FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

LUTA CONTRA A CORRUPÇÃO NO CONTEXTO DA AGENDA DO DESENVOLVIMENTO NÃO SUSTENTÁVEL

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Abstract: The paper analyzes the possible risks borne by the implementation of mechanisms for constructing a new post-consumer reality within the framework of the UN Sustainable Development Agenda. The study considers research devoted to the analysis of changes in the economic and political situation provoked by the COVID-19 pandemic. The proposed scenario for the construction of a new political and social order transforms the mechanism of public goods distribution and creates preconditions and drivers for the reproduction of new forms of corruption. In the system of digital power of inclusive capitalism, the benefits of a carbon-neutral economy will only be available to the golden billion countries. Peripheral states will have to seek latent channels of redistribution of resources, which runs the risk of spreading political corruption.

Keywords: Domination. Power. Corrupt practices. The great reset. Communications. Pandemic. Modernity. Postmodernity. Digital dictatorship.

Resumo: O documento analisa os possíveis riscos suportados pela implementação de mecanismos para a construção de uma nova realidade pós-consumo no âmbito da Agenda das Nações Unidas para o Desenvolvimento Sustentável. O estudo considera pesquisas dedicadas à análise das mudanças na situação econômica e política provocadas pela pandemia da COVID-19. O cenário proposto para a construção de uma nova ordem política e social transforma o mecanismo de distribuição de bens públicos e cria condições prévias e propulsoras para a reprodução de novas formas de corrupção. No sistema do poder digital do capitalismo inclusivo, os benefícios de uma economia neutra em carbono só estarão disponíveis para os países do bilhão de ouro. Os Estados periféricos terão que buscar canais latentes de redistribuição de recursos, o que corre o risco de disseminar a corrupção política.

Palavras-chave: Dominação. Poder. Práticas corruptas. O grande reinício. As comunicações. Pandemia. A modernidade. A pós-modernidade. A ditadura digital.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only radically changed social reality but triggered the processes of global world transformation in the context of the green paradigm (Bekezhanov et al., 2021; Johan, 2022). In 2015, the UN summit adopted a program document titled "The Sustainable Development Agenda", which stipulated 17 goals (United Nations, 2015). To summarize the key provisions of this document, the sustainable development agenda refers to a complex of measures aimed at satisfying the current needs of mankind without compromising future generations. Sustainable development can be achieved with a balance of three main factors: economic growth, social responsibility, and ecological balance. These are not equally relevant for all corners of the world, but their attainment, as asserted by the authors of the UN agenda, will improve the quality of life of present and future generations. However, there is a question of how the world needs to change to achieve these ambitious goals and what the world will be like once they are realized. The outcomes depend on the strategies for the implementation of this large-scale goal. Sustainable development is broadly recognized as a pivotal aspect of global development and is being implemented in various forms in many countries around the world (Leal Filho et al., 2019). Nevertheless, the sustainable development agenda is not free of critical remarks. Skipping ahead, we note that the implementation of this concept has faced opposition from several countries, such as Russia, China, Iran, Brazil, and South Africa. These states see in it the danger of power imbalances and the prioritization of the needs of some countries to the detriment of others (Bekezhanov et al., 2021; Cruz et al., 2022; Hope, 2021).

For example, at UN sessions, Brazil has spoken out against several provisions of the agenda. In particular, the country voted against reporting on the impact of austerity measures on human rights at the Commission on Human Rights in March 2017. Brazil also did not support a draft text containing proposals on fiscal justice for women at the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2017 (Hope, 2021). Achieving the necessary SDG indicators is still a major challenge for the country (Cruz et al., 2022).

Summarizing the criticism of the sustainable development agenda, we highlight several provisions, which are heavily debated following the results of scientific research.

One frequently cited critical point is that the definition of sustainable development is often ambiguous and lacks a clear, universally accepted definition (Leal Filho et al., 2019). This lack of clarity can lead to inconsistent interpretations and problems in implementing sustainable development initiatives, making it difficult to achieve the goals.

Another argument is that the focus on economic growth in sustainability initiatives can lead to an overemphasis on economic concerns at the expense of environmental and social ones. This can translate into unsustainable practices harmful to the environment and communities (Strydom et al., 2019), even though they are consistent with economic objectives (Hope, 2021).

In addition, the implementation of sustainable development initiatives can also be hindered by a lack of financial and institutional support, as well as by insufficient involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including government, society, and business. On the one hand, adequate financial and non-financial resources are needed to ensure the timely achievement of sustainable development goals through public administration plans. However, there is a major gap between developed and less developed countries in terms of their ability to provide these funds (Biglari et al., 2022).

In this context, some newly emerging projects begin to consider the highlighted shortcomings. For example, there is the Planetary Project – a scientific theory and a practical program for creating a new economic base for a polycentric world in which each country can take its rightful place in the global division of labor and achieve a normal standard of living (Planetary Project, n.d.).

Thus, with all the importance of the sustainable development concept agenda, it is vital to critically assess and solve the problems arising in its implementation. With the right measures, it is possible to address these issues and move toward a more sustainable future. Studying the risks of sustainability strategies will be an important avenue for understanding the mechanisms of shaping the future of our planet.

Proceeding from the identified problem, the purpose of this study is to analyze the risks, including corruption, inherent in the UN Sustainable Development Agenda and the Great Reset Initiative by K. Schwab and T. Malleret in the light of the global crisis aggravated by the events of recent years, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. METHODS

The main subjects of the study were the UN Sustainable Development Agenda in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis and the Great Reset Initiative proposed by K. Schwabb and T. Malleret.

In the first five years since 2015, the UN agenda was rarely mentioned at international forums. The topic of sustainable development re-entered the focus of the world agenda with the publication of the book "Covid-19: The Great Reset" by the head of the Davos Economic Forum, Professor K. Schwabb and T. Malleret (2020). The main leitmotif of the book is pushing the narrative that the coronavirus pandemic offers a unique chance, a narrow window of opportunity to restart the world economy, reform the liberal capitalism system, and establish a sort of inclusive capitalism (stakeholder capitalism), which the authors believed to be much fairer than its predecessor.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Mechanism of Reproduction of Corruption in the Strategy of Constructing a Green Democracy

The UN Sustainable Development Agenda involves the goal of promoting "peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels" (goal 16). To achieve it, it is proposed to "substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms" (16.5) and "develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels" (16.6). However, to address this goal, it is important to understand that the mechanism of reproduction of corruption is universal and consists in a combination of economic, political, social, cultural, and mental factors that give rise to corrupt practices. An objective medium for the emergence and growth of corrupt practices is the public sphere — the sphere of power relations, the purpose of which is to create universal rules and allocate resources through managerial decisions. The matter is that any society needs to organize and regulate the joint activity of people. To this end, the state is established, the purpose of which is to express and realize common needs through administrative officials with decision-making functions. The state administration apparatus is designed to fairly distribute public goods: resources, rights, freedoms, and statuses. However, officials at all

levels of the power hierarchy can exercise the power prescribed to them at their discretion, which enables the abuse of power resources by officials.

To what extent the main points of the Great Reset (or nullification) are appropriate to the solution of these goals was voiced by K. Schwabb and Prince Charles of Wales in the summer of 2020 at the meeting in Davos. According to the project's authors, a new reality will emerge as a result of the realization of five main tracks along which the world must move: 1) restructuring world public opinion toward acceptance of the inevitable need to reset the economy, which is impossible without the consent of the world's population; according to the authors, the reset is the only chance to save humanity; 2) complete change in the economy designed to achieve sustainable development; 3) transition to a carbon-neutral economy through rejection of fossil fuels (oil, gas, coal), shutting down nuclear power, using only renewable energy sources, producing electricity in hydroelectric power plants, wind farms, and solar power plants, and the development of hydrogen fusion; 4) science and technology are set to receive new impetus as the world stands on the threshold of a radical breakthrough that will change all our values, paradigms, and discourses; 5) investment must be made in the creation of a green economy.

Part of the reason for postulating the sustainable development thesis is related to the threatening growth of the world's population, which has not kept pace with food growth. This is a sign of impending ecological catastrophe, which can only be averted if humanity agrees to the Great Reset. K. Schwabb promotes the idea of humanity not returning to the old way of life. Specifically, Schwab (2020) writes:

> Many of us are pondering when things will return to normal. The short response is: never. Nothing will ever return to the 'broken' sense of normalcy that prevailed prior to the crisis because the coronavirus pandemic marks a fundamental inflection point in our global trajectory. Some analysts call it a major bifurcation, others refer to a deep crisis of 'biblical' proportions, but the essence remains the same: the world as we knew it in the early months of 2020 is no more, dissolved in the context of the pandemic… We will continue to be surprised by both the rapidity and unexpected nature of these changes – as they conflate with each other, they will provoke second-, third-, fourth- and more-order consequences, cascading effects and unforeseen outcomes. In so doing, they will shape a 'new normal' radically different from the one we will be progressively leaving behind. Many of our beliefs and assumptions about what the world could or should look like will be shattered in the process. (p. 25).

After the pandemic, the main directions for the construction of a new world order will be: 1) combating climate change; 2) fighting for gender equality; 3) securing LGBTQ

rights; and 4) a green economy. The authors of the Great Reset Initiative are trying to convince the world that change is a fact of life:

> When confronted with it, some industry leaders and senior executives may be tempted to equate reset with restart, hoping to go back to the old normal and restore what worked in the past: traditions, tested procedures and familiar ways of doing things – in short, a return to business as usual. This won't happen because it can't happen. (Schwab & Malleret, 2020, p. 46).

Under these conditions, the fate of the nation state is already sealed:

> Failing to address and fix the deep-rooted ills of our societies and economies could heighten the risk that, as throughout history, ultimately a reset will be imposed by violent shocks like conflicts and even revolutions. It is incumbent upon us to take the bull by the horns. The pandemic gives us this chance: it 'represents a rare but narrow window of opportunity to reflect, reimagine and reset our world' <…> if both democracy and globalization expand, there is no place for the nation state". In the inevitable future of stakeholder capitalism, "unaccountable groups of experts <…> will decide everything, and global corporations with social responsibility must stand behind them. (Schwab & Malleret, 2020, p. 112).

In reality, the goal of this campaign for supposedly fair capitalism is an attempt by the collective West to maintain its dominant position and to demand a redistribution of all resources at the expense of the middle and lower classes, who are now protected by the institutions of modernity and the achievements of the class struggle of the proletariat over the last 200 years. They must be nullified and discarded, which is the real essence of the Great Reset. The mass media try to pass this project off as some kind of socialism, which K. Schwabb defined as "welfare on the basis of equality". In this case, the uncomfortable details of the proposed Great Reset Initiative are covered by Schwabb in a very general and indirect way.

The same positioning of the new society was chosen by the former Danish Minister of the Environment and a member of the World Economic Forum I. Auken. She wrote a New World Order manifesto titled "Welcome To 2030: I Own Nothing, Have No Privacy And Life Has Never Been Better" (Auken, 2016). The brave new world, which resembles many famous dystopias, will look like this: "Welcome to the year 2030. Welcome to my city – or should I say, 'our city'. I don't own anything. I don't own a car. I don't own a house. I don't own any appliances or any clothes… Once in a while I get annoyed about the fact that I have no real privacy. Nowhere I can go and not be registered. I know that,

somewhere, everything I do, think and dream of is recorded. I just hope that nobody will use it against me" (3, electronic resource).

Without hesitation, K. Schwabb speaks of the inevitability of withdrawing the rest of human rights (the abolition of the first batch of rights was, in his opinion, a consequence of September 11, 2001), trying to portray this process as the natural course of events. He offers to surrender the remaining rights in exchange for medical security. In so doing, he trusts that corporations and governments that possess personal information will not misuse it: "Now that information and communication technologies permeate almost every aspect of our lives and forms of social participation, any digital experience that we have can be turned into a 'product' destined to monitor and anticipate our behaviour" (Schwab & Malleret, 2020, p. 105). The digital society thus establishes the model of a panopticon society – total digital control of the individual. The advent of a period of surveillance capitalism is reflected in the book "The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future on the New Frontier of Power" by S. Zuboff (2022). Global technology companies (Google, Twitter, Facebook) have convinced millions of ordinary people to give up privacy for convenience. In the era of digital capitalism, customers are seen as sources of data, and supervisory capitalism transforms economics, politics, society, and individual life, creating a model of techno-dictatorship that combines an anti-democratic asymmetry of knowledge and power that is contained in knowledge. In the coming years, the tradeoff between the benefits of public health and the loss of privacy will be carefully weighed, becoming a topic of heated debate. Most people, wary of the danger posed by COVID-19, will ask: "Isn't it foolish not to harness the power of technology to come to our aid when we are victims of the outbreak and are faced with a life-or-death situation?" Then they will be willing to give up much of their private lives and accept that in this situation state power can rightfully prevail over the rights of the individual. When the crisis is over, citizens may realize that their country has suddenly become a place they no longer want to live in. This thought process is not anything novel. In recent years, governments and corporations have used increasingly sophisticated technology to control customers, actively manipulating citizens and employees. The pandemic could be an important divide in the history of monitoring the individual, a covert invasion of privacy if one is not vigilant. The argument advanced by those who most fear the impact of technology on personal freedom is simple: in the name of public health, some elements of personal privacy will be set aside for the sake of combating the pandemic. Similarly, the

terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 against the United States caused total and unprecedented security measures worldwide. The 17th-century Dutch philosopher B. Spinoza, who resisted repressive power his whole life, once remarked: "There can be no hope without fear, and no fear without hope". Nothing is inevitable if one can adequately recognize the positive and negative consequences of new corrupt practices. To do so, however, we must know how they are formed.

3.2 Corrupt Practices in the Age of Inclusive Capitalism

One of the people to introduce the term "social practices" into science was the French sociologist P. Bourdieu. He was the first to draw attention not to institutions and structures, but to how people interact. By practices, he understood interactions between people in a specific situation. The nature of practices is dual:

> Because they tend to reproduce the regularities immanent in the conditions in which their generative principle was produced while adjusting to the demands inscribed as objective potentialities in the situation as defined by the cognitive and motivating structures that constitute the *habitus*, practices cannot be deduced either from the present conditions which may seem to have provoked them or from the past conditions which have produced the *habitus*, the durable principle of their production. (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 109).

Habitus is defined as a "a subjective but not individual system of internalised structures, schemes of perception, conception, and action common to all members of the same group or class" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 86). Complementing Bourdieu's position, the American sociologist R. Brubaker (2012, p. 69) sees practices as a category that reflects the activity of mastering everyday social experience.

Corrupt practices are informal interactions relating to the use of power by officials; they are the cogs that make social institutions carry out the commands given by them in the process of their operation. In this sense, corrupt practices are understood as a process of reproduction of meanings, signs, stereotypes, and rules that define the use of an official's position for personal enrichment. Formal corrupt practices (as a form of gaps in the law), in case of their moral obsolescence, can be relatively easily annihilated and changed, in contrast to informal practices, which are entrenched and difficult to modify.

K. Schwabb's initiative proposes a mechanism for such a change. This initiative is a global project of creating a new world order, which is realized within the UN Sustainable Development Agenda and is implemented under the guise of achieving well-being based on

equality. In actuality, it represents a reformatting of the model of Anglo-Saxon domination in the new context of a multipolar world and the collapse of US hegemony. The modern era saw a transition to a new paradigm of domination and subordination: from the control of the body through a system of punishment, through legitimate violence, to the control of mass consciousness by elites via the manipulation of public opinion and symbolic violence. This process was made possible by the development of mass communication: the advent of radio and television, which made it possible to reach vast numbers of people whose consciousness had previously remained out of reach. In the post-modern era, the emergence of the Internet has opened up opportunities to reach target audiences regardless of their location and construct the entirety of their demands and expectations. A powerful instrument of manipulative influence in the process of constructing a picture of the new hyper-reality, along with the social, was the institution of public opinion, which provided control over pleasure in the process of consuming symbols and signs. This domination is accomplished through total control over traditional and new media and messengers, which is achieved via framing (creating a framework of message meanings) and gatekeeping technologies (filtering and withdrawal of information detrimental to the goals set). In the postmodern era, the reproduction of the universal practices of left-liberal globalism, represented by the Great Reset initiative, takes place under the guise of implementing the concept of sustainable development and concern for humanity. In the system of digital power of inclusive capitalism, the widely advertised benefits of a carbon-neutral economy will be imposed on citizens through new forms of political domination, at the core of which will be the instruments of symbolic violence. Through the techniques of symbolic positioning and cancel culture, political elites interpret the content of political reality and impose the logic of its development. In turn, the symbols and images of leaders are transformed into structures that form institutionalized meanings and interpretations, codes for the new political identification of citizens of humane and inclusive capitalism, whose purpose in life is not only consumption but also entertainment. In the face of limited resources and in the struggle to support new voters for humane and inclusive capitalism, elites and leaders will compete to invent rules for redistributing the public good of green democracy in their favor.

4. CONCLUSION

Sustainable development has become a topic of interest in recent years as countries and organizations work to balance economic growth with environmental and social commitments. Despite the potential benefits of this strategy, we must not ignore the criticism of the Sustainable Development Agenda, which draws attention to the possible difficulties of its realization. On the one hand, states do not have adequate funds for stable and equal funding of programs. On the other hand, if most people in society do not share the values of sustainable development, they will not effectively address urgent global problems by focusing on legitimate practices. The risks of the development of corrupt mechanisms, which are often persistent, will increase.

The COVID-19 pandemic has only heightened these fears as the impact of the pandemic on the global economy and environment has become more evident. Critics argue that a focus on sustainability could lead to unintended consequences, such as reduced economic activity and increased poverty. Moreover, the pandemic has exposed the vulnerability of global supply chains and the risks associated with dependence on just a few countries for critical goods and resources.

To address these problems, the sustainable development strategy proposes several measures to minimize corruption and increase transparency in the implementation of sustainable development goals. These measures include increasing public participation in decision-making processes, using technology to track resource allocation, and strengthening anti-corruption institutions. If civic initiatives in the state are underdeveloped and political elites are not focused on democratic values, it is difficult to counteract the mechanisms of corruption because the balance of power is disturbed.

We believe that the study of sustainability strategies remains an ongoing process, and prospects for sustainability remain uncertain. As the world continuously faces new challenges (major international conflicts, man-made disasters), it is important to continue evaluating and adjusting sustainable development strategies to achieve a balance between economic growth, environmental protection, and social well-being.

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