

**COUNTRY FACTSHEET**

BRAZIL

Attempts to constrain the deterioration  
of existing climate policies

**Contributions of civil society to climate policies in Brazil**

# Brazil – Attempts to constrain the deterioration of existing climate policies

The global relevance of the protection of primary forests as in the Amazon region makes the climate policy ambitions of Brazil extraordinarily relevant. With regard to this, a colourful and well-organised civil society campaigns against the deterioration of existing climate policies.

## Climate policy in Brazil

In several ways Brazil is of high relevance in international climate politics: On one hand, Brazil ranks seventh in the list of global greenhouse gas emitting countries.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Brazil possesses great potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

<u>Climate policy Brazil</u>	
<b>Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI 2019)</b>	
• Overall value	average (Rank 22)
• National climate policy	51,4 of 100
<b>Civic space</b>	
• CIVICUS monitor	obstructed
• Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2018	
Freedom of expression	8 of 10
Civil society traditions	3 of 10
Civil society participation	7 of 10
Association/ assembly rights	9 of 10

simply by reducing primary forest deforestation, which cover 4 Mio. km<sup>2</sup> and are thus the largest worldwide next to Russian primary forests.<sup>2</sup>

In the context of the Paris agreement the South American country committed itself to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to 1300 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>e by 2025 and to 1200 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>e by 2030. This equates an emission reduction in comparison to 2005 of 37% and 43% respectively.<sup>3</sup> According to the NDCs, the reduction shall be realized by reforestation and the restriction of illegal deforestation until 2030 as well as an increase of the share of renewable energies in the energy system to 45% by 2030.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, international experts as well as civil society organizations consider the NDCs of Brazil as rather not ambitious and question Brazil's compliance even with these goals.<sup>5 6 7 8</sup>

The climate policy framework of Brazil contains the *National Plan on Climate*

<sup>1</sup> In 2014, including emissions from land use changes. EU Member States were counted as one emitter. Source: World Resources Institute (WRI, 2017): CAIT Climate Data Explorer

<sup>2</sup> World Bank (2015)

<sup>3</sup> Federative Republic of Brazil (2015)

<sup>4</sup> Federative Republic of Brazil (2015), Climate Action Tracker (2016)

<sup>5</sup> ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Rezende de Azevedo, Tasso et al. (2016)

<sup>7</sup> Morena, Camila (2017)

<sup>8</sup> Angelo, Mauricio (2017)

*Change (Plano Nacional sobre Mudança do Clima - PNMC), the Brazilian Forest Code (Código Floresta), the Brazilian System of Protected Areas (SNUC) and sector plans for climate protection on a national level. Following the adoption, the implementation of these policies should be coordinated, observed and evaluated. Instead, in 2012 the Brazilian Forest Code was severely weakened by the Brazilian Forest Law Reform<sup>9,10</sup> and Interim President Michel Temer drastically cut the Environmental Ministry's budget and slackened deforestation restrictions.<sup>11,12</sup> The recent President Jair Bolsonaro aims to further reduce these restrictions and also dissolved the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) handing reservation demarcations to the Agriculture Ministry.<sup>13</sup> Yet, in spite of Brazil's withdrawal from hosting COP25<sup>14</sup> it is not clear until now whether Brazil is to withdraw from the Paris agreement as proclaimed as well.<sup>15</sup> The latest deforestation counts illustrate this policy change: After deforestation rates constantly decreased until 2014 they began to distinctly increase again ever since then.<sup>16</sup>*

## Climate-driven civil society in Brazil

Although the Constitution of Brazil guarantees freedom of expression and freedom of assembly NGO work is heavily restricted by violence against activists and journalists, juridical censorship, a homogenous media landscape and restrained access to international support.<sup>17,18</sup> The actual influence of the partly institutionalized civil society participation in co-managing public policies by committees or councils vary. The most important participatory council – *Fórum Brasileiro Mudanças Climáticas (FBMC)* – although staffed with high-level actors and stakeholders from politics, the economy and civil society<sup>19</sup>, was lately criticized due to its lack of transparency, unequal composition and its low significance for national climate policy decisions.<sup>20,21</sup> The assurance of the Temer government to promote participation possibilities for civil society and to adhere to the rights of traditional and indigenous groups when implementing the NDCs is endangered since the amalgamation of the responsible institutions.<sup>22,23</sup>

<sup>9</sup> WWF Brasil (2012)

<sup>10</sup> Folha de S. Paulo (2011)

<sup>11</sup> Contas Abertas (2017)

<sup>12</sup> O Tempo (2017)

<sup>13</sup> Die Zeit (2019)

<sup>14</sup> Süddeutsche Zeitung (2018)

<sup>15</sup> Bertelsmann Transformation Index (2018)

<sup>16</sup> INPE (2017)

<sup>17</sup> CIVICUS (2017)

<sup>18</sup> Bertelsmann Transformation Index (2018)

<sup>19</sup> Chaired by the Brazilian president the FBMC is composed of 15 Ministers, chairpersons of the most important national regulatory and fiscal authorities, officeholder from the legislative, federal states and their capitals as well as actors from science, the economy and civil society. Source: Presidente da República Federativa do Brasil (2017)

<sup>20</sup> Interviews for the final report of the project *Strengthen Civil Society for the implementation of national climate policy*

<sup>21</sup> Grupo Carta de Belém (2016)

<sup>22</sup> Die Zeit (2019)

<sup>23</sup> Girardi, Giovana / PROCLIMA (2019)

The climate-driven civil society in Brazil can be described as a professional, well-informed and science-oriented movement connecting climate with social issues.<sup>24</sup> NGOs are primarily financed by international donors and mainly deal with climate change as a cross-cutting issue by integrating it in their work on conflicts about land and resources, environmental crimes and social justice.<sup>25</sup>

Important civil society networks regarding national climate policies are the *Observatório do Clima (OC)* and the *Grupo Carta de Belém (GCB)*. While many international environmental protection organizations and research institutes are members of the *OC*, the *GCB* mainly consists of regionally active NGOs representing e.g. indigenous people, workers or peasants. Thus, the connection between social and ecological issues is especially strong with *GCB*. The networks also differ in their position towards market-oriented climate protection instruments such as REDD+, green economy and payments for ecosystem services.<sup>26</sup> The *OC* is rather open towards these and cooperates with government agencies although both networks lately also criticised government action.<sup>27</sup>

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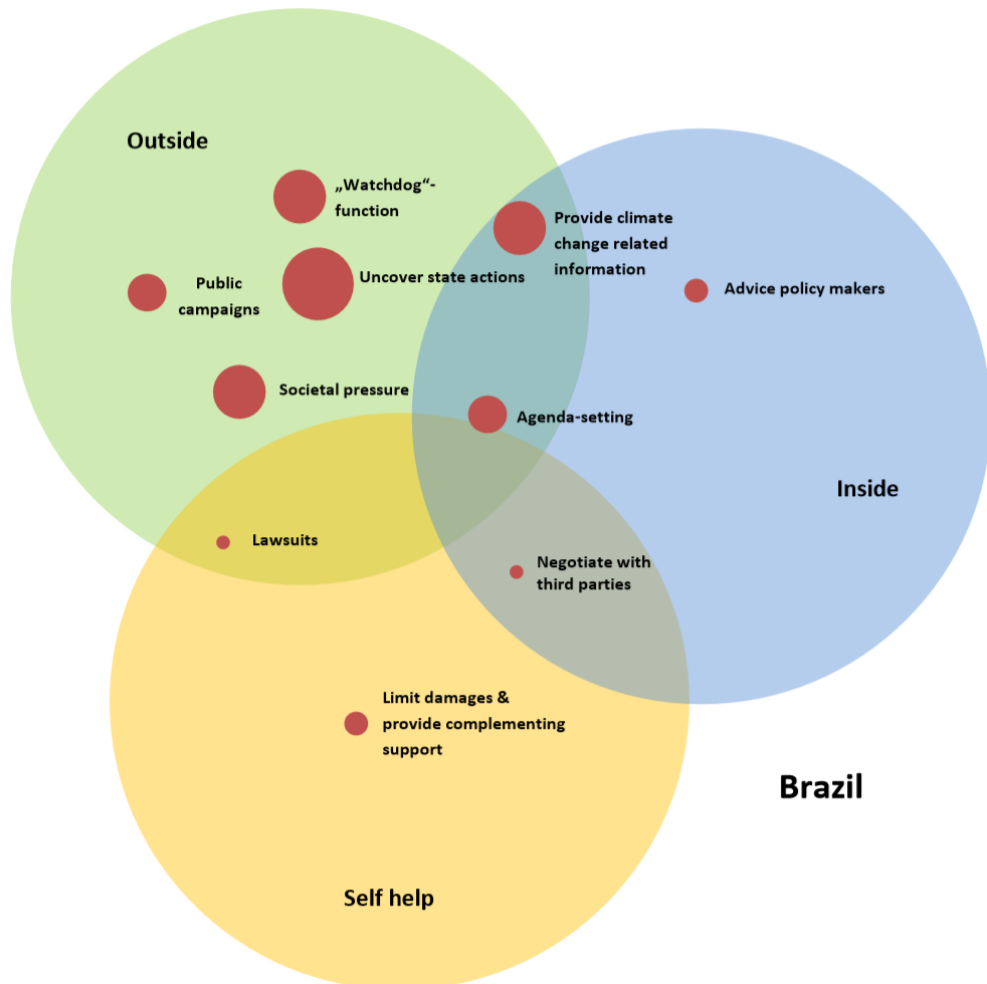
<sup>24</sup> Segebart et al. (2013)

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> See for example: Grupo Carta de Belém (2015), Observatório do Clima (2018a)

## Climate-driven civil society activities in Brazil



**Figure 1: Activities of the climate-driven civil society in Brazil. The larger the dots the more important the respective activity. (own source)**

There is an active civil society in Brazil that considers climate change an important issue. In order to participate in the national climate policy discussions Brazil's civil society has united in two networks, the *OC* and *GCB* (see above). While the *GCB* member organizations agreed on common guidelines with regard to climate issues, the *OC* has issued detailed propositions for Brazil's NDCs. National climate networks are not only of advantage to NGOs in terms of the positioning of their own climate policy claims, but they are also necessary to use the often limited resources of (sub-)national grassroots organizations to participate in climate policy activities as effective as possible.

An important part of the climate policy work of both networks is the supervision of climate relevant government actions. Both networks provide information on the latest developments of the Brazilian climate policy on their homepages. This comprises critical contributions like the exposition of bills with foreseeable harmful effects on the climate or explanations of the links between forest and climate policies.<sup>28</sup> Thus, both climate networks consider themselves government “watchdogs”.

Further, both networks use their homepages to present their respective positions which were developed in cooperation with, among others, smaller and only locally active organizations. While *OC*'s work mainly focuses on influencing national climate policies, *GCB* rather engages in educational work, e.g. sustainability schools in urban and rural regions.

Both networks consider campaigns part of their work although these are not at all as far reaching as campaigns of civil societies in European countries.

Often climate and environmental issues are linked with social problems in Brazil, which reflects the strong interlinkage of the discourses on land rights and climate protection. An example for this is the participation of *CGB* members in demonstrations organized by the *Resistal* alliance against social and ecological regressions of the Temer government.<sup>29</sup> In general, climate policy protests are planned mainly on the organizational level and only rarely on the network level.

Although climate related lawsuits do not yet play a role in Brazil, Brazilian NGOs make use of the legal system in their work on climate relevant subtopics, such as land rights, in order to enforce their claims.

Yet, both Brazilian climate networks cooperate with the government: The *OC* holds a seat in the FBMC and the *GCB* contributes to the national council on REDD+ (CONAREDD).<sup>30</sup> Overall, it seems that the *OC* interacts with decision makers on a much more regular basis since *GCB* cooperation with government agencies is rather rare. This is due to limited resources as well as political differences. However, on a subnational level the *GCB* maintains good and regular contacts with local government institutions in order to advice these on the implementation of socially acceptable climate policies.

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<sup>28</sup> E.g. Observatório do Clima (2018b)

<sup>29</sup> Grupo Carta de Belém

<sup>30</sup> Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Brasil (2016)

## Methodologies and definitions

In order to clarify the scope of this research, this chapter gives a definition of the key terms and the indicators used to analyse climate-driven civil society groups in different countries. The indicators were chosen based on a literature research. Also, it shortly introduces the central activities and capacities of civil society groups to advocate their interest, and the way they have been analysed in the examined country contexts.

### Definition of terms

In contrast to the United Nations which define NGOs as all non-governmental actors,<sup>31</sup> this analysis mostly refers to NGOs as all (sub-)national organizations that are organizationally structured, refrain from violence, act in alignment with human rights, make moral claims and claim to represent universal societal interests. In doing so, these publicly acting non-profit-organizations aim to influence political decisions on climate change and climate change adaptation<sup>32</sup> but have not been initiated by government initiatives. Consequently, trade associations, commercial associations and labour unions are excepted from this definition.<sup>33</sup> The analysis thereby focuses on cross-organizational structures, whereby important groups and tendencies within the climate-driven societies – if existing – were considered as well.

The term **climate-driven civil society (groups)** comprises all environmental organizations that deal with climate change. This includes NGOs primarily dealing with climate change related issues as well as environmental organizations covering climate change as a cross-cutting issue or as one independent issue among others.

**Civic space** refers to the conditions enabling civil societies to act. To assess the civic space, the preservation of civil rights, such as freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, and the facilitation of their exercise are taken into account as well as the restriction of bureaucracy, excessive regulation and state control of foreign funding. Also, regarding civil society engagement on climate change related topics, the existence and promotion of, as well as access to (official) participatory processes dealing with climate policies is relevant for the assessment.<sup>35</sup> This includes climate policy committees as well as possibilities to participate in planning committees for climate relevant policies of other line ministries.

For the comparability of civil society activities in different countries, several indices have been used. The respective scores can be found in the country fact

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<sup>31</sup> See Brunnengräber, Achim (2011)

<sup>32</sup> See Brunnengräber et al. (2005)

<sup>33</sup> Roth, Roland (2005)

<sup>34</sup> See Brunnengräber, Achim (2011)

<sup>35</sup> Heinrich Böll Stiftung et al. (2016)

sheets at the end of this report.

The *Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI)* was used for an assessment of the current climate policies of each country. This index assesses the NDC's ambition levels in addition to climate policy developments on a national scale.<sup>36</sup>

The *CIVICUS Index*<sup>37</sup> as well as the *Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI)*<sup>38</sup> categories "Freedom of expression", "Civil society traditions", "Civil society participation" and "Association/ assembly rights" were drawn on to assess the civic space of each country examined. Countries not included in any of these indices were marked accordingly. Significant discrepancies between the indices' ratings and the authors' evaluation based on interviews or personal experience were explained in more detail in the texts.

Some sources used in this paper refer to the final report of the project *Strengthening civil society in the implementation of national climate policy* as well as to interviews conducted as part of it with experts in the field of climate policy and civil society and with representatives of the climate-driven civil society.

## Activities of climate-driven civil society groups

Civil society organizations engage in different ways to make their voices heard by decision makers. Their climate policy related work includes the following

- Observation and definition of climate change related problems
- Provide civic education on climate politics

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<sup>36</sup> The Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) assesses and compares the climate protection performance of 56 countries as well as member states of the EU. Based on the analysis of 14 indices evaluating greenhouse gas emissions, renewable energies, energy use and climate policies the climate protection performance is categorized as very high, high, medium, low and very low and ranked accordingly. Here it is important to note that no country's climate protection performance was ranked very high and the top three ranks were left vacant in order to raise awareness for the generally low performance. The subcategory national climate policy comprises the latest political climate protection activities and was scored between 0 (no climate protection activities) to 100 (maximum performance) by experts of local NGOs. For further information see: <https://www.climate-change-performance-index.org/>

<sup>37</sup> The CIVICUS Index evaluates the scope of action for civil societies in different countries and categorizes these in descending order as open, narrow, obstructed, repressed or closed. Thereby, CIVICUS mainly analyses to what extent the government and government institutions attend to their duty to guarantee assembly rights, association rights and freedom of expression. The index is mainly based on expert evaluations and the latest data from the respective countries. For further information see: <https://monitor.civicus.org/methodology/>

<sup>38</sup> The Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) assesses the status of the political transformation towards democracy and the transformation management of different states according to 10 categories and 38 subcategories. A score from 1 to 10 differentiates between total Autocracies (1) and Democracies in consolidation (10) in the category Democracy Status, and between failed, weak, moderate, good and very good in the Governance Index. The subcategories used in this study are those connected to civil society work. These are also scored from 1 to 10. 1 indicating a lack of tradition of civil society organizations, no assembly or association rights and no possibilities for civil society participation. Whereas 10 indicates diverse, longstanding civil society traditions as well as extensive possibilities for civil society participation and guaranteed assembly and association rights. For further information see: <https://www.bti-project.org/>

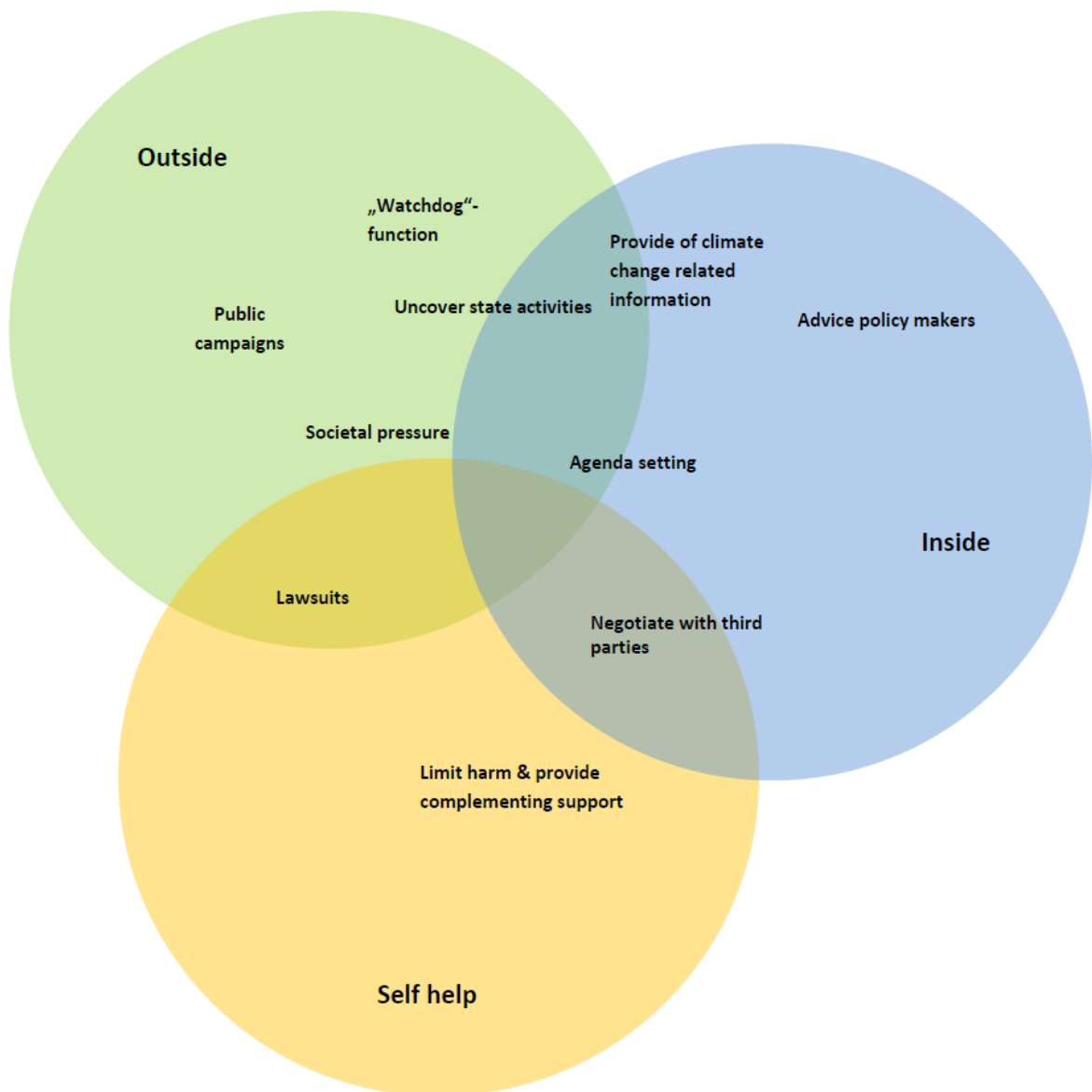


- Provide public information on and transparency in climate change related topics
  - Control state compliance with its commitment on climate action
  - Campaign work
  - Exert societal pressure by demonstrations and the unification of individuals and groups with the same interests
  - Limit harm in case of state failure
  - Lawsuits
- Provide expertise and advocacy by directly cooperating with decision makers

Roth et al. (2005) differentiate these activities between (1) partly institutionalized, legal ways of participation in cooperation with decision makers or legal forms of criticism such as demonstrations (“**Inside**” according to Roth et al. (2015), also Inside-Strategies) and (2) spaces for political discourse and critical reflection on climate policies or civic education on climate policies (“**Outside**”, also Outside-Strategies). Another compilation of political activities “**Self help**” (3) was introduced by Müller et al. (2014). Self help comprises measures to improve the situation of those affected by climate change or reduce negative effects on them. In

For the analysis of the activities of climate-driven civil society, we have focused on the activities listed above, while we categorized them in consideration of the work of the authors listed above. The figure resulting from this categorization was used to summarize and to display the climate policy related activities in the surveyed countries. In the country factsheets, the activities related to each category are represented by a red dot. The size of the red dots indicates the amount of work taking place in that specific field. The results are based on scientific publications as well as interviews with experts and representatives of the climate-driven civil society of the respective countries. Thus, the score is to a certain degree subjective and can only serve as orientation.

Some sources used in this paper refer to the final report of the project *Strengthen Civil Society for the implementation of national climate policy* as well as to interviews conducted as part of it with experts in the field of climate policy and civil society or with representatives of the climate-driven civil society.



**Figure 2: Climate policy related activities of the climate-driven civil society categorized according to the sections Inside, Outside and Self help (own figure).**

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