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## PROGRAMA REGIONALIZAÇÃO DO TURISMO NO TOCANTINS: FRAGILIDADES E DESAFIOS NO PROCESSO DE IMPLEMENTAÇÃO

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### ABSTRACT

The study presents the application of the Tourism Regionalization Program in the State of Tocantins. Throughout its justification, in addition to information from the Ministry of Tourism, reflections are revealed in the literature review on the subject of public policies, placing the role of governance, also, in the context of public tourism policies in Brazil. To carry out this work, the following were applied: literature review; bibliographical research and documentary research, therefore characterized as exploratory and descriptive in nature, using the precepts of qualitative research as a method of data collection and analysis. Data were collected from official websites and complemented with interviews with official tourism bodies. When analyzing the data and information, it appears that there is dissemination of knowledge related to the public policy of regionalization of tourism in municipalities. However, there are many difficulties in implementing the actions necessary for the development of national tourism. And, when this reality is applied to the state of Tocantins, the challenges and weaknesses are more sensitive.

**Keywords:** Public Policies; Tourism; Regionalization of Tourism.

## RESUMO

O estudo apresenta a aplicação do Programa de Regionalização do Turismo no estado do Tocantins. Ao longo de sua fundamentação, além de informações do Ministério do Turismo, são reveladas reflexões presentes na revisão de literatura sobre a temática das políticas públicas, situando o papel da governança também no contexto das políticas públicas de turismo no Brasil. Para a realização deste trabalho, foram aplicadas: revisão de literatura, pesquisa bibliográfica e pesquisa documental, caracterizando-se, portanto, como de cunho exploratório e descritivo, tomando como método de coleta e análise de dados os preceitos da pesquisa qualitativa. Os dados foram coletados em sites oficiais e complementados com entrevistas a órgãos oficiais de turismo. Ao analisar os dados e informações, verifica-se que há disseminação de conhecimento relacionado à política pública de regionalização do turismo nos municípios. Todavia, há muitas dificuldades para a implementação das ações necessárias ao desenvolvimento do turismo nacional. E, quando essa realidade é aplicada ao estado do Tocantins, os desafios e fragilidades se tornam mais sensíveis.

**Palavras-chave:** Políticas Públicas; Turismo; Regionalização do Turismo.

## I - INTRODUCTION

Tourism today appears, in various discourses, as an alternative for the socioeconomic development of communities, and is also regarded as an instrument for the valorization of culture and the preservation of natural resources in the localities where it takes root. As the sector has gained prominence on the global stage, governments have begun to intervene by formulating specific policies for tourism, with the aim of organizing the activity and enabling the sector's growth.

There are many definitions ascribed to the term "policy," which, according to Ham and Hill (1993), suggests a difficulty in treating it as a highly specific and concrete phenomenon. However, after engaging with their discussions on the subject, one is left with the idea that policy represents a course of action or inaction, or a web of complex decisions. According to these authors, this implies several aspects: (i) the existence of a network of complex decisions which, when taken together, in a way define what policy is; (ii) policies change over time, making their conclusion difficult to determine; and (iii) nondecisions must also be analyzed when studying policy.

Since the 1990s, the tourism sector has received increased public investment in projects aimed at improving the infrastructure of tourist regions, training and qualifying the workforce, among other initiatives. With the creation of the Ministry of Tourism in 2003, various macroprograms were



launched to foster tourism development in Brazil. One of these - considered by the Ministry itself to be a cornerstone of tourism policy execution in the country and a reference for all subsequent sector initiatives - is the Tourism Regionalization macroprogram. Introduced in April 2004, this macroprogram proposes a decentralized management model based on the principles of flexibility, coordination, and mobilization, with the goal of internalizing tourism activities and incorporating new destinations into the Brazilian tourism market.

It is observed that, at the state level, the rollout of this program's actions had not been achieving the desired results, with some improvement only after amendments to the governing legislation. It is believed that this shortfall is mainly due to vulnerabilities at the municipal level.

In this context, the present article aims to outline the landscape of Brazil's tourism public policies, with a specific focus on the Tourism Regionalization Program in the State of Tocantins.

This is a descriptive study with a qualitative approach. Initially, a literature review, bibliographic research, and documentary research were conducted using official documents from the Tocantins State Department of Tourism and the Ministry of Tourism, supplemented by empirical observations drawn from informal interviews with stakeholders involved in the program's implementation. The investigation was guided by analytical categories chosen for their alignment with administrative perspectives: conception; weaknesses; and challenges.

## **II - TOURISM AND TOURISM PUBLIC POLICIES IN BRAZIL**

In Brazil, tourism occupies a prominent place on the global stage. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WWTTC) - an organization that brings together the world's leading tourism entrepreneurs - reported that in 2014 the study entitled "Travel & Tourism: Economic Impact," covering data from 184 countries, placed Brazil 6<sup>th</sup> in the tourism ranking, considering various sector indicators: tourism's contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), job creation, foreign exchange generated by international tourists, and public and private investments (Ministry of Tourism, 2014). However, despite this position in the ranking, Brazil ranks 45<sup>th</sup> overall in travel competitiveness, according to the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2021.



Thus, it is crucial to develop sector strategies based on sustainable planning in order to achieve a better international ranking. According to Bissoli (2000, p. 34), the planning process makes it possible “to analyze the tourism activity of a given geographic area,” as well as to diagnose and establish goals, strategies, and guidelines to “promote, coordinate, and integrate tourism into the macroeconomic framework in which it is embedded.” Therefore, tourism planning must be carried out in a systemic manner, addressing the diverse aspects that comprise the tourism system. In this regard, Barretto (2005, p. 41) asserts that “to plan tourism means to plan for all those involved in the phenomenon.” Echoing this idea, Molina (2005, p. 46) observes that “tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors in Brazil and worldwide and, in today’s context, consolidates itself as an alternative activity for promoting the socioeconomic, cultural, and environmental development of the localities where it is carried out.”

Against this backdrop, the number of studies focusing on the importance of tourism public policies for the sector’s potential to drive socioeconomic development has grown, as noted by Santos and Rejowski (2013).

Accordingly, researchers aim to understand how state actions reverberate through tourism activity, striving for better planning and recognizing how urgent and fundamental it is - for the economy and/or the growth of a municipality, region, state, or country - to develop instruments that stimulate tourism. These efforts emphasize partnerships between the state and private-sector stakeholders, considering the entire chain of actors and events involved in the planning, co-participation, and responsibilities tied to implementing tourism public policies.

Since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, debate over social problems has unfolded from various perspectives - social movements, media and public opinion, urban issues, and more. For Capella (2018), conflict lies at the heart of all political activity. Thus, any conflict, when harnessed by political organizations, can expand and transform into a matter of public policy.

It is important to note that current literature on public policy formulation holds that problems are not merely facts or dysfunctions and therefore cannot be reduced to a technical exercise of formal diagnosis and analysis. Recent scholarship shows that problem definition is a central element

of political conflict. Problems are choices made by social groups regarding the various issues circulating in the public arena (Capella, 2018). Consequently, the entire production of public policy is tied to how problems are defined, which in turn arises from actors' perceptions of public problems and the interests at stake.

One role of public policies is to present guidelines which, when translated into actions or programs, establish possible solutions for latent problems across the most varied areas of societal interest (education, culture, economy, security, etc.). According to Aguilar (2012), public policy should be oriented toward achieving objectives of interest and benefit to society as a whole. He further states that such guidelines consist of actions with a dual political and technical dimension, and when both dimensions are articulated, the expected outcomes are achieved. However, when a discrepancy exists between these dimensions, efficiency and efficacy are seldom realized.

In other words, when policy is designed without integrating technical and political aspects, it typically fails to address the genuine needs and interests of society. Therefore, it is essential for governments to commit to transparency and assertiveness in their actions, acting responsibly and with dedication to the public interest. From this perspective, effective citizen participation in defining public policy objectives becomes a necessary condition for ensuring that real problems and societal interests are addressed. Likewise, public-sphere protagonism legitimizes the process.

The conception of public policy as a solution to public problems has been the basis for classifying policies, which, according to Aguilar (2012), can be "distributive," "regulatory," or "redistributive." Policies are considered "distributive" if the problem can be solved by distributing or allocating resources (material, human, financial, in kind, or monetary). Conversely, they are "regulatory" if the problem cannot be resolved unless people's behaviors are regulated through prohibitions or prescriptions and incentives are generated to promote compliance. They are "redistributive" if the problem is structural in nature and encompasses the entire society, so that it cannot be resolved unless there is a redistribution of property, power, and social status across society (Aguilar, 2012).

The definition of public policy is complex and broad. In Souza's view (2006, p. 36), public policy is "a field of knowledge that seeks simultaneously to put government into action and/or analyze that action and, when necessary, propose changes in the direction or course of those actions." For the author, public policies encompass the following elements:

Public policy allows one to distinguish between what the government intends to do and what it actually does. [...] It involves multiple actors and decision-making levels, although it is enacted by the government. [...] It is comprehensive and not limited to laws and rules. [...] It is an intentional action, with objectives to be achieved. [...] While it may yield short-term impacts, it is a long-term policy. [...] It encompasses the processes that follow its decision and proposal—that is, it also entails implementation, execution, and evaluation (Souza, 2006, p. 36).

Ham and Hill (1993), drawing on Wildavsky (1979), clarify that public policy does not refer solely to the policy-making process (decision-making), since, as much as it is a process, it is also its own product. In a similar vein - but this time based on Minoque (1983) - the authors argue that any theory aiming to explain satisfactorily what public policy is must also account for the interrelationships among the State, politics, and society, given the effects public policies provoke on the economy and the community.

Although the debate on Brazil's tourism public policies has been growing, it remains recent and timid when one considers the scale and potential influence of this sector on economic growth and income generation.

Moreover, tourism public policies intersect with the economic, social, cultural, and environmental contexts of localities - particularly in adopting measures to mitigate possible negative impacts arising from tourism activities or from mediating conflicting local interests. According to Vasconcelos and Coriolano (2008),

[...] tourism is one of the newest modes of the accumulation process, producing new geographic configurations and materializing space in contradictory ways through the actions of the State, businesses, residents, and tourists. Understanding this dynamic means grasping the productive relationships of space and the exercise of power by the State, the entrepreneurial classes, and labor in movement and conflict (Vasconcelos & Coriolano, 2008, p. 6).

In this context, it is the State's role to deliberate actions that organize tourism activity, thereby ensuring that benefits accrue principally to the local population. Globally, the State was once a key promoter in tourism sector development—intervening heavily at the outset and gradually stepping back as private

entrepreneurs took on responsibilities, driven by the profits realized. In that scenario, governments acted merely to provide “[...] an enabling environment” for the private sector (Fávero, 2006, p. 36).

In contemporary Brazil, however, this pattern of State action in tourism no longer holds. Today, public-sector involvement in tourism management is characterized by regulatory and supervisory functions. On this point, Cruz (2005, p. 29) notes: [...] given the advance of neoliberal assumptions regarding federal public administration, one no longer observes in Brazilian tourism the State’s ‘participation’ in tourism enterprises as occurred in the past.

It is understood that State intervention remains fundamental for tourism development at the state and municipal levels. Nonetheless, its role should be that of promoter and policy implementer, leaving investment and entrepreneurial functions to the private sector in the subsectors that support and enable tourism activity, thereby energizing and strengthening the tourism market.

A tourism public policy can be understood as a set of intentions, guidelines, and strategies and/or deliberate actions by public authorities aimed at achieving and/or sustaining the full development of tourism activity in a given territory (Brusadin, 2005).

In Brazil, the first governmental initiative conceived as a coherent policy emerged only in 1966, with the creation of the Brazilian Tourism Institute (Embratur), the body tasked with organizing the sector, which established the National Tourism Policy by Decree-Law No. 55/66.

Thus, Embratur led public tourism management throughout the 1980s and 1990s. In this context, from 1990 onward several significant tourism policies were implemented in Brazil: the National Municipalization of Tourism Program (PNMT, 1994–2002); the Northeast Tourism Development Program (PRODETUR/NE, 1992–2013), which later gave rise to PRODETUR NACIONAL (2008); and the Tourism Regionalization Program – Roteiros do Brasil (PRT, 2003–2013).

Across all these policies, one can identify arrangements designed to enhance political and managerial capacity, foster networked work, and value human capital. These themes were addressed to strengthen political and social acceptance, embodied by a new governance model expressed through decentralized implementation structures in which these new institutional arrangements involve diverse segments of society (Endres & Pakman, 2019).



For the purposes of the present study, analyses begin with the year 2003—the year a new direction was established for the sector and tourism attained priority status with the creation of the Ministry of Tourism. On this moment, Beni (2006, p. 28) affirms that “[...] for the first time, the sector has its own ministry, as well as specific structure and budgets.” With this new configuration, the government intended to overcome the previously deficient public-sector performance in tourism and to integrate tourism into the realm of public policy with greater decorum, respectability, and vigor.

Indeed, decentralized management increased community influence over related matters, including the exploitation of tourism resources. Aligned with this model, in 2004 the Ministry of Tourism implemented a new National Tourism Policy, with its principal execution instrument being the Tourism Regionalization Program—the central subject of this investigation.

## 2.1 TOURISM REGIONALIZATION IN BRAZIL

In Brazil, the debate between the public and private spheres over the model of regional tourism development is centered on the perspective of integrated territorial development. Thus, the Ministry of Tourism (Mtur, 2009) endorses the concept of regionalization as a shift from action focused on a single unit to a decentralized, mobilizing public policy. The Ministry of Tourism (Brazil, 2009, p. 81) then states that tourism regionalization should be understood as a proposal aimed at deconcentrating the tourism offer by creating and structuring new destinations in the country’s interior, both for the domestic and international markets.

Beni (2006) contends that regionalization fosters development - through systemic planning - of tourism regions that complement one another and possess the potential to attract visitor flows. Accordingly, the primary objective of tourism regionalization is to jointly develop neighboring municipalities that offer a range of complementary attractions and services.

Regarding regional development, Oliveira (2021) emphasizes the importance of considering social relationships, identity processes, and the economic units established in the region, acknowledging their historical and mutable character in response to political and economic factors.

Regional development unfolds as a process of transforming a locality's structure at the subnational level, involving improvements in quality of life, progress and valorization of the local population and their culture, positive economic outcomes for the region, and mitigation of socio-environmental issues. Territorial governance enables this type of development by placing local actors at the forefront of the process; however, it requires the joint and consensual construction of: (a) a territorial development strategy and its corresponding management; (b) efficient mechanisms for convening social actors capable of forging minimal consensus; and (c) a forward-looking vision of the future scenario (Dallabrida, 2007).

## 2.2 THE TOURISM REGIONALIZATION MACROPROGRAM

In Brazil, one of the key measures to consolidate democracy was the Federal Constitution's adoption of participatory and decentralized management, which incorporated and legitimized citizen participation in public administration and redesigned national public policies. Parallel to this, federal tourism management adopted a decentralized model anchored in municipalities. Adhering to the Constitution's guidelines, Brazilian tourism advanced by embedding principles of participation and decentralization into its policy framework. The first major initiative was the National Municipalization of Tourism Program, which was discontinued in the late 1990s.

From 2003 onward, the creation of the Ministry of Tourism - built on decentralizing principles - marked a new era for Brazilian tourism management. This model took shape through the Tourism Regionalization Program, which appointed, for each Federative Unit, a state-level interlocutor (a technician indicated by the official tourism body), thus forming the National Regionalization Network composed of tourism stakeholders. Under this structure, Mtur launched the Regionalization Program - "Roteiros do Brasil" - guided by the orientations set out in the National Tourism Plan (PNT), which offered a new vision for tourism development via decentralized management (Brazil, 2009, p. 82).

Consequently, the regional development model solidified as a strategy to structure tourism activity in Brazil. Its objectives were to "articulate national and regional bodies and instances and promote cooperation and interaction with federal, state, and municipal administration bodies," in order to "decentralize tourism management and ensure the political-operational participation" of tourism regions (Mtur, 2013).



Years later, during the drafting of the National Tourism Plan (PNT) 2007–2010, it was observed that the management model based on regionalization - “incorporating the notion of territory and productive arrangements - became the structuring axis of the Plan’s macroprograms” (Brazil, 2009, p. 81). Thus, the Tourism Regionalization Macroprogram became one of the eight macroprograms proposed by PNT 2007–2010, defining tourism regions as strategic units for planning and management.

To ensure this policy was effectively implemented and that all macroprograms were put into practice, the Public Power - through the Ministry of Tourism - began investing in and fostering the organization and structuring of existing tourist circuits in Brazil under the concept of “tourist itineraries.” These circuits, designated within the Macroprogram as Regional Governance Instances, took the form of associations and today are responsible for adapting the national policy to each region’s characteristics and needs, as well as structuring, promoting, and marketing local products and services in a sustainable and integrated manner.

According to the Ministry of Tourism (2013, p. 10), the National Regionalization Network aimed to “[...] promote the necessary articulations for structuring tourist destinations and disseminate, in the regions and municipalities of the State, the guidelines and strategies under the new framework.” Consequently, regional governance instances were established to ensure the decentralization of actions.

Since the launch of the Tourism Regionalization Program (PRT) in 2004, Brazilian tourism has seen significant advances, with regionalization regarded as the best approach to fostering tourism development in Brazil—respecting the territorial, social, and economic particularities of those involved in its implementation.

Governance literature explores configurations of relations among government, the private sector, and civil society organizations in public policy contexts based on three general paradigms: hierarchy, market, and network. The “hierarchy” paradigm relies on integration and coordination through authority, laws, and organizational structures (high formalization/routinization, low flexibility and creativity). The “market” paradigm assumes interactions are governed by contractual exchanges, employing monetary incentives and cost–benefit analyses to foster flexibility and competition. The “network” paradigm posits that actor relationships are characterized by interdependence, trust, shared identity, reciprocity, and common values or objectives (high flexibility and solidarity, but lower sustainability).



Although distinct, these three principles co-exist in practice within organizations and among them. Increasingly, debates highlight a shift from arrangements focused solely on hierarchical state structures toward more decentralized frameworks involving multiple actors and effective articulation mechanisms. Within this context, the importance of public “policy arrangements” stands out - understood as the set of formal and informal rules and processes that define how actors and interests interact in implementing a specific public policy.

When we speak of a public policy arrangement, we are essentially drawing attention to the governance model implicit in its execution. An implementation arrangement defines who the actors involved are, establishes each actor’s role, and specifies how they interact in producing a given action, plan, or governmental program. In this way, the arrangement is precisely the “space” where decisions and actions of government bureaucracies intertwine with the decisions and actions of political and social actors, resulting in either stalemates and obstacles or learning and innovation in public policies (Gomide & Pires, 2018, p. 26).

Thus, these arrangements set a specific configuration for articulating the actors involved, contributing - or not - to the production and maintenance of the collective action necessary to carry out government policies.

In line with Gomide and Pires’s thinking, Dallabrida (2007) argues that initiatives or actions by a territorially organized society to manage public affairs -through the joint and cooperative involvement of social, economic, and institutional actors - constitute governance arrangements of a democratic nature, encompassing mechanisms for participation, consensus-building, and civil-society engagement in territorial development.

Converging with Ostrom’s (1990) advocacy for institutionalizing local policies as a result of the participation and integration of diverse actors working in specific contexts - on the basis of reciprocity rather than exogenous imposition - Lima (2021) notes that governance mechanisms should guide the political construction processes of policies so as genuinely to enable endogenous initiative within decision-making structures and processes, providing voice, strategy, and tactics to realize the local vision of development. Those mechanisms unfold across dimensions of participation, consensuality, and mixed management - the latter representing the tactical ordering of collective action, observable in coordination and integration instruments that encompass task-sharing and prerogatives.

Tourism governance constitutes an integrated management model within social relations, whereby various actors actively participate in decision-making in a concerted fashion, aiming to



implement the Analytical Model of Regional Tourism Governance. Accordingly, by accepting the pre-established agreements in statutes, regulations, laws, or decrees of the Regional Governance Instances, actors enable deeper engagement with the partnerships formed, integrating and cooperating fully, and committing themselves to discuss and execute whatever the governance bodies propose through their management models.

Regional tourism governance takes place within a space in which cities (municipalities and districts) recognize one another through complementary or interrelated tourism activities, employing both public and private administration to advance governance in support of the social and economic development of those cities (Conceição, 2020).

Regarding tourism governance instances in Brazil, the Tourism Regionalization Program - Roteiros do Brasil - defines an organizational structure involving public authorities and private-sector actors from the municipalities comprising each tourism region, tasked with coordinating the Program at the regional level to foster activity development and integrate that region into the national landscape. Indeed, the governance instance also executes planning and organizes guidelines for tourism development in a given region. The Tourism Regionalization Program proposes the following as possible regional governance instances: regional associations, regional councils, regional tourism chambers, tourism forums, tourism committees, and intermunicipal tourism consortiums (Melo, 2022).

Oliveira (2022) argues that the definition of a governance model depends on its application context. Drawing on Hall's (2011) classification, four models emerge: the hierarchical model (democratic administration involving public and private actors); the community model (participatory and autonomous management); the network model (characterized by interaction between public and private powers); and the market model (involving articulation of private actors).

The primary function of regional tourism governance is to act cohesively on behalf of its region, with actors cooperating and undertaking joint, transparent actions to improve and develop their territories. However, because actors may have their own interests, it is essential they understand that governance demonstrates tourism as a collective enterprise - presenting solutions and information that show how joint action can yield significant benefits for both shared and individual interests (Conceição, 2020, p. 125).

For Endres and Pakman (2019), the network built by the new arrangements proposed under the national programs is the environment in which institutional changes materialize. Thus, the spaces provided by committees, forums, councils, and management groups—by virtue of this decentralized structure and participatory practice—can make interactions among the State, the market, and civil society more efficient in promoting tourism development in the country.

### **3. THE TOURISM REGIONALIZATION PROGRAM IN TOCANTINS: WEAKNESSES AND CHALLENGES IN LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION**

With significant grain production and a leading role in agribusiness in Brazil's Central-North region, the State of Tocantins views tourism as a driver of sustainable socioeconomic development, given its wealth of natural and cultural resources.

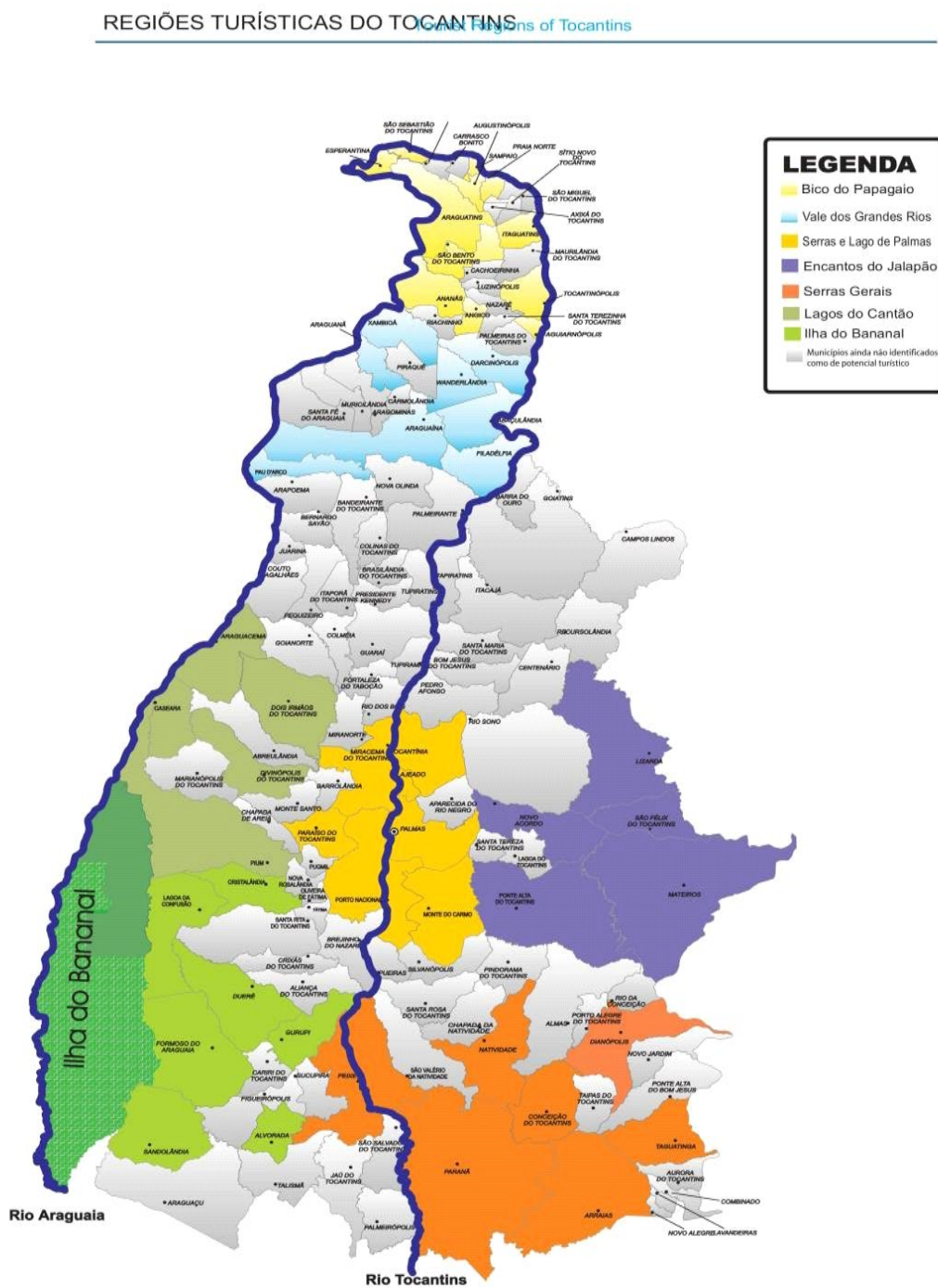
Positioning Tocantins's tourism governance within the broader context of Brazil's tourism public policies, research with the state's official tourism bodies shows that, until 2018, planning, development, and management directives were the responsibility of ADETUR (the Tourism Development Agency) linked to the State Secretariat of Economic Development, Science, Technology, Tourism, and Culture.

In 2019, ADETUC - the Agency for the Development of Tourism, Culture, and Creative Economy - was created under the same Secretariat, charged with strategic tourism planning and management for the state.

Actions under the Tourism Regionalization Program in Tocantins began in 2013, while ADTUR was still in charge. At that time, the Integrated Sustainable Tourism Development Plan (PDITS) for the state's tourism hubs was also initiated. It is important to note that PDITS serves as an instrument to guide tourism development in a strategic, integrated, and sustainable way. Under a hub-based methodology, PDITS became a prerequisite for requesting and approving Program Development funding. The Tourism Map - established by Mtur Ordinance No. 313 of December 3, 2013, and its subsequent updates - serves as an ordering instrument to aid in the formulation of tourism public policies within the National Tourism Regionalization Program (PNRT), defining the territorial scope that the Ministry should prioritize. Accordingly, Tocantins was divided into seven cataloged tourism regions: (1) Encantos do Jalapão; (2) Serras e Lago; (3) Praias e Lagos do Cantão; (4) Bico do Papagaio; (5) Ilha do Bananal; (6) Serras Gerais; (7) Vale dos Grandes Rios (Setur, 2023).



**Figure 1** | Tourist Regions of Tocantins





With the implementation of Mtur Ordinance No. 41 of November 24, 2021, states were granted the freedom to create and adapt complementary criteria according to local realities. Consequently, the Tocantins government issued Ordinance No. 336/2021/GABPRES/ADETUC on December 17, 2021, establishing these additional criteria so that municipalities and tourism regions could be included in the 2022 update of the Brazilian Tourism Map. They are:

- I. Submit the Term of Office for the person responsible for tourism;
- II. Present a Municipal Tourism Plan and/or the annual Work Plan of the municipal tourism body, approved by the Municipal Tourism Council, with strategic actions aligned to the municipality's priority needs;
- III. Have at least two registered and regular tourism service providers—one of which must be lodging—on CADASTUR, the Tourist Service Provider Registry;
- IV. Possess a tourism inventory meeting the criteria of the Integrated Tourism Platform (PIT) and validated by ADETUC;
- V. Submit a Term of Commitment, signed by the Mayor and using ADETUC's template, pledging to share tourism-related data and information with the Tocantins Tourism Observatory (Setur, 2023).

Based on these criteria, the new map of Tocantins was defined:

- a. Bico do Papagaio (3 municipalities): Itaguatins, Praia Norte, Araguatins
- b. Encantos do Jalapão (4 municipalities): Ponte Alta do Tocantins, São Félix do Tocantins, Lizarda, Novo Acordo.
- c. Ilha do Bananal (5 municipalities): Sandolândia, Formoso do Araguaia, Peixe, Gurupi, Lagoa da Confusão.
- d. Serras Gerais (8 municipalities): Lavandeira, Novo Jardim, Porto Alegre do Tocantins, Dianópolis, Paranã, Aurora do Tocantins, Arraias, Rio da Conceição.
- e. Serras e Lago (6 municipalities): Palmas, Lajeado, Paraíso do Tocantins, Porto Nacional, Miracema do Tocantins, Tocantínia.
- f. Vale dos Grandes Rios (4 municipalities): Araguanã, Babaçulândia, Juarina, Filadélfia.
- g. Lagos e Praias do Cantão (3 municipalities): Pium, Araguacema, Caseara.





On one hand, the decentralization process driven by the Tourism Regionalization Program empowered local governments with greater autonomy and encouraged not only public authorities but also local populations to engage in tourism management via Municipal Tourism Councils.

Thus, although the strategies and directives of the National Tourism Policy underscore the importance of the local level, it is necessary to strengthen the institutional and technical capacity of the bodies responsible for municipal tourism management in Tocantins. The role of the public sector and the political will of local governments - despite their limitations - remain fundamental in tourism development, especially when it embraces the role of a democratic State responsible for formulating and implementing policies for the sector, while decentralizing its responsibilities among the other stakeholders involved.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research sought to explore the essential aspects involved in the public-policy-making process, using as a case study the implementation of the Tourism Regionalization Program in Tocantins, as well as the manner in which such policies enter the public agenda - highlighting “a study of policy formulation,” in which attention is focused on the policy-formulation phase, according to Ham and Hill’s (1993) classification.

The program under analysis succeeded the National Municipalization of Tourism Program (PNMT), which emphasized citizenship and was conceived during President Fernando Henrique Cardoso’s second term (1995–2003), and PRODETUR, whose principal focus was investment in infrastructure projects (access roads, basic sanitation, airport improvements). The Regionalization Program one of the macroprograms of the National Tourism Plan (“A Journey of Inclusion,” 2003–2007) - employed a methodology of identifying the municipalities comprising each tourism region and then training the relevant local actors.

The governance model adopted presupposes coordinated and shared participation, decision-making, and management. Governance instances may take various forms - councils, forums, associations, or agencies - capable of capturing and managing stakeholder demands.



Regarding weaknesses and challenges, one perceives that the institutional design of public policies formulated and implemented in Brazil increasingly derives from a democratic and participatory approach. Assigning exclusively to the State the duty of fostering the country's economic development risks perpetuating a distorted and passive stance.

The decentralization of federal tourism management has yielded changes that demand greater involvement and responsibility from states and municipalities in addressing their local structural conditions. Not by chance, decentralized policies that encourage the participation of all social actors - government, private sector, and civil society - have spread across all fields, including tourism.

By introducing and providing the legal apparatus for popular participation in governance, the Federal Constitution took a major step forward in Brazil's democratic development. However, while decentralization has created new space and reshaped relations among the State, capital, and society, it also reflects the interests of capitalism and prevailing neoliberal policies in Western contemporary society -leading to a form of shared participation in which the State assumes a minimal role, distributing functions and responsibilities among the market and civil society. Consequently, this quest for participatory democracy has spurred new reflections on the forms of participation achieved and their consequences in contemporary Brazilian society.

This investigation advanced to answer the central question: What are the principal weaknesses and challenges faced by tourism public policies, particularly with respect to local-level management? Thus, through theoretical and empirical elements, it aimed to uncover and analyze the vulnerabilities and challenges encountered in executing the Tourism Regionalization Program in the State of Tocantins.

Although the national outlook was optimistic, the Regionalization Program encountered obstacles to implementing its planned actions in Tocantins, made evident by severe structural deficiencies and institutional weaknesses. In this regard, ensuring the program's success calls for, among other factors, a robust reception infrastructure: states and municipalities must be equipped with technical teams capable of assimilating the program's methodological and operational steps, as well as the integrated and shared-vision strategies to be applied at the local level. Moreover, it

is imperative that state and municipal leaders adopt a differentiated outlook - eschewing simplistic measures such as event sponsorship or scattershot initiatives. Public authorities must recognize tourism as a vital element of governmental planning that can foster social, economic, and cultural dynamism in Tocantins's municipalities.

In sum, a pathway forward is emerging. The current context suggests a redefinition of the governmental role in tourism development, with the public sector functioning both as policy-maker and policy-implementer and thereby strengthening institutional capacity. Understanding the government's presence in tourism is fundamental to grasping the sector's own dynamics. Yet, combining the efforts of all stakeholders will yield meaningful progress for Tocantins's tourism. The goal, therefore, is to establish a tourism sector grounded in solid, reinforced foundations -recognized as public policy - and capable of executing local actions successfully in tandem with national strategies, overcoming instabilities, and making assertive decisions underpinned by effective planning.



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