



The Implications of Closing Civic Space for Sustainable Development in Brazil

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April 2019

Citation: Sauer, S.; Leite, A.; Oliveira, K. and Shankland, A. (2019) 'The Implications of Closing Civic Space for Sustainable Development in Brazil', mimeo, IDS and ACT Alliance



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Summary

This report on Brazil is one of a set of four country case studies designed to study the implications of closing civic space for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The case study was commissioned in response to the wave of legal, administrative, political and informal means to restrict civic space and the activities of civil society actors in countries around the world in the past decade. Based on a literature review and conceptual framework developed for the study (see also Hossain *et al* 2018), the report documents how changing civic space in Brazil, a country characterized as a competitive developmental state at the outset of the period analysed, has impacted on development outcomes, with a focus on specific Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) outcomes including poverty, hunger, inequality and the preservation of biodiversity and water resources.

The study found that:

- Almost three decades of imperfect and unequal democracy in Brazil saw a flourishing of civil society engagement with state poverty and development policies, particularly under the Workers' Party government of 2003-2016. Inequalities declined and the poorest and most marginalized saw relatively rapid development gains. Brazil also played an international role in influencing development policies beyond the country's borders and shaping the SDG agenda in the wake of the 2012 Rio+20 summit.
- Since the economic and political crisis surrounding the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff in 2016, there have been signs of rapid reversal. Backed by the increasingly powerful rural caucus, which represents groups with interests in land and natural resources in Congress, there has been a rise in attacks on and criminalization of agrarian movements, organisations and their leaders. Hundreds of activists and rights defenders have been killed since 2016. There are now fears that the situation will worsen still further under the government of the extreme right-wing President Jair Bolsonaro, elected in October 2018.
- The crackdown on Brazil's civil society disproportionately affects four million members of the 'traditional peoples and communities' (PCTs), the majority of the country's rural poor and a significant proportion of all Brazilians living in poverty. PCTs are communities, often of indigenous and/or African descent, whose livelihood systems depend on collective management of diverse landscapes. These groups won significant government recognition and some strengthening of their rights over land during the Workers' Party government, but progress has slowed, and in some instances reversed, since the 2016 impeachment.
- SDGs 1 and 2 (ending poverty and zero hunger) are particularly likely to be affected through changes in key participation spaces and policies (including land titling, cash transfers and food purchase programmes) with which civil society organisations have engaged in the past.
- SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) is affected, as organized civil society has been fundamental for giving visibility and promoting inclusion of PCTs and other marginalised rural populations in the Brazilian citizenship and social justice agenda. In the current climate of impunity for attacks on rural activism, the study examines the establishment of the National Council for Traditional Peoples and Communities (CNPCT), and the role of social movements and NGO allies in resisting pressure on PCT territories from agribusiness and extractive industries and attacks on rights defenders.
- SDG 6 (water and sanitation) and SDG 15 (life on land) are also being affected, substantially because the protection of PCT and other rural territories is not only of fundamental importance for human rights, but also for environmental goals. Civil society organizations, working with PCT groups and movements, have a key role to play in Brazil's efforts to improve water management and halt biodiversity loss.

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Acknowledgements

The study team would like to thank all those who gave so generously of their time and shared their insights so openly in participating in interviews and FGDs, as well as Christine Meissler, Maren Leifker and Tina Kleiber of BFDW and Una Hombrecher of HEKS for advice on key issues and informants and thoughtful feedback on earlier drafts of this report, and especially Vicente Puhl, Juliana Miranda and colleagues from the Brazil office of HEKS for supporting the study from its outset and for facilitating the organisation of the focus group discussions and interviews during the fieldwork phase.

1. Introduction

Background

This report on Brazil is one of a set of four country case studies designed to study the implications of closing civic space for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It adopts a theoretical and analytical framework developed in a synthesis report entitled *The Implications of Closing Civic Space for Development* (set out in more detail in Hossain *et al* 2018). The study was commissioned from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) by the Act Alliance during 2017-18, in response to the wave of legal, administrative, political and informal means to restrict civic space and the activities of civil society actors in countries around the world in the past decade. It was motivated specifically by the need to assess the implications for development outcomes, as measured by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This reflects the wide body of evidence that civil society has played a significant role in promoting inclusive, equitable and sustainable modes of development in the past, and reasonable concerns that closures of civic space may choke off pathways to the achievement of the SDGs.

The study comprised:

- a review of the literature on closing civic space, and the development of a conceptual and methodological framework for further study
- an application of these frameworks to a desk-based analysis of the potential development implications of closing civic space in 12 selected countries of interest to the Act Alliance and its wider partnerships, classified according to the degree of competitiveness in their political settlement and to their elites' levels of capacity and commitment to inclusive development
- a subset of country case studies selected from the 12 for more detailed and empirical analysis of development impacts in selected policy domains (land rights, labour rights, social inclusion, gender equality, poverty, hunger, and urban livelihoods), where identified as of potential relevance in four countries with a distribution of political settlement regimes. These countries were a relatively established (if intermittent) democracy with a strong record on inclusive development (Brazil), an increasingly dominant hybrid regime with a mixed record on development (Cambodia), a new democracy with a constitutional mandate for inclusion (Nepal), and a predatory authoritarian regime (Zimbabwe).

The Brazil country case study

Within the wider study, Brazil was selected as an example of a 'competitive developmental' political settlement and because of its globally-recognised success in poverty and inequality reduction, prior to the advent of the current political crisis. The study on Brazil focuses on two key issues for the relationship between civil society space in the country and its ability to progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The first is the acceleration of land-grabbing and environmental destruction in indigenous and 'traditional community' (PCT) territories by agribusiness and large infrastructure projects, including impunity of those responsible for violence against land and environmental rights defenders. The second key issue is the closing down of spaces for the co-construction of pro-poor policies by rural social movements and their allies through formal participation spaces. The SDGs relating to these issues are SDG 1 (end poverty) SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 6 (water and sanitation, including the impact of deforestation in PCT territories on increased drought frequency, as well as the closing of space for PCT participation in river basin management), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities, in this case particularly inequalities in income and in access to services), and SDG 15 (life on land, including impacts of land-grabbing on biodiversity).

The Brazil study was conducted by a leading Brazilian specialist in agrarian development and the struggles of PCTs, Professor Sérgio Sauer of the University of Brasília, working with two colleagues

(Acácio Leite and Karla Oliveira) who have experience not only of conducting social research but also of working in relevant policy areas within the Brazilian government. The study was designed in collaboration with IDS researcher Alex Shankland, who also participated in the main phase of fieldwork in March 2018 and in writing up, editing and revising this report.

This fieldwork centred on two major events in 2018 bringing together researchers and civil society activists working on issues relevant to the study: the World Social Forum (WSF) in Salvador, and the Alternative World Water Forum (FAMA) in Brasília. The methodology combined participant observation in these events and interviews with key informants present at them with a series of focus group discussions (FGDs). The first FGD, with civil society leaders working across different development-related sectors and movements, was hosted by Act Alliance partner HEKS and leading Salvador-based civil society organisation CESE and held shortly before the start of the WSF. The second FGD, with activists linked to the Social, Economic, Cultural and Environmental Rights Network (Plataforma DHESCA), was held on the fringes of the WSF itself. The third FGD brought together PCT movement leaders and members of movement support NGOs from across the country, and was held on the fringes of the FAMA in Brasília. Data from these interviews and FGDs was combined with analysis of Brazilian government data and additional literature review activities to complement those already carried out during the scoping study phase of the project.

Study overview

Over the course of close to three decades of imperfect and unequal democracy following the 1988 post-dictatorship Constitution, Brazil saw a flourishing of civil society engagement with poverty reduction and sustainable development. Following the end of hyperinflation in 1994, social indicators began to improve, albeit slowly. There was a major acceleration in the period between 2003 and 2015, which saw significant poverty reduction and an improvement in indicators of social and economic inequality (Campello 2017). However, this improvement began to stagnate during the period of economic and political crisis that culminated in the impeachment of Workers' Party (PT) President Dilma Rousseff in 2016, and showed signs of rapid reversal under her immediate successor (and former vice-president) Michel Temer (Campello and Teixeira 2017; DIEESE 2016). Under the influence of and supported by the increasingly powerful rural caucus (*'bancada ruralista'*), a cross-party group which represents agribusiness and other rural landowning interests in Congress, the Temer government promoted a "return to increasingly regressive modes of extraction and exclusion" in the Brazilian countryside (Wolford and Sauer 2018).

Grassroots and civil society resistance to land- and resource-grabbing and environmental destruction has been met with increasing violence against and criminalization of agrarian movements and their leaders. Legislative bills sought to characterize the MST (the most important social movement engaged in the rural land struggle) and the MTST (which leads the struggle for housing rights in urban Brazil) as terrorist groups, and other legal actions were launched in an attempt to criminalize civil society activists. In both 2016 and 2017 Brazil had more murders of peasants, indigenous leaders, land and environmental rights defenders than any other country (Global Witness 2017; 2018). According to CPT (2018), 70 people were killed in the Brazilian countryside in 2017, the highest number of cases since 2003. Another 188 indigenous people were killed in 2016, according to Cimi (2017), causing Brazil's international reputation to become associated with impunity, denial of justice and lack of respect for life. The aggressively anti-indigenous and anti-social movement declarations made by the current President Jair Bolsonaro and his Vice-Presidential candidate General Hamilton Mourão during the 2018 election campaign have raised fears that this trend may worsen under the new government.

The segments of the rural population most vulnerable to this trend include Brazil's more than 300 indigenous peoples and the other social groups collectively known as 'traditional peoples and

communities' (*povos e comunidades tradicionais* or PCTs), numbering around 4 million people. PCTs, along with landless households, account for most of the country's rural poor, and a significant proportion of all Brazilians living in poverty and extreme poverty. PCTs are typically communities of indigenous and/or African descent and other communities whose livelihood systems depend on collective management of diverse landscapes (Little 2002; Almeida 2008). These territories, which together cover around a quarter of Brazil's territory, are home to most of the country's biodiversity, and the source of much of its fresh water. The latter is an increasingly critical issue given climatic changes that have led to large parts of the country suffering intense water stress in recent years.

After 1988, as part of the process of re-democratization, these communities developed organizations and movements, intensifying mobilizations and struggles for land in alliance with sympathetic civil society organisations. By combining political pressure and negotiation, they secured some rights, especially access to land and recognition of their territories. These rights were already formally guaranteed in the Constitution, but began to be fulfilled in practice with the demarcation of indigenous lands, recognition of *quilombola* (maroon) territories, and creation of agrarian reform settlement projects and of conservation units gazetted for sustainable use by their traditional inhabitants. However, many territories still lack legal protection or even formal recognition.

During the governments of Dilma Rousseff and her PT predecessor Luís Inácio Lula da Silva (President from 2003-2010), Brazil's PCTs secured greater political recognition and control over many of their territories and benefited from a range of innovative policies to promote their social and economic inclusion, including cash transfers and local food purchase programmes as well as improved access to energy, transport, education, health care and other services (Shankland *et al.* 2016). Civil society played a number of key roles in these policies, particularly following the expansion of institutional participation spaces (such as national conferences and dialogues) after 2003, as is explored below.

This study examines the contribution of civil society to Brazil's achievements in the fields covered by SDGs 1 and 2 (poverty and hunger reduction), particularly as these affected the most marginalised segments of the rural population. Ever since the Campaign against Hunger promoted by the sociologist Herbert 'Betinho' de Souza in the 1980s and early 1990s, civil society action on the issues covered by these SDGs has historically included proposing new policies. In recent years it has also included taking on new roles in monitoring and co-managing policy delivery. To understand these roles, this study focused in particular on key participation spaces (including CONSEA, the National Food and Nutrition Security Council and CONDRAF, the National Council for Sustainable Rural Development), and the key government bodies (including MDA, the Ministry of Agrarian Development) and policies (including land titling, cash transfers and food purchase programmes) with which civil society organisations have engaged. Recent political developments have shaped very different future trends in these fields and policies, with closing space impacting directly on policies that had been put in place to tackle hunger and poverty.

This study also looks at SDG 10 (inequality reduction), since organized civil society has been fundamental for giving visibility to and promoting inclusion of PCTs and other marginalised rural populations, which for many years had been invisible to the state, in the Brazilian citizenship and social justice agenda and in efforts to overcome inequalities in the country. Thus, the study also analyses the establishment of a National Council for Traditional Peoples and Communities (CNPCT), along with the role of social movements of PCTs and their NGO allies in ensuring territorial rights in the face of pressure from agribusiness and extractive industries, and in denouncing attacks against rights defenders. It also examines the implications of the recent increase in violence and the introduction of policy changes leading to the removal of legal protections for some territories.

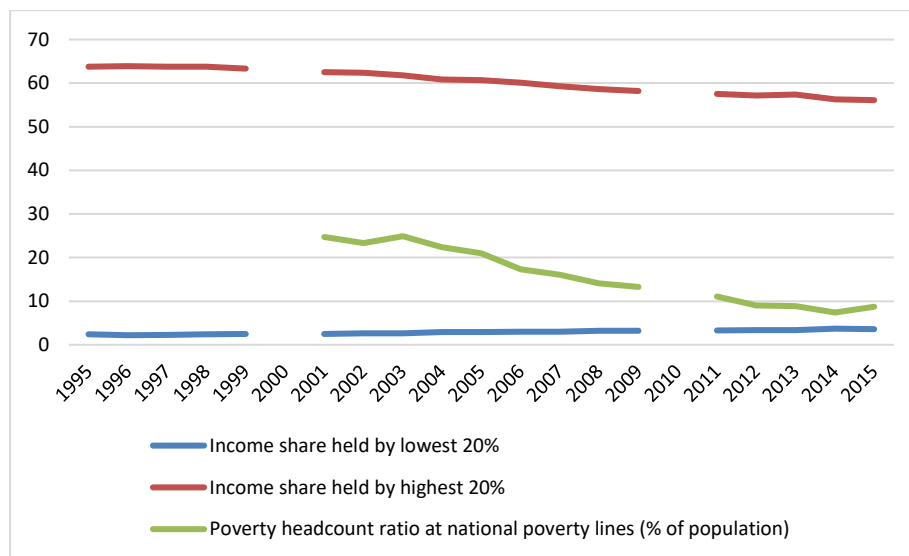
In addition, the study looks at SDG 6 (water and sanitation) and SDG 15 (life on land), seeking to establish plausible connections between these recent changes and the current and future contribution of PCT territories to these SDGs. The protection of these territories is not only of fundamental importance for the social rights struggles of their inhabitants, but also for environmental goals, since their populations are identified as 'nature protectors' and 'water producers'. Civil society groups working with PCT organizations and movements have proven capacity to ensure high levels of biodiversity conservation, and therefore have a key potential role to play in efforts to achieve the SDGs in areas such as improving water management (SDG 6) and halting biodiversity loss (SDG 15).

2. The challenge of sustainable development in Brazil

Brazil's poverty and inequality reduction achievements

Under the Workers' Party (PT), between 2003 and 2016, Brazil saw significant improvements in indicators of social and economic equality and in the reduction of poverty and hunger, as part of a broader model of inclusive development. This came about through an intensification of the civil society-state engagement that had characterised Brazil's democracy since the end of the military regime in the 1980s. Poverty reduction policies, increased social spending and a stronger labour market saw comparatively rapid improvements in indicators of poverty and extreme poverty (Campello 2017: 65; see Figure 1).

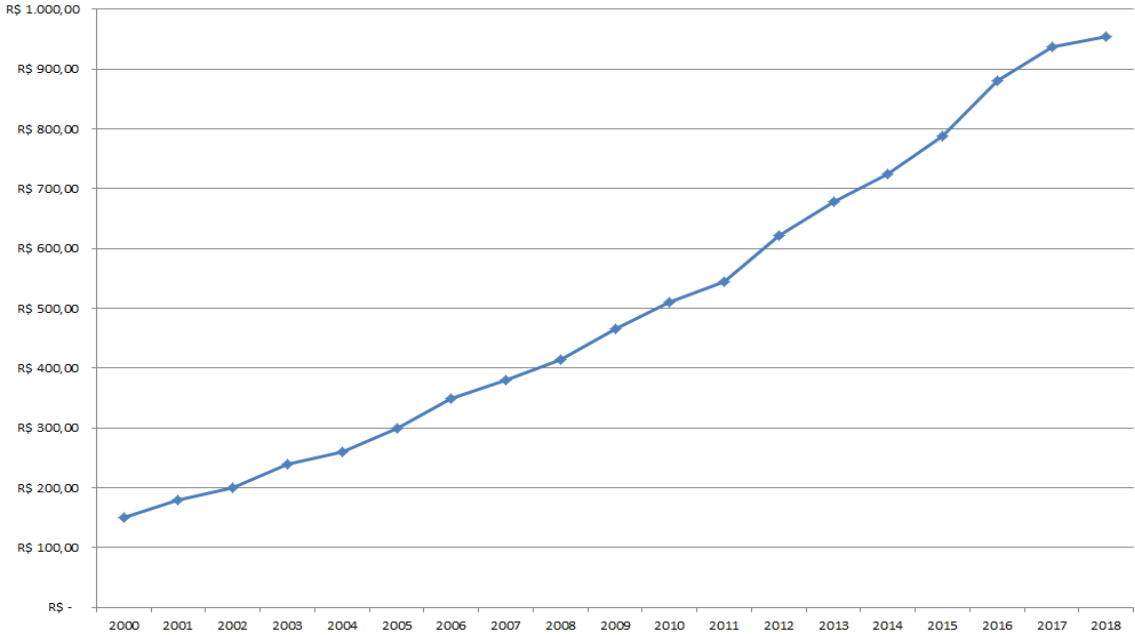
Figure 1 Poverty and income inequality in Brazil



Source: 1 World Development Indicators; accessed September 17 2018

While social spending increased from 13 to 17 percent of GDP between 2002 and 2013, the driving factor was the increase in real purchasing power, with a fall in unemployment (Forum 21 *et al.* 2016) combining with real increases in the minimum wage of 77 per cent between 2002 and 2016 (DIEESE 2016; see Figure 2). The minimum wage affects the value of various worker and social benefits indexed to it, such as unemployment insurance, pensions and other social transfers for rural workers, family farmers, and fishermen, which are the primary source of income redistribution in rural municipalities. These policies were implemented along with other government programmes as part of a mandate to 'eradicate extreme poverty in all stages of life ... [and] ... reduce the proportion of people living below national poverty lines by 2030' (Brazil 2014: 14). Combined with the creation and implementation of public policies (chiefly, but not only, the flagship *Bolsa Família* conditional cash transfer programme), this positive labour market and wage rate dynamic was responsible for the improvement in Brazilian social indicators between 2002 and 2015 (Campello 2017).

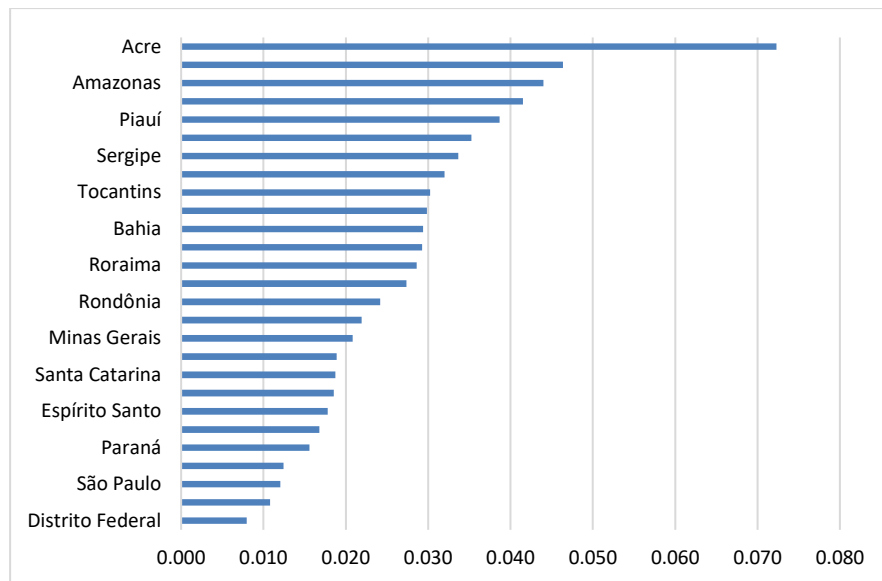
Figure 2 Monthly minimum wage values



Source: Authors' own, based on Imprensa Nacional 2000-2018

Between 2002 and 2012, gross domestic product (GDP) per capita increased by 64 per cent and the poverty headcount halved to 24 per cent, with 28 million people escaping from poverty during this time (Campello 2017). State investments in education and social assistance programmes were credited with enabling a wider share in the returns to education and in reducing income poverty (Lustig, Lopez-Calva and Ortiz-Juarez 2013), demonstrating that government efforts can be effective in addressing the issues covered by SDGs 1 and 2 (Brasil 2014). Poverty has a pronounced regional character, with multidimensional poverty prevalence greatest in the North and Northeast (see Figure 3). Broad-based social programmes adopted by the PT enabled poverty to drop significantly in these regions, enabling some convergence with the richer regions (Campello 2017); these national programmes demonstrated the state's commitment to 'reduce intra-country socioeconomic disparities' (Brazil 2014: 14).

Figure 3 Multidimensional poverty index in Brazil's states



Source: 2 Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (2017) Global Multidimensional Poverty Index Databank. OPHI, University of Oxford; accessed September 17 2018

Despite the advances described above, Brazil still has vast socioeconomic inequalities. While income inequality (measured by the Gini coefficient) dropped from 0.59 to 0.53 over the period (Campello 2017), it is still above the Latin American average of 0.49. With the richest 20 per cent commanding 54 per cent of all income, Brazil also remains the Latin American country in which income is most highly skewed (Costa 2018). In addition, progress on key indicators of inequality began to stall after 2014, as economic and political crisis took hold following a commodity price slump, faltering economic growth, and a bitterly polarising election campaign that saw the PT's Dilma Rousseff narrowly win re-election as President. Wealth inequalities had in any case not been reduced at the same rate as income inequalities. According to INESC (2017), Brazil's concentration of national wealth in the hands of the top 1 per cent is the largest in the world. The six richest men in Brazil have the same wealth as the poorest half of the population. Meanwhile, 16 million Brazilians live in poverty, and more than half are vulnerable to slipping back into a state of financial hardship.

This vulnerability is significantly shaped by intersecting racial, gender and rural/urban inequalities. While overall half of all Brazilians earn below the minimum wage, this is true for over 88 per cent of black women living in rural areas compared to under 43 per cent of urban white men (INESC 2017: 2)

The political economy of sustainable development in rural Brazil

Despite the significant gains in social inclusion described above, in political economy terms, the Lula and Dilma administrations left an ambiguous legacy with complex implications for rural poverty. On the one hand, Lula's 'signature initiative, the Growth Acceleration Program (PAC) instituted 'neo-developmentalism' or inclusive capitalism geared towards maximizing profits that would allow for the deepening of social assistance' (Wolford and Sauer 2018). On the other, while such neo-developmental approaches did allow for greater social investments, they led to a higher degree of dependency on commodity exports and to a process of deindustrialisation and/or 're-primarisation' of the Brazilian economy (Sauer, Balestro and Schneider 2017).

An array of policies to support family farming, traditional communities and rural populations were introduced by the Lula and Dilma administrations. Many of these advances responded to broad-based social movements and civil society activism over decades (Poskitt, Shankland and Taela 2016).

However, these were accompanied by a range of initiatives favouring large agribusiness enterprises, highlighting the ambiguous nature of Brazilian national neo-developmentalism. These pro-agribusiness initiatives, as well as government policies favouring mining and large-scale infrastructure development (particularly in hydropower, as in the notorious examples of the Belo Monte, Santo Antônio and Jirau dams), had major environmental impacts and promoted systematic encroachment on the territories of indigenous and traditional communities. This often had disastrous social and ecological consequences that were denounced by civil society coalitions of grassroots groups, national social movements and environmental and human rights NGOs.

In practice, government decisions tended to be shaped by the interests of large business groups much more than by pro-poor policy networks working on issues such as family farming. The PT administrations' priority was to find ways to promote peaceful co-existence of groups with very different interests in rural Brazil in order to maintain a coalition government, and 'political alliances with the right and centre-right meant that the PT was committed to working with the contradictions' (Wolford and Sauer 2018).

The incentives provided for agribusiness were aligned with the so-called 'national champions policy' implemented during Lula's and Dilma's administrations. Under this policy loans and investments from the National Economic and Social Development Bank (BNDES) were directed to large Brazilian companies in the agribusiness, mining, construction and infrastructure sectors. This significantly strengthened the economic and political power of the Brazilian agribusiness multinationals. The world's largest meat processor, the Brazilian JBS Group, is a prime example, but on a smaller scale the same effect applied to soy and sugar cane producers, among others (Sauer, Balestro and Schneider 2017).

The scale of the imbalance between government support for the agribusiness sector and that for family farming can be seen in the government credits provided to each. In 2003-04, agribusiness received less than twice the public support going to family farming; by 2016, agribusinesses were receiving six times the funding going to family farms (OGU 2016). This level of economic support increased the demand for land, resulting in the expansion of the agricultural frontier both towards the Amazon and into the 'MATOPIBA' (Maranhão, Tocantins, Piauí and Bahia) region of the Northeast. This intensified land conflicts, particularly with traditional communities and indigenous groups, as well as putting pressure on the environment:

[R]epresentatives of the rural elite understood that Lula's administration was not keen on repressing actions and demonstrations organized by protagonists in the struggle for land. Thus, sectors of the agribusiness elite, especially the rural caucus, moved their fight to the legislative arena and started to use legislative instruments of investigation and inspection to criminalize movements, their leadership, and their social causes (Sauer 2017: 5).

Despite the generous economic concessions and incentives granted to agribusiness, and the importance attributed by the PT governments to political alliances with the agrarian elite, these alliances ultimately did not hold. The 'rural caucus' faction in Congress became increasingly hostile as time went on, until eventually it came to play a key role supporting the impeachment process which led to Michel Temer replacing Dilma Rousseff's as President in 2016.

The post-2016 shift in the political settlement

Analysis of Brazil's political settlement indicates that in the past 20 years the country has had a competitive but developmental settlement, characterized by an unusual degree of inclusiveness and

emphasis on addressing inequality.¹ Until 2016 political power was concentrated in the hands of the PT executive, but shared more broadly through the distribution of governmental positions to other political elites. This changed radically after 2016, when the Brazilian political settlement was abruptly upturned.

Brazil's recent period of political and economic crisis began during Dilma's first administration, with the eruption in 2013 of street protests against rising transport prices, poor quality of public services, police brutality and corruption in public works for the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Rio Olympics. Protesters' agendas also included mobilization against racism and homophobia and calls for an end to the evictions for the World Cup and Olympics. These were swiftly reframed as an anti-corruption movement, and as the 'Operation Car Wash' revelations of bribery and corruption in the state oil company Petrobrás grew in scale they were seized on by the political right as a way to mobilise popular anger against the PT. This anti-corruption narrative was used to support processes that claimed to be upholding democracy and human rights standards while intensifying anti-government feeling and promoting criminalization of left-wing forces (Avritzer 2017). The crisis proved to be an opportune moment for right wing entryists with neoliberal or anti-redistributive economic and political agendas to seize power (Wolford and Sauer 2018; Malerba 2018).

The Operation Car Wash investigations, which had been set up in 2014, implicated more and more Brazilian political and business elites, dragging numerous powerful politicians and their business associates into the investigation, including several who drove impeachment charges against Rousseff. Using their power in Congress, the opponents of the recently-re-elected PT charged members of the PT in government with having skimmed off Petrobrás income to pay for PT alliances – gifts or funds for politicians or their electoral expenses (Watts 2017). The massive corruption scandal weakened key sectors of the Brazilian economy such as construction and oil and gas, as public works were halted by audit processes and prosecutions.

President Rousseff was impeached in August 2016 by the Brazilian Senate amid a growing economic crisis, as prices for Brazil's commodity exports remained low (Avritzer 2017; Nunes and Melo 2017). Although Rousseff was accused of misrepresenting the state of the public finances rather than embezzling public funds, and Michel Temer's own PMDB party was found to be behind the most egregious cases of corruption uncovered, her replacement by Temer came to be associated with a campaign against PT corruption. After her impeachment, charges were also brought against Lula. He was imprisoned in April 2018 after emerging as front-runner in the October 2018 elections in what would have been his third Presidential term. In August 2018 the Supreme Court confirmed that Lula was debarred from standing, leaving the extreme right-wing candidate Jair Bolsonaro as front-runner in the Presidential election. Bolsonaro went on to defeat Fernando Haddad, Lula's original candidate for vice-president who had become his stand-in as PT Presidential candidate, in the run-off round in October 2018.

At the beginning of Dilma's second term (2015-2016), the country had already begun to undergo a strict process of fiscal tightening and public expenditure cuts (Mattos 2018). Following her impeachment, the new Government began a sustained assault on the social programmes associated with the PT's period in office. Faced with economic crisis, the Temer Government justified budget cuts on grounds that the PT had growing public spending in an uncontrolled and unsustainable way, outstripping GDP growth (DIEESE 2016: 3). In 2016, Constitutional Amendment 95 was passed to freeze public spending in real terms for the next 20 years. This new fiscal regime has the potential for undermining human rights (INESC 2017: 1) and threatening the development of social security

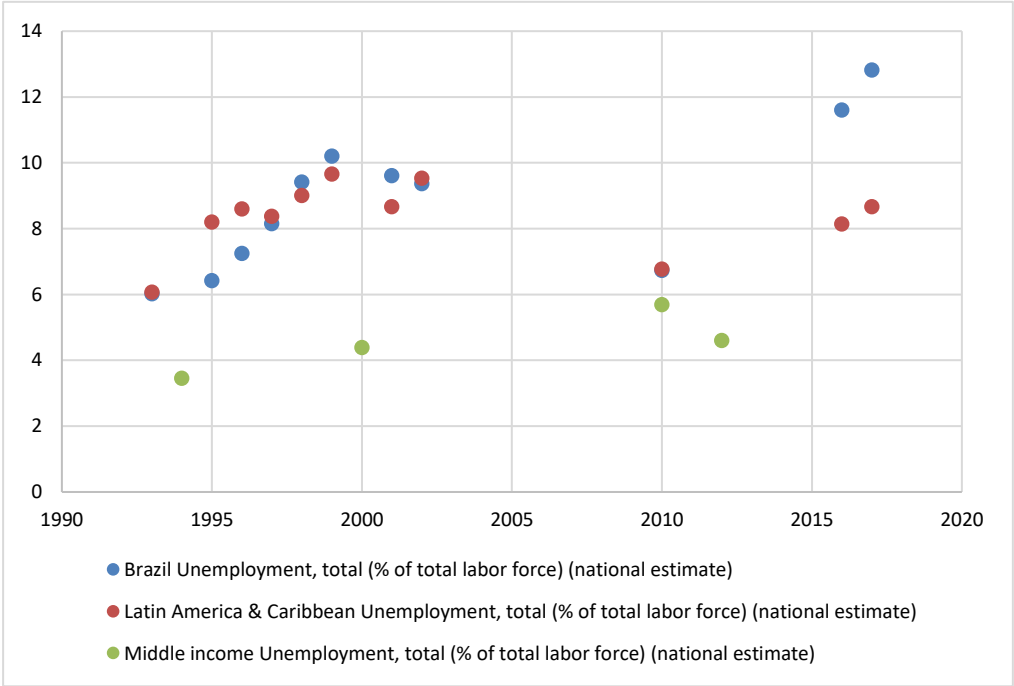
¹ For a discussion of the different types of political settlement and their implications for inclusive and sustainable development, see Hossain 2018.

(DIEESE 2016), as well as severely limiting the country’s ability to deliver on its undertakings under the SDGs.

At around 34 per cent of GDP, Brazil's total public sector debt is not unusually high by world standards, but its nominal deficit climbed steeply from 3 per cent of GDP in 2013 to over 10 per cent in 2015 (Forum 21 *et al.* 2016: 35). The Temer Government’s claim that social spending was responsible for the increase in the deficit neglects to note the sharp rise in debt interest payments, from 4.7 per cent of GDP in 2013 to 8.5 per cent in 2015; in fact, servicing debt accounted for the largest part of the deterioration in the nominal deficit (*ibid.*). PT Governments ran a substantial primary surplus, but the cost of servicing the Federal Government’s debt to Brazilian financial institutions became unmanageable, as it grew from R\$ 86 billion to R\$ 5 trillion (in current USD values, from USD 22 billion to USD 1,300 billion) between 1995 and 2017 (Citizen Audit 2018: 1). Constitutional Amendment 95, the cornerstone of the new fiscal regime, has meant severe cuts in social spending, but has not touched the debt issue, as it excludes ‘non-primary expenditures, which are precisely the primary financial expenses’ (Fattorelli 2016: 1).

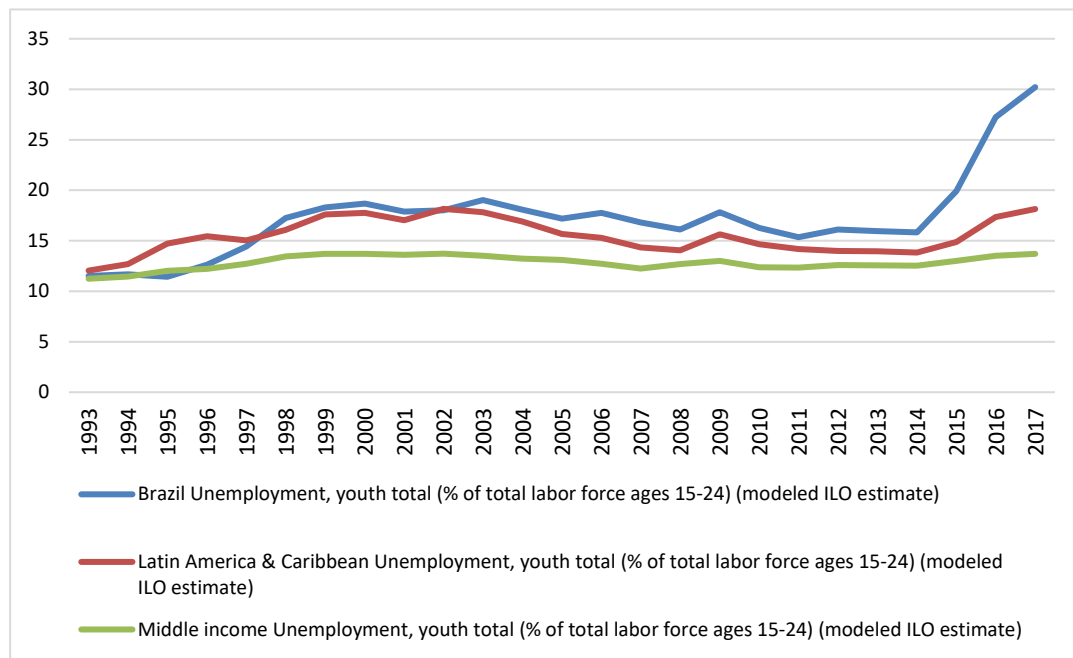
The approval of Constitutional Amendment 95 was a decisive step in launching a new cycle of neoliberal reforms after 2016, deconstructing social policies and withdrawing rights (DhESCA Brazil 2017). Although the minimum wage was adjusted by 6.7 per cent in 2017, slightly above inflation, the following year it was only increased by 1.8 per cent, well below inflation and the smallest increase in 24 years. According to some critics, this ‘ultra-neoliberal agenda that violates rights and destroys hard-earned social policies’ represents a threat to the ‘fragile democratic social order’ (Cardoso *et al.*, 2017: 6). This was exemplified by the accelerated passage of a labour market reform bill that authorized outsourcing for all sectors and categories, in the context of a doubling of the unemployment rate since 2013 (Figure). Some 30 per cent of young people were classified as unemployed in 2017 (Figure).

Figure 4 Unemployment in Brazil, 1993-2017



Source: 3 World Development Indicators [accessed September 20 2018]

Figure 5 Youth unemployment in Brazil, 1993-2017



Source: 4 World Development Indicators [accessed September 20 2018]

Austerity measures have hit the poor hard, but agribusiness has continued to benefit from government largesse. Large agribusinesses with an estimated total debt of R\$ 20 billion accumulated with the rural pension system, Funnrural, over the last 16 years have been allowed to pay over 176 months with 100 per cent discounts on interest and late payment penalties. This and other concessions formed part of the deal for votes in Congress that led to the shelving of corruption allegations against Temer himself (Sauer 2017).

The Presidential election in October 2018 highlighted the risks for PCTs and other poor rural Brazilians resulting from the country's extreme political polarisation. President-elect Jair Bolsonaro, long considered a political outsider whose extreme right-wing views meant that he would never be taken seriously, was able to ride a wave of anti-PT sentiment that was most marked in wealthier urban areas of Southern and Southeastern Brazil, while poorer rural areas in these regions, along with a majority of both rural and urban areas in the poorer North and Northeast regions, largely voted for his PT opponent. During the campaign Bolsonaro clearly signalled a desire to reverse policies seen as favouring protection of the territories of traditional communities and indigenous people.² The generalized use of racist language by Bolsonaro and Vice-President-elect Mourão has a particular significance for the struggle over land, livelihoods and the environment in rural Brazil.

The agribusiness lobby had already been emboldened by a shift in the political settlement which began before Dilma Rousseff was impeached. Its increasing domination of the political agenda has led to a closing of civic space whose impacts are already being felt by indigenous and rural populations, as well as the human rights activists and journalists who highlight and mobilize around their concerns. This process is likely to intensify under the Bolsonaro government. Powerful economic interests are at stake; that closures of civic space would impact first and most directly on spatially, racially and culturally marginalized indigenous populations and traditional communities,

² This included declaring that "As far as I am concerned, there will be no more demarcation of indigenous land" (Source: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2018/11/no-que-depender-de-mim-nao-tem-mais-demarcacao-de-terra-indigena-diz-bolsonaro-a-tv.shtml>. Accessed 5 November 2018).

and in ways that benefit powerful market actors, is consistent with the underlying unequal socio-economic foundations of political power in Brazil.

3. Civil society engagement with sustainable development policies

In this section we review the ways in which civil society has helped to shape government policy and programmes in key areas addressed by the SDGs. We focus particularly on the role of state-society engagement via the institutionalised participation mechanisms that have been such a characteristic feature of Brazilian democracy since the 1990s. We also examine the impact on these institutions of the closing of civic space that has taken place since 2016.

The role of civil society in development in Brazil

Civil society played a number of different roles in the policy areas in which Brazil achieved the notable successes described above. These roles ranged from leading the initial public awareness campaigning that put issues of hunger and food and nutritional security on the political map, to articulating policy proposals and mobilising support for them through large-scale policy conferences, to overseeing their implementation through influential oversight committees, delivering them on the ground through outsourcing contracts with the state, and working with the independent public prosecutor's office (known as the *Ministério Público* or Public Ministry) to tackle rights violations and threats to rights defenders.

In addition to its domestic role, Brazilian civil society also participated actively in the global forums and international conferences that led to the agreement of the SDGs. In the Rio+20 conference, a massive presence of NGOs and social-environmental movements was supported by the Brazilian Government as part of its egalitarian development agenda (Brasil 2014: 13). However, despite this engagement in Rio+20, many groups in Brazilian 'organized civil society' – NGOs, human rights groups, development organizations and social movements – have since expressed serious reservations about Agenda 2030 and the political and policy processes that drove it, seen as both too government-centred and too accommodating of private-sector interests (Cardoso *et al.* 2017).

The success of many civil society engagements with the Brazilian state depended on active support from pro-poor politicians and bureaucrats, which has declined or disappeared since Dilma Rousseff's impeachment. In the following sections, we examine the impacts of this process on civil society participation in a number of key areas relating to the SDGs. First, however, we provide an overview of the growth of institutionalised participation spaces – conferences and councils – in Brazilian policymaking during the Workers' Party's period in power.

After the start of Lula's first administration in 2003, there was a proliferation of national conferences (preceded or prepared by state and municipal conferences), providing ample space for mobilization and participation of organized civil society (Avritzer and Souza 2013). These conferences served to broaden the channels of participation and dialogue through which civil society engages with policy formulation in various branches of government, on issues ranging from human rights to education.³ The conferences played a relevant role in ensuring that social participation involved proposing and formulating policies as well as a watchdog role, with veto power over certain decisions as an outcome of discussion of public policies. Their proliferation after 2003 illustrates one of the ways in which Brazil has sought to fulfil the SDG commitment to 'Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory

³ Four human rights conferences were held (2003, 2004, 2006 and 2008), two Social Assistance conferences (2003 and 2005), two on Women's Policies (2003 and 2005), and one each on Education (2010), Indigenous Peoples (2006), and the Promotion of Racial Equality (2005), among others.

and representative decision-making on all levels' (Objective 16.7). The Dilma Rousseff government argued that the 'the expansion of institutional channels of social participation was fundamental for the formulation and implementation of laws, policies and measures aimed at fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals and at realizing rights, as well as instilling and exercising democracy and promoting its expansion through the practice of active citizenship' (Brasil 2014: 13).

In addition to the conferences, which took place on a one-off basis or at intervals of a few years, Brazil has had an extensive system of sectoral councils which meet regularly to shape and oversee the implementation of government policies in different fields. Several of these, including the National Council on Human Rights (CNDH), play an important role. Consistent with the present focus on poverty and food security and on the rights of PCTs, in the following sections we discuss the roles played by civil society engagement with a selection of key councils, including those responsible for Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA), Sustainable Rural Development (CONDRAF) and Traditional Peoples and Communities (CNPCT).

Civil society, CONSEA and the fight against hunger

In the 1990s, a civic movement led by the sociologist Herbert 'Betinho' de Souza, 'Action of Citizenship Against Hunger and Misery and For Life' (known as the 'Hunger Campaign' or 'Betinho's Campaign'), succeeded in placing the issue of hunger on the public agenda. In 1993, under the presidency of Itamar Franco (1992-1993), this led to the creation of a National Council for Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA), and to the holding of the first National Conference on Food Security. The subsequent Fernando Henrique Cardoso Government (1994-2002) abolished CONSEA, but it was formally re-constituted when Lula took office in 2003.

CONSEA was involved in overseeing and implementing the social policies of the Lula Government, initially coordinated by the Special Ministry for Food Security and the Fight against Hunger (MESA), and subsequently by the Ministry of Social Development and the Fight against Hunger (MDS). It was also involved in launching the Zero Hunger campaign in 2003 and subsequently the *Bolsa Família* (Family Stipend) conditional cash transfer programme, in convening the 2nd National Conference on Food and Nutrition Security in 2004, and in the establishment of the National System of Food and Nutrition Security (SISAN) in 2006.

CONSEA has served as a channel linking the government with civil society to propose guidelines for food and nutrition policy. It has had advisory status, and been responsible for advising the President on policy formulation and guidelines for guaranteeing the human right to adequate food (HRAF). After it was reconstituted in 2003 CONSEA acquired a two-thirds majority membership of representatives of civil society. These representatives were nominated primarily by the Brazilian Forum on Food and Nutrition Security, which brings together the principal civil society organizations active in this field (Burlandy 2011). The council also began to apply the concept of Food and Nutrition Security (*Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional* or SAN), replacing a limited understanding of the issue that had focused on the quantity of food produced with a more multidimensional and intersectional approach. This meant that policies were designed and coordinated to link SAN to activities in the agricultural, health, education, labour, technological and environmental sectors (Maluf, n/d). The 2015 National Conference on Food Security and Nutrition adopted the theme 'Real Food, in the country and in the city', with a political charter stressing the importance of social and family farming policies as a fundamental guarantor of the HRAF. It also recognized the importance of minorities such as PCTs, as well as the roles of women, youth, and the LGBT community in the promotion of food and nutrition security.

Despite the country's remarkable progress in moving towards food and nutrition security for all (recognised by the FAO in 2014 with the removal of Brazil from the World Hunger Map), hunger

remains an issue among some marginalised population groups, including indigenous peoples. The issue of food insecurity among indigenous peoples has been highlighted by a number of cases in recent years. One of the most extreme cases is that of the Guarani Kaiowá people, most of whose territories lie in the agribusiness-dominated state of Mato Grosso do Sul (Box 1).

Box 1 A human tragedy: the case of the Guarani Kaiowá people, Mato Grosso do Sul

In 2016, the National Council for Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA) carried out a technical visit to several Guarani Kaiowá territories. One of the statements made by the CONSEA president at the time about the human and territorial rights situation of the Guarani Kaiowá was that it was "a real human tragedy!" (CONSEA, 2017, 4). This tragedy results from an historical process of rights violation, driven by the genocidal expulsion of the Guarani Kaiowá from their ancestral territories, and from attempts to extinguish their culture. Despite the existence of a federal government agency, the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI), with a remit to protect the territorial rights of indigenous people, these rights have been neglected for decades.

In the 1920s the Brazilian State forced several indigenous peoples to settle in small "reservation" areas, which in the case of the Guarani Kaiowá accounted for only a fraction of their ancestral territory. Their situation was aggravated by the economic model implemented by the Brazilian State from the 1970s, which included government incentives to produce agricultural commodities in ancestral indigenous territories, intensifying the expulsion of indigenous people and driving deforestation. In Mato Grosso do Sul, this has resulted in the Guarani Kaiowá experiencing situations of extreme poverty, hunger, discrimination, violence and marginalization. Their rights claims are met with discrimination and hatred, stirred up by a racist discourse among landowners and farmers that seeks to naturalize the hunger and violence experienced by indigenous people in the state (Yamada, 2017).

Since 2007, there have been several attempts by indigenous land occupation movements to 'retake' the ancestral territory seized by landowners. Reactions against these movements have consistently been violent, leaving many indigenous leaders dead or missing. When the federal government stepped in to demarcate some of the 'retaken' territories as officially-recognised indigenous lands, state politicians took legal action, alleging that Mato Grosso do Sul was being deprived of part of its territory.

The violation of the territorial rights of the Guarani Kaiowá had a direct impact on the realisation of the Human Right to Adequate Food of these communities. The deaths of indigenous children due to malnutrition and constant exposure to agrochemicals have been well documented, attracting increasing attention as examples of the cycle of impoverishment and degradation faced by the Guarani Kaiowá people. In 2013, about 42 per cent of Guarani Kaiowá children under the age of five suffered from chronic malnutrition (including stunting as measured by age-standardised stature), and 9 per cent suffered from acute malnutrition (low weight for their age and height) (FIAN BRASIL, 2016). According to CONSEA (2017), within 'retaken' areas, families reported difficulties in accessing food, drinking water, basic sanitation, health services, social protection and physical safety.

The Guarani Kaiowá case is an extreme example of a broader trend in the ways in which indigenous peoples have been affected by territorial and environmental conflicts. The wide range of extremely poor human development indicators recorded for Brazilians of Guarani Kaiowá ethnicity relate directly to their loss of traditional territory in the face of encroachment by

agribusiness, while attempts to recover this territory have been met with an intensification of hate speech and physical violence.

Sources: cited in the text

Civil society, CONDRAF and the fight for sustainable rural development

The National Council for Sustainable Rural Development (CONDRAF) was created in the 1990s to support policies for family farming; it was formerly linked to the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA), but since the Ministry was downgraded after the 2016 change of government it has been part of the Special Secretariat for Family Agriculture and Agrarian Development (SEAD). CONDRAF was initially known as the National Council for Sustainable Rural Development (CNDRS) and focused on ensuring participation in the oversight of the National Programme for Strengthening Family Farming (PRONAF), an attempt by the Ministry to promote greater access to credit for family farmers. Since being renamed the National Rural Development Council for Family Farming (CONDRAF) in 2003, it has started to address a broader range of issues related to rural development, agrarian reform and family farming. Among its objectives is to contribute to overcoming poverty through the generation of jobs and income, as well as ‘contributing to the reduction of inequalities in terms of income, gender, generation and ethnicity...’ (CONDRAF 2016: 2).

CONDRAF’s membership was designed to ensure representation of a broad range of civil society actors. Under the 2016 decree (No. 8,735, dated May 3, 2016), this comprised a group of 46 members, of whom 18 were representatives of the Federal Executive and 28 of civil society groups, including organisations of *quilombolas*, indigenous peoples, fisherfolk, other PCTs and family farmers. In November 2017 this decree was revoked and replaced by Decree 9,186, which specified that its membership should consist of 17 Federal Government representatives and 17 representatives of civil society organisations (Brasil 2017).

As a space for dialogue and coordination, CONDRAF played a significant role in designing and monitoring various policies during the Lula and Dilma Administrations (CONDRAF 2016). One example of an area of policy formulation to which it made a significant contribution was the adoption of a more systematic approach to coordinating different government programmes within Brazil’s most deprived rural regions. This ‘territorial’ approach sought to work across boundaries between sectoral policy areas and local government units in a way that was more aligned with the territorial logic of PCTs themselves, since communities tend to be organised around the management of natural resources within extensive territories that often cross municipal boundaries. The initiative, dubbed the ‘Citizenship Territories’ programme, was operationalised through the National Program for the Sustainable Development of Rural Territories (PRONAT) and overseen by Joint Territorial Development Bodies (CODETER), which were established as spaces for participation and social oversight of rural development policies within a given group of municipalities.

Traditional Peoples and Communities and the CNPCT

The PT’s period in power also saw the establishment of a National Commission for the Sustainable Development of Traditional Peoples and Communities (CNPCT). From the outset, this commission was designed in a way that expressed and gave visibility to the social and cultural diversity of rural Brazil. The 1988 Federal Constitution had given explicit recognition only to the land rights of indigenous people and *quilombolas*. With the creation of the CNPCT the federal government opened a space for dialogue around the identities, territorial claims and social policy demands of other marginalised rural groups with ‘traditional’ characteristics, whose lack of formally guaranteed land rights rendered them even more vulnerable to land-grabbing (Almeida, 2008).

This diverse set of identities includes *terreiros* (Afro-Brazilian communities organised around religious practices rather than descent from a *quilombo*), traditional practitioners of small-scale natural resource harvesting such as *seringueiros* (who gather wild rubber in the Amazon), *apanhadores de flores* (who gather commercially valuable species of dried flowers in the semi-arid uplands of the Serra do Espinhaço mountain range) and *pescadores* (artisanal fisherfolk), as well as groups whose identities are linked to landscapes they manage, such as *ribeirinhos* (riverine communities in floodplain areas of the Amazon and Northeast) and *geraizeiros* (upland communities in the savannah of northern Minas Gerais).⁴

Box 2: Land-grabbing in geraizeiro territories: the case of the Morro Grande community in Vale das Cancelas, Minas Gerais

A traditional *geraizeiro* community combines subsistence farming in the small areas of fertile ground at the bottom of the steep valleys that cross the region with a range of other livelihood activities. These include harvesting of fruit and medicinal plants from the gallery forest and savannah zones and free-range cattle-raising in the upland plateau areas known as *Gerais*.

These plateau areas are generally classified as *terra devoluta* (“unclaimed land”) and therefore under the jurisdiction of the state governments, which in recent decades have granted concessions covering hundreds of thousands of hectares to corporations for mining, agriculture or commercial forestry. The latter generally involves the planting of eucalyptus to replace the native savannah vegetation. In addition to the loss of cattle pasture from the destruction of savannah vegetation, eucalyptus is a thirsty crop which communities blame for drying up local streams, a process that frequently makes it impossible for them to cultivate their own crops in an already water-stressed region.

These land concessions, made without regard to the territorial rights of local *geraizeiro* communities, have triggered disputes and conflicts. Since the 1970s the invasion of the plateau areas by eucalyptus plantations has seen violence, eviction of families and a consequent loss of traditional *geraizeiro* culture and the associated knowledge which had ensured sustainable management of the natural ecosystems of the *Cerrado* savannah biome. In addition to obtaining formal land concessions from the government, land-grabbers have also used fraud, bribery and intimidation to obtain title to areas traditionally occupied by *geraizeiro* communities. This process is illustrated by the case of the Morro Grande *geraizeiro* Community, which is located within the traditional territory of Vale das Cancelas, which extends across the municipalities of Grão Mogol and Riacho dos Machados in the north of Minas Gerais state.

In 2017, the Attorney General of Minas Gerais received an investigation request to look into possible fraud against Mr. Adão José Alves, a member of the Morro Grande community, in the context of illegal land occupation processes in the territory. According to the allegation, Adão had been duped or coerced by an agricultural company into accepting just R\$240,000 (USD 60,000) for transferring ownership of an area of 723 acres which according to the State Revenue office was actually valued at R\$ 50 million (USD 12.4 million) because it contained significant deposits of iron ore.

The investigation revealed that a criminal organisation formed by a group of businessmen, farmers, lawyers and land surveyors had been operating in the territory of the Morro Grande

⁴ While the latter groups are generally of mixed European, African and indigenous descent, the category of PCTs also includes rural ethnic minorities, such as gypsy and Pomeranian communities, whose presence in Brazil is a result of nineteenth-century immigration processes driven by persecution in their countries of origin.

Community. This group had illegally acquired land belonging to the Morro Grande Community that corresponded to the area covered by the prospection and mining permits granted to the mining company MIBA (Mineração Minas Bahia S/A) by the National Department of Mineral Production (DNPM). The reserves of iron ore in the area are estimated to total around 10 billion tons. In all, the group obtained title to some 2,500 hectares of land which officially belonged to the State of Minas Gerais, and which also comprised the territory of the Morro Grande *geraizeiro* community. After the mining concession was granted and the title transfers had taken place, MIBA was bought by the Amsterdam-based Eurasian Natural Resources Corporation (ENRC N.V.) for US\$ 200 million.

The case illustrated the *modus operandi* of land grabbers (known as *grileiros*). In addition to coercive practices, they use fraud, particularly targeting vulnerable (and less literate) older people, who have more difficulty in assessing the true value of their land. They guide these people in bringing court actions claiming *usucapião* (adverse possession) of an area of land, which they then buy from them for an amount that ridiculously under-values the property, enabling it to be sold on for mineral extraction.

Source: correspondence with local NGO Centro de Agricultura Alternativa do Norte de Minas (CAA) and documents filed by the law firm Alves, Souza e Mota Advogados Associados of Montes Claros municipality, Minas Gerais.

Despite the pervasive threat of land-grabbing and the lack of a robust legal framework recognising the rights of PCTs who are neither indigenous nor *quilombola*, these populations have managed to secure a degree of control of many of their territories. The largest share of the approximately 230 million hectares now recognised as PCT territories consists of Indigenous Lands (mostly in the Amazon region), with a much smaller area formally recognised as Quilombola Land. However, PCTs have won the right to practice traditional livelihoods in a number of Conservation and Sustainable Land Use Units, and many areas designated as Agrarian Reform Settlements have also been gazetted in a way that permits community management of natural resources.

Altogether, recognised PCT territories account for 26.5 per cent of Brazil's total land area. Their location makes them particularly strategic for water and biodiversity conservation, because they generally lie in the headwaters of river basins and/or in regions that have retained a significant share of natural forest cover. This amounts to a vast wealth of socio-biodiversity. Each of the recognised territories shown in the map below represents both a history of struggle for rights and recognition, and a key site for the preservation both of traditional ways of life and of an array of nationally- and globally-important natural resources (Almeida 2008; Little 2002).

The social movements formed by PCTs and their NGO allies had long called for public policies specifically focusing on their sustainable development needs. In 2004, the second year of Lula's first administration, these calls resulted in the government convening the 1st National Meeting of Traditional Communities. This was followed in the same year by the establishment of the National Commission for the Sustainable Development of Traditional Communities. In 2006, its designation was changed to the National Commission for the Sustainable Development of Traditional Peoples and Communities (CNPCT), recognising the claims of some groups to be recognised as peoples in their own right.

The CNPCT included a diverse range of representatives of different communities, who participated actively in the development of the National Policy for the Sustainable Development of Traditional Peoples and Communities. This policy was formally promulgated by Decree 6,040 on February 7,

2007, and represents a milestone for the struggle for recognition of these differentiated peoples and their right to traditionally occupied lands. The existence of a formal policy gave visibility to these historically marginalized groups, facilitating the formulation of government strategies to address their specific needs. The CNPCT was intended to provide a forum for dialogue and cooperation between the federal government and civil society organisations around the formulation and implementation of these strategies. It was successful in facilitating the adaptation of some policies (such as the extension of government rural credit to cover traditionally harvested forest products as well as agricultural produce) and the extension of others (such as the *Bolsa Família* conditional cash transfer programme) to cover these formerly invisible populations. However, in the face of intensifying opposition from the *bancada ruralista* and other agribusiness and mining interests, it was unable to secure any more far-reaching changes in the land tenure system to support recognition of collective territorial rights (Shankland *et al.* 2016). In a last-ditch attempt to strengthen the institutionalisation of the CNPCT, shortly before she was impeached President Dilma Rousseff upgraded it from a Commission to a Council, formally giving it greater power to determine government priorities. However, lack of support from the Temer government meant that the Council was not able to meet and formally initiate its activities until 2018.

Changing dynamics of institutionalised civil society participation

The establishment or consolidation of these Commissions and Councils was a significant step taken under the Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff governments. However, despite domestic and international recognition of Brazil's pioneering commitment to broadening participation, there were many criticisms of the way it was implemented and of the limitations that applied in practice to state/civil society collaboration. According to one focus group participant

Brazil used to be seen as dynamic and the Lula government as a global exemplar – except that under the PT we didn't manage to arrive at a system to organise participation; we tried, but instead it was represented in the discourse as a new power challenging established structures and blocked by the political class. Brazil has been very productive of ideas for participation – the international participation agenda is reductive, what it talks about is less than what we are used to. Remember the concessions that were made by the progressive government? These spaces were captured and are now used by the post-coup government – used but without democracy: the councils still exist but they have no echo or connection with society. This is the dilemma of progressive, transformational civil society: we have to participate, but when we do nothing changes. What is the meaning of participation today? Does it really have an impact on policy formulation? Gender dimensions always get left as a cross-cutting issue – but what is really transformational today is gender as it has been taken into broader discussion by the feminist movement – so race, gender, class, ethnicity have to be part of the analysis (Discussion group, Salvador, March 13, 2018).

The participation agenda suffered losses and setbacks even before the impeachment process. In April 2016, CONSEA responded to these by releasing a manifesto calling for Congress 'to defend citizenship, democracy and social participation, refusing any movements that represent threats to rights or social setbacks' (Manifesto 2016). This appeal was ignored by Congress, and after the political process that resulted in Rousseff's impeachment in 2016, institutionalised social participation began to be restricted. Although CONSEA continued to hold regular meetings and plenary sessions, several leaders and nongovernmental entities left the council in 2016 and 2017. Before reaching this point, in an effort to maintain their autonomy, they had denounced policy changes and budget cuts in programmes such as the Food Acquisition Program (PAA) and the ATER

(Rural Technical Assistance and Extension) system, which left the latter largely inaccessible to family farmers (CONSEA 2017a).⁵

Both CONDRAF and CNPCT have been paralyzed since 2016. In the case of the CNPCT, its members were appointed at the end of Dilma Rousseff's period in office in 2016 so their mandates are still valid. However, at the time of writing the Council has only met once.⁶ This indicates the Temer government's lack of interest in maintaining dialogue with PCTs. As discussed in the next section, multiple policies that are highly important for these populations have faced deep budget cuts across different Ministries. CONDRAF has faced problems as a result of the change in structure of the government, as the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA) to which it was linked has been downgraded to the status of a Special Secretariat of the Presidency. In November 2017 President Temer promulgated Decree No. 9,186, which modified CONDRAF's structure, competence and functioning. This decree removed the presidency of CONDRAF from a civil society representative, transferring it to the new Special Secretariat for Agrarian Development (SEAD). It also limited the Council's remit only to monitoring public policies in the specific fields of rural development, technical assistance and rural extension and agrarian reform. Moreover, CONDRAF will no longer be able to convene and coordinate the forthcoming rural development conferences, significantly reducing the already limited possibilities for institutionalised social movement participation and intervention in rural development policies.

According to one interviewee, 'the previous [PT] government was a conciliation government - participation was a giant priority, emphasizing strong listening', although implementation did not always follow. The formal participation process supported a massive process of social movement organization to engage the state from the local up to the national levels. This support was channelled via the policy conferences, and participation in this process helped to build citizenship for many poor and marginalised women and men. One of the participants in the focus group discussion held with CSO leaders during the World Social Forum explained the role played by the national councils in this context:

We adapt to the policy process, adjust to the government's limitations, help organizations take their demands directly to the managers. However, we are keeping this [participation] separate from the strategic debates. In this context, neo-developmentalism and growth continued to dominate the agenda, but they [the councils] still had huge impacts on communities, especially on women... closing space involves closing out diversity – exclusion of women, black people, the poor, as a result of the dynamics that characterise highly unequal societies...

Everyone here must have had an experience of being a part of a council, so-called participatory democracy. We need to think about the diversity of meanings of participation – local and national have very different experiences, there can't be a single homogenous view. Building a timeline is important to look at this – participation was already thinning out, being weakened in the Lula and Dilma governments... Today everything's very confused – the coup has messed with this structure and closed down spaces for dialogue. We need to discuss what democratic participatory mechanisms we want to build. I was in the National Cities

⁵ According to several statements in the PCT Discussion Group (UnB, March 18th, 2018), the participation of civil society in CONSEA changed completely after 2016, as only people with little or no representative legitimacy in the field of Food and Nutrition Security continued to participate.

⁶ CONSEA (2017b: 2) issued a recommendation to the Ministry of Social Development (MDS) to transfer the budget of the National Council of Traditional People and Communities (CNPCT) and the structure of its Executive Secretariat, including permanent administrative personnel and discretionary civil service positions, to the Ministry of Human Rights (MDH) to ensure the effective functioning of this National Council.

Council for two mandates – it was bad, but today I miss it (World Social Forum CSO leaders' discussion group, Salvador, March 13, 2018)

Despite the limitations of these spaces for cooperation between government and civil society, interviewees perceived the political or institutional emptying-out of the Councils as a threat to the advances that had been made in key policy areas. Social movement and NGO leaders interviewed during the study reported that there had been profound changes in the public spaces of participation in Brazil since 2016. By no means all formal participatory spaces were formally closed down after the change in government, but several had their roles and participation diminished.

This closing-down process may involve simply not calling meetings (as in the case of CNPCT) or reducing a council's remit (as in the case of CONDRAF). It can also take place through less formal processes. One recent example was the national meeting of CNAPO (the National Commission for Agroecology and Organic Production), in which several members representing civil society on the Commission were blocked from entering the meeting room (located in one of the annexes of the Presidential Palace) because they were wearing traditional headdresses (in the case of indigenous leaders) or T-shirts with the slogan 'Free Lula' (MST, 2018). This process of undermining the role of institutionalised participation has limited the scope for state/civil society co-construction of innovative policies to address SDG challenges, and has restricted the level of public accountability to which policy implementation is subjected. However, some of the most serious impacts on the rights and wellbeing of PCTs (and thereby on Brazil's prospects for achieving the SDGs) have come through the imposition of deep cuts in the budgets allocated to existing pro-poor policies, and in some cases their outright cancellation. This is discussed in the next section.

The undermining of key sustainable development policies

The budget cuts and restrictions on the implementation of existing policies which began in 2016 severely affected those sections of Brazilian society who were most in need of public action to uphold their rights and promote their wellbeing. According to Cardoso et al (2017: 13), the problem is not a lack of state capacity or appropriate policies to promote sustainable development and continued progress in the areas on which the SDGs focus: 'the issue is political and involves budgeting, and it concerns a deep lack of political commitment on the part of the current government', given that adequate funding for the implementation of key policies had already been allocated under the government's own Multi-Year Planning Framework (PPA), reflecting Brazil's national commitments on the SDGs. The examples of policies and programmes discussed below highlight the extent of cuts since 2016. However, it is worth noting that funding in many areas had already been squeezed since 2010, making the cumulative impact of the budget cuts even more significant (Campello 2017; DIEESE 2016).

Bolsa Verde Programme (PBV)

Launched in 2011 by the Dilma Rousseff government as an essential part of its flagship Brazil Without Absolute Poverty Programme, the main objective of *Bolsa Verde* was to promote the social inclusion of remote rural populations living in extreme poverty by combining cash transfers with environmental conservation activities. It was instituted by Law no. 12,512 / 2011 with the following stated objectives: (i) to encourage the conservation of ecosystems (via sustainable use); (ii) to promote citizenship and improve living conditions; (iii) to raise the income of the population in situations of extreme poverty while ensuring natural resource conservation in rural areas; and (iv) to encourage the participation of beneficiaries in environmental, social, technical and vocational training programmes.

The grant of R\$ 300.00 (approximately USD 75) every three months for a two-year period was intended for households who developed sustainable natural resource management activities in Extractive Reserves, National Forests, Federal Sustainable Development Reserves and Environmentally Differentiated Agrarian Reform Settlements. In addition, territories occupied by riverine, extractivist and indigenous populations, *quilombolas* and other traditional communities, as well as other rural communities' territories, could be included in the programme. This innovative programme sought to bring together environmental conservation, sustainable use of biodiversity and the eradication of extreme poverty in Brazil. The target profile for programme beneficiaries was the same as for *Bolsa Família*, i.e. families with a net per capita household income of less than R\$ 85 (approximately USD 21). These families developed sustainable extractive activities within the areas defined by the programme, agreeing to terms which included committing to upholding environmental conservation objectives. All programme areas had regular environmental monitoring, with quarterly updates on deforestation and fires. The programme achieved extensive coverage, reaching families living in some of remotest regions of Brazil, especially in the Amazon. Evaluations carried out with data obtained from the *Bolsa Verde* programme in 2015 revealed that 88 per cent of beneficiaries were women, typically with limited formal education, and without access to safe drinking water, sanitation and infrastructure.

During the Rio+20 conference, which took place while Dilma Rousseff was still in office, the Brazilian government presented *Bolsa Verde* as one of the country's major contributions to sustainable development. At the time, approximately 50,000 households were covered. According to Campello and Teixeira (2017), *Bolsa Verde* was relatively cheap (costing on average R\$ 100 per month per family) and highly effective. The beneficiaries, who became known as 'Forest Guardians', protected an area of approximately 900,000 km², equivalent to the combined territories of Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom. Yet beginning in 2015 and particularly since 2016, the programme experienced significant budget cuts. According to the WWF (2018), *Bolsa Verde* was not the only programme affected as budgets for all conservation and biodiversity monitoring activities were cut. However, it has become one of the most critically endangered of all environmental policies, as the 2018 Draft Budget Law completely eliminated the budget allocation for *Bolsa Verde*, effectively ending it.

Bolsa Família Programme (PBF)

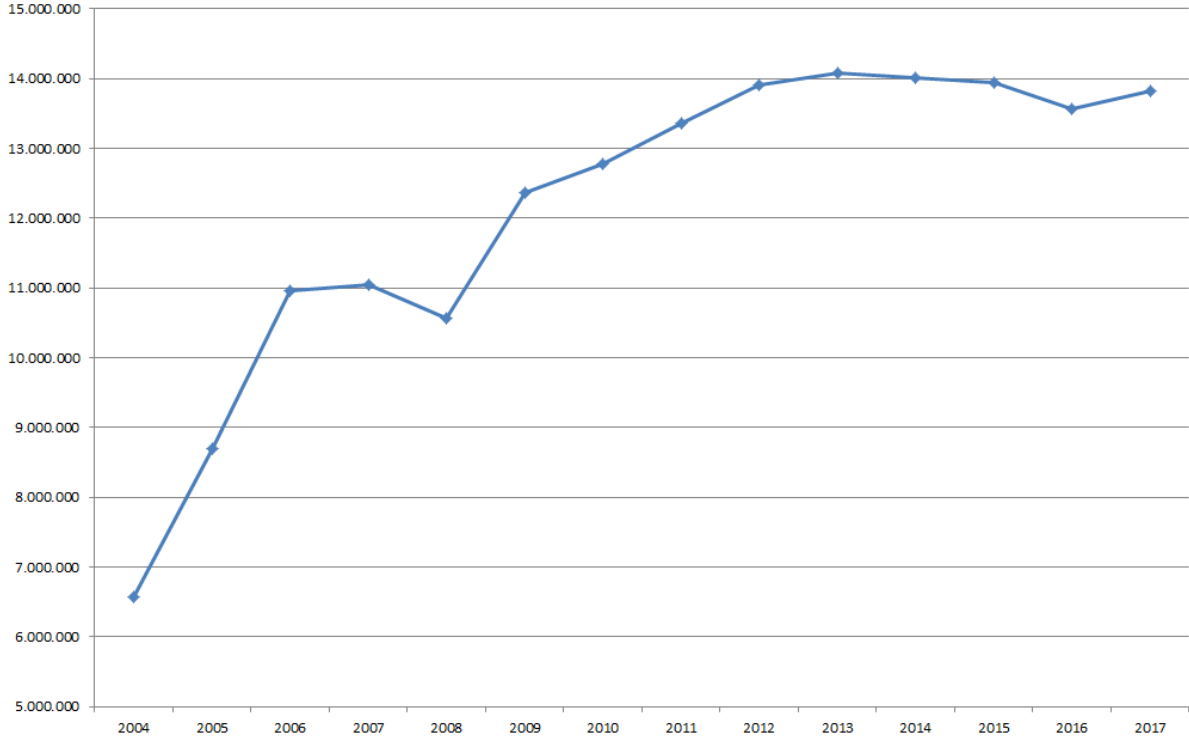
The *Bolsa Família* Programme (PBF) is internationally recognized as one of the world's largest efforts to combat poverty and eliminate hunger. In 2013, the programme was reaching around 14 million families (a quarter of the Brazilian population), helping the country to meet its commitment to reduce the proportion of people living below the national poverty line by 2030 (Brasil 2014: 14). The primary objective of the PBF was to transfer income directly to families in vulnerable social situations, i.e. those considered to be poor or extremely poor. According to the Brazilian Statistics Institute, in 2016 Brazil had more than 50 million people living in poverty, with incomes of less than US\$ 5.50 per day (IBGE 2017). The PBF requires beneficiary households to abide by a series of education and health conditionalities. It provides for monitoring of the growth and development of children under seven, of the health of pregnant women, and of children's regular school attendance. Women are the main beneficiaries of the programme, as they receive the swipe card which enables them to make cash withdrawals, which has helped to shift many families' gender relations away from the previous pattern of male dominance.

Despite the success of the programme, media reports indicate a reduction in the number of families receiving *Bolsa Família* assistance since 2016. As of July 2017, the total number of families receiving benefits from the programme had fallen by 543,000, in 'the largest month-on-month reduction since the launch of the programme in 2003' (Madeiro 2017). At 12.7 million in July 2017, the number of beneficiary families was at its lowest since July 2010, and represented a reduction of 1.5 million households compared to the same month in 2014 (Madeiro, 2017; see Figure).

Since 2016, government representatives have claimed that adjustments and measures against ‘fraud’ are necessary. Although the main driver appears to be the effort to cut public spending, the official argument is based on a need for greater control or ‘enhancement of auditing’. The changes in *Bolsa Família* introduced by then-Minister of Social Development Osmar Terra included ‘programme monitoring improvements, along with cross-referencing of governmental databases, in order to verify if the approximately 14 million beneficiary families meet the required conditions of low-income status’ (Mariz, 2016).

At its launch in 2016, the Temer government’s ‘Social Crossing’ programme projected that there would be a reduction of around 10 per cent in households receiving this assistance, supposedly by excluding families that did not meet the criteria. This created room for a real-terms reduction in the amount of federal budgetary resources allocated to the programme in 2017. These cuts, together with a more rigid application of the compliance inspection regime, contradicted the Brazilian government’s previous commitment to assist the population living in extreme poverty, and ensure that all public services and policies reach this population ‘as a matter of urgency’ (Brasil 2014: 14).

Figure 6 Annual number of Bolsa Familia beneficiary families



Source: Authors’ own, based on Madeiro 2017

In addition to the cut in beneficiary numbers, which has been confirmed by official data (MDS 2018), there were no adjustments to the value of benefits in 2017. The programme’s benefit levels were increased in July 2016 by an average of 12.5 per cent, but subsequently no allowance was made for the impact of rising prices on households, and the absence of an adjustment in 2017 contradicted the government’s promise (on the official website of the Programme) to ensure that ‘every year there is a readjustment, even if the amount is lower than that desired by the beneficiaries’. According to press reports, the Temer government initially aimed to guarantee an increase of 5 per cent or more in PBF benefit values in 2017, but this proposal had been abandoned by the end of

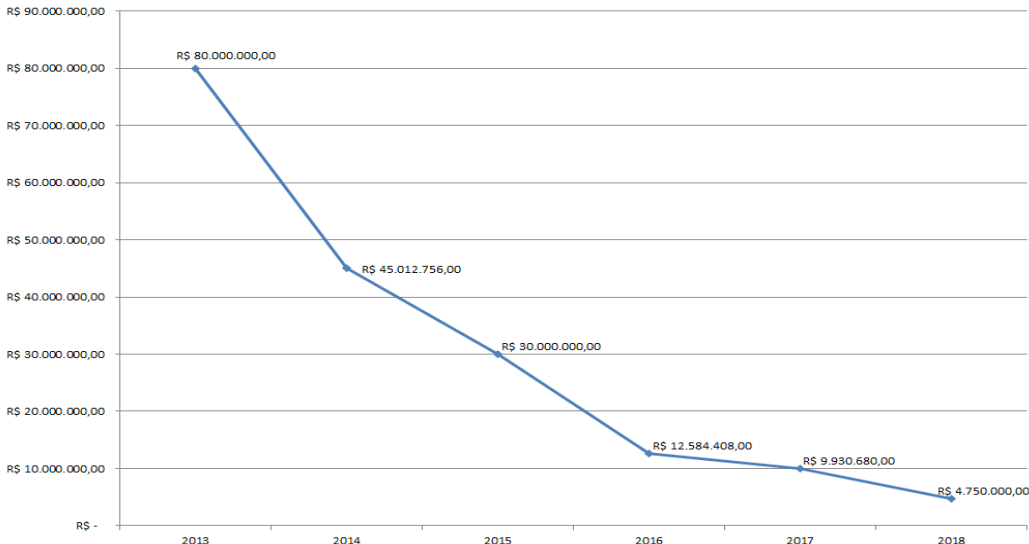
June, in a context of ‘revenue frustration and difficulty in meeting the fiscal target for the year’ (Villas Bôas 2017).

Food Purchase Programme (PAA)

The Food Purchase Programme (PAA) was created in 2003 by Law No. 10,696 as an instrument to promote access to food and support family farming. The programme aims to encourage family agriculture, promoting social and economic inclusion with support for production, and promoting access to food that is assured in terms of quantity, quality and regularity for people in situations of food and nutritional insecurity, based on the human right to adequate and healthy food. There are six modalities of the PAA: (i) purchase of family farming produce via simultaneous donation; (ii) buying family farming produce for government stockpiles; (iii) direct purchase of family farming produce; (iv) incentives for milk production; (v) institutional purchase; and (vi) seed acquisition. The programme buys food from family farmers for use in feeding programmes for people suffering from food insecurity and in the catering operations of public facilities (schools, “popular restaurants”, hospitals, etc.), in the formation of public food stocks, in encouraging the creation of stocks by family farming organizations, and in meeting government departments’ food purchasing requirements (for example for university restaurants or the armed forces). Prices are set in line with regional markets.

The PAA also encouraged the production of a more diverse range of foodstuffs, which were then incorporated into the diet served in public facilities and by programme partner institutions. The experience of the PAA attracted international attention and was shared with other countries in Latin America and Africa (including Haiti, Bolivia, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Senegal and Niger) and named by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) as an important reference-point for international efforts to promote family farming and reduce food and nutritional insecurity (Bateman, Brochardt and Porto, 2013). However, since 2003 the programme has seen significant cuts, with its budget dropping drastically from R\$ 80 million (USD 20 million) in 2013 to just R\$ 4.75 million (USD 1.2 million) in 2018 (see Figure).

Figure 7 Food Acquisition Programme budget (2013-2018)



Source: Authors’ own, based on SIOP 2018

National Cisterns Programme ('Water for All')

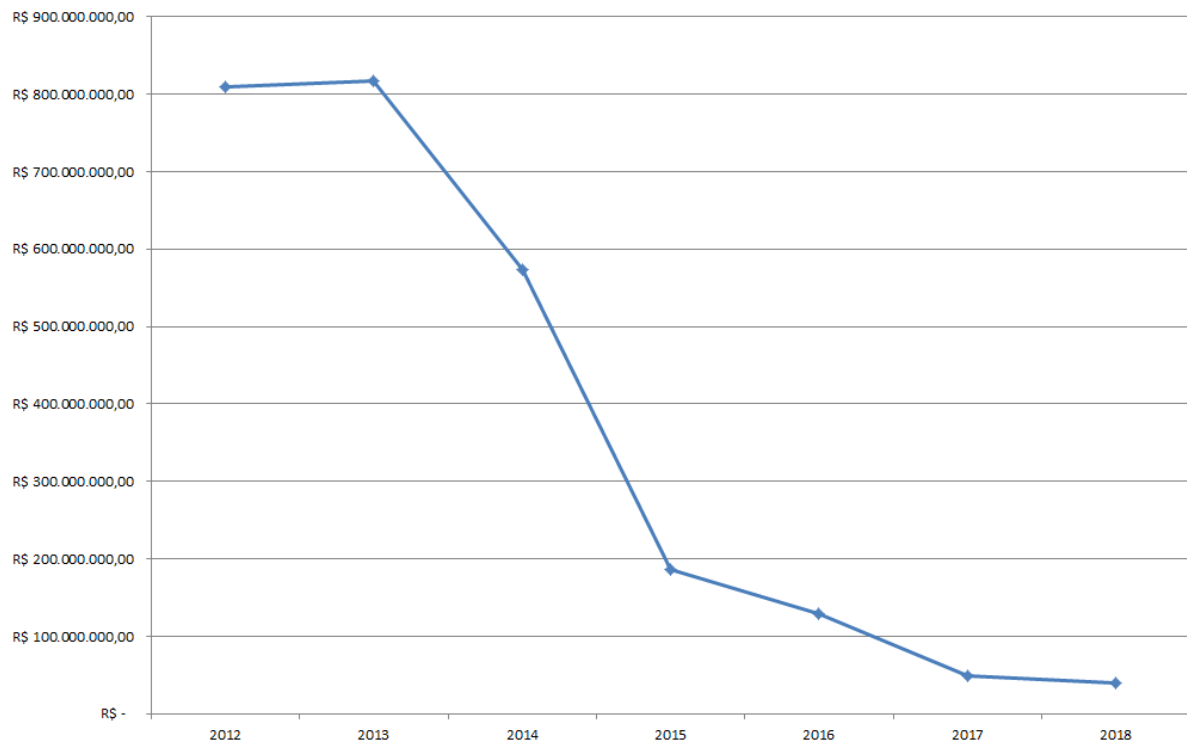
The Cisterns Programme originated during Lula's administration with the NGOs and social movements who presented the Brazilian government with proposals for the use of social technologies for rainwater harvesting. The innovation of the Cisterns Programme was to provide cheaper technology for providing water to people living in the poorest regions of Brazil (in particular the semi-arid region of the Northeast). These technologies had been generated by a process of social learning about how to coexist with drought and adapt to climate change. The programme's implementation strategy involves social mobilization, training, and provision of general guidelines for the use and management of water. The involvement of civil society has been an important element in the process of implementing this policy.

The key actor in this process has been the Articulation of the Semi-Arid Zone (ASA), a network of more than 3,000 civil society organisations working in this region, which includes areas with some of the worst human development indices in Brazil, covering several different states in the Northeast. Since the early 1990s, the ASA has sought to promote the concept of 'working with the grain' of this semi-arid region, in contrast to government policies that had emphasised combating drought via mitigation measures such as the distribution of water to the population and the construction of dams. The government's approach changed radically as a result of ASA's campaigning, which sought to demonstrate low-cost social technologies that could be rolled out to populations living in extreme poverty in the Northeast.

The Cisterns Programme has installed more than a million local rainwater harvesting systems since 2003, providing water for drinking and irrigation in the dry season. It also covers rural schools, using technologies that ensure that the water needs of students are met during the school period. Over the course of the programme's lifetime, R\$ 3.5 billion (approximately USD 890 million) has already been transferred by the government to local organisations and firms for the construction of local systems for access to water for consumption and production. The programme is recognised to have contributed to the empowerment of rural women (who have traditionally carried the main responsibility for ensuring household water supplies), to have helped enable youth to remain in the countryside and to have promoted sustainable rural development for people living in extreme poverty. In 2017 the Cisterns Programme won the Future Policy Silver Award, presented by the World Future Council and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

However, since 2015, the programme has suffered deep budget cuts (see Figure). In 2013, the programme had R\$ 816.8 million (approximately USD 200 million) allocated for cistern construction, but by 2018 this had been cut by 95 per cent to R\$ 39.5 million (approximately USD 10 million). According to ASA, the cuts in the past two years mean that more than 350,000 families will no longer be provided with drinking water technologies, and a further 600,000 will not receive technologies for irrigation. This situation occurs in a context of prolonged water stress, as the Brazilian semi-arid region has been experiencing the worst drought in a century, directly affecting the human right to adequate food (Oliveira, 2018).

Figure 8 Cisterns Programme budget (2012-2018)



Source: Authors' own, based on Boletim do Programa Cisternas 2018

Brasil Quilombola Programme (PBQ)

The *Programa Brasil Quilombola* (PBQ) was launched in March 2004, with the objective of consolidating the government policy frameworks for *quilombola* (maroon) communities. The programme has four thematic strands:

- i. Access to Land (implementation and monitoring of land titling for *quilombola* territories, starting with guaranteeing the right to remain on the land and working towards collective title for the community's territory);
- ii. Infrastructure and Quality of Life (provision of infrastructure including housing, sanitation, electricity, communication and access roads and the construction of health, education and social assistance facilities to provide for community needs in these areas);
- iii. Productive Inclusion and Local Development (support for local productive development and economic autonomy, based on cultural identity and the natural resources present in the territory, with the aim of achieving environmental, social, cultural, economic and political sustainability for communities); and
- iv. Rights and Citizenship (promotion of initiatives to guarantee rights and encourage the active participation of *quilombola* representatives in collective spaces of social oversight and participation).

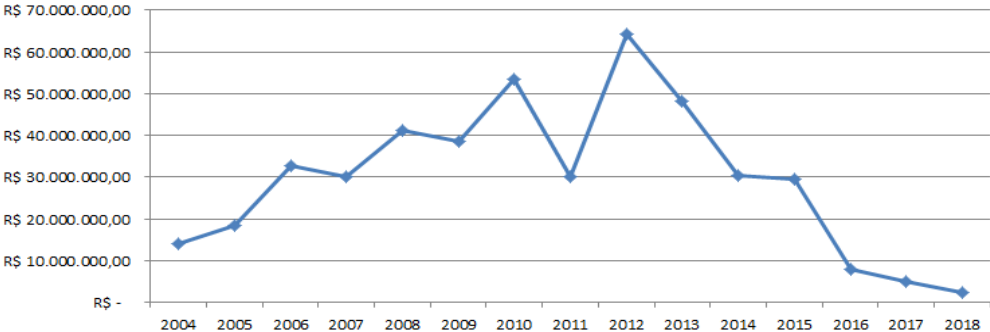
Each of these themes also has cross-cutting actions, to ensure a holistic approach to guaranteeing the rights provided for in the Constitution.

Following the 2016 change of government a presidential decree (Provisional Measure 726/2016) changed a number of institutional responsibilities overnight, eliminating several ministries, regrouping some policy areas and leaving others without any bureaucratic structure in place to

ensure their implementation. The *Brasil Quilombola* Programme was not mentioned in the decree, which left uncertainty around how land titling should be managed and who would be responsible for providing agricultural extension and other services that had been included in the programme. Responsibility for *quilombola* land demarcations was taken away from the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) and transferred to a new Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC). The programme’s implementation had already been slowing during the latter years of the PT government, and with this wave of administrative dysfunction it became more or less defunct.

The Presidency issued guidance (SAJ Note 2,897 / 2016) which blocked the promulgation of any further decrees granting recognition to *quilombola* territories and authorising compulsory purchase of land within their boundaries. This veto was maintained by the Presidency pending the Supreme Court’s judgement on a case (ADI 3239) which had been brought alleging that Decree 4887/2003, which authorised compulsory purchase and recognition of *quilombola* territories, was unconstitutional. In February 2018 the Supreme Court ruled that the decree was constitutional, but several months later the Presidency still had not yet issued a single decree authorising compulsory purchase of land located in *quilombola* territories. A sharp fall can be observed in recent years in the programme’s budget allocations for recognition, delimitation, compulsory purchase / squatter removal and titling of *quilombola* territories (see Figure).

Figure 9 Brasil Quilombola Programme Budget (2004-2018)

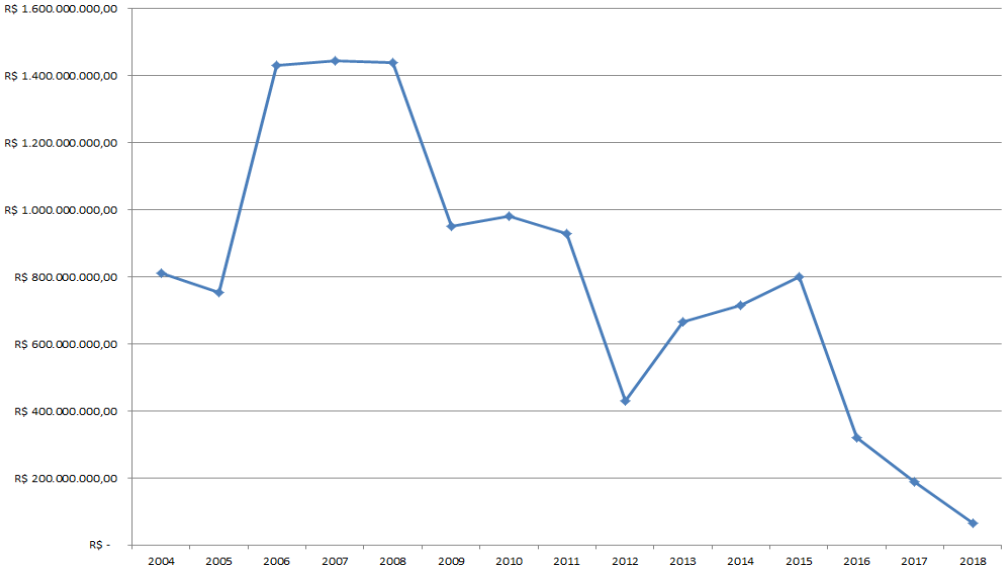


Source: Authors’ own, based on SIOP 2018.

National Plan for Agrarian Reform (PNRA)

Agrarian policy in Brazil has long been a focus of conflict and controversy. In November 2003, the first Lula government issued the Second National Plan for Agrarian Reform (II PNRA), which had as its main goal ensuring access to land, with a target of 400,000 families to be provided with land in 2003-2006 and R\$ 5.15 billion (then approximately USD 1.8 billion) allocated for land acquisition. The promises of the II PNRA were not fulfilled, and after its initial period ended the government did not publish any new plans. Although some progress can be observed, the state’s historical debt to people without access to land remains unresolved. With the exception of 2013-2015, over the last 10 years the budget allocation trend has been consistently downwards (see Figure).

Figure 10 National Plan for Agrarian Reform budget (2004-2018)



Source: Authors' own, based on SIOP 2018.

4. Tracing changes in civic space through to SDG outcomes

Traceable pathways of impact: civic space to development

Previous sections have illustrated the extent to which the opening of civic space in Brazil during the 30 years since the end of the military regime (and in particular during the 14 years of Workers' Party rule that ended in 2016) enabled an unprecedented boom in state/civil society co-construction of development policies and programmes through institutionalised spaces for engagement. This, in turn, had very positive impacts on sustainable development indicators at the national level, including for poverty, hunger and inequality. It made a particularly important contribution to efforts to secure the social, economic and territorial rights of the historically marginalised traditional peoples and communities who not only account for a large proportion of rural poverty in the country but are also the stewards of much of Brazil's biodiversity and some of its most important water resources.

In recent years this pathway to positive impact has begun to operate in reverse. The deactivation or shrinking of institutionalised engagement spaces has limited the scope for state/civil society co-construction of new policies and programmes capable of benefiting these communities – and other poor and marginalised Brazilians – and thereby for delivering on the SDGs in general and the “leave no one behind” principle in particular. The introduction of austerity policies in response to the fiscal impact of the economic crisis that marked the latter years of the PT's period in power had already reduced the scope of these policies and programmes and therefore their potential to achieve more transformative effects. Austerity has deepened since the 2016 rightward shift in government orientation, and its impact has been intensified by the targeting of budget cuts towards areas that are most strategic for the struggle to reduce rural poverty and protect the rights of traditional peoples and communities, leading to the abandonment or radical scaling-back of several key policies.

As we can see from the budget data presented in the previous section, programmes aimed at promoting social inclusion have suffered harsh cutbacks over the past few years. This has reversed some of the gains that had been observed during the previous period. According to the DhESCA Platform, official data indicate ‘an intensification of income inequalities between blacks and whites starting in 2015’ (2017: 12). This analysis, based on historical data series from the official Brazilian statistics institute (IBGE), shows that income differences between white, *pardo* (mixed race) and black people declined by 5.6, 6.5 and 8.6 per cent in 2012, 2013 and 2014 respectively, but as of 2015 the average income of black and *pardo* people declined, whereas that of white Brazilians grew in 2016. In the first quarter of 2017, the average earnings of black people were 56 per cent of the figure for white people, down from 59 per cent in 2014; the equivalent figures for *pardo* people were 55 per cent and 57 per cent (*ibid.*).

In addition to the decline in co-construction of progressive social programmes and policies and the intensification of cuts to their budgets, there are other pathways through which closing civic space is having an impact on Brazil's ability to achieve the SDGs, and in particular on those areas most directly affecting traditional peoples and communities and their territories. These pathways centre on the criminal law and the justice system. These are increasingly being used to target social movements and their allies in government and civil society who have sought to protect the human, territorial and environmental rights of these communities, while also allowing violence against rights defenders and the rural poor to go unpunished.

The National Congress has been a key focus for efforts to criminalise social movements and their allies, led by the rural caucus (*'bancada ruralista'*), which represents agribusiness and other rural landowning interests in Congress. These efforts were a consistent feature of the PT period in power, as landowning interests sought to block state-CSO collaboration by using Parliamentary Commissions

of Inquiry (CPIs) to bring accusations of politically-inspired misuse of public funds. CPIs were held during the Lula governments into land policy (2004-2005), NGOs (2007-2008) and the Landless Rural Workers' Movement or MST (2008-2010). The main goal of this criminalisation process was to block any provision of government financial support to civil society organizations as a way of diminishing their mobilization capacity. This led the federal government to create a new legal framework for financial support to civil society organizations which came into effect in 2014, though its implementation has been slow.

While the impeachment process was under way in 2016, the *bancada ruralista* (publicly supported by several Ministers) secured the installation of a CPI into two government bodies, the indigenous affairs agency FUNAI and the land reform agency INCRA. The Commission operated in two phases under the authority of the Federal Chamber of Deputies in 2016 and 2017. Its final report (which was 3,300 pages long) called for the indictment of over a hundred prosecutors, anthropologists and indigenous leaders, in general for allegedly providing fraudulent evidence in support of indigenous land rights claims. However, it did not include any investigation of actual rights violations, and did not indict any large landowners or other actors involved in rural crime (Tubino, 2017).

In addition to the FUNAI / INCRA Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry, Congress has seen other recent attempts to criminalise leaders, movements and their allies via the introduction by members of the *bancada ruralista* of bills specifically targeting rural rights struggles. For example, Federal Deputy Nilson Leitão (a member of the centre-right PSDB party who represents the agribusiness-dominated state of Mato Grosso do Sul) has presented a bill that aims to establish a procedure for making it easier for police to use force in enforcing judicial decisions land that has been occupied by social movement activists, and classifying collective action to occupy land as a criminal act. Federal Deputy Jerónimo Goergen (a member of the right-wing PP party from the Southern state of Rio Grande do Sul) has proposed a bill to classify the MST, as well as the Homeless Workers' Movement (MTST), as a terrorist group. The bill changes articles of the Anti-Terrorism Law (Law 13,260, sanctioned in March 2016), to classify the struggles for land and housing rights as terrorist activities. Along with other parliamentary initiatives, which are often introduced by politicians with links to large landowners and multinational corporations implicated in land-grabbing processes, these bills threaten Constitutional rights such as those of indigenous peoples to the territories they have traditionally occupied (under Article 231 of the Constitution) and of *quilombola* communities to their ancestral lands (under Article 68 of the Transitional Provisions of the Constitution).

The growing strength of the *bancada ruralista* has emboldened land-grabbers. Although land-grabbing has been a widespread phenomenon across Brazil for many decades, in recent years its impacts have been particularly severe for traditional territories located in Brazil's central savannah region, the *Cerrado*, which has become the country's principal agribusiness expansion zone.

Box 3 Traditional communities against Condomínio Estrondo: violent expansion of the agricultural frontier in the Cerrado of Western Bahia

Until the 1950s, the *Cerrado* was seen as sparsely populated and isolated. However, the region has seen massive changes since the 1960s, following an agricultural modernisation process based on Green Revolution principles, centred on the successful tropicalisation of soybeans by the Brazilian Agricultural Research Institute (EMBRAPA). Several regions within the *Cerrado* zone have witnessed an intense process of agricultural frontier expansion, as agribusiness operations have moved in to produce commodities such as soybeans and cotton.

One such region is the western part of the large Northeastern state of Bahia. The geography of Western Bahia consists of a series of large plateaus with extensive flat areas that have been used

for centuries by traditional communities. However, these plateaus are also sought after by large agricultural enterprises, some supported by foreign capital, in search of cheap land whose topography means that farming can easily be mechanized.

In the municipality of Formosa do Rio Preto in the Alto Rio Preto region of Western Bahia, a number of rural communities have practiced traditional livelihoods, based on small-scale cultivation, cattle raising in upland plateau pastures and harvesting *Cerrado* fruits and other plants, for at least 150 years. Since 1975 Condomínio Estrondo (an agribusiness joint venture formed by Grupo Delfim Crédito Imobiliária, Companhia Melhoramentos do Oeste Baiano and Colina Paulista) has illegally obtained almost 450,000 hectares of land in Formosa do Rio Preto and its neighbouring municipality of Santa Rita de Cássia, using various land-grabbing techniques (10envolvimento 2017). In 1999 Condomínio Estrondo was listed in INCRA's 'Land Grabbing White Paper' as responsible for the 7th largest area of illegally obtained land in Brazil, including the territory of the Alto Rio Preto traditional communities.

According to CSOs, this land-grabbing process has come to represent one of the most serious conflicts between traditional communities and agribusiness in the region. A number of deaths have been recorded, and many families have lost their homes. The community of São Pedro, for example, was completely evicted by Condomínio Estrondo, which destroyed houses that had existed for over a century. Currently, the communities are completely surrounded by land controlled by Condomínio Estrondo, and all access routes have been privatized. To get to the town, people from local riverine communities must pass through identification checkpoints, which they are prevented from passing at night. The farm security company has been accused of consistent aggression towards local residents, including threatening children, women and elderly people in the communities, and there have been reports of kidnapping and torture of the community leaders, as well as of physical injury and attempted murder suffered by members of riverine communities. The company has also blocked access to the areas of the *Cerrado* where 'golden grass' (*Syngonanthus nitens*) is found, making it impossible to harvest this key resource for the production of traditional handicrafts, an important component of women's livelihoods.

CSOs in the region have been monitoring the case of the communities threatened by Condomínio Estrondo. They report that the police, the Public Prosecutor's Office and judiciary have been slow to act in cases of violence against local community members and in the face of various breaches of agreements by the company. They estimate the total value of the environmental damage caused by Condomínio Estrondo at around R\$ 109 million (approximately USD 28 million), and that members of the community have suffered damage equivalent to some R\$ 14 million (approximately USD 3.6 million) at the hands of the company.

The case of Condomínio Estrondo and the traditional communities of Formosa do Rio Preto illustrates the interaction between land-grabbing and the expansion of the agricultural frontier and the impacts of this process on the lives and livelihoods of traditional communities in the *Cerrado*. Large agribusiness firms, many with links to international capital networks, have been enclosing the commons on which communities depend and depriving them of access to their traditional territories, as well as frequently violating their human rights.

Sources: 10envolvimento 2017

As the case discussed in the box above indicates, the second pathway through which closing civic space is affecting the struggle against rural poverty and hunger and for the rights of traditional peoples and communities via the criminal law and justice system is that of growing impunity for

violence against rights defenders and the rural poor. There has been a significant increase in violence in the Brazilian countryside in recent years. According to data from the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT), 70 people were murdered in rural land conflicts in 2017 (CPT, 2018). In addition to the assassination of movement leaders, there were massacres of groups of peasants and indigenous people, leading the CPT to state that 2017 was characterized as 'the year of the return of massacres in the countryside' (Agência Brasil, 2018).

Grassroots and civil society resistance to land- and resource-grabbing has been met with increasing violence since 2016, amid perceptions that the federal government is less inclined than its PT predecessors to take energetic action when land rights defenders are intimidated or killed. This is also the case with environmental rights defenders resisting or protesting against the destruction of biodiversity or pollution of water resources, as is illustrated by the Barcarena case summarised below.

Box 4 The impact of Megaprojects on Riverine and Quilombola Communities: the case of Barcarena, Pará

The municipality of Barcarena, approximately 40 km from Belém, the capital of the Eastern Amazonian state of Pará, has a history of environmental contamination due to mining activity. Since 2009, the riverine and *quilombola* communities of the municipality have been denouncing a number of health and environmental problems which they associate with the operations of Hydro Alunorte, a Norwegian-owned company that is currently the world's largest aluminium producer.

On the 16th and 17th of February 2018, water courses in the communities of Vila Nova, Bom Futuro and Burajuba, all in Barcarena municipality, suddenly turned red. These communities, which are located very close to the tailings basins of Hydro Alunorte, suspected that the cause was an overflow from the basins. This caused considerable alarm, given the massive human and environmental cost of the recent accident in Mariana (in the Southeastern state of Minas Gerais), which had been caused by a breached tailings dam.

Experts concluded that there were signs of overflow and discharge of untreated effluent, which was highly alkaline and contained concentrations of metals above the limits permitted by health legislation. In addition, a clandestine pipeline for effluent disposal was found in the region. The Federal Public Ministry and other agencies in the State of Pará recommended the immediate distribution of drinking water to the riverside communities of Bom Futuro and Vila Nova and the implementation of a contingency plan for the treatment of water resources in the municipality of Barcarena.

The company was heavily criticised for its performance in this episode and especially for the lack of transparency around the company's activities and for its disregard for the situation of the affected communities. Hydro Alunorte received a fine of R\$20 million (approximately USD 5 million), and the operation of the tailings pond was suspended after it was found to have been operating without an environmental licence.

This action against the company was not accompanied by measures to protect local community leaders, who had reported suffering death threats since they brought a legal action against the company in 2014. Two leaders of the local social movement organisation Cainquiama (the Association of Amazonian Natives, Indigenous People and Quilombolas) have been assassinated since December 2017, in attacks that local residents claim were linked to their role in denouncing the environmental impact of the company's activities. The authorities ignored Cainquiama's requests for police protection after its office was attacked in December 2017, and no one has been

brought to justice following the murders, the second of which took place less than a month after the tailings dam spill.

The Barcarena case illustrates the perverse dynamics that lead to *quilombola* communities losing control of their traditional territories. When mining companies' activities lead to environmental damage, these communities' ability to pursue their traditional livelihoods can suffer irreparable damage due to their dependence on land and water resources that are vulnerable to the effects of contamination. When community leaders try to uphold their rights and seek reparations for the damage suffered, they often find themselves facing threats and intimidation – and sometimes deadly violence.

Source: Barbosa 2018a and 2018b

Key general findings

Both of President Lula da Silva's administrations and President Dilma Rousseff's first managed to secure support from a broad and heterogeneous political coalition to implement a 'neo-developmental' programme of government incentives and investment that focused on boosting economic growth while tackling poverty and income inequality through cash transfers and other social benefits. However, under this neo-developmental approach – and even more under the neoliberal one that has succeeded it since Dilma Rousseff's impeachment in 2016 – the rights, needs and interests of the rural poor in general and of traditional peoples and communities in particular have been relegated to a subaltern place in government economic policies, plans and strategies.

The maintenance of the PT's political pact with agribusiness since 2003 meant that progress on key issues affecting these communities was limited. This pact prevented the government from adopting and implementing policies capable of bringing about structural transformation in strategic areas such as access to land and demarcation of traditional territories. However, it is important not to overlook the extent to which maintaining this pact may have been a survival response on the part of the government to pressures, including political threats, from Congress. The power of these pressures, mainly channelled by the *bancada ruralista*, is shown by the ability of Congress to push through processes of criminalisation of social movements and their demands and struggles, despite the government protection which many movements' close links with the PT might have been expected to afford them.

This underlying political economy dynamic ensured that the agenda of opening up spaces for participation in policymaking and implementation oversight for movements of PCTs, as well as for other social movements and their NGO allies, was mostly limited to non-binding 'dialogue' rather than binding negotiation or joint decision-making. Although this agenda did seem to have considerable momentum at the beginning of the first Lula administration, with civil society playing a key role in proposing and formulating important public policies such as the PAA through strategic participation spaces such as CONSEA, this momentum was subsequently lost.

In the latter part of the PT's period in power (particularly under President Dilma Rousseff) state/civil society relations became more ambivalent, moving quite far from the effort to empower civil society organizations that had been made at the beginning of Lula's first administration – an effort which the government itself highlighted as a key element of its strategy for inclusive development. During this latter period there was a shift towards efforts to mediate conflicts and strike deals with the financial, economic and rural landowning elites, which failed to appease their appetite for outright deregulation and weakening or elimination of environmental, social and labour standards.

The relative strength of the two sides can be seen in the fact that although the government introduced policies favouring agroecology and PCT rights as well as agribusiness and mining interests, policy measures on the former issues tended to move slowly and uncertainly through the bureaucracy while those favouring the latter forged ahead rapidly. This, in turn, led to an acceleration of the Brazilian economy's process of 're-primarisation' (a return to dependence on the export of primary commodities), thereby increasing the intensity of socio-environmental conflicts over control of the natural resources located in the territories of PCTs.

While Brazil was enjoying a period of strong economic growth, there was fiscal space for increased investment in social policies. This, in turn, made it possible to secure considerable advances in key areas of inclusive development, particularly those relating to SDGs 1, 2, 6 and 10. Even during this period, however, sustainable agricultural production and access to land remained relatively neglected, ensuring that Brazil made less progress than its fiscal circumstances could have permitted on the issues covered by SDGs 1 and 15. Progress in these areas was restricted by the political and economic pact with agribusiness interests, which acted as a block on efforts to move ahead on key issues like land demarcation for traditional peoples and communities. With the economic downturn from 2013/2014 onwards, the data show that government programmes that were essential to support progress in the areas covered by all these SDGs were gradually hollowed out. After 2016, this gradual process shifted into a rapid sequence of deep budget cuts.

The nature of some of the programmes that have been targeted by austerity measures, such as the PAA and the Cisterns Programme, means that the cuts will have direct and indirect impacts that are not only immediate but also lasting. These programmes made a significant contribution to expanding livelihood diversification, increasing production and guaranteeing food security in rural areas. Beyond specific targeted programmes, however, the general context of budget cuts has implications across the range of policies and programmes that have helped to reduce the invisibility, poverty, vulnerability and marginalisation of these populations. This, in turn, greatly reduces Brazil's scope for achieving the SDGs.

In addition to the impact of budget cuts and of the hollowing-out of spaces for institutionalised participation, the attempts to criminalise rural social movements and the prevalence of impunity in cases of violence against PCTs and rights defenders also threaten Brazil's scope for achieving the SDGs. While this is particularly relevant to SDG 16, and in particular to SDG target 16.1 ('significantly reduce all forms of violence'), it also has knock-on effects on the country's prospects for achieving other SDGs that depend on policy processes that are inclusive of the most marginalised rural populations.⁷

Although the overall logic of government policy seemed to be taking Brazil further away from rather than closer to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the Temer Government did set up a National SDGs Commission in 2016. This Commission, established via Decree No. 8,892 in October 2016, has responsibility for SDG monitoring and the promotion of Agenda 2030 and is located within the Office of the President. According to Cardoso et al., it is a 'collegiate, joint body, advisory in nature' (2017: 11). The Commission's structure makes provision for civil society participation, but the list of members published in April 2017 included only a single organisation of the rural poor (the council for small-scale resource harvester communities, CNS) and one representing urban workers

⁷ The proposed legislation classifying urban as well as rural social movements as terrorist groups also affects the scope for Brazil to achieve SDG 11.1 on access to adequate, safe and affordable housing, given the key role played by housing rights movements like the MTST in securing government commitments to combat homelessness and upgrade slums.

(the General Workers' Union, UGT). The remaining members of the Commission included three representatives from the business and corporate philanthropy sectors (The National Industry Confederation, CNI, Instituto Ethos and Fundação ABRINQ), two from the science and technology field (the national association of higher education institutes, ANDIFES, and the Brazilian Association for the Advancement of Science, SBPC), an international NGO (World Vision), two representatives of subnational governments (the Association of State Environment Agencies, ABEMA, and the National Confederation of Municipalities, CNM) as well as six federal government representatives (from the President's Office and Government Secretariat, the Foreign Ministry, the Environment Ministry, the Planning Ministry and the Social Development Ministry).

Findings for SDG 1 (end poverty)

Brazil's most dramatic recent poverty reduction successes resulted from a set of political choices made by one part of the elite – led by the Workers' Party (PT) – that ensured that some of the revenues from a commodity-led economic growth cycle were channelled into measures benefiting the poor. This was a significant departure from the pattern of previous economic boom periods in Brazil, where a 'trickle-down' approach left poverty levels largely untouched.

These political choices may have been influenced by ideas circulating in civil society – indeed this is highly likely, given the close links between many CSO thought-leaders and the PT. However, with the exception of the labour unions (some of which have an organic link with the PT, having helped to shape the party since its foundation), CSOs had limited influence on the design and delivery of the minimum wage policy, the single measure that had the greatest impact on poverty reduction. The PT policy of systematically increasing the real-terms value of the minimum wage ensured that by 2014 it had risen by 251 per cent on its 2002 value, with a pattern of increases that remained constant throughout the 13-year period of PT governments. The impact of this policy went far beyond the labour market, since the monthly minimum wage is used as the benchmark for a wide range of social benefits targeted at the very poorest in society, including the disabled and elderly people living in rural areas.

In addition to the minimum wage, a major contribution to poverty reduction came from wider changes in the labour market in a context of economic growth and low unemployment. These changes resulted in millions of Brazilians gaining access to formal-sector employment and associated rights for the first time. For some historically marginalised groups, such as women domestic workers, this resulted not only from government policy and changes in the pattern of demand for labour but also from active civil society campaigning.

Beyond these factors, the most important direct contribution to poverty reduction was made by cash transfers, and in particular the *Bolsa Família* Programme (BFP). While the programme itself was designed with limited civil society participation, its origins lie in the anti-poverty and anti-hunger campaigning that CSO leaders such as Herbert 'Betinho' de Sousa had been carrying out since the 1990s, which undoubtedly helped to shift the national policy agenda. The importance of the BFP is not limited to the transfer of income. It also functions as a gateway to broader processes of social inclusion, as its Single Registry system is used to establish entitlement to access other government programmes such as the PAA, the Cisterns Programme or *Bolsa Verde*. *Bolsa Família* has achieved international recognition for its role in contributing to the sustainable development of vulnerable populations, and could form an important part of the social protection provisions envisaged by SDG indicator in 1.3. However, the programme has seen a series of cuts which have resulted in the exclusion of more than 10 per cent of its beneficiaries since 2016.

Although the 'expenditure ceiling' Constitutional Amendment (EC 95) did not specify which specific policies or budget items would be cut, in practice the cuts have fallen most heavily on policies

directed towards the most vulnerable and least empowered populations. Along with the consequences of the economic crisis and rising unemployment, austerity has contributed to an increase in the number of people living in extreme poverty after years of reduction, with the number rising from 13.34 million in 2016 to 14.83 million in 2017 (Villas Bôas, 2018). As a result, SDG targets such as the establishment of 'nationally appropriate social protection systems, and procedures for all, to achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable by 2030' (SDG Target 1.3) seem to be becoming less, rather than more, attainable for Brazil.

At the same time as austerity measures have been applied across the social policy sectors, no fewer than 60 bills providing for tax breaks, which if approved would total some R\$ 664 billion (USD 170 billion) by 2020, are making their way through Congress (Rodrigues and Linder 2018). Along with the measures introduced by the *bancada ruralista* and its allies in Congress to restrict PCTs' access to land and roll back demarcations of indigenous and *quilombola* territories (as well as reducing the coverage of environmentally protected areas), this indicates that the SDG commitment to 'ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources' (SDG Target 1.4) is a long way from being a current priority for the Brazilian political elite.

Findings for SDG 2 (zero hunger)

In 2014, the FAO announced that Brazil had left the World Hunger Map, after the number of undernourished Brazilians fell by 82 per cent between 2002 and 2013 (FAO, 2018). This was the culmination of a decades-long effort that had initially been triggered by civil society campaigning. After 'Zero Hunger' became a central commitment of Lula's first government, civil society again played a key role, this time in helping to oversee the implementation of policies designed to turn this commitment into a reality, through institutionalised participation spaces like CONSEA.

Cash transfer policies such as *Bolsa Família* played a fundamentally important role in Brazil's hunger reduction achievements. However, despite the almost universal coverage achieved by these policies, as cases such as that of the Guarani-Kaiowá people discussed in this report show, there are still some challenges facing efforts to guarantee the human right to adequate food in Brazil that particularly affect the rural poor, and in particular indigenous groups and traditional communities. Now, with austerity measures threatening the coverage of *Bolsa Família* and other key social policies, Brazil may once again find itself on the World Hunger Map.

Beyond cash transfers, for PCTs and other groups of the rural poor, a key role in reducing hunger was also played by the expansion of policies to support family farming, including provision of credit and technical assistance and the implementation of the Food Acquisition Program (PAA). Although Brazil always gave priority in resource allocation to subsidising agribusiness, as part of a strategy for strengthening its position as one of the world largest exporters of agricultural commodities, the PAA and related policies went some way to offsetting this bias by emphasising sustainable food production for local consumption. CSOs made an important contribution both to overseeing these policies, through institutional participation spaces such as CONDRAF, and to delivering them on the ground, through government-funded programmes of NGO technical assistance for family farmers.

This strategy reflected the logic of SDG Target 2.3, according to which investments in policies to support small-scale food producers should help to reduce world hunger. However, recent policy and political changes have undermined the likelihood that Brazil will deliver on the promise of SDG Target 2.3 that such policies will help to secure by 2030 a doubling of the agricultural productivity and incomes of 'small-scale food producers, particularly women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers ... through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment'.

The threat comes not only from cuts to government programmes such as the PAA but also from efforts to roll back the progress made in recognising and guaranteeing PCT territorial rights. The right of indigenous people and *quilombolas* to access, use and control the lands that they occupy ancestrally is under threat despite being included in the Brazilian Constitution of 1988, and other groups of PCTs have yet to secure formal recognition of their territorial rights. This is one of the most important areas where closing space, especially via criminalisation of social movements and impunity for violence against communities who resist land-grabbing, is likely to affect Brazil's ability to meet the SDGs.

Findings for SDG 6 (water and sanitation for all)

The ongoing threat to traditional territories, and the restrictions on civil society efforts to protect them that are resulting from closing space, also affect the likelihood that Brazil will be able to achieve SDG 6. This is because these territories – generally located along river valleys or in the headwaters of river basins – are the source of much of Brazil's fresh water, and thus excluding and intimidating the populations who traditionally manage these territories will make it impossible to fulfil the SDG commitment to 'support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management', as well as to fulfil the promise that by 2020 there will be action to 'protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes'.

Brazil's ability to meet the SDG 6 commitment to 'achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all' by 2030 may also be under threat as a result of the cuts to the innovative Cisterns Programme. As discussed above, this programme originated with civil society proposals for a new paradigm based on adaptation to and coexistence with a drought-prone ecosystem. It was only able to meet its ambitious target build over one million cisterns because of the expertise of CSOs in developing and using low-cost social technologies for rainwater harvesting and their ability to deliver the mobilisation, education and frequently the construction components of the programme. However, since the financial crisis began in 2014 the programme has suffered cutbacks totalling more than 95 per cent of its budget. According to ASA, the key civil society network working on the programme, the budget cuts have brought it to an almost complete standstill.

Findings for SDG 10 (reduce inequality)

Brazil remains one of the most unequal countries in the world, despite the progress made in reducing income inequality over the last two decades. As this report has discussed, income inequalities have a strong intersectional character, with race, gender and rural/urban location combining to shape the most extreme differences. This gives particular relevance to civil society struggles for equality, and thus increases the risk that closing space will accelerate the trend back towards higher levels of income inequality that has already begun to appear since 2016 under the influence of austerity and economic crisis. Analysis by Cardoso et al. has highlighted that budget areas associated with key citizenship rights suffered the most severe cuts under the austerity programme, with a 37 percent reduction from R \$ 2.6 billion (USD 700 million) in 2016 to R \$ 1.6 billion (USD 400 million) in 2017 (2017: 14). This type of policy directly contradicts the SDG aim to 'progressively achieve greater equality' by adopting 'policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies' (Target 10.4). PCTs and other groups of the rural poor have been doubly affected by austerity, since they have suffered from cuts both in social protection and in government programmes intended to reduce Brazil's grotesquely unequal levels of access to land, a key driver of overall wealth inequality in society.

Beyond the issue of austerity, social movements and other civil society groups engaged in the struggle against inequality in rural Brazil face serious challenges as a result of closing space. The nature of the socio-environmental conflicts affecting PCTs is illustrated in the five cases presented in the boxes in this report. For civil society to continue to play a role in ensuring that these conflicts do not lead to further impoverishment of some of the most marginalised people in Brazil and their exclusion from traditional territories – thereby intensifying still further the country’s already extreme levels of inequality in access to resources – it is essential that branches of government, including the Judiciary, also fulfil their responsibilities to protect rights on the ground. The recent trends in criminal justice, including both attempts to criminalise rights defenders and pervasive impunity for violent attacks on them, suggest that this condition is unlikely to be met.

Findings for SDG 15 (life on land)

After the progress made in the early years of the Lula Government, the drastic reduction in the number of traditional territories benefiting from official recognition (demarcation and titling) has implications that go beyond the risk of failing to reduce poverty, hunger and inequality and denying PCTs their Constitutional rights to land. Given the strategic importance of these territories for biodiversity conservation (as well as carbon storage in natural vegetation), this also represents a risk that Brazil will fail to meet the SDGs in an area where it was previously able to demonstrate a strong track record, that of halting deforestation.

The ability of traditional territories to act as a barrier against deforestation is well documented. Research indicates that indigenous lands have historically suffered much lower rates of forest cover loss even than national parks, although changes in this pattern have been observed in recent years (Jusys 2018). These changes have occurred as pressures on indigenous lands and other traditional territories have intensified, with efforts by agribusiness interests represented by the rural caucus or *bancada ruralista* in Congress to remove legal protections for indigenous and quilombola lands. Preliminary data for 2018 indicate that there has been a year-on-year increase of almost 14 per cent in the rate of deforestation in Brazilian Amazonia, taking it to its highest level since 2008 (Lima 2018).

The threat from the *bancada ruralista* extends beyond the risk of rolling back demarcation of traditional territories, as this group is also seeking to change environmental legislation to reduce conservation requirements and shrink protected areas. Tackling this threat will require environmental NGOs to make common cause with PCT social movements, in a context where such alliances are increasingly likely to become the focus of attempts at criminalisation.

5. Conclusions and implications

This study has shown how changes in civic space in Brazil have driven a formerly positive dynamic of state/society collaboration into reverse, opening the way for austerity measures to target the social policies that previously helped to reduce poverty, hunger and inequality, and leaving rights defenders increasingly exposed to threats of criminalisation and/or violence. These changes are restricting the ability of civil society to support the rights struggles of PCTs, who account for a significant proportion of the poorest and most vulnerable Brazilians. As a result, some four million people risk being 'left behind', facing worsening social indicators and growing inequality. If PCTs are unable to defend their rights to land, then the territories that they have managed sustainably for generations are at risk of further environmental devastation, depriving Brazil of a fundamental resource for delivering on its SDG commitments to preserve water resources and halt deforestation and biodiversity loss.

Further research

This study was carried out during a period of extreme political volatility and severe economic crisis in Brazil. It is difficult to establish the extent to which the changes identified here represent long-term trends rather than temporary shifts. Further research would need both to look at a longer time period (including other episodes of austerity under right-wing governments) and to take a more fine-grained approach to tracking changes in key indicators at a more disaggregated level, ideally at the level of individual PCT territories to capture specific patterns of change in vulnerability, wellbeing and environmental protection. Such analysis could be combined with process tracing methodology to clarify the causal links between changes and consequences, untangling further the complex relationships and feedback loops involved.

Implications for policy and practice

If Brazil is serious about meeting its SDG commitments, it has everything to gain from protecting the territorial rights of PCTs and ensuring that these groups of citizens have full access to appropriate social policies. Civil society is a vital interlocutor and potential ally for this. However, the current context includes several serious obstacles to realising this potential.

Brazilian CSOs were still reeling from the shock of the abrupt end to their access to government resources and decision-making processes which followed the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff in 2016 when the 2018 elections left them facing an even more challenging scenario. After the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff in 2016 many of the key participation spaces were closed down and the budgets for anti-poverty programmes were cut drastically. Jair Bolsonaro followed his election victory by announcing the appointment of an extremely conservative cabinet, including a large number of ministers with military backgrounds. This does not bode well for indigenous peoples, *quilombolas* and other traditional communities as they prepare to defend their territories against what seems likely to be an intensification of the pressures they already face.

Beyond the immediate challenge of dealing with the Bolsonaro government, the main obstacle to restoring a level of state-civil society collaboration that can ensure socially inclusive and sustainable development outcomes for PCTs and other vulnerable groups in rural Brazil is the growing strength within the wider Brazilian political system of groups seeking to deny their land rights and open up their territories to agribusiness and extractive industries. The most visible group is the *bancada*

ruralista in the National Congress, but similar alliances exist at subnational level, and were part of the coalitions that won control of several states in the 2018 elections.⁸

As well as attempts by the *bancada ruralista* and others to pass legislation criminalising their mobilisation activities, social movements and their NGO allies may face threats of repression via the legal system. The Brazilian judiciary has recently displayed a tendency to intervene aggressively in politics in the name of the struggle against corruption, and although the Public Ministry has an admirable record of supporting PCTs' efforts to secure their Constitutional rights, it increasingly contains elements who are less inclined to support rights claims that run counter to elite economic interests.

In the media and within Brazilian society more widely, an anti-PCT discourse has been gaining traction. This is not only because it has been able to tap into pervasive racial, regional and anti-rural biases amongst many segments of Brazilian society, which previously had been largely hidden but have been given greater visibility by Bolsonaro's rise, as illustrated by his Vice-President elect's racist statements associating indigenous Brazilians with 'indolence' and Afro-Brazilians with 'dishonesty' (Raatz and Strazzer 2018).

The power of this discourse is also due to its association with a claim that PCTs and their territorial rights represent a 'barrier to development'. In a context where economic growth has gone into reverse and unemployment has increased sharply, appeals to a purely growth-based vision of development based on exploiting the natural resources of the country's hinterland have a strong appeal among many segments of Brazil's largely urbanised population. The fact that this vision contradicts the holistic and sustainability-centred logic of the SDGs is unlikely to impress a population with little knowledge of the global goals, especially in a context where rising nationalism questions the legitimacy of such international agreements.

This is also an issue for the potential engagement of civil society in efforts to secure broader support for the SDGs, since many Brazilian CSOs are themselves sceptical about the legitimacy of Agenda 2030, albeit for different reasons, relating principally to the government-dominated nature of the process that led to their definition. Civil society in Brazil is much more likely to rally behind appeals to defend the rights that were established by the 1988 Constitution and are now perceived to be increasingly under threat. One key implication for policy and practice is therefore that there is a need to develop materials clearly communicating the links between the SDGs and the national rights provisions and progressive policy measures of which Brazilian civil society is justly proud. Forging connections between currently divergent national and international civil society agendas will be an essential part of enabling joint action, in the face of what is likely to be an intensifying set of pressures on Brazil's formerly vibrant but now beleaguered civic space.

⁸ The growing power of the evangelical Christian Right also represents a challenge, given its calls for the imposition of a conservative social agenda on indigenous peoples despite the latter's Constitutionally-guaranteed right to protection of cultural diversity.

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