

Policy pointers

In a scenario of structural socioterritorial inequalities, governments need to reconcile the reduction of emissions with the right to the city. They must focus on promoting inclusive urban development while avoiding future emissions.

Climate policies and urban planning must focus on reducing greenhouse gases and meeting the needs of local communities, prioritising broad and inclusive participation.

Governments can learn from and expand collaborative climate governance initiatives, such as Urban Labs for Sustainability, which foster dialogue and facilitate cross-sector climate actions that respond to local development priorities.

Local governments should encourage collaborative territorial governance and climate action, by learning from Urban Labs in Recife and Teresina, removing obstacles to meaningful participation, and developing institutional capacities and learning.

Coalitions that transform territories: mitigation from a new perspective

The sectoral divisions between climate change mitigation (emissions reduction) and adaptation (responding to the effects of climate change) are inadequate when we consider climate justice and the right to the city, especially when it comes to the needs of peripheral neighbourhoods and people in vulnerable situations. A new mitigation agenda must address both the quality of urban life and the systematic reduction of emissions. Territorial governance models are also essential. This briefing is based on the 'Transformative Urban Coalitions' project, which uses 'Urban Labs' to innovate in citizen participation, which not only involves diverse actors taking a leading role, but also integrates territorial and climate issues.

The role of cities in combating climate change is widely recognised, and Brazil has made progress in integrating urban policy with climate action.¹ However, an inclusive approach is still a challenge, especially in a context of persistent urban inequality and recurring climate injustice.²

Brazil is one of the world's largest emitters of greenhouse gases (GHG), with 84.7% of its population living in urban areas and many municipalities vulnerable to climate change. Implementing climate action in complex urban environments faces challenges such as: (i) coordinating multiple actors, both state and non-state; (ii) integrating different sectoral policies; (iii) promoting broad spaces for democratic participation; and (iv) recognising local needs and realities that reflect deep socioterritorial inequalities.

Bridging the gap between large-scale decarbonisation targets and unequal and unfair urban development must be a priority. The international project 'Transformative Urban Coalitions' addresses this issue by supporting multistakeholder Urban Labs in five Latin American cities. This policy brief summarises the lessons learnt from Labs in the Brazilian cities of Recife and Teresina after two years of operation.

Inclusive mitigation: a new perspective

Although mitigation and adaptation must go hand in hand, inclusive measures to combat climate change focus on adaptation actions, which are still insufficient. The national mitigation agenda, based on Brazil's nationally determined contributions, is unambitious and

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focuses on containing deforestation as a key strategy.³ In the municipalities, which have primary responsibility for urban development under articles 30, VII and 182 of the Federal Constitution, mitigation is often centred on urban mobility.

The differences in agendas point to challenges: (i) in coordination between different levels of government and their areas of competence and (ii) in the development of governance models that

include a variety of state and non-state actors and take territorial aspects into account. These challenges are critical for inclusive climate action, which must focus on the most vulnerable communities and neighbourhoods.

In addition, climate mitigation agendas often address the right to development and seek decarbonised economies through technological solutions. To be truly fair, such agendas must rethink urban development to minimise new emissions and improve quality of life. More egalitarian cities with quality public services tend to emit fewer GHG.⁴

The road ahead requires policies at multiple levels, from local to global, guided by different governance models and a variety of expertise.⁵ Changing the current development model is crucial to combating inequalities in Brazilian cities. By affirming the right to the city, we can advance climate justice⁶ and adopt more inclusive mitigation measures.

To make progress in creating an inclusive mitigation agenda, some government actions are essential to develop skills and stimulate learning:

- **Improve integration of the mitigation and climate justice agendas into urban policy.** Federal government needs to coordinate studies that focus on understanding how issues of equity and justice are being incorporated into local climate actions, particularly climate action plans and policies that respond to the needs of vulnerable neighbourhoods. This approach can foster institutional learning and help develop capacities. It is especially useful for coordinating actions between different levels of government and identifying themes and sectors where collaboration can be more effective.

- **Improve coordination between ministries and secretariats, aligning the climate agenda with the demands and needs of peripheral territories and vulnerable populations.** This can be done by integrating the mitigation agenda with the right to the city approach. The reinstatement of the Ministry of Cities and the installation of a National Secretariat for the Peripheries offer a good opportunity to do this.
- **Form partnerships with civil society to promote learning and expand awareness of how climate change affects local problems.** By promoting environmental education in accordance with Law 9.795/99 and disseminating environmental information from a human rights perspective, as established in the Escazú Agreement, we increase understanding of the impacts of climate change in different territories. This happens through a combination of local government action and the integration of popular knowledge, something that has already been observed in international experiences.⁷ The Transformative Urban Coalitions project also shows that demands based on the needs of communities can be integrated into inclusive mitigation agendas. Issues such as transport, mobility alternatives, waste and recycling, construction quality, temperature improvement (housing and green areas), and climate impacts, such as rising sea levels and flooding, are longstanding community priorities. However, there is still a need for a broader understanding of climate justice.

Transformative Urban Coalitions and territory-based climate action

The design and implementation of inclusive mitigation projects, plans and policies can be more effective if the latter consider the specific demands of vulnerable territories. However, governments play an important role in promoting the nesting of collaborative practices⁸ as well as experiences of co-production and co-management of territories, which need legitimisation, protection and respect.

The concept of participation has multiple meanings⁹ and although there have been both advances and setbacks, participatory urban management (according to articles 2, II and 43–45 of Brazil's City Statute) has increased in institutional spaces, and always has a rather revolutionary nature.¹⁰ Participation on climate issues needs further development. It is common for climate action to prioritise the

opinion of experts (a 'mini-public'). This science-centred approach needs to be questioned in order to ensure an effective and inclusive response to the climate crisis.

The experiences in Teresina and Recife¹¹ contribute to learning about participatory territorial governance. These models seek to improve the urban environment through co-creation with residents and other actors from the public and private sectors and civil society. Through active listening, these participants influence decisions in areas such as community diagnoses, initial interventions, priorities, the formation of working groups and alignment with existing initiatives.¹²

The climate dimension is being developed with the aim of making effective contributions to promoting a fairer city. This objective aims to improve urban and environmental conditions, solve local problems and promote the right to sustainable cities, as established in Article 2, I, of the City Statute and in the United Nations' New Urban Agenda.

There is great potential to make urban climate policies more inclusive, combining mitigation and adaptation strategies. These policies should be built from the bottom up, allowing governments to learn from and collaborate with these coalitions, as shown in the examples below (Box 1 and Box 2).

Government action can increase the impact of the coalitions, removing obstacles and promoting their development in parallel with other territorial interventions. It is crucial that these actions do not make the coalitions an end in themselves or a precondition for public investment. Support measures include removing obstacles, building capacity and fostering learning, such as:

- **Enabling a physical location in or near the territory:** multipurpose community spaces serve to strengthen identities and catalyse new possibilities for networking. Finding and maintaining these properties can be challenging. It is crucial to eliminate this obstacle through government measures that make public property (land or buildings) and resources available from existing public actions, to cover recurring costs of maintaining the space.
- **Providing initial materials and guidance is crucial to the success of the coalitions.** This involves: (i) terms of membership and operating structures, such as working groups; (ii) joint guidelines for meetings and diversity of participants; (iii)

Box 1. Alliance for the Edgar Gayoso Residence

Location: residencial Edgar Gayoso [Edgar Gayoso Home], built under the '*Minha Casa, Minha Vida*' [My House, My Life] programme in the northernmost outskirts of Teresina. The area lacks adequate access to services, public facilities and quality green spaces.

Initial strategic intervention: Praça dos Sonhos [Dreams Square] has toys, an outdoor gym, a pergola for waiting for public transport, street furniture (such as benches, tables and rubbish bins) and small green areas.

Working groups: multipurpose Space; Employment and Income; Public Policies; Public Spaces

Planned urban-environmental improvement actions (examples): depolluting the Lagoa de Polimento; training courses based on consultations with the community, made possible through partnerships and without neglecting initiatives that foster learning about inclusive climate actions, such as engagement with community gardening experiences; sustainable and eco-efficient paving of the bus route, carried out in partnership with the town hall and the private sector; setting up a sustainable waste management process in collaboration with the community caretaker and a waste pickers' cooperative; and expansion of wooded areas.

integrating the climate agenda with local demands, such as through games; and (iv) identifying catalytic projects with a quick impact and low cost.

- **Identifying a subject that has legitimacy and institutional stability is a key strategy that should be emphasised in capacity building.** This stage is crucial for the continuity of this model of co-production and has the effect of facilitating the contracting of projects,¹³ for example, through terms of collaboration, agreements

Box 2. Alliance for the centre of Recife

Location: comunidade do Pilar, which covers a Special Zone of Social Interest. A housing complex has already been partially built in this area with funds from the Growth Acceleration Programme to accommodate families displaced by the implementation of the Porto Digital redevelopment project.

Initial strategic intervention: Rota da Infância, a public space intended to serve as a leisure and social area for children and their carers, who are predominantly women.

Working groups: Housing; Community Space; Sustainable Waste Cycle; Childhood Route

Planned actions for urban-environmental qualification (examples): expanding the participatory process for the project to renovate the current housing estate and build new ones, discussing sustainable construction techniques that contribute to reducing future emissions; establishing partnerships to use the community space for vocational training courses including recycling activities; and developing a project to set up selective collection and recycling services.

and management contracts, which guarantee public funding for certain interventions. Public universities, federal institutes¹⁴ and professional councils¹⁵ have great potential to contribute and offer interesting experiences.

- **Financing inclusive climate action projects linked to actions already underway is essential to building capacity.** This involves identifying existing public programmes or projects and integrating the actions of coalitions

that prioritise coordination with these initiatives. The identification of budget lines compatible with local demands, together with greater inter-secretarial and inter-ministerial integration and coordination, can speed up and scale up this territorial governance model.

Julia Azevedo Moretti

Julia Azevedo Moretti is a lawyer and an independent consultant, specialising in urban planning law, environment and development.



Knowledge Products

The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) promotes sustainable development, linking local priorities to global challenges.

Contact

Anna Walnycki
anna.walnycki@iied.org

Julia Azevedo Moretti
moretti.julia@gmail.com

44 Southampton Buildings
London, WC2A 1AP
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)20 3463 7399
www.iied.org

IIED welcomes feedback via: @IIED and
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Notes

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