



Anti-doping and National Politics: An Ethnography in Brazilian Anti-doping Around the Era of the Rio de Janeiro Games

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- B) acquisition of data
- C) analysis and interpretation of data
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Abstract

This study is based on an investigation into the Brazilian anti-doping policy, with a specific focus on the establishment and operational mechanisms of the Brazilian Doping Control Authority (ABCD), under the auspices of the Ministry of Sport (ME). The objective was to describe how Brazilian national policy (general political decisions, interests of parties or particular politicians/agents) affects the fight against doping and, vice versa, how the harmonization process controlled by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) affects national sports policy. A multi-sited ethnographic study was undertaken, involving field diary practices, interviews and document analysis. Adopting the perspective of pragmatic sociology, this study delves into the descriptions of three key periods in the recent history of anti-doping in Brazil: the creation of ABCD and the dissolution of ANAD (National Anti-Doping Agency), the realization of the first 100 anti-doping tests by the ABCD (critical period for its members who managed to keep away ex-officers from ANAD) and the impeachment of the Brazilian president in 2016 (ex-officers from ANAD took over the direction of the ABCD). Our analysis allowed us to conclude that 'diverting others from decision-making spheres' comprised a political strategy to occupy spaces of power or to stabilize itself in them, which, in this case, allowed the control of anti-doping actions in the country. Local protagonists tried to make use of international injunctions and pressure or local political events to achieve these goals.

Keywords: Anti-doping, policy analysis, sport, ethnography, ABCD

Introduction

This research presents part of an extensive ethnographic research work on the anti-doping struggle in Brazil (Vasques, 2018) carried out by the first author of the text. This research investigated the anti-doping policy in Brazilian sports governance, focusing on actions and associations of protagonist actors in the constitution and operation of the Brazilian Authority for Doping Control (ABCD) for the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

Among the objects emerging in the research was the creation of ABCD as a National Secretariat in the structure of the Ministry of Sport (Government of Brazil, 2011), that is, an agency as a state apparatus. Obtaining the rights to host the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2009 led Brazil to promise to set up an anti-doping agency, in the form of a National Anti-Doping Organization (NADO) and under the umbrella of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) (Vasques *et al.*, 2021a, Vasques *et al.*, 2021b). Until the creation of the ABCD, there were two organi-

zations responsible for anti-doping policies and practices: the National Anti-Doping Agency (ANAD) and the Brazilian Anti-Doping Agency (ABA), which were linked to the Brazilian Olympic Committee (COB) and the Sports Confederations. According to WADA, the existence of such agencies was not enough to take action in anti-doping control, as they did not have the characteristics of a NADO under the umbrella of WADA, such as independence from sports federations and the application of the rules of the World Anti-Doping Code (WADA, 2021).

For WADA, the NADOs should have independence and autonomy, both from the national governments and from the sports institutions/federations. The aim is for NADOs to operate independently with the objective of avoiding the cover-up of positives or the leaking of information, but the financing continues to be public, so that NADOs continue to depend on the state. In NADOs that are inside government apparatus, although almost all agents are hired technicians (in theory, independent), the directors are normally chosen by ministers, so they occupy a political position that depends on national policy and decisions. This is the case of countries such as Colombia, Spain, France, Algeria, South Africa and Brazil (Zubizarreta, 2021).

Vasques *et al.* (2021a) addressed WADA's use of the compliance device, investigating how it can be a requirement of an actor (WADA), a threat (the consequences of non-compliance are increasingly important) and eventually a legal issue if disputes arise. In this sense, for the authors, conformity is work over time and space marked by social tensions, in dialogue with the processes of stability and adaptation of a national community in the fight against doping in sport. In the case of Brazil, this community was composed of heterogeneous actors shown as a more or less stable collective for the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and WADA to be able to act in the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Bearing in mind the establishment of ABCD in Brazil, this work intends to describe how Brazilian national policy (general political decisions, interests of parties or politicians/private agents) affects the fight against doping and, vice versa, how the harmonization process led by WADA affects national sports policy. For that, we will pay special attention to the actions of approximation or distancing between the groups of protagonists in charge of the fight against doping in Brazil.

One of these groups is the anti-doping 'old association/old arrangement', an empirical expression that designates a group of actors and practices closer to the sports federations/institutions, which commanded the ABA and the ANAD, and in the case of the ABCD constitution and preparation for the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games whose members had close ties with the International Olympic Committee, the Brazilian Olympic Committee

and the Local Organizing Committee of the Rio2016 Games (COL), abbreviated to the IOC/COB/COL system. The other group, formed in the early days of the agency, called the 'new association/new arrangement' anti-doping, was composed of heterogeneous actors who were part of ABCD's first management, some of whom had experience in the private sports world, while others held positions in the Ministry of Sport or, in other instances, in the government. These were similar because they had no previous experience with the anti-doping system.

Theoretical Framework

Although it is not a major aspect of this study, an increasing number of studies are interested in the work of nation states and their adaptation and application of the World Anti-Doping Code (WADA, 2021). Studies on the creation of WADA and the beginning of the harmonization process (Demeslay, 2013, Hanstad *et al.*, 2008) has laid the foundations that allow analyses to be carried out of the national policies adopted by states to apply these regulations in their respective national territories. These studies are not numerous and differ in terms of the methodology and theoretical frameworks used, but they allow us to understand how the fight led by WADA affects the national anti-doping policy, how national political interests interfere with the fight against doping, or how they affect the particularities from the ground to the process of applying international regulations.

Tan *et al.* (2020) studied China's strategy for complying with WADA. Since mid-2010, the country, with a history marked by the doping scandals of the 1990s, the mismanagement of the 2008 Games and the cases of doping by national athletes, has proposed to host major sporting events. To this end, the Chinese government has decided to invest considerable resources in creating a more independent NADO (CHINADA), to obtain ISO 9001 quality accreditation, build a second anti-doping laboratory, create cooperation ties with countries considered to be benchmarks in anti-doping, and to maintain good relations with WADA and UNESCO. As a result, Tan and colleagues argued that China would have achieved 'costly compliance' (costly in economic terms). This type of compliance would be characterized by a political action that creates an anti-doping system that goes beyond the implementation of the minimum necessary to respect the World Anti-Doping Code (WADA, 2021) and that aims to become a benchmark. As a limitation to the study, it is important to mention that it is limited to analyzing the creation of the anti-doping system, which does not analyze the implementation of the programme.

The work of Lipicer and McArdle (2014) studied how international anti-doping regulation affected Slovenian

national legislation. Since 2009, there is a harmonized legislation in Slovenia and, since 2011, a NADO (SLOA-DO). According to the authors (Lipicer & McArdle, 2014), although everything was true on paper, Slovenian practices had changed little compared to those before 2009. Therefore, there would be certain discrepancies between what is written on paper and what happens in reality: the activity was focused above all on carrying out controls and very little on education. Furthermore, it focused almost exclusively on high performance. In this case, it shows how a country was able to meet its obligations at minimal cost and satisfy WADA. Of course, the in-depth study of real activity shows that some of these obligations would only be fulfilled on paper.

Zubizarreta (2021) studied the evolution of the anti-doping system in Algeria, Colombia and South Africa. In the Algerian case, it is surprising to note that the Algerian Football Federation does not submit to the direction of the NADO and carries out an independent anti-doping programme, so far unimpeded by FIFA and WADA. This national reality shows the power (economic, but also political) that said federation has, which allows it to finance the anti-doping programme (control agents, kits, laboratory analysis, sanction committee experts, etc.) and makes it possible for that system to continue to function. Furthermore, it appears that WADA has been unwilling or unable to force a change to this system that would force WADA to submit to NADO, but the exact reasons are unknown. On the other hand, as far as the Colombian case is concerned, it is worth noting the great influence of changes in national policy on the budgets of NADO and the anti-doping laboratory. The directors of the Ministry of Sports have replaced each other on numerous occasions and each of them, during his tenure, has directed the fight against doping his own way, without a continuation of previous policy. This changing situation has made the NADO's work difficult and seems to have also affected the loss of WADA accreditation by the Bogotá laboratory at the beginning of 2017. These two specific cases show how it can affect (in this case make difficult) the national political reality in the fight against doping.

The three papers presented here show the interest in studying the relationships between national policy and the fight against doping from a local perspective. However, as the case study of Slovenia shows, above all, an analysis based only on indicators or on self-filled¹ questionnaires does not account for the anti-doping reality on the ground, and therefore does not offer a true picture of the fight

against doping in different territories, nor of the particular challenges that governments or NADOs may encounter when applying the regulations on the ground. Therefore, as Hanstad *et al.* (2008) showed, the interest in carrying out ethnographic studies at the national level is notable. Along the same lines, Trabal and Le Noé (2019) argue that there is a gap in terms of this type of ethnographic research that studies the application of regulations on the ground. Studies that are interested in the work on the ground of national agents in charge of adapting regulations, creating local institutions, or carrying out the tasks assigned to NADO are rare. This article aims to respond to this need by focusing the study on the generally unknown and little described work of these national anti-doping agents, since they are a key piece in the global anti-doping framework and also represent the point of articulation between international demands and the political, social, and sports reality at a national level.

In terms of the sociological analysis of anti-doping, it has been decided to frame the article within pragmatic sociology. This choice is due to the claim of this theory to sidestep the dichotomy between structuralism and phenomenology (Chateauraynaud, 2009). In other words, it avoids an understanding of social acts always structured according to social norms that limit the actions of the agents, or of a constant negotiation of the norms by agents in the course of their actions. For this, the pragmatic sociology of transformations (Chateauraynaud, 2016) is committed to granting a central position to the agents and studying the meaning that they give to their actions in order to identify the structures that govern their actions, as well as the adjustments/negotiations they perform in order to achieve their goals. In the case of national anti-doping agents, we must clarify that they are in charge of implementing the World Anti-Doping Code (WADA, 2021) in their national territory and that, for this, it is necessary to adapt the rules (adoption of laws and decrees, the creation of the agency, the attribution of a budget, the recruitment and training of agents, etc.) and their application (carrying out controls, carrying out prevention days, study and attribution of TUEs, etc.). Therefore, the observation of their work will allow us to identify how international norms and events influence their work, but also the importance of national political, administrative and sports structures (Trabal & Le Noé, 2019), the national political events or particular interests.

An author who has studied the actions of actors from the perspective of pragmatic sociology is Latour (e.g., 1987). For Latour (2005), sociology must focus on reconnecting the ties, the nodes, the moorings that form the social, thus forming a sociology concerned with the visualization of associations. From this perspective, Latour (1987) understands that actors transfer their interests as long as it helps them to achieve their goals, thus diverting

¹ There are numerous works that use this methodology in their analyzes of anti-doping policies (see, for example, Gatterer *et al.*, 2020). UNESCO and WADA also use these procedures as part of their strategy for monitoring compliance with anti-doping stakeholder commitments.

a little from their path can be a strategy adopted to achieve what in fact interests them. For Latour (1999), diverting is changing the origin of actions, associating with other actors, with the aim of achieving their goals. In other words, it is the action of the actors in transferring interests, changing the route, modifying the way, in order to have more possibilities to meet the purposes. Such diversions are more visible in potential moments of change, which are capable of revealing the complexity of diversions and adjustments that make up the fact. Based on this perspective, we understand that diverting is a strategic and hybrid action of conduct taken by actors with a view to achieving their objectives.

In the case at hand, the aim of this text is to describe the actors 'in action' in the anti-doping harmonization process and their approximations and distances from Brazilian 'political' and 'sports' institutions. To achieve this, we studied the actions of the groups of actors ('old association' and 'new association') in their objective of coordinating ABCD and, consequently, anti-doping actions in Brazil. In this direction, we described how the actors acted based on their 'interests' and made use of or took advantage of international injunctions (i.e., the pressure by WADA to create an independent agency with respect to national federations) or national events (e.g., a change of government president) to try to squeeze another group of power and strengthen themselves more in it. Or to the contrary, to 'resist' diversion. The uniqueness of the article stems from its innovative investigation into the political dynamics within Brazilian anti-doping initiatives and its use of a multi-site ethnographic approach, a methodology not commonly employed in the analysis of national anti-doping policies.

Materials and Methods

This qualitative study is the result of multi-site ethnographic research conducted by the first author from February 2016 to August 2017. This period was chosen in view of Brazil's organization for the Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games in 2016, the impeachment of the country's president and the change of government at the beginning of 2016, as well as the changes in the ABCD during this period. In line with Marcus (1995), the object of study was not limited to one site and was not bound by a priori asymmetries such as micro/macro, human/non-human, present/past. It relied on research using multi-site circulation and following associations and flows of actions, actors, stories and artifacts. Therefore, like the actors in action, the object of research was actualized in the multi-site ethnographic experience, regardless of the variety and quality of this research and its access to various spaces. Understanding the multiple spaces and temporalities as

well as flows, trajectories and connections (Marcus, 1995) was more relevant.

In terms of pragmatic sociology's understanding of scientific practices, we consider that anti-doping policies coexist with several sports organizations, laboratories, government buildings, documents, laws, conferences, meetings, newspapers, etc. From the perspective of pragmatic sociology, the methodological design seeks to study that coexistence in the actions and their development, paying attention to controversial situations or trying moments, which render the grammars of justification and criticism operated by actors tangible.

In order to be able to describe these movements, the first author of this article developed multi-site ethnographic immersions in the anti-doping universe, mainly by undergoing training and working as an anti-doping agent, which included processes of negotiation of participation as well as formal presentation letters and free and informed consent forms. However, as demanded by ethnographic research, interaction with anti-doping actors was sustained and consolidated on a daily basis through explanations and renegotiations of the researcher's presence, permanence and participation.

With regard to the materiality of empirical production, the multi-site and circulation-based experience of the research was recorded in field diaries based on initial notes. In addition to the diaries and parallel to the ethnographic work, 16 semi-structured interviews were conducted with anti-doping actors who agreed to participate in the research, including staff from ABCD, from the anti-doping laboratory, and from sports federations and private companies considered important. During the immersion process, the researcher recognized different actors and institutions in the anti-doping world. In this process, actors from different institutions and groups who could contribute to understanding the disputes, tensions and criticisms produced in that field were selected for interview. The interviews varied greatly in length (from 12 minutes to 4:51 minutes), depending on the topics to be discussed with the subjects and were conducted in-person in different cities (Brasília, Florianópolis, Lisbon, Porto Alegre, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo), according to interviewees' availability. The names of the interlocutors were anonymized.

The research also included surveys of public documents selected as the researchers followed the actors, such as national and international anti-doping laws, standards, codes and protocols published by ABCD and WADA from 2009 to 2017. Those documents included: the World Code (WADA, 2015); the Brazilian Code (Ministry of Sport/ABCD, 2016); a WADA report on the 2016 Olympics and Paralympics (2016); the Independent Observer Team Report; in addition to two Brazilian executive orders and a law that provided for the creation and modification of

the makeup of the ABCD (Government of Brazil, 2011; 2016a; 2016b). Data production is shown in Table 1. Data analysis was carried out based on a content analysis, which led us to an organization of the research that considered two groups ('old and new associations') and diversion as a strategy of actors in action.

Table 1. Data produced.

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION	
Paralympic Games	14 days
Course of DCO formation	3 days
World Championship	3 days
ABCD	2 days
Laboratory	1 day
DOCUMENTAL ANALYSIS	
Brazilian laws	4
ABCD and WADA documents	3
Television documentaries	2
INTERVIEWS	
Doping control officers (DCOs)	6
Sport and anti-doping officers	8
Members of government	5
Anti-doping business owners	2
Laboratory workers	2
TOTAL	16

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Results and Discussion

The results of the research are presented in chronological order. Given the long history of the anti-doping fight in Brazil, the decision was made to focus the analysis on three periods. Each is presented in a section below. The first and third are related to two periods of great change in the anti-doping system and could be categorized as periods of change in the state of affairs, according to Chateauraynaud (2009). In the second, a discussion period is described, which, however, ended without giving rise to changes. The choice of these three periods is due to the fact that all the periods mentioned can be qualified as periods of great argumentative activity (Chateauraynaud, 2009). In these periods, the argumentative activity of the protagonists is greater due to the crystallization of arguments during confrontations between different groups (due to latent or new conflicts). This can occur due to a change in the daily situation, or a revelation or a particular event, but it can also be the consequence of the particular strategy of a group of actors. The interest in focusing the analysis on these moments is due to the fact

that in these periods of discussion, debate or negotiation, the interests and arguments of the protagonists can be observed more clearly given the greater argumentative and justifying activity (Chateauraynaud, 2009).

In these periods, two groups played a leading role in these confrontations: the 'new association' and the 'old association'. The **first period** deals with the constitution of the agency that, as said, was created in order to distance the actors and practices from those previously established in the country. In this way, WADA and the Brazilian government acted to divert ABCD from the anti-doping 'old arrangement'. In the second period, the conflict created in relation to the realization of the first 100 anti-doping controls by ABCD is analyzed. The direction of the ABCD (new association) is maintained in the old association and the first author of this article carries out the controls with the help of other members; for its part, the old association denounced failures in carrying out these controls. The **last period** deals with the changes that took place in ABCD after the coup-impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff in 2016.

The creation of ABCD to divert anti-doping from the 'old arrangement'

The anti-doping practices carried out in Brazil were coordinated, until 2013, by the ANAD and the ABA, which were linked to the COB and the sports federations. However, in 2009, with the forecast of the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, the government signed a commitment with WADA for the establishment of a NADO in the country. This is because WADA had criticized the existing anti-doping system in Brazil, under the pretext that the ANAD and the ABA were not independent with respect to the Brazilian sports institutions.

The WADA injunction that NADOs remain 'compliant' with the World Anti-Doping Code (WADA, 2015) has serious weight with governments. It requires that they respect all the obligations established by WADA for a national anti-doping system. Without this certification granted by WADA, states may be unable to organize major sporting events (Olympic Games, world championships, etc.) or even be prohibited from participating in international events². In Brazil, the World Agency used this argument to put pressure on the government to create a NADO.

To set up a NADO, it was necessary for the government to create an entire infrastructure. It was necessary to

² For the reasons described, compliance can become the main objective of governments and, therefore, of NADOs. The study by Vasques *et al.* (2021a) shows compliance as a key element in the relationship between the national agency and WADA in Brazil. This device can be used as a pressure tool to 'make them act' and, likewise, can be used to suspend or disqualify those agencies that do not achieve WADA's objectives.

build and publish a national anti-doping code and create positions within the Ministry of Sport. It was also necessary to provide NADO with a budget, create the necessary committees for its proper functioning and purchase the necessary material for control and prevention activities.

The pressure exerted by the world agency on Brazilian authority defined many of the actions taken by the government and, later, by ABCD members. Next, ‘scenes’ that emerged during fieldwork are presented to show that the power relations between the WADA and the ABCD were also based on the ‘compliance’ device. The following is a statement by the Secretary of ABCD of the time – who claimed to have met with WADA many times – about the relationship between the two agencies.

Considering that the Games would take place in 2016 and there was the issue of the laboratory and the *creation of the agency [ABCD], time was very short to create it and actually make it operational. Even because those putting pressure on us were not responsible for it, so it was easy for them to put pressure [...] I mean WADA and the IOC always put lots of pressure to create ABCD, which was their job; they had to put pressure and I had to live with it... So, the pressure was intense, but they had no idea of the complexity involved in creating something from scratch in government. Policy, management, everything... starting from scratch [...] it's one thing for you to sit here one day and understand everything: you'll choose a model, you'll create a Brazilian agency and you'll put it on its feet. Another thing is to get the budget, get legal authorization to create the positions, the law.* (ABCD employee)

This excerpt from the interview with the ABCD official presents the pressure from WADA and the IOC for the government and, in this case ABCD, to act. Nevertheless, it shows the justifications for difficulties related to administrative bureaucracies in the structure of the public institution of the state. This argument helps the interlocutor to justify the delay – and to mitigate the criticisms related to this – for the ABCD to be created and put into operation, which in fact only occurred in 2014/2015³.

In September 2011, two years after Rio de Janeiro was chosen to host the Olympics, the Brazilian agency had not yet been created. Brazil was on the verge of being considered ‘non-compliant’ for not having an anti-doping agency. While the world agency accepted that countries without NADOs included the anti-doping agency into their Olympic Committees – Brazil had had the ABA, shut down in December 2012 – it did not apply that to

Brazil, which had committed itself to creating its own dedicated agency.

According to a member of the ‘new arrangement’, “WADA considered the ABA as equal to nothing,” that is, they criticized the agency, which operated under the COB and was headed by an ‘old’ anti-doping group. Such view shows that WADA diverted from the interests of the IOC/COB by pushing for the creation and compliant operation of “another agency” – not the one previously existing under the IOC.

Finally, President Dilma Rousseff signed an executive order creating the ABCD (Government of Brazil, 2011) on November 30, 2011, after the Conference of Parties (CoP) met at UNESCO, which was a first step in compliance with the requirements imposed by WADA. The creation of ABCD staff positions had to be approved by Congress for the agency to function effectively. In addition, regulations of the Ministry of Sports had to be changed as well, including the secretariat and its staff, and the budget had to be approved by Congress.

As a result of the pressure received, the Brazilian government decided to nominate people only to the ABA and to the ANAD. Therefore, ‘new’ people were named in the anti-doping fight who were named after employees who already worked in other secretariats of the Ministry of Sport, but which included heterogeneous actors from companies that organize sporting events, university professors and other areas far from the anti-doping universe.

After the appointment of the members of the ABCD, it became necessary to train additional personnel for the proper functioning of NADO. An ABCD employee says there was pressure in 2012, which became very clear in “extremely difficult meetings with WADA and the IOC” to train Doping Control Officers and carry out anti-doping controls.

In late 2012 [...] 2012 was a very difficult year for the President in Congress, but we managed to pass [the creation of staff positions] together with an executive order. “With the help of the office of Chief of Staff, the best thing here is to go with a ‘benign’ executive order, which is not controversial.” Thus, the 24 positions of the executive order were created and published in December 2012. (ABCD employee)

Such elements show that maintaining ‘compliance’ was an important justification regime adopted by the ‘new anti-doping association’ regarding its actions. Thus, associating with WADA in order to meet their demands was a strategy employed by that group to keep the ‘old association’ away from ABCD.

Conflicts between the two groups were consolidated after the choice of Rio de Janeiro as the host city for the 2016 Games, when the country committed to having an

³ As we explained, ABCD was created in 2011 and started operating from 2014–2015.

active NADO for the competitions. The group of actors that was appointed to manage the ABCD – the ‘new association’ –, from its place in the state apparatus as the National Secretariat, sought to stop the monopoly of the old group in anti-doping control in the country. In turn, the more established group with more experience – the ‘old association’ – occupied the spaces of anti-doping in the Olympic and Paralympic Games, since it was close to the actors and institutions of the Olympic system, especially the IOC and the COB.

All for compliance: taking on jobs unprepared

Once created, the new NADO (or rather, the group of protagonists who directed the new NADO) tried to take advantage of WADA’s desire for Brazil to have a more independent NADO in relation to the COB. Thus, it launched diversion strategies in relation to the ‘old arrangement’: no employee from the ‘old arrangement’ was invited to join the ABCD, nor to collaborate in precise work, despite some of them being recognized in the international universe of anti-doping practices. For example, the construction of the anti-doping legislation in the country, the court and the Brazilian anti-doping code was carried out by the members of the ‘new arrangement’, without the participation of the members of the other group, the COB, the sports federations or the organizers of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The same thing happened when WADA wanted to test the ability to control ABCD, after its creation.

When ABCD was created, WADA wanted ABCD to start carrying out doping controls to prove its capability. At the end of 2012, still lacking employees⁴, materials and budget, 100 anti-doping controls were performed on athletes belonging to the Athlete-Grant Program in Brasília, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. However, instead of asking for assistance from members of the old association and associations such as COB – who have practical experience and the necessary materials to carry out different tests – ABCD asked other institutions for help. In this way, this action was carried out with materials borrowed by the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) and the Brazilian Paralympic Committee (CPB) and with the help of ADOP (Portuguese NADO). A DCO who worked for the Portuguese NADO came to Brazil, based on a previously constructed agreement, to coordinate these controls. These 100 tests served to normalize a series of procedures for anti-doping control (norms for sample collection), rendering them similar to those that took place in the anti-doping agency in Portugal, due to the ties that united ABCD and the Portuguese agency: agreement, language, approaches and visits.

These 100 tests performed in 2012 were criticised for being irregular. The Secretary stated that they had to be performed for WADA to see that the Brazilian government could create a NADO and get it up and running. The problem was that the ABCD only existed under an executive order, that is, it had no staff, materials or budget. Interviewees reported – and they said⁵ they had reported it to supervisory agencies – that the Ministry commissioned the tests from a company selected in a bidding process for ceremonial events. These companies are usually hired through bidding processes to organize events with the presence of the Minister or a representative. They are in charge of planning, making purchases for and executing the ceremony, providing water, chairs, microphones, organizing cocktail parties, etc. Therefore, the companies list the expenses and the Ministry authorizes the spending.

Such reports of using a company that had been hired for other purposes would put the ABCD under pressure, on the one hand, as a result of WADA’s pressure for the agency to start operating and, on the other, because of the procedural delay in purchasing materials. Procurement procedures by government departments, in most cases through bidding processes, are often criticized for the time they take when compared to the private sector, since they must include public notices, price surveys, and competition between providers, and deadlines may be extended due to legal proceedings or postponed for various reasons, such as rain, lack of available stocks, difficulty in authorizing expenses, etc. (Vasques, 2018). The ABCD certainly found itself entangled in Brazilian government’s procurement web.

As we described above, WADA’s pressure resulted in the creation of ABCD by the government and in the creation of a new anti-doping system. The government could have requested assistance for the members of the ‘old association’, but in order not to jeopardize the compliance, it was decided to set these aside and create one from scratch, fully respecting the WADA demand for an independent system close to the sports federations and the COB. For that, the government created an alliance with the Chief of Staff and its corresponding articulation in the Brazilian National Congress that made it possible to approve specific positions for hiring workers for the ABCD. The agreement between the Ministry of Sports/ABCD and ADOP (Portugal’s NADO) added the knowledge and experience to perform the 100 tests and to prove ABCD’s capacity and its ‘compliance’ in terms of procedures and protocols. Materials from the anti-doping kit lent by CBF and CPB helped to set the conditions for performing the tests ‘in compliance.’ The involvement of a company that had already undergone the bidding

⁴ The people who formed the ‘new association’ had been invited to work at ABCD, but had not yet been formally hired.

⁵ We did not have access to the complaints made as they were confidential.

procedure streamlined the use of government funds for the acquisition of materials according to the timeframes and spaces of the Olympic and Paralympic movement.

This group of allies brought together by ABCD/‘new arrangement’ indicates WADA’s diversion from the interests of the IOC/COB/COL, showing its shift towards institutional independence (distancing) to impose restrictions as an important aspect in the work towards achieving ‘compliance’. The 100-test event was criticized because a male DCO – a specialist from Portugal – performed controls on female athletes, a practice banned⁶ by the Anti-Doping Code (WADA, 2015). Such exposure was based on statements by the ‘old arrangement’ (linked to the IOC and previous anti-doping agencies), who wanted his group to take over the ABCD and, therefore, criticized the practices of the administration.

In the criticisms of this member of the ‘old association’, the ‘new arrangement’ saw criticism as an opportunity to embarrass him publicly, which would help him in his interest in coordinating the ABCD. He then stated that the ABCD was starting its work in the country and therefore undergoing a learning process, and that ‘old’ actors, having so much experience, should help in the agency’s creation process rather than criticizing it publicly. However, according to interviewees, the ‘new association’ had already rejected this ‘old arrangement’ help several times and used that criticism to drive them even further away from ABCD. According to interviewees, that is when ‘old arrangement’ actors began to be criticized within WADA, which would have strengthened ‘new arrangement’ position in the Brazilian authority.

The aforementioned discussion about the 100 tests ultimately highlighted interests and accusations that further stabilized the two groups in different places of anti-doping. The new arrangement, instead of approaching and asking for help from the former anti-doping agents, decided to stay away from them and associate with other institutions in order to carry out the task ordered by WADA. The old team (‘old arrangement’), for its part, wanted to recover its position of power from the pre-ABCD era, so it resisted in this new moment and exerted pressure to be able to recover the leadership of the national anti-doping that it had lost⁷.

The coup-impeachment agency for the ‘old arrangement’

The enlistment of ‘new arrangement’ allies – as well as the possibility of diverting IOC/COB/COL interests through the ABCD – would not last long, falling apart

a few months before the Olympics. On May 12, 2016, President Dilma Rousseff of the Workers’ Party (PT) was removed from office following an impeachment⁸ process marked by an alliance of political, legal and media interests. The post-impeachment period marks a rupture in ABCD’s politics as well. With the change in government and President Michel Temer of the then Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB)⁹ taking office, all ABCD staff were dismissed and replaced with a new political group, with other practices.

Rogério Sampaio – a former judo athlete and a member of PMDB at that time – took over. Along with him, two other important actors in Brazil’s anti-doping scene, who belonged to the anti-doping ‘old group’, joined the ABCD. It is possible to understand that this group was, in general, closer to the ‘new’ government, just as the previous one was to Dilma’s government. Thus, in the last month before the Olympics (beginning on August 5), people who belonged to the same group and who were opposed to the first administration of Brazil’s national agency were put in charge of both the ABCD and the Rio 2016 Anti-Doping Commission (COL).

The arguments on the side of the ‘new association’ for his dismissal resided in the government’s political change, in the criticism of the state’s rigging by another political group, and in the discontinuity of public policies. The arguments of the ‘old association’ are close to allegations of corruption¹⁰ and the loss of legitimacy of this group in power.

The collapse of ‘new arrangement’ alliances after the President’s impeachment and the simultaneous emergence of other interests mobilized by that ‘old anti-doping’ group – including PMDB, the Comptroller General (CGU), the Federal Court of Accounts (TCU) – created conditions

⁸ The National Congress, in a “big national deal” with the Judiciary and large parts of the media and business sectors, managed to remove the president through accusations of administrative impropriety and, thus, ascend the vice president to power.

⁹ Since 2017, this party has assumed the name of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB).

¹⁰ The dismissal of ABCD employees is marked by controversy. A different version of dismissal – by a public servant of the Ministry of Sports who worked for a certain time at the ABCD – said that the new Minister of Sports – Leonardo Picciani, a politician from PMDB in Rio de Janeiro, the host city of the Olympics – learned that complaints had been made to the Federal Comptroller General (CGU) and the Federal Court of Accounts (TCU) about ‘irregular practices’ at the ABCD, and that these agencies were looking into them. As reported by two interviewees who were ABCD staff members, the allegations included irregular payments to DCOs and, as previously mentioned, the use of companies that had been selected by the Ministry of Sports in bidding procedures for purposes other than those in question. There is no way to be certain whether or not the corruption allegations affected the government’s decision on ABCD’s direction, in any case, the change in government did in fact bring about a change in the employee who was the target of denouncements.

⁶ The members of the ‘new association’ defended themselves by stating that the DCO was a doctor and that he would therefore be a legitimate person to carry out the control in women.

⁷ The motivations of individuals and groups for wanting to occupy positions of power are not always obvious; even so, it is not difficult to consider that political and economic reasons are among them.

for the appropriation of the ABCD by the same group of actors that led the Rio 2016 Anti-Doping Commission, linked to the IOC/COB/COL system¹¹.

The coup that overthrew President Rousseff, the complaints about the management of ABCD, and ‘new arrangement’ dismissal took place within two months – from May to July 2016. These three facts are ultimately related, as they caused ABCD staff to be changed during that period. Therefore, the coup was not directly related to the ABCD but impacted its makeup. As soon as the Vice-President took office temporarily, he appointed people from the parties that supported him – which had supported President Rousseff’s first impeachment vote and which, after these appointments, became allies in the final vote against the President in the Senate. Some interviewees stated that the ‘distribution of government positions’ that happened when the Vice-President took office was intended to gather votes for the President’s definitive impeachment.

Inflexion moments are unstable and temporary junctures that are eventually accommodated and create stabilization for the actors involved. The idea here is to show how stabilizations generated by these processes took place. The change of Secretary of ABCD, combined with the change of all ABCD staff – which did not happen before October 2016 – was certainly a moment of rupture in the agency. According to interviewees, information could not be passed on from one administration to the other. Policies changed: people close to sports federations were appointed; controls were performed involving more strategy, knowledge and experience; training of new DCOs stopped. In addition, new anti-doping education programmes were created (Vasques *et al.*, 2023). However, it was also more difficult to meet WADA’s demands, since the previous administration was close to the Chief of Staff and the Ministry of Planning, which was not the case with the second administration.

The change of all ABCD employees put the ‘old association’ back in power, which acted to distance the ‘new association’, now outside ABCD, from anti-doping actions. In the end, the transformations of the Brazilian government built rearrangements into anti-doping that instituted a form of diversion in the opposite direction: in the direction of distancing itself from the actors of the ‘new association’.

Rearrangements and new associations to stabilize actions were carried out as of July with other actors, such as sports confederations and the COB. However, since the ABCD was declared ‘non-compliant’ by WADA in November 2016 and therefore could not operate, it is pos-

sible to say that the space for stabilization was restricted, as it only lasted a few months. With this sanction, there was some rearrangement with other alliances to achieve ‘compliance,’ and there was more space for stabilization after ‘compliance’ was re-established in April 2017.

With respect to this third period, two main, interrelated issues should be highlighted. The first is the great influence that national politics has on sports policy, which once again became visible. This time the objective was not to respond to political pressure, but to distribute sports-related political posts among colleagues from the political parties in power. It is not the only described case of this type that affects the anti-doping fight, since Zubizarreta (2021) describes a similar practice of ‘clientelism’ in Colombia, which has a considerable effect on the anti-doping fight. The second is the impossibility of WADA to control or limit these changes in order to maintain an independent anti-doping system with respect to federative sports organizations (IOC/COB/COL). The compliance mechanism is not sufficient to make it act as it wants and it can also limit the performance of controls in the country. Finally, it is important to point out that this time it was the old association, the one that had been diverted from the anti-doping system, which came to occupy a central role and diverted it to the new association, contrary to what happened in the other two periods described.

We specifically observed periods when the actions of groups of protagonists sought as a political strategy to distance opposing groups from decision-making spaces of power, which we call ‘diversion’. The first diversion occurred in the creation, in 2011, of ABCD as a state apparatus, in relation to the existing ANAD and ABA, which were linked to sports entities. The second period shows how the ‘new association’, at the head of the anti-doping fight, kept the old association crippled and prioritized other alliances until such a critical moment as the realization of the first 100 tests to prove the capacity of the ABCD. The third, in turn, took place after the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff in 2016, and enabled rearrangements that brought the sports system closer to ABCD. In this case, diversions from ABCD distanced the actors present in its constitution, then belonging to the ‘new association’ anti-doping. These descriptions showed how actors acted to employ diversion as a political strategy to reach political-institutional spaces or maintain themselves in them, in this case, in ABCD.

Therefore, diversion was a political strategy to occupy spaces of power that, in this case, enabled the control of anti-doping actions in the country, granted political space within the government, and provided access to government funds. In order to divert or avoid diversion, actors sought to associate themselves with spaces of power, especially WADA, which controls the compliance mechanism. Therefore, keeping – or losing – the status of compliant

¹¹ We were left to look for information on how WADA reacted to this appropriation that focused on its independence in terms of ‘conformity’, since it did not make any public comment.

or even acting on the pressure for compliance was an important mechanism for those in power to avoid diversion. Furthermore, the use of public criticism and slander towards the opposing group was a strategy employed by the actors in this political game to manage diversion.

In terms of sociological analysis, it is possible to consider that, as Latour (2005) argues, association movements are the object of study of sociology, and looking at the diversion movements also helps to understand the formats that make up the social. Therefore, the social is formed by associations and diversions between actors, and, from this point of view, diversion is an action that enables exposing the makeup of the social.

Conclusions

This research illustrates the evolution of the anti-doping fight in Brazil by focusing on national political dynamics. This theme has proven to be pertinent, since it has allowed us to explain the dynamics of change in this area in light of political events at a national level (for example, in relation to impeachment), but also at an international level (the pressure received to harmonize the anti-doping system).

The choice of pragmatic sociology has been useful to describe the interests of the protagonists and understand how they have made use, or tried to make use of, international demands and political relations at the national level. Given that the anti-doping dossier has dealt with two groups of protagonists (on the one hand, the Dilma government and the new association and, on the other hand, the federative sports institutions, the old association and, to a lesser extent, the Temer government), the description in terms of diversion (in the sense of diverting someone) has allowed us to show how the groups that directed the anti-doping fight have almost systematically tried to alienate the rest of the anti-doping system, and thus strengthen their position.

The limitation of this work is linked to the methodology foreseen for the research work (of which this article only presents a small part, as mentioned above). The data collected within the anti-doping institution through ethnographic research present results of great interest, partly due to the scarcity of this type of research in anti-doping. However, the study could have been enriched if it had been extended to WADA, for example, including some interviews with those responsible for ensuring the relationship with Brazilian institutions.

The instabilities, rearrangements, inconsistencies, and volubilities involved end up posing risks to the fight against doping in Brazil, as can be seen in the well-documented case of the ABCD's failure to test any athlete in the month prior to the Rio 2016 Olympics. Such a gap

– quite long and located in a crucial period, given the proximity to the Olympics – would allow the use of several banned substances that could lead athletes to perform better in the Olympics without control agencies being aware of it. Such a possibility was a risk that WADA was able to foresee, given that the presidential impeachment process lasted months. However, it was unable to act.

The media, legal and parliamentary reaction that was arranged to remove President Dilma Rousseff from office in 2016, on the eve of the Olympics, established a new order at the ABCD, with the return of the 'old association' of anti-doping actors and the resulting approximation to the IOC/COB/COL sports system. Finally, the coup brought about changes in Brazil's anti-doping policy.

Finally, it should be noted that instability in national policies can impact the integrity of anti-doping efforts, especially in those nations where anti-doping organizations are linked to state structures, as is the case in Brazil and several other countries. In the case of Brazil, there are ways to make anti-doping a state policy, not a government policy. The creation of permanent public positions, a change in status to a federal autarchy, which would give the agency greater relative managerial autonomy, and the stability of an independent budget forecast would be possible ways to reduce instability in the country's anti-doping integrity, but they depend on broad political mobilization for change.

Ethics approval and informed consent

The study followed integrity parameters in scientific research, as well as ethical research procedures. Its protocols were approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul under report 2081732.

Competing interests

The authors report that there are no competing interests to declare.

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