



## **Decentralization of public policies for integrated environmental management: an analysis of the Município VerdeAzul program**

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**SUMMARY**

In terms of public policies in Brazil, especially within the environmental theme, there is a chain of constitutionally established competences between the federative entities (Union, States, Federal District and Municipalities). With respect to this chain of competences, considering the internationally defended principle of sustainability, namely, "think globally and act locally", attention should be paid to the decentralization of both environmental policies and their command and control instruments, as well as economic, voluntary and market instruments. In view of this, the main objective of this paper is to discuss and analyze the decentralization of power as a tool for the management of environmental public policies. In this sense, and more objectively, it is intended to identify some of the main decentralizing characteristics of the program developed for a long time in the state of São Paulo, designated as the "GreenBlue Municipality Program". To this end, a literature review and document analysis were carried out on the topic to be discussed, especially within the scope of the State Secretariat for the Environment, Infrastructure and Logistics (SEMIL). At the end of this discussion and analysis, it was possible to conclude that the VerdeAzul Municipality program effectively has, in one of its principles, a decentralized management, which is presented in a fully articulated and transparent manner with respect to the processes and actions included in the management of the municipalities. In other words, there is a control on the part of SEMIL with respect to the results achieved (objectives and targets) by the municipalities of São Paulo that voluntarily adhered to the VerdeAzul Municipality Program, but, on the other hand, the benefits achieved by the municipalities are pre-established and offered automatically, integrating the actions. In this sense, it is possible to understand that decentralization, in this case, has a bidirectional sense, that is, it allows the exchange and interaction from the State to the Municipalities and from the Municipalities to the State.

**KEYWORDS:** Governance. PMVA. Integrated management.

**1 INTRODUCTION**

There is no single definition of what Public Policies are, as there are several conceptualizations by different authors that refer to the theme. From a broader perspective, although substantiated, it can be understood that Public Policies are actions arising from the State to solve or solve a problem in society, both in general and in a specific way. In other words, a Public Policy can cover different areas that directly affect a population or community, and can also intervene in specific areas, such as health, education, public safety, among others.<sup>1</sup>

In this way, it is also possible to understand that even if there is a direct relationship with the government (public sector), a Public Policy can have the participation of the private sector and must have the participation of the people, both in its elaboration (construction) and in its execution and subsequent feasibility assessment.

Based on these aspects, planning is essential for a public policy to meet its objectives and meet the wishes of the population with transparency, legislative firmness, and fiscal responsibility. In addition, as a fundamental part to be planned, it is necessary to focus on monitoring the implementation of public policies and evaluating their results, using indicators

<sup>1</sup> Public Policy can be defined as the field of knowledge that seeks to put the "government into action" and/or analyze this action, proposing changes in the course or course of these actions. "The formulation of public policies is configured at the stage in which democratic governments translate their purposes [...] in programs and actions, which will produce results or changes in the real world" (Souza, C. in Hochman et al., 2007, p. 69). And, Environmental policy is understood as the set of government initiatives [...] aimed at protecting, conserving, sustainable use and restoration of environmental resources, also focusing on the interactions of ecosystems with society and their productive activities, considering the built environment, cities, their infrastructures and services (Bursztyn, Bursztyn, 2012).

that point to the reality of their effectiveness, integrating different points of analysis (MATUS, 1991).

Even respecting the steps necessary for the planning of the effective implementation of a Public Policy, such as those already pointed out by Matus (1991), it is perceived, and the author also warns, that the uncertainties in the executive process of public policies, often based on luck, have in view the various external influences of the different agents that affect a program.

It is in this context that the decentralization of a policy or program must be considered, to democratize and integrate management, in this case, state and municipal. In this context, there is the VerdeAzul Municipality Program, hereinafter PMVA, which has decentralizing bases, but which need a deeper analysis to understand the roles played by the agents and the mechanisms inherent to the program.

The PMVA was created in 2007 and implemented the following year by the Department of the Environment of the government of the state of São Paulo (currently, the State Secretariat of Environment, Infrastructure and Logistics - SEMIL), with the aim of guiding and providing bases for the environmental management of the municipalities of São Paulo, through directives and criteria directly and indirectly linked to the environment.

## 2 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this paper is to discuss and analyze the decentralization of power as a tool for the management of environmental public policies. In this context, this article aimed to outline some of the main decentralizing characteristics of the VerdeAzul Municipality Program, conducted by the Department of Environment, Infrastructure and Logistics of the State of São Paulo, together with the municipalities of São Paulo that voluntarily adhered to the environmental program.

## 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The main part of the discussion about the characteristics presented by the Blue Green Municipality Program (PMVA) is its decentralization. This attribute makes it possible to understand the functioning of a priori public management, *more democratic, participatory, and personalized, as well as its respective assertive and contestatory points*.

Considering the concepts of decentralization of a policy or program is an important part of understanding the functionality of the PMVA, given its high capillarity. Therefore, for the discussion proposed here, it is vital that there are references to studies of the historical line of the Brazilian public administration for a better understanding of the path of the Program to its models that have decentralizing management characteristics.

The original model of the PMVA, which contained decentralizing aspects and defended a broader and less central management, was managerialism (or managerial administration) with neoliberal traits, defended and implemented by the governments of Margaret Thatcher in the

United Kingdom and by Ronald Reagan in the United States in the 1980s (NEWMAN; CLARKE, 2012).

Therefore, the PMVA can be taken as a reference to describe the historical and technical process of decentralization as part of a management model that contemplates the core of the Program's development, as well as other historical governmental interventions that were associated with a more decentralized management.

Klering, Porsse and Guadagnin (2010, p. 02) explain that one of the first attempts to implement a management model in the Brazilian federal administration was through Decree Law No. 200/67, which was issued during the military regime, and which was based on administrative political decentralization. Subsequently, the Federal Constitution of 1988, for example, provided for the decentralization of power as a tool for the management of environmental public policies, defining it as a principle, in which autonomy would be brought to the municipalities to bring citizens - the most interested and affected - closer to the provision of services, making them the main responsible for public rights.

Thus, citizens would be committed to planning, executing, and promoting actions in the public service (BRASIL, 1988):

with the promulgation of the 1988 Constitution, changes were introduced both in the administrative structure (process of decentralization of public administration) and in the political dimension (construction of full citizenship, inserting society in the formulation of public policies and government management) (KLERING; PORSSE; GUADAGNIN, 2010, p.02).

However, prior to the approach of a more decentralized policy model, it is necessary to contextualize what was previously practiced in public administrations, with emphasis on the bureaucratic public administration model.

Campelo (2013. p, 02) bases the bureaucratic model on the ideals of certain legal procedures with more rigorous features, which are provided for in rules that allow the practice of public administration acts:

these practices aim to prevent the intricacies of patrimonial administration, inversion of the purpose, that is, to prevail, through the will of the norm itself, in the face of the principle of legality, public interests, which must prevail over merely private interests in the performance of the public function and in the provision of public services (CAMPELO, 2013. p, 02).

In addition, Klering, Porsse and Guadagnin (2010, p.06) define bureaucratic public administration using central attributes of career professionalization, impersonality, and functional hierarchy, which characterizes it as a rational-legal power. However, according to the authors, this dynamic also presupposes a certain prior distrust of public administrators and all those directly and indirectly involved in a public policy, pointing out counterpoints that emerge with such characteristics that disgust public administration:

On the other hand, dysfunctions arise; Control – the guarantee of state power – becomes the very *raison d'être* of administration. As a result, the state runs the risk of turning inward, losing the sense of its basic mission, which is to serve society. The fundamental quality of bureaucratic public administration is its effectiveness in controlling abuses; its defect, on the other hand, lies in its inefficiency, self-reference,

and inability to turn to the service of its citizens (KLERING; PORSSE; GUADAGNIN, 2010, p.06).

Understanding this bureaucratic model is important for this discussion, especially because its replacement becomes the central point in the structuring of new forms of administrative management. The bureaucratic model was not able to adapt to the size of the State, its most important activities, and its demand for agility within its strategic movements.

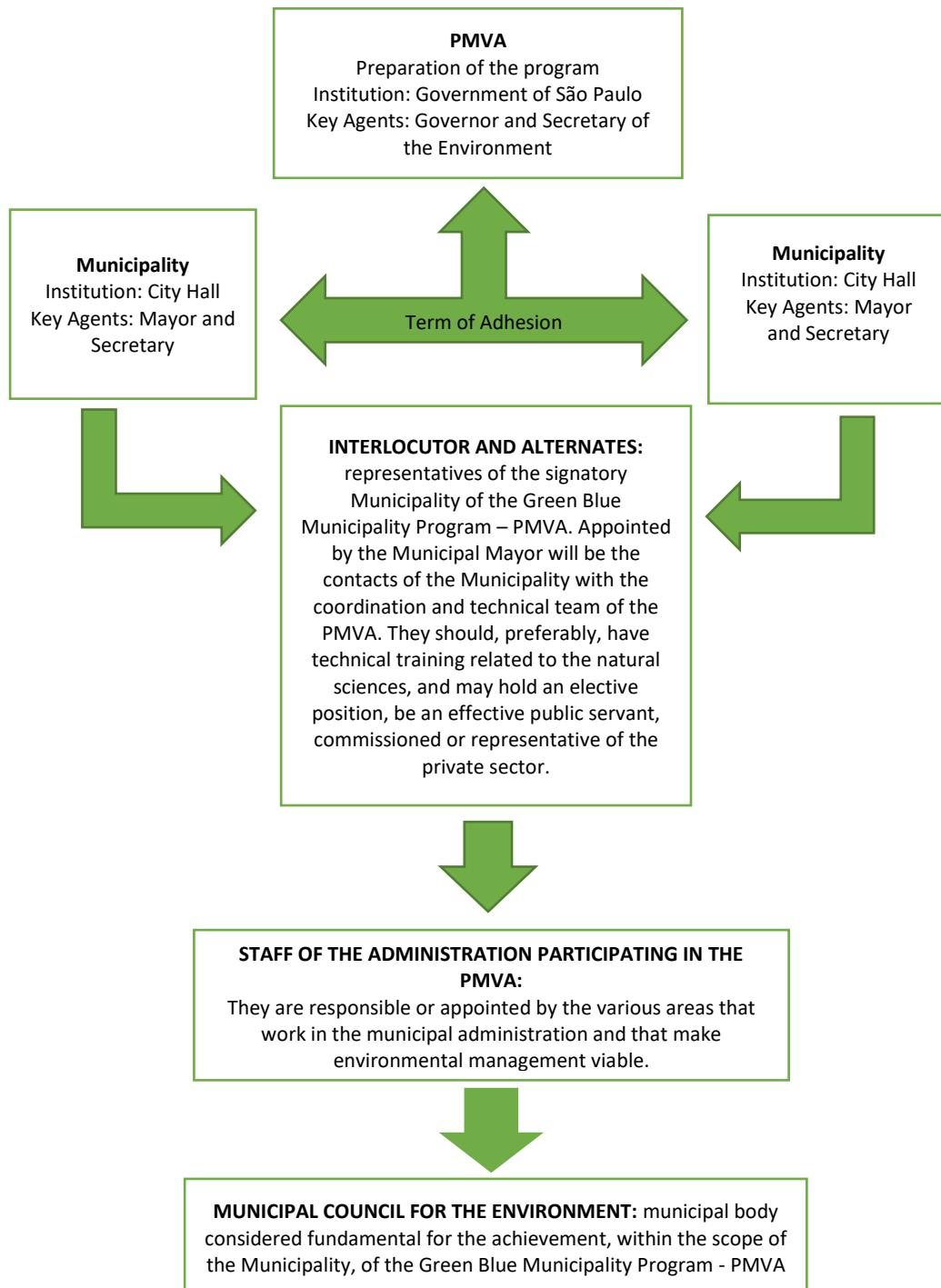
This slowness and bureaucratic rigidity of the State not only delayed and limited public administration, but also its ability to develop and implement public policies, leading to the neglect of social needs. As a response to these conflicts, the new management model, addressed by Bresser-Pereira (1998), incorporates some ideas employed by the private sector, but does not completely deny the bureaucratic management model previously experienced.

This mixture between ideas brought from the private sector and ideas from the bureaucratic model made the environment favorable for the emergence of aspects that defined the current managerial model of public administration. However, it is worth noting that there are some points of convergence and divergence between the two models observed. Experienced

For example, as a convergence between the bureaucratic and managerial models, professionalism and meritocracy can be mentioned. On the other hand, about the divergent points, the bureaucratic model can be characterized: (i) the strategic evaluation before (a priori) the processes; (ii) the centralization of power; (iii) the strong hierarchical structure; (vi) and the focus on the process and the tasks. On the other hand, the points of divergence between the managerial and bureaucratic models can be characterized: (v) the a posteriori strategic evaluation of the results; (vi) decentralization; (vii) the flexible hierarchical structure; and (viii) a focus on results and citizens.

The focus on results and citizens, previously cited as a point of divergence between the bureaucratic and managerial models, is addressed by Motta (1994) who points to new forms of democratic participation due to greater articulation and aggregation of community interests that would have been ignored by the previous political system.

Thus, the propositions about the decentralization of power as a tool for managing environmental public policies were attractive due to their proximity to democratic ideals. Among the main points of divergence and convergence between the two models listed above, the centralization of power by the bureaucratic model and the respective decentralization from the managerial point of view, stand out in the meritorious interest of this discussion, culminating, thus, in the substantial aspect of the PMVA: the decentralization of management.

**Flowchart 1.** Decentralization of the PMVA


Source: Prepared by the authors (2023)

It is observable in the flowchart that the PMVA brings a clear model of decentralization, following in the footsteps of other important programs at the federal level such as the National School Feeding Program (PNAE) (NERO; GARCIA; ALMASSY, 2022), and other environmental programs (NADAL, *et al.*, 2021).

In this sense, each agent fulfills its function, while responsibilities pass through all components of the process. During the government of Juscelino Kubitschek, there were trials

on administrative reforms that promoted the simplification of processes, as well as reforms of the ministries, seeking, mainly, global reforms and the decentralization of the services offered (KLERING, PORSSE; GUADAGNIN, 2010, p. 03).

The changes remained and in the reform that took place in 1967, through Decree Law No. 200, which sought to break bureaucratic rigidity, the first managerial action in the country was initiated, resorting to decentralization, because, "through the aforementioned Decree-Law, the transfer of activities to autarchies, foundations, public companies and mixed-capital companies was carried out, in order to obtain greater operational dynamism through functional decentralization" (KLERING, PORSSE; GUADAGNIN, 2010, p. 03).

Motta (1994) saw the emergence of administrative political decentralization as a matter of course since the country was suffering from social and economic backwardness. According to the author, these delays were always linked to a model loaded with authoritarianism and centralism. Thus, with decentralization, it would pave a way to counteract this reality, through greater autonomy (CRAVEIRO; ESTEVINHO, 2021).

Decentralizing tendencies have also been driven because of the development of new technologies, such as new forms of industrial and commercial organization (MOTTA, 1994). These activities of technological characteristics have greater decentralization in their productive organization (MOTTA, 1994).

In addition, the decentralization of power allows the supplier sphere to invest more resources in the program or policy in question, as observed by Nero, Garcia, and Almassy (2022) in a study on the PNAE. Bresser-Pereira (1997) also considers the decentralization of power as an inherent characteristic of managerial public administration:

It is citizen-oriented and results-oriented; presupposes that politicians and civil servants are deserving of a real, albeit limited, degree of trust; As a strategy, it uses decentralization and the encouragement of creativity and innovation; the instrument through which control over decentralized bodies is carried out is the management contract (BRESSER-PEREIRA, 1997, p. 08)

For Bresser-Pereira, managerial administration was based on decentralization, on the delegation of authority, as well as on the responsibility of the public manager. In this aspect, there would be a rigid control of performance, measured based on criteria pre-established in the contract. The author also affirms the effectiveness of this model, where, in comparison to the bureaucratic model, it is oriented towards the wishes of the citizen and no longer self-reported as in bureaucratic public management, according to Bresser-Pereira (1997, p. 09):

To proceed with the control of results, decentralized, in a public administration, it is necessary that politicians and civil servants deserve at least a certain degree of trust. Limited trust, permanently controlled by results, but still sufficient to allow delegation, so that the public manager can have the freedom to choose the most appropriate means to meet the agreed goals, instead of setting goals and procedures in law. In bureaucratic administration, this trust does not exist (BRESSER-PEREIRA, 1997, p. 10)

This "limited trust" brought by Bresser-Pereira (1997) is observed in the PMVA, since it is up to the interlocutors and alternates to act in the management and execution of Program

actions in their respective municipalities, but not failing to be accountable for the results obtained, through periodic reports to the state government.

Motta (1994) corroborates Bresser-Pereira by suggesting that decentralization would be an important step for local political actors, as it would represent attributing more power to them, as opposed to what was practiced, where these actors were submitted to a centralized power.

In a published study, Nadal *et al.* (2021) found that legal support enabled the emergence of public policies, which ended in a mechanism with aspects of decentralization. As a result, there was a redistribution of responsibility for the political process, divided between the Union, the State, and municipalities (NADAL *et al.*, 2021).

This last part, the municipalities, represent the end of the chain, that is, where the population really is. For this reason, the PMVA offers the possibility of a more intimate intervention, where they are considered intrinsic public problems of the municipalities.

Another important point to be considered is popular participation, also conceptualized by Motta (1994) and characterized by Deslandes (2018) as the collective will:

the social dimension of political decentralization translates into social participation, public management, a set of forms and resources for empowering groups to decide on problems on the public agenda, allowing the expression of collective will (or of collectives) in decision-making spaces, in the supervision and social control of public management services and projects (DESLANDES, 2018).

In this aspect, Craveiro and Estevinho (2021, p. 03) also relate decentralization to the immersion of the community in decision-making processes, involving "greater political-administrative participation of the citizen", which corroborates Nero, Garcia, and Almassy (2022) who cite the need for society to be involved in decision-making actions, which only occur through decentralization.

In addition, other beliefs are listed by Motta (1994) who perceives in decentralization the opportunity to disseminate specific proposals related to the management model:

The decentralization movement in developed countries contributes to disseminating the following beliefs or proposals: a) the need to institute policies of "devolution" of usurped power; b) disbelief in the central administrative apparatuses, seen as distant, inaccessible, inefficient and uninterested in community welfare; and c) restructuring of local political and administrative life, not only for the provision of services that were previously centralized, but also to allow for a more efficient exercise of citizenship rights (MOTTA, 1994, p. 3).

According to Bresser-Pereira (1997, p. 13), the activities of a government are basically divided into exclusive and non-exclusive, being examples of exclusive activities the that cover strategic and traditional sectors such as the armed forces, the police, and the tax collection agency. On the other hand, since the author treats them as non-exclusive services, there are educational, health, cultural and scientific research services.

This distinction is important, since Bresser-Pereira (1997) predicts, for non-exclusive services, a greater participation in the supply of the private sector, as well as the non-state public sector. In this sense, once again a decentralizing characteristic is given to these services, that is,

the PMVA that includes areas that develop cultural, educational, and scientific research actions is encompassed in the author's theory.

In turn, Craveiro and Estevinho (2021), through studies, give other attributes and understandings about decentralization:

decentralization was understood in its multiple dimensions as a tool associated with the transformation and reform of the State; as a mechanism capable of boosting intergovernmental relations; as a promoter of popular participation in government bodies and as a solution to problems arising from the absence of State action in specific sectors (CRAVEIRO; ESTEVINHO, 2021, p. 12).

In relation to the exclusive services of the State, cited by Bresser-Pereira (1997), Paula (2005, p. 07) states that there is a strategic nucleus that follows the Master Plan and that concentrates the elaboration and evaluation of public policies, taking charge of their implementation in institutions of a decentralizing nature of indirect administration, such as autarchies and public foundations. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that there are authors who are against or minimally analysts of the idea of decentralization of power, but who in a certain way do not go against one of the basic principles of decentralization, which refers to a more shared public management.

Peres (2021), for example, through the results obtained in his research, observed that the "decentralizing and participatory character is always explicitly presented as an interest of the State". This is due, according to the author, to the desire to apply the constitutional precepts provided for in the National Environmental Policy and in the State Environmental Policy.

In addition, Santos (2019) points out a gap in research related to the topic. According to the author, the studies are based on specific cases, such as those of municipalities or the behavior of the federal government; not turning, for example, to the expenses affected by decentralization. Another author to point out contradictions in decentralizing management is Dias (2004, p. 91) when referring to the Brazilian Institute of the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA).

Dias (2004) defends the idea that the institution suffered in the first years of its creation some obstacles from administrative discontinuity "caused by the constant change of its heads (IBAMA, in less than three years of creation, had eight presidents) and now suffered clear attacks for its dismantling, disguised as 'decentralization'".

It is common for political agents to use established theories with a certain degree of confidence to justify, at times, incongruous and malicious decisions in their administrations; However, by focusing on the basic principles of decentralization, it is possible to expose tangible benefits for a more democratic and participatory management.

This decentralization of the program is also presented in the considerations of the SMA Resolution, of January 9, 2008, in which the Strategic Environmental Project Green Municipality 50 (PAEMV) is launched, reinforcing the objective of the State to share the control of the quality of the actions of the environmental agenda with the respective municipalities, increasing decentralization and, directly, citizen participation (SÃO PAULO, 2008). This is fundamental from the point of view of public policies and corroborates what had already been discussed, showing the peculiarities inherent to an environmental, educational, or social policy.

Finally, in relation to the execution of the established objectives of a given Program or Project, in a governmental context, accountability is another key point for a good planning and operation of an effective public policy (MATUS, 1991; MELGES, FIGUEIREDO NETO; BENINI, 2021; NERO; GARCIA; ALMASSY, 2022). What is observed in the Green Blue Municipality Program is an integration between the spheres that meet requirements based on technical and financial reports, which allow the higher sphere to identify the correct implementation or not of certain plans and actions.

To schematize the entire process presented, a two-column table was structured, as can be seen below. The first column (on the left) sought to systematize the main aspects pointed out in the work; the second column (on the right) sought to build some correspondence with some of the main points of the PMVA.

Table 1. Aspects of the PMVA

Aspects of the PMVA	
Integration	Directives and criteria that provide for adherence to state government programs and actions: SP without fire. Springs Program. Projects registered in SARE. Provision of municipal employees participating in the Technical Chambers of their respective River Basin Committee
Decentralization	Implementation of the criteria and provision of data and information by the municipalities. Integrated planning between the state and municipal spheres.
Reciprocity	SEMIL's counterparts with the municipalities during the PMVA cycle: Training of interlocutors and alternates. Answers to questions. Provision of technical consultation. Awards.
Alignment	Criteria that provide for alignment between the spheres: The Sanitation Plan is aligned with the goals of the New Regulatory Framework of the Sanitation (Federal Law No. 14,026, of July 15, 2020).

Source: prepared by the authors (2023)

#### 4 CONCLUSION

It is concluded that the VerdeAzul Municipality Program, in fact, has as one of its principles a decentralized management. This Program is presented in a fully articulated and transparent manner with respect to the processes and actions included in the management of the municipalities. In other words, there is a control on the part of SEMIL monitoring the results achieved (objectives and goals) by the municipalities of São Paulo that voluntarily adhered to the PMVA but, on the other hand, the benefits achieved by the municipalities are pre-established and offered automatically, integrating the actions. In this sense, it is possible to understand that decentralization, in this case, has a bidirectional sense, that is, it allows the exchange and interaction of the State with the Municipalities and of the Municipalities with the State.

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