region. The notorious level of greenwashing and disinformation content reveals that *O Globo* supported the construction of Belo Monte.

On the same day, *Folha de S. Paulo* covered issues with infrastructure in the region of the Belo Monte Dam<sup>292</sup>. *FSP* mentioned complaints regarding the slowness of the energy company Norte Energia S.A. in fulfilling conditions imposed by the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources. *FSP* stated that local infrastructure would not support the migratory flow that had already started. The article cited concerns regarding the health system,

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<sup>291</sup> 'O Globo (2011) Ibama dá o sinal verde a Belo Monte. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 2 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 28 September 2021).

<sup>292</sup> Brito, A. (2011) Fórum pró-usina critica lentidão das obras impostas pelo Ibama. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 2 June. Available from: <https://acervo.folha.com.br/> (Accessed 11 October 2021).

traffic, drinking water, and sanitation. *FSP* also reported that the company agreed to fulfil all demands, while the Brazilian federal government promised 500 million reais to invest in the Xingu Sustainable Development Plan.

The *Folha de S. Paulo* article about the establishment of Belo Monte resembled *O Globo*'s coverage of the US mining company Alcoa in 2007, which was also presented in this section. In both cases, it is evident that the northern region of Brazil lacked infrastructure and relied on partnerships with the private sector to improve areas that would accommodate economic activities.

Regarding the coverage of Belo Monte, both publications dating from 2 June 2011 addressed the authorisation to build the dam in the Amazon region, despite infrastructural and environmental concerns. Nevertheless, neither *OG* nor *FSP* explained why the construction was authorised by the federal government with so many issues yet to be resolved. Additionally, both pieces referred to a sustainable development plan in the Xingu region. However, neither publication explained the project, nor its implementation, thus reproducing greenwashing narratives in both cases. *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* unveiled greenwashing discourses used by the Brazilian federal government. Moreover, *FSP* added similar greenwashing content from Norte Energia S.A., the company that was responsible for the dam, as it said that it would fulfil all requirements but did not refer to projects or deadlines.

One day later, *O Globo* published an opinion piece about Belo Monte Dam that was produced by the newspaper's editorial team<sup>293</sup>. Once again, the text presented similarities with *O Globo* coverage of the US mining company Alcoa in 2007, and *FSP* coverage of Belo Monte on the previous day. All of it referred to the lack of infrastructure in the region.

Regarding *O Globo*'s coverage of Belo Monte Dam, it focused on the positive impacts of Belo Monte, describing it as a great opportunity for a region marked by endemic poverty and lack of infrastructure. For instance, *OG* said that the dam would guarantee access to water and sanitation to 100% residents of two municipalities, which was significant as no city in Brazil had this index, especially in the Amazon region where less than 5% of residents had access to water and

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<sup>293</sup> *O Globo* (2011) Belo Monte deve servir de bom exemplo. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 3 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 18 October 2021).



sanitation. *OG* highlighted that the dam would create 20,000 direct and 80,000 indirect jobs and Norte Energia S.A. would also invest 3.2 billion reais in environmental projects. *OG* explained that the dam would finance infrastructure, buy from local producers to improve local markets, and educate employees, marking that it was the first time that a construction of such scale would accept illiterate workers due to high illiteracy rates in the region. *OG* stated that Belo Monte would possibly become a model of a great project capable of improving the quality of life of the local community and contributing to sustainable development.

As this opinion piece was written by *O Globo*'s editorial team, it revealed *OG*'s full support for the construction of Belo Monte Dam in the Amazon. The newspaper's editorial team solely mentioned positive effects of the construction of the dam within the Amazon rainforest. *OG* did not reflect on any possible negative impacts, especially in regard to environmental aspects. It is evident that *OG* made an effort to gather positive data to explore advantages of the dam in the region. This opinion piece suggests that *O Globo* needed or wanted to influence the Brazilian public opinion regarding the benefits of Belo Monte Dam.

Exploitation of Amazon resources was addressed in an opinion piece written by sociologist Paulo Delgado<sup>294</sup> and published by *O Globo* in 2011. Delgado claimed that the nine countries that shared the Amazon rainforest should articulate social, economic, and environmental development. Delgado made several suggestions to enable free movement of people, information, goods, and an articulation of market and peace. The text focused on the importance of regional development to occupy and protect the rainforest, suggesting sustainable occupation of the Amazon to avoid predatory exploitation of natural resources. Delgado, nevertheless, did not explain how to occupy the area and build infrastructure projects such as highways and railways without destroying the forest. The text gave the impression of being a greenwashing narrative, as the occupation of the forest would cause deforestation and further environmental impacts. Once again, environmental protection would be overlooked to produce economic and social growth.

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<sup>294</sup> Delgado, P. (2011) O livro branco. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 6 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com.br/> (Accessed 18 October 2021).

One day later, on 7 June 2011, *O Globo* produced a special edition about the Mamirauá Sustainable Development Reserve in the Amazon. *OG* presented the reserve<sup>295</sup> saying that it had been created in 1996, in an area that gets completely flooded during the rainy season. *OG* stressed that the area encompassed large biodiversity and many endemic species. *OG* also highlighted that the reserve was the first conservation unit that linked nature protection activities to the participation of local residents in natural resources management.

The piece advertised the reserve, superficially highlighting its environmental characteristics. It was actually an introduction to another article that referred to ecotourism activities in the area<sup>296</sup>. *O Globo* stated that ecotourism had become the main income source to 76 families who lived in the reserve. It said that it attracted hundreds of tourists every year, of whom about 70% were foreigners. It also stated that the main inn on the reserve was built on floating structures, and that from the inn, tourists could see hundreds of birds, alligators, pink and grey dolphins, and the forest. The article explained that the inn was managed by the community, generating work and income for people from the reserve.

This time, *O Globo*'s articles aimed to publicise the reserve as a tourist attraction. The focus was on ecotourism, advertising the inn that received most visitors. The piece seemed like tourist publicity, emphasising the attractions to visitors. *OG* also added a picture of the place, linking with the text's marketing strategy (Figure 8.7). Both the photograph and article resembled hotel advertisements. The main appeal of the photo was the inn's privileged location in a natural reserve within the Amazon rainforest.

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<sup>295</sup> Nóbrega, C. (2011) MCT é o principal parceiro do instituto. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 7 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 15 October 2021).

<sup>296</sup> Nóbrega, C. (2011) Turismo gera renda em Mamirauá. *O Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 7 June. Available from: <https://acervo.oglobo.globo.com/> (Accessed 7 October 2021).



**Figure 8.7:** Picture published in *O Globo* on 7 June 2011

*O Globo*'s especial edition about the Mamirauá Sustainable Development Reserve also contained an article exposing an educational project in the region. This text, however, was analysed in chapter 5, *Social narratives in the coverage of sustainable development*, as part of a section that highlighted the coverage of environmental education. It was the only journalistic piece about environmental education, evidencing a coverage gap about the subject. The superficiality of the piece revealed that it was solely merchandising to promote the organisations that supported the project: the US multinational oil and gas corporation Exxon Mobil and the Brazilian Ministry of Education.

Finally, this section investigated how *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* covered economic activities in the Amazon rainforest, especially related to the mining industry, cattle farms, the construction of Belo Monte Dam, and ecotourism. The analysis showed repeated greenwashing and disinformation content linking to economic activities that continually promoted devastation of the rainforest. The next section presents conclusions about the Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development that highlighted the Amazon.

#### 8.4 – Conclusion

This chapter analysed articles about the Amazon rainforest that were part of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage of sustainable development. The content was produced between 1992 and 2012, referring to 36 texts that correspond to roughly 5% of the 790 pieces gathered for this research.

The objective here was to make a case study of the coverage about the Amazon to detect characteristics of *FSP* and *OG* coverage after the analysis of social, economic, and environmental narratives, presented in chapters 5, 6, and 7, respectively. Subjects studied in this chapter related the coverage of the Amazon rainforest to World Environment Day and Environment Week, deforestation, and economic activities. Once again, the similarity of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage reaffirmed that both newspapers disclosed analogous perspectives when covering sustainable development, revealing that Brazilians read similar content about sustainability.

The section about World Environment Day and Environment Week unveiled that *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* published articles on these dates that propagated greenwashing narratives from the Brazilian federal government. Disinformation was part of marketing strategies to promote the country as environmentally friendly, while the government emphasised its actions on the promotion of economic development. Furthermore, the repeated reproduction of greenwashing discourses revealed that *FSP* and *OG* corroborated misleading strategies, while missing opportunities to promote environmental awareness and the protection of the Amazon rainforest.

Analysis of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage that highlighted deforestation in the Amazon showcased pieces discussing causes and initiatives to halt forest destruction, while patronising federal and regional governments through the deliberate divulging of greenwashing excuses and disinformation. The section revealed recurring claims for financial aid to protect the region. There were also allegations that rich countries' suggestion to maintain the forest intact was a colonial nonsense, compared to abuses committed under colonialism. The segment also showed right- and left-wing politicians and environmentalists discussing the

importance of the rainforest, while emphasising the need to develop the region sustainably.

Investigation of pieces about economic activities in the Amazon focused on the mining industry, cattle farms, the construction of Belo Monte Dam, and ecotourism. Once again, greenwashing and disinformation tried to cover up social and environmental impacts promoted by different businesses established in the rainforest. The coverage also presented infrastructural problems in the region and the dependence on private investment to develop in a more sustainable way. Moreover, the section revealed the existence of slave work on cattle farms in a superficial article published by *O Globo* dating from 2008. *O Globo*, however, did not make any criticism of the persistence of slave work 120 years after its abolition in Brazil. Another publication from *O Globo* in 2009 disclosed the misuse of development funds by cattle farmers who were promoting deforestation instead of protecting the rainforest. Once more, *O Globo* disregarded this finding and supported the greenwashing discourse from the bank that was financing deforestation but claiming to invest in sustainable development in the Amazon. These examples corroborate findings that economic narratives of Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development either created or retransmitted greenwashing discourses to cover up the environmental destruction of governments and companies.

These reflections complete the analysis of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* content about the Amazon rainforest that emerged in the coverage of sustainable development. Texts studied in this chapter were produced between 1992 and 2012, corresponding to the period between two international environmental events that popularised sustainable development in Brazil. The thesis now moves to the final section that presents and analyses findings encountered during the research of Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development.

## Conclusion

This thesis has studied patterns in the Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development. The concept of sustainable development, as defined by the *Brundtland Report*, addresses environmental, social, and economic aspects of development and thus extends to cover a wide range of concerns related to humanity's impacts on the environment. Based on this definition, the investigation has studied the Brazilian media coverage of sustainability to understand the connection between media publications and environmental protection in the country.

This thesis has focused on unveiling the dominance of economic aspects in Brazilian environmental media coverage. The literature review, chapter 2, *Environmental journalism in context*, revealed that there was a research gap due to the small number of investigations of environmental communication in the Global South. Particularly, the literature review identified a low number of studies displaying historical overviews, which referred to the development of environmental journalism in national daily media outlets in Brazil. Historical investigations of media are significant in showing the interconnection between journalism and society and in examining its development through time.

After acknowledging this research gap my aim was to investigate environmental communication produced by national daily media outlets. The objective was to understand the relationship between Brazilian environmental media coverage and continuous environmental destruction in the country. The choice to research the coverage of sustainable development was premised on the need to critically examine Brazil's challenging environmental, social, and economic scenarios. As a developing country – with significant economic and social challenges – that holds the largest tropical forest left on Earth, the three aspects of sustainability are extremely important to Brazil.

This thesis focused on two of the main daily newspapers with national distribution, namely *O Globo (OG)* and *Folha de S. Paulo (FSP)*. This PhD research analysed *FSP* and *OG* production over 20 years, from 1992 to 2012. More specifically, the timeframe considered the coverage produced around World

Environment Day, 5 June, and three main international environmental events, Rio92, Rio+10, and Rio+20. The period resulted in 193 days of investigation, which corresponded to 386 daily newspaper editions.

Analysis of coverage of sustainable development produced by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* has shown broader findings than suggested by the initial hypothesis. The primary assumption was that economic aspects would dominate the debate. However, despite *FSP* and *OG* producing content related to economic narratives, both newspapers also considered social and environmental features. This finding suggests that Brazilian media coverage of the concept of sustainability was more extensive than originally presumed. Furthermore, the initial hypothesis has been correct in assuming that Brazilian media coverage of sustainability did not contribute to environmental protection, especially because *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* overlooked environmental damage, while using greenwashing and disinformation narratives that promoted companies and governments responsible for the devastation throughout the 20-year period.

In particular, one of the key arguments from this research is that most of the Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development was based on greenwashing narratives that tried to hide environmental destruction in the country. By suppressing publicly available news of environmental degradation and its impacts *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* prevented Brazilian civil society from demanding an effective protectionist policy. The investigation also proved that coverage produced by *FSP* and *OG* was similar, and at times even repetitive, making use of identical sources and arguments. The finding disclosed that the main Brazilian newspapers with national distribution had equivalent editorial lines when covering sustainable development, with the Brazilian public having access to analogous content produced by these mainstream media outlets.

In summary, this thesis presented eight chapters exploring *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage of sustainable development produced between 1992 and 2012. Chapters were designed to respond to the main research objectives that were: 1) creating an updated literature review of environmental journalism; 2) exploring how *O Globo* and *Folha de S. Paulo* introduced the concept of sustainable development; 3) analysing social narratives of *FSP* and *OG* coverage of

sustainability; 4) studying economic narratives of *FSP* and *OG*; 5) examining environmental narratives of the coverage; and 6) reviewing *FSP* and *OG* coverage of sustainability and the Amazon rainforest. Here, it is important to recollect that the choice of social, economic, and environmental narratives highlighted in objectives 3, 4, and 5 directly referred to the 1987 *Brundtland Report*'s official explanation of the concept of sustainable development.

The first objective of this research, displaying a recent literature review about environmental coverage, was presented in chapter 2, *Environmental journalism in context*. The goal was to disclose updated discussions of environmental coverage worldwide and especially in the Global South. The section provided an initial outline that highlighted the increasing importance of media coverage on the growing number of global environmental issues. The investigation showed that environmental journalism unfolded differently in the world, and that it especially depended on economic and political approaches in each context. For instance, richer media groups based in developed nations had more opportunity to produce more refined and specialised content.

Analysis of recent investigations underlined that most studies of environmental communication focused on the Global North and underlined two interconnected specific subjects: climate change and global warming. The chapter also explained that the contribution of this thesis was studying characteristics of environmental communication produced in the Global South. More specifically, the focus is on investigating Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development, which was considered an important area due to the low number of studies of the topic. Additionally, studying environmental communication in Brazil is significant because the country holds relevant forest and biodiversity reserves that influence global climate change.

The research's second objective, investigation of *O Globo* and *Folha de S. Paulo* usage of the concept of sustainable development, was the focus of chapter 4, *Definitions of sustainable development*. Studying the explanation of the concept was an important tool in identifying which aspects of sustainable development were in the spotlight of Brazilian media coverage from 1992 to 2012. The section introduced 57 definitions of sustainability, presented in 57 pieces, corresponding to



nearly 7% of the 790 pieces studied in this thesis. Analysis showed that nearly half of the explanations made by *FSP* and *OG* connected to the 1987 official concept of sustainability. Despite the low number of clarifications offered to the public throughout the 20 years of coverage, usage of the official concept indicates improving media awareness of sustainable development and environmental issues in Brazil.

To reach such a conclusion, the chapter used a seven-type categorisation specifically created for this thesis. The categorisation revealed that 25 pieces (44%) catalogued as type A, matching the *Brundtland Report's* notion and stating environmental, economic, and social descriptions; two texts (3%) fitted type B, stressing economic aspects; three items (5%) were type C, emphasising environmental topics; 13 (23%) related to type D, underlining economic and environmental issues; one (2%) focuses on social and environmental aspects; nine (16%) were type F and referred to future generations, linking to the *Brundtland Report*; finally, four (7%) were categorised as type G, presenting critical interpretations of sustainability. Considering each aspect of the concept separately, these figures disclosed that 46% of definitions referred to social angles, 70% to economic features, and 74% to environmental issues. These findings exposed a coverage gap regarding social narratives, indicating that Brazilian media coverage did not consider social elements to be as important as the other two components of sustainable development.

Additionally, the study of definitions showed that *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* presented sustainable development as the solution for global environmental issues throughout the 20-year timeframe. Findings also revealed that initial allusions to sustainability during the coverage of Rio92 referred to economic narratives, while the coverage of Rio+20, 20 years later, gave more attention to social aspects. This result disclosed that Brazilian media gradually broadened its coverage of sustainability, including social issues such as poverty, food security, and women's health, which were thoroughly examined in chapter 5. Furthermore, the examination of media definitions of sustainability revealed efforts by the Brazilian government to promote Brazil as a sustainable country. The discovery demonstrated that throughout the 20-year period the Brazilian federal government recognised the importance of sustainability in boosting the country's economy,

irrespective of having right- or left-wing representatives. Is it also notable that 24 definitions of sustainable development (42%) were presented in opinion articles, whereas 33 (58%) emerged in the journalistic coverage. This finding highlights the importance of opinion pieces to promote sustainability in Brazil.

After studying the definitions of sustainability provided by Brazilian media coverage, the thesis moved on to its third objective, which was evaluating social narratives of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage of sustainability. This was the focal point of chapter 5, *Social narratives in the coverage of sustainable development*. The choice to analyse social narratives directly referred to the official definition of sustainability, which includes social, economic, and environmental features. Investigation of social narratives centred on 32 pieces produced by *FSP* and *OG* between 1992 and 2012. The data corresponds to less than 4% of the 790 texts gathered to develop this research. The small number of pieces selected in chapter 5 once more demonstrates that social narratives were not frequently represented in *FSP* and *OG* coverage of sustainable development.

Regarding social issues, Brazilian media pieces highlighted five main topics: 1) poverty, which was partitioned into childhood, inequalities, and projects; 2) food security; 3) women's health; 4) environmental education; and 5) indigenous population. Texts analysed in this chapter showed that Brazilian media recognised the feasibility and positive impacts of sustainability. For instance, both *FSP* and *OG* displayed sustainability projects that improved the life conditions of Brazilian communities. Investigation also suggested that *FSP* and *OG* supported Brazilian biofuels because they used sources, namely FAO, the UN, and the World Bank – and Brazilian president Lula da Silva – that defended the sustainability of Brazilian biofuels in international discussions about global food security. The defence of Brazilian biofuel, however, was made by political actors and lacked scientific explanations of the product's sustainability, thus resembling greenwashing political narratives.

Another finding related to chapter 5 was a coverage gap regarding environmental education, which possibly influenced the level of environmental awareness and diminished social mobilisation in Brazil. A further negative discovery was that the newspaper *O Globo* covered indigenous communities using

prejudice and discrimination. *OG* published texts and images that were aggressive and dismissive towards indigenous groups. The racist coverage was certainly a negative surprise, as it emerged in the main newspaper of *Grupo Globo*, which is the biggest media conglomerate in Latin America.

Moving on to the fourth objective of this thesis, the aim was to study economic narratives of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage of sustainability, which was the core of chapter 6, *Economic narratives: greenwashing sustainable development*. Study of economic narratives relates to the *Brundtland Report's* definition of sustainability that also comprehends social and environmental issues. Investigation of the media coverage of sustainability's aspects emphasises this thesis's focus on sustainable development, as chapters 5, 6, and 7 addressed characteristics of the concept. Consequently, the primary objective of those chapters was to study how Brazilian media covered specific elements of sustainability to identify the style of the coverage, the type of information offered to Brazilian public, and the media's contribution to promoting environmental awareness in the country.

Chapter 6 analysed 57 texts that focused on economic discourses, amounting roughly 7% of the material examined in this research. Analysis identified four main subjects: 1) greenwashing; 2) consumerism; 3) monetisation of natural resources; and finally, 4) conflicts over money. Investigation unveiled that, throughout the 20-year timeframe, *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* made use of recurrent greenwashing discourses, merchandising, and propagandistic narratives. These findings showed that the Brazilian public had access to recurrent passive and misleading coverage, which possibly influenced the likelihood of environmental degradation in the country.

The examination also disclosed that businesses' mindsets regarding sustainable development changed over time, moving from new undesired investments in the coverage of 1992 to being a significant marketing tool in 2012. It is noteworthy that coverage produced in the last years of the timeframe, and especially in 2012, showed that the concept of sustainability was used by business and political sectors in greenwashing marketing campaigns, overexposing

sustainable development. In addition, the link between consumerism and sustainability was repeatedly used in greenwashing stories.

*FSP* and *OG* coverage lacked analysis and contextualisation. Texts were descriptive and often resembled press releases, promoting companies and governments instead of examining contents and interests hidden in narratives. Additionally, *FSP* and *OG* frequently did not provide historical and background data to explain the reasons behind the stories and so to offer contextualisation. Media passivity promoted sustainability discourses that were part of greenwashing strategies made by companies and governments. This discovery resulted from Brazilian media creating and replicating misinformation regarding sustainable development throughout the 20 years instead of actively looking for facts.

Furthermore, evaluation of economic narratives revealed that the Brazilian media coverage of sustainability lacked data and produced imprecise texts, thus contributing to greenwashing narratives and disinformation. Outcomes also showed that *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* often monetised the environment, referring to natural resources as economic resources. Findings denote that *FSP* and *OG* disseminated the view that nature was more important for its economic value than for its environmental significance. These conclusions reinforce the predominance of economic discourses in the Brazilian environmental media coverage of sustainable development.

Additionally, investigation of Brazilian media coverage showed that UN environmental conferences were marked by conflicts over financial support to promote sustainability. The exposure of repeated clashes between rich and poor nations suggests that environmental protection was never a priority for participants at those international events. Moreover, the coverage revealed that developed nations continuously denied monetary aid to implement sustainable development in developing countries. Discoveries corroborated the argument that the media unreflectingly described a global preference for economic growth over environmental protection.

The research's fifth objective targeted the examination of environmental narratives in Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development, which was the goal of chapter 7, *Sustainability's environmental narratives: superficiality and*

*greenwashing*. The chapter analysed 58 texts, nearly 7% of the content on sustainability produced by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* between 1992 and 2012. The focus on environmental narratives resembles the UN's official definition of sustainable development that also refers to social and economic aspects, which were addressed in previous chapters. The analysis of environmental aspects revealed that *FSP* and *OG* coverage was once again inefficient. In this case, both newspapers promoted greenwashing narratives, propagated disinformation, overlooked environmental subjects, and superficially covered sustainable development.

The investigation disclosed that during Rio92 the environmental coverage of sustainability underlined political discussions and neglected environmental issues through repeated use of political sources and the almost complete absence of environmental specialist perspectives. Brazilian media coverage presented a small improvement after a decade. During Rio+10, *FSP* and *OG* attempted to promote environmental awareness but still missed basic data and contextualisation. Study demonstrated that the coverage of environmental policy disclosed that both internationally and in Brazil, economic factors were the main obstacles to generating and implementing efficient environmental legislation. The global impacts of the recurrent economic prioritisation that prevented environmental protection, however, were not analysed by Brazilian newspapers.

Finally, the sixth objective of the thesis was reviewing *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* discourse about the Amazon rainforest that was part of the coverage of sustainability. This was the goal of chapter 8, *The coverage of the Amazon rainforest: a case study*, which analysed 36 texts, 5% of the content produced by *FSP* and *OG* between 1992 and 2012. In short, Brazilian media coverage of the Amazon rainforest was superficial, descriptive, and mainly considered sustainable development in the region as an economic expansion, overlooking social and environmental impacts.

Evaluation of the characteristics of *FSP* and *OG* articles about the Amazon rainforest amalgamated elements of the investigation of the coverage of social, economic, and environmental narratives of sustainability that were presented separately in previous chapters. This amalgamation suggests that Brazilian media coverage about the Amazon was broad, considering several aspects of

sustainability. It also confirms arguments in chapters 5 to 7 showing: the prominence of greenwashing narratives, with social aspects neglected and superficially covered; economic issues dominating the news and leading to greenwashing stories that suppressed social and environmental impacts; and, finally, environmental coverage focusing on nature's economic return rather than on its environmental importance.

Likewise, investigation of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* coverage of the Amazon rainforest revealed that, once more, greenwashing narratives aimed at promoting the Brazilian government were recurrent throughout the 20-year timeframe. The finding suggests that the government intended to promote Brazil as an environmentally friendly country, and *FSP* and *OG* supported the government by not analysing this recurring and misleading discourse. For instance, investigation exposed that World Environment Day and Environment Week were frequently used by *FSP* and *OG* to advertise environmental programmes that actually constituted the greenwashing narratives of Brazilian national and local governments.

The study also revealed that, while media coverage portrayed deforestation in the Amazon rainforest, stressing key reasons for the devastation and efforts to stop deforestation, the real efficacy of attempts to reduce the devastation were never evaluated. This demonstrates again that *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* reproduced greenwashing and disinformation discourses that aimed to safeguard the government from accusations of environmental destruction. Within the study of the Amazon there was an analysis of *FSP* and *OG* coverage of the environmental impacts of mining, cattle farms, and construction in the rainforest. Despite exposing the main economic activities responsible for deforestation, both newspapers produced superficial reporting, based on description and lacking analysis. The coverage did not refer to the environmental outcomes of the devastation of the rainforest. This finding indicates reckless coverage of the Amazon rainforest. As the main tropical forest in the world, its devastation has direct impacts on global climate and biodiversity reserves.

Greenwashing narratives also emerged in the coverage of a sustainable development reserve located in the rainforest. This specific case briefly mentioned environmental protection, but highlighted ecotourism by describing economic

activities in the reserve. The example dating from 2011 shows that almost 20 years after the initial media coverage of sustainability in Brazil, newspapers, and particularly *O Globo*, continued to privilege economic narratives even when there were successful social and environmental cases to report as part of a sustainable development programme in the rainforest.

In total, this thesis analysed 240 out of the 790 collected in this research. It is noteworthy that when reporting on sustainable development, *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* focused on narratives about Brazil, reinforcing their role in the national media scope and connecting readers to sustainability. Additionally, Brazilian media coverage of sustainable development tried to disguise problems and negative social and environmental facts with greenwashing and disinformation narratives that intended to protect the image of companies, governments, and economic growth. *FSP* and *OG* highlighted political and economic sources, presenting limited contributions from specialists and communities. Furthermore, opinion pieces played a significant role, alongside journalistic reporting.

The conclusion shows that all six objectives of this research were addressed by the thesis. It conclusively underscores the hypothesis that the coverage produced by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* contributed to an overall devaluing of environmentally sustainable development in favour of more economic concerns. These framing tactics occurred because both newspapers overlooked social and environmental impacts of sustainability, while trying to cover up negative effects of unsustainable economic expansion with greenwashing narratives. Disinformation about environmental destruction prevented the acknowledgement of problems, which could have led to social and political mobilisation to guarantee an effective environmental protectionist policy. Despite recognising *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo* attempts to promote environmental awareness in Brazil, the analysis revealed coverage gaps, missing data, lack of contextualisation, superficiality, and disinformation.

Findings reveal that Brazilian national news media could improve its environmental reporting to assist Brazil in preventing disasters that continue to damage the country's natural environment. In addition, better qualified environmental coverage could support Brazilian civil society in demanding an

effective protectionist policy, as well as ensuring its implementation. The improvement of Brazilian environmental media coverage is, therefore, vitally important, and academic investigations can support the development process of the media, ultimately contributing to the promotion of global environmental protection.



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