

On the margins of the route: discourses on development in journalistic coverage of the RILA

Às margens da rota: discursos sobre o desenvolvimento na cobertura jornalística da RILA

En los márgenes de ruta: discursos sobre desarrollo en la cobertura periodística de la RILA

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Abstract: Large infrastructure projects are often presented and justified as strategies for development. However, many of the results experienced directly by those affected by these projects in their daily lives are different from the previously defined objectives. Starting from the idea of development as a consistent, desired and promoted process of social and economic transformations towards progress and modernity, we seek to identify, from the news about the Latin American Integration Route (RILA), the meanings and ideas expressed about development linked to the project and implementation of the Bioceanic Route. This work, therefore, aims to reflect on the discursive aspects implicit in the RILA project and its implementation based on the analysis of forty-nine reports published on the G1 portal about its implementation between 08/23/2017 and 06/04/2023. The analysis allows us to infer that RILA is not treated as a broader national development project by the Brazilian government that involves, in addition to diplomatic, productive and infrastructure aspects, also social, cultural, environmental and legal aspects while economic agents interested in the realization of the project act directly in the project and design of practices and strategies to be adopted to promote development.

Keywords: critical development studies; Latin American Integration Route (RILA); critical discourse analysis.

Resumo: Grandes projetos de infraestrutura são frequentemente apresentados e justificados como estratégias para o desenvolvimento. Entretanto, muitos dos resultados experienciados diretamente pelos afetados por estes projetos em seus cotidianos são diferentes dos objetivos previamente definidos. Partindo da ideia de desenvolvimento como um processo consistente, desejado e promovido de transformações sociais e econômicas em direção a ao progresso e à modernidade, buscamos identificar, a partir do noticiário sobre a Rota de Integração Latino Americana (RILA), os significados e ideias expressos sobre o desenvolvimento vinculados ao projeto e implantação da Rota Bioceânica. Este trabalho, portanto, tem como objetivo refletir sobre os aspectos discursivos implícitos ao projeto da RILA e a sua implantação a partir da análise de quarenta e nove reportagens veiculadas no portal G1 sobre a sua implementação publicados no período entre 23/08/2017 e 04/06/2023. A análise permite inferir que a RILA não é tratada como um projeto nacional de desenvolvimento mais amplo pelo governo Brasileiro que envolve além dos aspectos diplomáticos, produtivos e de infraestrutura também aspectos sociais, culturais, ambientais e legais enquanto agentes econômicos interessados na concretização do projeto atuam diretamente no projeto e desenho das práticas e estratégias a serem adotadas para promover o desenvolvimento.

Palavras-chave: estudos críticos do desenvolvimento; Rota de Integração Latino Americana (RILA); análise crítica do discurso.

Resumen: Los grandes proyectos de infraestructuras suelen presentarse y justificarse como estrategias de desarrollo. Sin embargo, muchos de los resultados experimentados directamente por los afectados por estos proyectos en su vida cotidiana difieren de los objetivos previamente definidos. Partiendo de la idea de desarrollo como un proceso consistente, deseado y promovido de transformaciones sociales y económicas hacia el progreso y la modernidad, buscamos identificar, a partir de las noticias sobre la Ruta de Integración Latinoamericana (RILA), los significados e ideas expresadas sobre el desarrollo vinculadas al proyecto e implementación de la Ruta Bioceánica. Este trabajo, por lo tanto, se propone reflexionar sobre los aspectos discursivos implícitos en el proyecto RILA y su implementación a partir del análisis de cuarenta y nueve noticias publicadas en el portal g1 sobre su implementación entre el 23/08/2017 y el 04/06/2023.

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El análisis permite inferir que el RILA no es tratado como un proyecto de desarrollo nacional más amplio por el gobierno brasileño que involucra, además de aspectos diplomáticos, productivos y de infraestructura, también aspectos sociales, culturales, ambientales y legales mientras que los agentes económicos interesados en la realización del proyecto actúan directamente en el proyecto y diseño de prácticas y estrategias a ser adoptadas para promover el desarrollo.

Palabras clave: estudios críticos del desarrollo; Ruta de la Integración Latinoamericana (RILA); análisis crítico del discurso.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Latin American Integration Route (RILA) is part of an economic, productive and logistics integration project between Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina and Chile known as the Bioceanic Road Corridor, which aims to connect the ports of northern Chile to ports in the southern and southeastern Brazilian states through the revitalization, expansion, construction and connection of highways, railroads, bridges and river port terminals. The Corridor is a logistics strategy that aims to integrate the transportation infrastructure of the countries involved and enable the circulation and flow of goods and products between producing regions, ensuring the flow of production through Chilean ports in the Pacific Ocean, and the intensification of foreign trade with Asian countries (Bourlegat, 2019).

The project's achievement comprises, in addition to the networked transport modes, an energy, communication and support services infrastructure that serves the flows of goods, products and people along the Corridor. It is expected that the corridor formed by the transport infrastructure network will play the role of a territorial vector of development and that some cities will function as nodes connecting flows and transport modes, part of a broad system that requires the action of several actors and agents in a multi-scalar and articulated way for its structuring, organization and governance. (Bourlegat, 2019).

The route has been euphorized by propaganda and research, as technical acceleration, financial affordance and political expediency precede perceptions of risks, shortcomings and impacts when it comes to mega-developments. In scientific journals and outreach programs, material celebrating the benefits of large-scale construction and its partnerships is common. The presence of news and critical analysis of its geopolitical and socio-environmental framework, however, is less common. This text starts from the relations of knowledge and discourse production to highlight some gaps, not so much in the enterprise, but in the discourses with which it is attempted to legitimize it.

Although seemingly uncomfortable, critical analysis can be useful for civil society interested in and affected by the project, as well as managers seeking a state and long-term vision, and the scientific community.

2 LATIN AMERICAN INTEGRATION: A PATHWAY TO THE ROUTE

The idea of a transcontinental route through South America, connecting the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic, dates back to pre-Columbian times. The original peoples traveled along the Peabiru Way, formed by trails of approximately 3000 km that connected indigenous settlements. They had been reported to European conquerors at the beginning of the colonization of the continent. The colonizing occupation of these territories promoted territorial transformations leading almost to the destruction of the path, leaving only traces of its existence (Colavite; Barros, 2009).

Since the beginning of the conquest and occupation of the continent, the interest in exploiting natural resources, especially precious metals, required the search for roads and connections that would allow these resources to be accessed and transported to the colonial metropolis. The process of internalization of the occupation of the continent was marked by major territorial transformations and changes in the ways of life of the original peoples, constituting "the first movement of integration of the new world into the international economic system" (Costa, 2011, p. 36). Thus, the constitution of national territories in Latin America led to a great interregional heterogeneity determined by the attributes of their economic production and the natural resources available for exploitation, by the regional and international division of labor and by the forms of association and articulation between local, regional and international economies.

Even after the break-up of colonial relations, Latin American nations maintained their position of complementarity and subaltern adaptation to the framework of the international division of labor. Hence, inequalities and heterogeneity were reproduced in territories that were organized in a discontinuous manner, concentrating infrastructures, dynamic productive activities and population at specific points of the urban networks that were formed in these regions (Costa, 2011). Communication by land with the central regions of the subcontinent was precarious until the beginning of the 20th Century. The ports of Corumbá and Porto Murtinho (Brazil's borders with Bolivia and Paraguay), in the south of the former state of Mato Grosso, drained the region's production for export through the La Plata River Basin while also receiving and redistributing imported industrialized products until the implementation of the Noroeste do Brasil Railway, which would connect the municipality of Santos, in São Paulo, to Corumbá, enabling later connections with cities in Bolivia, Peru and Paraguay (Silva, 2022).

In the 1960s, the South American countries integration gained importance in the context of the debates of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), which investigated economic and development alternatives for Latin American countries to strengthen "the region's economic ties due to the problems arising from the international division of labor and the extreme dependence of these countries on the economies of Europe and the United States of America" (Silva, 2022, p. 246).

In 1960, the commission promoted the creation of the Latin American Free Trade Association (ALALC), later called the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI), with the representation of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay, aiming to stimulate trade in the region and the production and export of manufactured and higher value-added products among the countries of the region. In the following decades, efforts were taken to promote the establishment of transportation routes and infrastructures for the integration of these markets and development funds to finance infrastructure projects were established such as the Financial Fund for the Development of the La Plata Basin (FONPLATA) and the Andean Development Corporation (CAF) (Silva, 2022, p. 246).

The redemocratization process of the South American countries during the 1980s enabled more complex and extensive negotiations and agreements with the aim of integrating the region physically and commercially until the consolidation of Mercosur (Southern Common Market). The member countries attempted to expand their participation in the world market, strengthening the "regional economic process of integration through the elimination of barrier tariffs in trade between member countries; creating of a common external tariff; free trade and services; free movement of labor and free movement of capital and people" (Silva, 2022, p. 250).

At the end of the 1980s, a set of recommendations based on neoliberal ideas inspired by the governments of Margaret Thatcher in the UK and Ronald Reagan in the US have occupied global economic debates. The neoliberal ideology has overcome the prevailing perspectives since the end of World War II, which foresaw the engagement of States in the planning and organization of the economic and productive activities of nations, shifting to the market and its agents the role of arbiters of development (Peet; Hartwick, 2015).

In 1989, the so-called Washington Consensus applied these liberal measures and recommendations to Latin American countries, such as reduction and control of public expenditure, fiscal austerity policies, reduction of subsidies, tax reform for tax reduction, liberalization and deregulation of the economy, free formation of interest rates, privatizations of state-owned enterprises, introduction of floating exchange rates, reduction of export and import restrictions and tariffs, and stimulation of free trade. These measures intended to constrain the crisis of external indebtedness and hyperinflation resulting from developmentalist policies undertaken by Latin American governments in the 1950s to 1970s (Batista, 2009; Costa, 2011).

The Consensus was based on the idea that the "volume of international trade, not only commercial, but also economic transactions; is directly responsible for increasing national welfare and prosperity" (Costa, 2011, p. 39). However, the sovereignty of the market as a regulator of the economy has resulted in a decrease in the state's participation in development policies and strategies, which have been controlled by market competition and by individuals who define the allocation of productive resources and control development (Peet; Hartwick, 2015). The reduction of the State and the corrosion of the concept of Nation, the maximum openness to the import of goods and services and the entry of risk capital prescribed by the Consensus, had modest positive results and limited to monetary stabilization and fiscal balance. Unable to reduce poverty and inequality in the region, it left high unemployment rates, deindustrialization and social tensions (Batista, 2009).

As a result of this context, the First Meeting of South American Presidents was held in Brasilia in 2000. The meeting, chaired by Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, was attended by eleven Latin American presidents and representatives of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Andean Development Corporation (CAF). On that occasion, the Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA), a multinational plan that proposed a common agenda based on issues related to integration infrastructure, democracy, trade, combating drugs and crimes, information, knowledge and technology, was launched (Costa, 2011).

Cooperation among the signatory countries, however, was more intense in the areas of transportation, energy and communications, both in political and technical and economic aspects with the support of financial development agencies such as the IDB, CAF and FONPLATA (IIRSA, 2011). The IIRSA's main purpose was to organize a multimodal transport structure, a vast network for the production and distribution of electricity, gas, naphtha and minerals, as well as the constitution of a convergent telecommunications apparatus in South America with means to overcome the obstacles that limit the capital accumulation due to the restriction of external competitiveness parameters, especially the logistical efficiency of production for export (Costa, 2011).

It appears that the integration project was based on a neo-liberal vision that endorsed the promotion of "trade" as an instrument or strategy for progress. The underlying objective

of the plan, however, was to create "conditions for the capitalist appropriation of new natural resources, increase the economic efficiency of ecological exploitation (of biodiversity, forestry, geological elements etc.) and create large-scale markets on the continent through logistical and institutional approximation between the most dynamic regions" (Costa, 2011, p. 50).

IIRSA was structured in ten integration and development axes (EID) that, together, intended to give coherence to an ordering of the South American territory through the creation of circulation corridors and logistics systems capable of connecting the markets of the main metropolitan centers and inland regions of the continent, and ports in the Pacific and Atlantic oceans; enhancing and expanding the scales of operation and reducing the costs of exploitation and production of commodities through more economical logistics and transport systems (Costa, 2011).

In 2004, at the VI Meeting of IIRSA's Executive Steering Committee (CDE) in Lima, a Consensus Implementation Agenda was approved for the period 2005-2010, proposing 31 projects considered to be priorities and to have a major impact on the region's physical integration process. The priority of the projects was defined "according to the interest of private investments in association with the public sector" (Bueno; Oliveira, 2015, p. 125). The Agenda included projects related to physical infrastructure for transportation (roads, ports, waterways etc.), energy (pipelines, gas pipelines, electricity grids), communications and logistics (transportation, freight and insurance). The Agenda would have resources from the National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Andean Development Corporation (CAF) and the Financial Fund for the Development of the River Plate Basin (Fonplata) (Bueno; Oliveira, 2015; Silva, 2022).

The regional integration process, and especially the regional infrastructure integration, was strengthened through the creation of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) in 2008. Infrastructure continued to be a structuring premise of integration initiatives, even after 2009, with the creation of the Council for Infrastructure and Planning (COSIPLAN), which replaced the IIRSA Executive Steering Committee (Bueno; Oliveira, 2015; Silva, 2022).

The new Council intended to "provide greater institutionalization and political support to the activities developed in terms of infrastructure and within the scope of the priority projects already outlined" (Bueno; Oliveira, 2015). From 2004 to 2013 there were many approaches, discussions, debates, studies and meetings between actors linked to local and national governments involved in projects related to the corridor, but few concrete and articulated actions. However, in civil society the subject did not achieve density, confounded with political proselytizing that disqualified the idea of a logistics corridor towards Chilean port (Silva, 2022). Whereas an important change in the global economic context with effects on the region has been unfolded during the 2000s. Between 2005 and 2010, China became the world's largest exporter and second largest importer, behind the USA. As a consequence, mining industries and agribusiness expanded throughout the developing world, countering the developmentalist policies that had prevailed in the region since the post-war period, which favoured industrialization and reducing dependence on natural resource exports (Medeiros; Cintra, 2015; Hung, 2018).

In the 1970s, the Chinese economy began a transformation process of its economic development model, oriented by exports of industrialized products, thus connecting to the global order of free trade and the social division of labour. The growth of the economy, in addition to accelerated industrialization and urbanization, raised domestic consumption, increasing

the demand for imports of commodities such as soybeans and metals, boosting the export of raw materials from other developing countries, while its low-cost industrial sector gained in competitiveness (Hung, 2018).

Economic growth and China's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 and the subsequent crisis of 2008 have redesigned the organization of global and foreign trade with direct impacts on South American economies, leading to a reorganization of productive sectors. China has become the main destination of exports and origin of imports from these countries (Hung, 2018).

The horizon of business opportunities represented by the Chinese and Asian markets encouraged a group of entrepreneurs from the Brazilian logistics sector to organize a caravan in 2013, aiming to prospect alternative routes to Chilean ports and easier connections to the Asian market. The caravan also included businessmen from other sectors, politicians, diplomats and journalists (Silva, 2022). The organization was in charge of the Union of Cargo Transport and Logistics Companies (SETLOG-MS) and departed from the city of Campo Grande (MS) towards Corumbá, crossing Bolivia from Santa Cruz de La Sierra, to the port cities of Arica and Iquique in Chile. Its return route was through Paraguay, with customs bureaucracy and legislation apparently more conducive to international trade (Silva, 2022).

At the end of 2013, the project of a highway corridor returned to discussion agenda of the entrepreneurs of Mato Grosso do Sul. The Federation of Industries of Mato Grosso do Sul (FIEMS) then presented a document developed by the National Confederation of Industry (CNI) in partnership with the state federations, called "Competitive Midwest Project" whose objective was "to elaborate the strategic planning of the transportation and logistics infrastructure of the Midwest Region" (CNI, 2013, p. 5).

The document "Competitive Midwest Project" analyzed the conditions of the freight transportation infrastructure of the Brazilian Midwest and alternative strategies to make the Logistics Systems more competitive and transform them into Integrated Development Axes based on investments in energy, telecommunications and human capital, leading to the physical and economic integration of the states of the region and South American countries (CNI, 2013). The idea of a logistics corridor passing through the state of Mato Grosso do Sul awakened the debate and strengthened among entrepreneurs, motivating political and diplomatic articulations to make a corridor and necessary infrastructure works feasible.

According to COSIPLAN technicians, the Brazilian and Chilean diplomatic corps began to support the route of the road corridor cross northern Chile, Argentina, Paraguay and southwestern Mato Grosso do Sul, avoiding the bureaucratic and political obstacles identified in Bolivia. The idea gathered momentum among politicians from Mato Grosso do Sul, who began to participate in debates to make the corridor viable.

In December 2015, the Summit of Heads of State of MERCOSUR and Associated States and the XLIX Meeting of the Common Market Council were held in Asuncion, capital of Paraguay. The route of the corridor from Campo Grande towards Porto Murtinho / Carmelo Peralta, on the Brazil / Paraguay border, was then defined, passing through Mariscal Estigarribia and Pozo Hondo in Paraguay; Misión La Paz, Tartagal, Jujuy and Salta, in Argentina; Sico, Jama, Antofagasta, Mejillones and Iquique in Chile and a Working Group of the four countries involved was established, with the aim of preparing technical studies and recommendations for the implementation of the project and the necessary infrastructure.

Regarding the transportation infrastructure, the implementation of the route according to the route established in 2015 depended, in Brazil, on the construction of a bridge connecting Porto Murtinho to Carmelo Peralta and a bypass road that would circumvent the city of Porto Murtinho, streamlining the access of trucks to the bridge and ports; and, in Paraguay, on the construction and paving of the highway that would connect Carmelo Peralta on the border with Brazil to Pozo Honda, on the border with Argentina. In Argentina and Chile, physical and commercial integration of infrastructure had already been underway since the 1990s and part of the obstacles had already been overcome by both countries.

The political instabilities occurred in the period of 2015 and 2016 in Brazil that led to the removal of the then President Dilma Rousseff, as well as the changes that also have taken place in Argentine, Chilean, Paraguayan and Peruvian governments during this period have affected UNASUR and COSIPLAN and the projects led by them, slowing down the work and the accomplishment of the projects (Barros *et al.* 2020; Silva, 2022). In 2017, the Secretary-General of UNASUR left office in protest at the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff. The entity was left without effective command in the following years, lost its headquarters and several member countries left, suspending quota payments for the maintenance of the bloc.

Despite the disarticulation of UNASUR, an organization created for addressing the integration of South America, the Bioceanic Corridor Working Group persisted on a regular basis. Between 2016 and 2022, there were nine meetings, when were addressed issues related to the simplification of customs procedures, facilitation of trade relations, integration of local companies into value chains, promotion of economic and productive integration of the regions, creation of a network of universities with the objective of carrying out studies that can subsidize decisions of stakeholders in the Bioceanic Corridor project, development of logistics centers; design, implementation and monitoring of necessary infrastructure works; and adjustments of technical standards facilitation and connectivity for tourism purposes of the regions (Barros *et al.*, 2020). In 2017, the diplomats of Brazil and Paraguay sent a document to the Brazilian president recommending the further advancement of procedures for the construction of the bridge between Porto Murtinho and Carmelo Peralta. The issue was then discussed in the Brazilian National Congress until its final approval in 2018.

3 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

Based on the assumption that RILA is being designed to promote the development of the countries that have joined forces to carry out the Project and the local territories that border this infrastructure, it is important to reflect on the character of development that guides the project, who takes part in the project and for whom it is intended; and what or who is left on the margins of the process. The conception and elaboration of this type of project can be understood as a form of discourse, with assumptions, statements and conceptions associated with a certain kind of development and its the ideology.

Starting from this point, we consider development as a consistent, desired and promoted process of social and economic transformations towards a certain idealized "progress" that cannot be distinguished from advances in scientific knowledge and human Technologies (Peet; Hartwick, 2015). Based on this fixed premise, we sought to identify, from the news about RILA, the meanings and ideas expressed about development linked to the project and accomplishment of the Bioceanic Route. The research took place on the digital news portal g1, belonging to Grupo

Globo, the largest media and communication conglomerate in Brazil and Latin America and one of the leaders in audience among Brazilian news portals. Local news, related to Brazilian states, are linked to specific sessions on the g1 portal, which bring together both news and journalistic programs broadcasted by local stations affiliated with Rede Globo.

In the MS section of the g1 website, the content is distributed in six menu options, 03 of which are intended for the reproduction of TV Morena's journalistic programs, one for the broadcasting of the latest news, one exclusively for content on the Bioceanic Route and another for matters of interest to agribusiness. Immediately one realizes the importance attributed to these two themes, which are related and intertwined, by the prominence they receive on the portal.

In the Bioceanic Route menu we found 47 reports posted between 08/23/2017 and 06/04/2023. The searches also led us to other 02 reports linked to RILA and not indexed in the Bioceanic Corridor menu. Supported by the critical theories of development, we sought to analyze this material in order to identify the meanings and meanings attributed to the term development mobilized by the theme of the Bioceanic Route, which development project RILA seems to be linked to, what interests, results and actors are involved or excluded from the claim and what arguments and discursive strategies are used to persuade readers of the ongoing project. In order to analyze the collected texts, we were guided by some concepts and procedures of Critical Discourse Analysis (DIJK, 2005).

We started the work with a floating reading of all the material seeking first to extract a global idea about the subject and identify macro-structures or topics that would allow us to classify the material. Then we sought to identify implicit or explicit assumptions, propositions and meanings in the texts, seeking to identify beliefs or ideologies underlying the texts. Throughout the work, we conducted a bibliographical research to contextualize and understand the conditions that "designed" the Latin American integration project expressed by RILA and the temporalities to which the news analyzed related; and to subsidize the analysis of the material from critical perspectives on development.

4 ANALYSIS OF THE COMMUNICATION CONTEXT

G1 is a Brazilian digital news portal maintained by Grupo Globo and under the guidance of Central Globo de Jornalismo. The portal brings together journalistic content produced in real time by several companies of Grupo Globo, by its own newsrooms and TV Globo affiliates and by several national and international news agencies.

The G1 portal also broadcasts local and regional news and journalistic programs produced by its own newsrooms in several Brazilian cities and by Rede Globo affiliates in the states, which, in the case of Mato Grosso do Sul, is TV Morena, a broadcaster of Rede Mato-grossense de Comunicação (RMC), belonging to Grupo Zahran, a business group from Mato Grosso do Sul, with media and entertainment companies and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) distribution companies, operating in 24 Brazilian states. RMC was born in Campo Grande in the 1960s and is composed of Rede Globo affiliates in Campo Grande, Corumbá and Ponta Porã in MS and in Cuiabá, Rondonópolis, Sinop and Tangará da Serra in MT, as well as six radio stations and two regional news websites.

The content related to the states is gathered in specific sessions for each state, as is the case of g1 Mato Grosso do Sul. In the Mato Grosso do Sul section of the g1 website, the content

is distributed in six menu options, 03 of them reproducing journalistic programs of TV Morena, one broadcasting more recent news, one with exclusive content on the Bioceanic Route and another with subjects of interest to agribusiness. The importance attributed to these two themes, which are related and interconnected, is easily perceived due to the highlight they receive on the portal². Among the set of analyzed reports (49, 47 in the "Bioceanic Corridor" menu and 02 not indexed), 37 are signed by journalist Anderson Viegas, editor-in-chief of the g1 portal since 2019 and active in covering the agribusiness sector, which is overly interested in the achievement of RILA. Among the remaining set, 07 are produced by the portal's newsroom, 01 by the TV Morena newsroom. The others are signed by other journalists.

The analyzed reports have generally an apparent expository and informative character and aim to inform about the possibility of implementing RILA. However, at the same time that they intend to create a favorable opinion on the subject, highlighting its positive aspects, they also intend to persuade the reader to support the project and to defend the demands necessary to overcome the supposed Rila's "bottlenecks", as its achievement obstacles are repeatedly mentioned, and the development constraints encountered during its achievement process.

In order to justify and support the arguments in favor of the corridor, journalists reproduce speeches from people directly or indirectly involved and interested in its implementation. On the Paraguayan side, the Ministry of Public Works and Communications (MPOC) is often mentioned, while on the Brazilian side there are many mentions of the National Department of Transport Infrastructure (DNIT). Paraguayan President Mario Abdo Benítez (in office since August 2018 to date), and Brazilian Presidents Michel Temer (from 2016 to 2018) and Jair Bolsonaro (mandate from 2019 to 2022) are mentioned only in reference to protocols such as signatures, homologation or ratification of agreements and treaties between the two countries.

Despite the complexity of factors concerning the project attainment and the organizational structure of the Brazilian federal government in the period from 2017 to 2018, only the Minister of the diplomatic career of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, João Carlos Parkinson de Castro and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Brazil in the period from 2021 to 2022, Carlos França, were quoted. There are also mentions of the Minister of the Secretariat of Government of the Presidency of the Republic, Carlos Marun (2016-2018) and the Ambassador of Paraguay in Brazil, Juan Ángel Delgadillo.

At local government level, the portal's reports have frequently mentioned the mayors of Porto Murtinho Derlei Delevatti (2016-2020) and Nelson Ribeiro (2021-2024). At state level,

² It is also important to note that both Rede Globo and its local affiliate in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul have been running the "Agro é tech, agro é pop, agro é tudo" advertising campaign since 2016, an initiative that refers to Brazilian agribusiness and defends its political and economic interests, seeking to create a positive and modern image of the sector and an imaginary in which agribusiness is associated with progress and job creation in Brazil. This campaign "hides information from consumers/viewers about how and by whom the various agricultural products that reach the tables of the population are actually produced and, above all, about the other socio-productive relationships that exist beyond the rural as a productive space" and the agribusiness sector is presented as "primarily responsible for ensuring the country's employability and food security" (Santos; Silva; Maciel, 2019, p. 57), eclipsing the participation of small family-based producers, most of the labor in the field, in food production. Another campaign promoted by the broadcaster since 2020 is the "Let's Activate Entrepreneurship (VAE)", which aims to encourage entrepreneurship, legitimizing liberal ideas that have populated the Brazilian public debate since the mid-2010s. The campaign began in a scenario of economic crisis resulting from the political crisis of 2015-2016, with deterioration in employment and income conditions, inflation, increased unemployment, precariousness and informality, enhanced by the health crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic; and intended to motivate entrepreneurship among Brazilians as a response to the crisis and the ineptitude of the state in the face of it (Fernandes; Mattos, 2023).

there are mentions of Reinaldo Azambuja, governor of Mato Grosso do Sul from 2014 to 2022, and Jaime Verruck, who was successively Corporate Director of FIEMS, Secretary of Economic Development and Environment from 2015 to 2022 and, Secretary of State for Environment, Development, Science, Technology and Innovation (SEMADESC), from 2023 to the present and represents an important link between the productive sector of Mato Grosso do Sul and the state government. There are also mentions of the Secretary of Infrastructure of Mato Grosso do Sul from 2015 to 2018, road works entrepreneur, Marcelo Miglioli, and the Secretary of Government and Strategic Management from 2021-2022, real estate and construction entrepreneur, Sérgio Murilo.

A relevant character who runs outside the public administration but is very active in RILA's discussions is the businessman Claudio Cavol, president of Três Américas Logística e Transporte, a logistics company based in Campo Grande (MS), with branches in four states, and also president of SETLOG-MS, i.e., spokesman for the interests of his class and the productive sector. He was also a candidate for state deputy in 2018, defending liberal proposals to "reduce bureaucracy and the tax burden in Mato Grosso do Sul" (A Crítica, 2018) and organized the two expeditions of entrepreneurs to prospect the viability of RILA. Cavol had speeches quoted in almost all the analyzed articles. FIEMS is also cited to reinforce the economic potential of the route.

Speeches of local inhabitants affected by the works are reproduced only in a few moments and are always associated with entrepreneurship and the ability of some to envision potentialities and opportunities derived from the arrival of RILA. Sociocultural aspects of the populations of the territories are not directly addressed in the reports and references to local characteristics are made anecdotally: the locations are associated with curiosities, backwardness, disorganization, lack or precariousness.

It is concluded that the reports aim to build a consensus on the importance of RILA in order to transform it into a collective project. However, they give voice to social groups engaged in its accomplishment for their own economic interests and benefit, without making them explicit. Also concealed are broader geopolitical and socio-economic contexts in which different scales of interests and projects are intertwined with the interests of local actors and who act in the conformation of local territories.

Throughout the reports, it becomes clear that the physical infrastructure (roads and the bridge connecting Carmelo Peralta in Paraguay and Porto Murtinho in Brazil) is the most important issue for the establishment of RILA, often seen as synonymous with the route itself. The desired integration between the countries is always approached from the point of view of trade and customs relations between them. Tourism is presented as an additional and secondary potential that could be made possible through physical integration between the countries.

5 RILA FROM 2017 TO 2023 ACCORDING TO THE G1 PORTAL

The milestone that inaugurates the reports indexed on the G1 portal about the Bioceánico Corridor is the expedition of businessmen, authorities and journalists, on the defined route of the corridor, carried out at the end of August 2017, a mobilization to promote the implementation of a transcontinental route connecting the oceans Pacific and Atlantic. The expedition was widely reported, exposing and reinforcing the theme for the general population (Viegas, 2017). From 08/23/2017 to 09/01/2017, 18 articles by Anderson Viegas, designated by the RMC portal to

accompany the expedition, were produced and published on the portal, describing the stages of the route, the mishaps, the negotiations and the conquests made by the expedition that had as its objective.:

Besides verifying the feasibility of the 2,200-kilometer road corridor between Campo Grande, in Mato Grosso do Sul, and Antofagasta, in Chile, it will prospect logistics alternatives related to the use of the port of Iquique, also in Chile, and its members will also participate in a meeting with the Paraguayan government, to sign protocols of intent and discuss the Project (Viegas, 2017).

The expedition's antecedents described above are not exposed to the reader in the articles analyzed. The omission of this context excludes the participation of governments and institutions that worked for at least a decade in the strengthening of relations and formation of international alliances, in the mediation and alignment of interests of those involved and that built the environment and institutional conditions to make it possible to begin the negotiation for the accomplishment of the physical infrastructure of the project.

Such exclusion, combined with the emphasis on the businessmen who organized the expedition, leads to a perception that they are benefactors promoting development and defenders of collective interests, rather than actors defending their own economic benefits. This omission also reveals signs of a liberal view of economic and social relations that is consistent with the Washington Consensus, which "consist in withdrawing state direction and even government intervention in development in favor of the disciplining of economies by market competition and by self-interested individuals "efficiently" choosing between alternatives in the allocation of productive resources" (Peet; Hartwick, 2015, p. 100).

This view contrasted to the economic policies adopted by the Brazilian government in the 2000s, which were based on social values-driven state intervention in economy aiming to promote economic development. The tensions between these perspectives were central to the ouster of then Brazilian President Dilma Rouseff in 2016, in a process that led to the rise of political and economic groups aligned with liberalism. It is conceivable that the omission of the prior context of the 2017 expedition also means the effacement of the actions of the effacement of the deposed government in 2016 in establishing the preconditions for RILA's creation.

From 2018 onwards, the articles published deal with the progress made in the completion of RILA's physical infrastructure and the positive expectations about its economic results. The physical infrastructure, i.e. the road corridor and the bridge linking Carmelo Peralta and Porto Murtinho, are treated as synonymous with integration among Latin American countries.

In 2018, four articles were published on the G1 portal about RILA. This year marked the approval of the construction of the bridge between Porto Murtinho and Carmelo Peralta by the Brazilian Senate (Katayama, 2018), and the subsequent approval of the agreement between Brazil and Paraguay for its construction. To ensure the approval of the bridge, the Paraguayan government reinforced its commitment of paving roads in its territory and contributing to the construction of the binational bridge (Viegas; Rosa, 2018).

The Brazilian and Paraguayan presidents signed an authorization for the construction of this bridge at the end of 2018. This agreement established that the funds for the construction of the bridge would be provided by the Itaipu Binacional institution (Viegas, 2018), and not by national and international development agencies normally involved in projects of this nature, such as BNDES (National Bank for Economic and Social Development), FONPLATA or IDB.

Following a very polarized election in 2018 and the new government's change of direction on international policy, the procedures for launching Rila progressed slowly. In 2019, the portal published five articles on RILA, two of which dealt only with its viability and potential and set out expectations of positive results from its implementation. In July 2019, Itaipu Binacional launched a tender for the feasibility study, final engineering design and supervision of the road construction work between Porto Murtinho and Carmelo Peralta (Viegas, 2019).

The year 2020 was quite atypical due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Brazil and the world suspended or reduced activities in an attempt to reduce the spread of the coronavirus. Only one news item was published on the portal this year, informing about the contracting by the Brazil-Paraguay Joint Commission of a Consortium to carry out a technical, economic and environmental feasibility study, final engineering design, registration and inspection of the construction of the bridge over the Paraguay River in April 2020 and tendered the previous year; and the approval of the hiring of a company to prepare a study and project for a road bypass in Porto Murtinho that would allow access to the bridge between Brazil and Paraguay and the Integrated Border Control Center by the DNIT regional superintendence in Mato Grosso do Sul (G1, 2020).

In 2021 there were three publications about RILA. Two of them reported on progress in the process of establishing the bridge between Porto Murtinho and Carmelo Peralta: one announced the opening of the bidding process for the construction of the bridge (Godoy, 2021) and the other reported on the approval of the bidding process outcome by the Brazil-Paraguay Joint Commission and announced the winner, the Paraguay-Brazil consortium (G1, 2021).

Two news items from December 2021 not indexed by the g1 portal in the Bioceanic Corridor menu mention a ceremony to lay the foundation stone of the bridge that would be attended by Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro in Carmelo Peralta, who, however, was unable to arrive due to weather conditions that prevented the flight that would have taken him to the city. The event was attended by the Paraguayan president, members of parliament and representatives of the Mato Grosso do Sul state government, including the governor; and local Brazilian and Paraguayan politicians (Câmara, 2021).

The year 2022 was dominated by political tensions due to the state and federal elections that took place in October, in a very polarized and conflict-ridden environment. Only two articles about the route were published on the portal this year: the first reported on the Forum "The Integration of the Municipalities of the Bioceanic Corridor" at the Legislative Assembly of Mato Grosso do Sul (Viegas, 2022), in Campo Grande, and the second dealt with the start of construction of the bridge on the Paraguayan side (G1, 2022).

The political changes that took place with the 2022 elections signal a commitment at both state and federal level to completing the infrastructure works in Porto Murtinho (Teles, 2023). The paving of the first section of the road corridor in Paraguay, from Carmelo Peralta to Loma Plata, was completed in 2022 and the other 2 sections are in the course of being contracted and executed (Viegas, 2023).

6 CONCLUSION

An analysis of the articles on the portal suggests that RILA is not treated as a broader national development project by the Brazilian government involving social, cultural, environmental and legal aspects, in addition to diplomatic, production and infrastructure aspects, since there

are no mentions of federal agencies and institutions or their representatives at federal level dealing with issues related to production and economic issues, social and regional development, citizenship, environmental protection or tourism, among others, which are implicit in a multi-scalar integration context such as RILA.

Development is commonly associated with RILA in different articles and by different actors. In the texts, the term, like the corridor itself, evokes the idea of modernity and progress and is associated with an adnominal adjunct that is not expressed, but is implied: "economic development". Integration is inferred as the free movement of people and goods, and RILA is treated as a synonym for the physical infrastructure of the road corridor, but the real implications of the convergence and contact between different peoples, cultures and social, material and territorial realities are not addressed in the reports.

The reiterated use of terms and expressions from the discursive field of economics highlights the centrality of the economic agents interested in achieving it, especially agribusiness and the logistics sector, and their participation in the design of the practices and strategies being adopted to promote development, to detriment of State's participation as a development planner and total dismissal of local populations, other social groups and economic segments.

Possible local impacts of establishing the corridor are omitted or barely mentioned. Environmental and sustainability issues are not addressed, denoting an absence of commitment or alignment with the UN's 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. The emphasis on road transportation even contradicts recent discussions on reducing fossil fuel consumption and carbon emissions as a means of tackling the climate crisis.

Although the reports don't make it explicit, RILA and the Bioceanic Corridor are a manifestation of the neoliberal global order based on free trade and a reduction in state participation in the economic organization of countries, reinforced by discourses that value entrepreneurship and give the market and the individual the role of promoting economic development. They also reflect the global geopolitical changes that have taken place since the first decade of the 21st century with the rise of China on the global stage and which have initiated a new phase in the dispute for international hegemony. Despite the changes and restructuring of the international division of labor, resulting above all from the new position occupied by China, Latin American countries have maintained their peripheral role in international relations, returning to their position as commodity exporters. The growth of the agribusiness sector importance in Brazilian economy is a consequence of this process and the Bioceanic Corridor is presented as a resource to increase the sector's profitability.

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