



GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING THE G20



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GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING THE G20

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The **Guide to Understanding the G20** is the result of a partnership between the BRICS Policy Center (BPC), Jubileu Sul Brasil (Jubilee South Brazil), and Associação Nacional de ONGs (ABONG, or the National Association of NGOs). A collaborative effort with civil society organizations and networks, such as Rede Brasileira Pela Integração dos Povos (REBRIP, or the Brazilian Network for the Integration of Peoples) and Instituto de Estudos Socioeconômicos (INESC, or the Institute of Socioeconomic Studies), among others, this Guide aims to facilitate your journey through the complex universe of the G20, from the time of its creation, during the gradual expansion of its agenda and structure, until now, the year that Brazil holds the rotating presidency of the G20. We hope that this Guide will provide useful information on the G20's dynamics for civil society, the press, and academics, among other stakeholders. Written in easy-to-read language, its goal is to democratize information on the G20 process and terminology. To understand the G20, we sought to establish a pluralist dialogue with various representatives of civil society organizations and networks and the academic world and invited them to share their impressions on the tensions in the G20, its limits, and potential.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- The G20: where did it come from and how does it work?** 7
- What is the relationship between the G20 and the international financial institutions (IFIs)?** ... 12
- Inside the G20: how is it organized?** 14
 - The Finance Track and Meetings of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors 14
 - What is the difference between a Working Group and an Engagement Group? 16
 - G20 Working Groups 17
 - G20 Engagement Groups 20
- Brazil assumed the G20 presidency: now what?** 23
 - Who is who in the G20 in Brazil 23
 - Themes of the Task Forces, Working Groups, and Engagement Groups 25
 - Social participation in the G20 in Brazil 27
- How do civil society organizations in Brazil see the G20?** 29
- Gender and race in analyses of issues that seem so distant from one another? Yes! Because...** 38
- Sources** 40
- Interviews** 43

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

- Figure I – Expansion of the G7 to the G20 8
- Box I – The main themes on the G20 agenda *before* the 2008 crisis 9
- Box II – The main themes on the G20 agenda *after* the 2008 crisis 11
- Figure II – G20 Tracks 16
- Table I – Working Group and Engagement Group 17
- Box III – The UN’s 2030 Agenda 18
- Table II – Cross-cutting themes addressed by the Engagement Groups 25





The G20: where did it come from and how does it work?

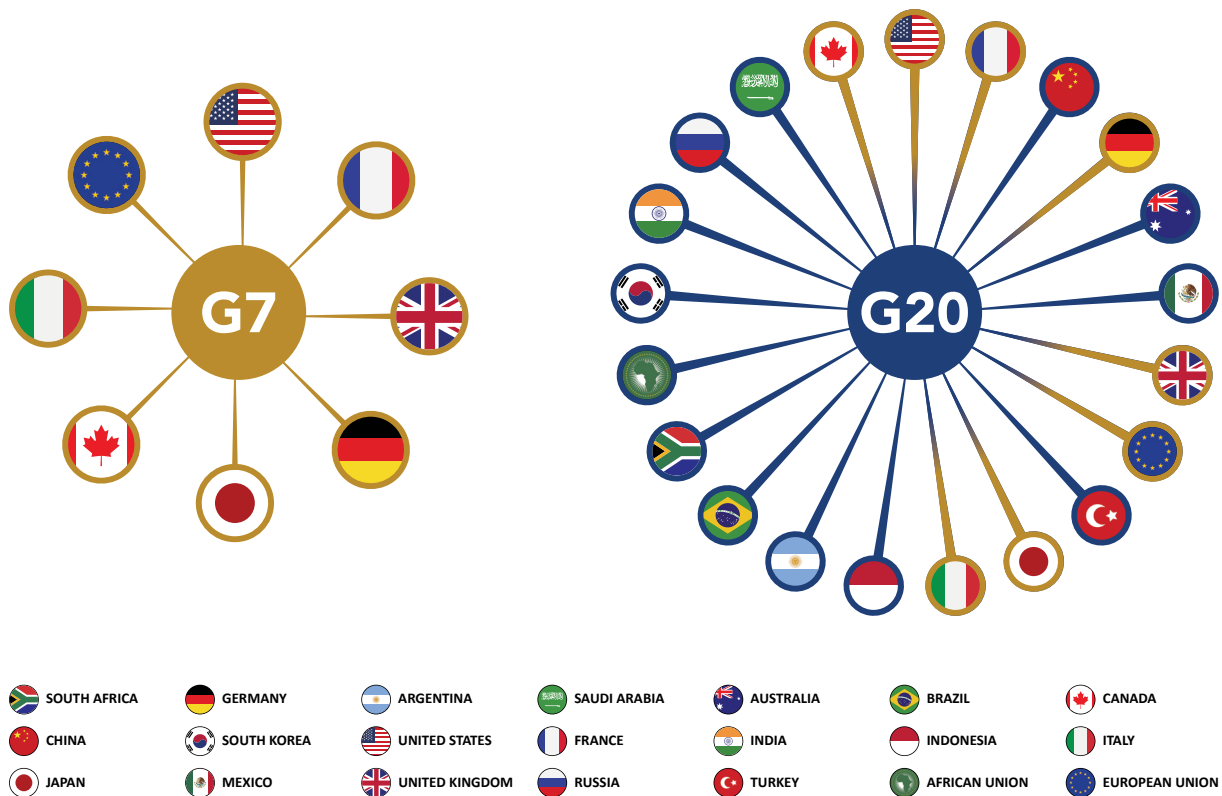
The Group of 20 (G20) is a platform for economic and political cooperation among twenty major world economies. It was founded in 1999 as an intergovernmental forum of the finance ministers and central bank governors of nineteen countries and the European Union. Its goal was to respond to the economic crises occurring at that time, such as the ones originating in Mexico (1994), the Asian Tigers (1997), and Russia (1998).

The 1997 Asian crisis began in Thailand, spread to South Korea and Indonesia, and eventually affected the entire region and the rest of the world. This prompted the G7, the group of the leading Western powers (United States, Canada, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Japan, and Germany), to create a larger forum to contain the crisis because of the interconnectedness of their economies. In the new space of the G20, countries were to work together to prevent future crises from happening and build consensus on global financial and economic issues that all members faced.

The G7 was also forced to acknowledge the changes in the world economy. In the 1970s and 1980s, the main industrialized countries would decide how to solve the major problems of the international economy themselves. In the 1990s and 2000s, however, due to the rapid growth of the emerging economies (such as China, India, and Brazil) and the relative decline in the weight of the G7 countries in the global economy, this was no longer possible.

The founding members of the G20 were Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, United Kingdom (UK), United States (US) and the European Union (EU). In 2023, the African Union (an African regional integration body involving 55 countries from the continent, based in Ethiopia) was invited to join the G20. With all these members, the G20 represents 85% of global gross domestic product (GDP), nearly two-thirds of the world population, and over 75% of global trade.

Figure I – Expansion of the G7 to the G20



The goal of the first meeting of finance ministers and central bank governors (Berlin, 1999) was to get the group's members to commit to complying with the codes and standards set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, strengthening their national financial systems, and addressing other finan-

cial issues. While the group's focus was initially on financial stability, it moved on to other issues that arose on the socioeconomic and political scene over the years, such as the fight against the financing of terrorism after the September 11, 2001 attacks.

Box I – The main themes on the G20 agenda *before* the 2008 crisis

- ▶ Crisis prevention and resolution (1999 - 2004)
- ▶ Challenges of globalization (2000 - 2004)
- ▶ Countering the financing of terrorism (2001 - 2004)
- ▶ Surveillance and domestic policies (2000 - 2007)
- ▶ Reform of the Bretton Woods institutions (IMF and World Bank, 2005 - 2007)

The collapse of the US-based bank Lehman Brothers in 2008 triggered the biggest and most recent international financial crisis by causing a domino effect that pushed other international financial institutions (IFIs) into bankruptcy. This was when the G20 was turned into the world's main forum for global economic coordination, as it began convening the heads of state of the twenty member countries as well, giving it much more political clout.

It is worth noting that Brazil held the rotating presidency of the Financial G20 in 2008, the year the leader's forum was created. Back then, the Lula administration played an important role in the political negotiations that elevated the G20 to the status of a multilateral forum for heads of state, and not merely one of finance ministers and central bank governors.

The first three G20 Summits – Washington (US), in 2008; London (UK), in 2009, and Pittsburgh (US), in 2009 – were mainly focused on containing the spread of the crisis. Many believed that failure to find a solution to the crisis would have disastrous economic consequences for the world.

The texts from these three summits criticized the financial markets' permissiveness and excesses for causing the crisis. The initial G20 statements contained strong criticism of financial deregulation (including references to the crisis of 1929 and the defense of countercyclical measures) and called for new regulations, which were the basis of the group's initial measures and resolutions. However, it started to take a change in direction in Toronto (2009) and Seoul (2010).

Between 2008 and 2010, the G20 adopted the following resolutions:

- ▶ Strengthen oversight of hedge funds and credit rating agencies;
- ▶ Create the Financial Stability Board (FSB), whose mandate is to promote international financial stability;
- ▶ Establish the Framework for Strong, Sustainable and Balanced Growth (FSSBG), under which members commit to working together to assess their national policies for international growth and development and identify potential risks, and
- ▶ Create the Mutual Assessment Process (MAP), together with the IMF.

Once the world economy returned to relative stability after 2008, the G20 began promoting itself as a mechanism for managing and monitoring the international economic order in general. It started including new issues in its agenda, in addition to the financial ones, in the areas of health, the environment, food security, and climate change, among others.

Box II – The main themes on the G20 agenda after the 2008 crisis

- ▶ Between 2010 and 2013, issues that were not present in its formative years began appearing on the G20's agenda. For example: international development, investment in infrastructure, and the environment.
- ▶ From 2011 to 2014, concerns and joint resolutions on food security, green growth, climate change, corruption, and infrastructure began to appear in Summit declarations.
- ▶ From 2015 to 2020, the issues of gender equality, migration, and terrorism were added to the resolutions.
- ▶ From 2020 to the present, global health gained prominence during the pandemic, together with the digital economy, technological change, the future of work, and tourism.

☀ **And how does the G20 work today?** The G20 is not an official international organization, with a head office and statutes (like the UN, the IMF, and the World Bank are). It is a mechanism for informal dialogue, and it has no secretariat, charter, or binding votes to dictate the group's rules.

Therefore, its rotating presidency is fundamental, as it is the one to set the year's agenda. The G20 presidencies form a "Troika" (group of three countries), made up of the presidents from last year, the current year, and the following year. For example, in 2024, the G20 Troika will be made up of India (2023), Brazil (2024), and South Africa (2025), respectively. These three countries are to cooperate among themselves and are responsible for defining the agenda of the Summit every year, meaning they may give continuity to themes or change them. They also have the power to alter their presidency's organizational structure and decide on the logistics.

The G20's main output is the final declaration from each summit and its recommendations. The wording of the declarations and recommendations reflect what all G20 members agreed on in relation to that year's agendas and themes. In other words, all decisions are made by consensus.



What is the relationship between the G20 and the international financial institutions (IFIs)?

The Bretton Woods institutions are the IFIs created by the agreement reached at the Bretton Woods Conference (US) in 1944, which defined the international economic order of the post-World War II era. They include the International Monetary Fund (IMF); the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), which is now the World Bank, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which is now the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Since its creation, the G20 has partnered with the IMF, World Bank, and the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), as well as the International Monetary and Financial Committee (IMFC) and the Development Committee. These organizations send representatives to participate in G20 meetings, produce documents, and promote debates and solutions. As such, the G20 has been integrated into and cooperates with the Bretton Woods international financial system.

The reform of the Bretton Woods institutions is one of the most debated issues at the G20. Developing countries demand better representation and more active participation in their decision-making.

The G20 worked with the IMF to create the Mutual Assessment Process (MAP) – a multilateral process through which G20 countries identify objectives for the global economy and the policies and measures needed to achieve them. Member countries commit to work together on issues such as: putting public finances

on a sustainable path, implementing structural reforms to boost global demand, and strengthening the capacity of IFIs to support development for the global economy, among others.

The organizations invited to G20 meetings are: the IMF and its ministerial committees, the IMFC, the Development Committee, World Bank, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Financial Stability Board (FSB), the BIS, the International Labor Organization (ILO), the United Nations, and the WTO.

Created by the G20 during the 2008 economic crisis, the FSB has become an important partner in the task of monitoring and fast-tracking financial sector reforms. Its task is to coordinate the work of national financial authorities and international organizations to develop and promote the implementation of regulatory, supervisory, and other financial sector policies.



Inside the G20: how is it organized?

The G20 organizes its operations into two “tracks”: the Sherpa Track and the Finance Track. The Sherpa Track is organized by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the G20 countries and led by the personal emissaries of the G20 leaders. The Finance Track is where finance ministers and central bank governors meet to discuss financial issues.

The Finance Track and Meetings of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors

The Finance Track is the ‘original core’ of the G20, which was born to enhance financial coordination and cooperation in moments of crisis. It is where the finance ministers and central bank presidents of member countries come together to discuss economic and financial issues. Its agenda relies on and is articulated with those of the Bank of International Settlements (BIS) and the Financial Stability Board (FSB).

The BIS has acted as the “bank of central banks” since 1930 to maintain global monetary and financial stability. The Banco Central do Brasil (BCB, or Central Bank of Brazil) has been a shareholder since 1997. The Financial Stability Board (FSB) is hosted by the BIS and coordinates with financial authorities to supervise and develop regulatory policies. Brazil has been a member of the FSB since 2009. The BCB contributes actively to several initiatives, from research to monitoring the effectiveness of policies aimed at reducing vulnerabilities in financial systems in collaboration with the IFIs.

Currently, the Finance Track has six technical groups, a task force, and an initiative on international taxation. The groups are: financial sector issues; international financial architecture; global economy; sustainable finances; financial inclusion, and infrastructure. Also, the Joint Finance and Health Task Force was set up in 2021, at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was developed as a forum for enhancing global dialogue and cooperation on pandemic prevention, preparation, and response (PPR).

The Political or the Sherpa Track

Created in the wake of the 2008 crisis, the Sherpa Track is led by senior diplomats and/or high-ranking government officials from the countries in the group. In diplomatic relations, Sherpas are the ones who conduct negotiations and act as liaisons for the heads of state summits. This track is responsible for discussing agreements and making decisions in preparation for the G20 Summits on a variety of issues.

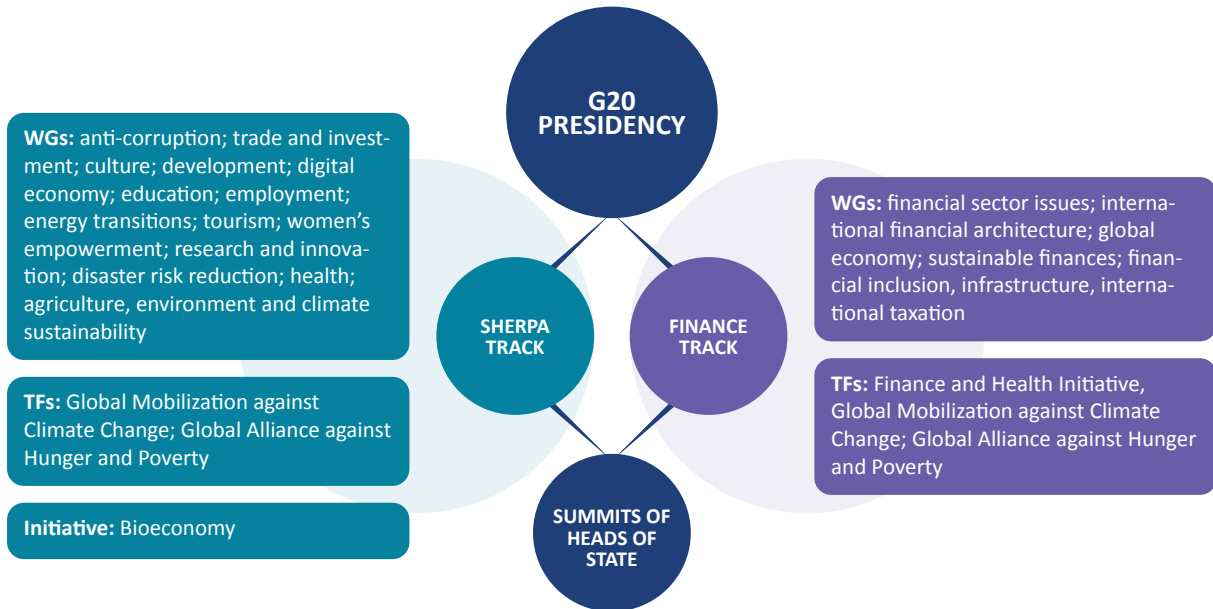


“Sherpas” are experienced guides from Nepal, known for leading expeditions in the Himalayan mountains. They are vital to the success of these journeys.

The Sherpa Track is currently organized into fifteen working groups (WGs): anti-corruption; trade and investment; culture; development; digital economy; education; employment; energy transitions; tourism; women’s empowerment; research and innovation; disaster risk reduction; health; agriculture, and environment and climate sustainability. These groups are coordinated by a joint team composed of different ministries. For example, the Anti-corruption WG is coordinated by the Office of the Comptroller General; the Tourism WG is coordinated by the Ministry of Tourism; the Culture WG, by the Ministry of Culture; the Women’s WG, by the Ministry of Women, and so on.

This track also has two task forces: Global Mobilization against Climate Change (coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and shared with the Financial Track) and the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty (coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Development, Social Assistance, Family and the Fight against Hunger). There is also a Bioeconomy Initiative, which focuses on three themes: science, technology, and innovation; the sustainable use of biodiversity, and the role of the bioeconomy in sustainable development.

Figure II – G20 Tracks



What is the difference between a Working Group and an Engagement Group?

While Working Groups are composed of government officials and focus on specific technical issues, the Engagement Groups involve different actors from society to promote a broader and more diversified debate.

Table 1 – Working Group and Engagement Group

G20	Working Group (WG)	Engagement Group
<p>Role</p>	<p>In the context of the G20, the term Working Group refers to committees or specific teams set up to deal with certain issues on the G20’s global agenda. These WGs are composed of representatives of the member countries and may address a variety of topics, such as trade, finances, or sustainable development, among others.</p> <p>These groups play a crucial role in the policymaking process and in drafting recommendations that are later submitted to the leaders of G20 countries for deliberation.</p>	<p>Engagement Groups in the context of the G20 refer to forums or organizations that represent different sectors of civil society, companies, and other interest groups that contribute to the dialogue and exchange of information.</p> <p>Engagement Groups play a fundamental role in offering a wider range of perspectives and recommendations during the policymaking process.</p> <p>They are run fairly independently from governments, are usually led by organizations from the host country, and include participants from all G20 member countries.</p>

G20 Working Groups

The Development Working Group (DWG)

The Development Working Group (DWG) was established to lead the implementation of the UN’s 2030 Agenda. The focus of its work is to narrow the gap between developed and developing countries. Created during the Toronto Summit, in 2010, the DWG adopted the Multi-year Action Plan on Development (MYAP)

and the Seoul Development Consensus, which defines six main principles as the basis for action: economic growth; the promotion of global development partnerships; addressing global or regional systemic issues; encouraging private sector participation; seeking the complementarity of approaches, and orientation towards tangible outcomes. The DWG also has a role in coordinating the G20's actions on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Box III – The UN's 2030 Agenda

Established in 2015 by the United Nations to address global challenges, the 2030 Agenda is a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to peace and prosperity that are to guide global action. Each SDG addresses crucial areas, from health and education to sustainable energy and peace.

The Agenda concerns all countries and recognizes that sustainable development is a shared responsibility. Therefore, every nation is to adapt the SDGs to its needs and reality. The 2030 Agenda represents a lasting commitment to forge a more sustainable future. However, to implement it, persistence and cooperation beyond 2030 are required in order to sustain the gains achieved and ensure a lasting impact.

The Anti-Corruption Working Group (ACWG)

The Anti-Corruption Working Group (ACWG) was created in 2010 to fight corruption and its deleterious impacts on markets, free competition, resource allocation, and public trust. Its main objective is to provide comprehensive recommendations to G20 leaders on how to make practical contributions to international anti-corruption efforts.

The ACWG coordinates the collective and national actions of G20 members, while working in close collaboration with organizations such as the OECD, World Bank, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the IMF, and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), as well as partners from the private sector (B20) and the civil society (C20) Engagement Groups.

The ACWG also relies on the Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative (StAR) to guide actions related to asset recovery, money laundering, terrorism financing, transparency, and beneficial ownership. StAR leads the World Bank delegation to the ACWG. Thus, its mission is to identify, track, and recover illicit assets, while working to promote transparency and prevent irregular financial practices on a global scale.

The Trade and Investment Working Group (TIWG)

The Trade and Investment Working Group (TIWG) aims to strengthen the member countries' trade and investment mechanisms. Its goal is to coordinate investment policies, support multilateral negotiations, and build inclusive global value chains. The Brazilian presidency of the G20 is highlighting the importance of international trade and investment in achieving common goals, promoting development, and guaranteeing economic progress and social inclusion.

The TIWG's priorities include the integration of trade and sustainability, sustainable development in investment agreements, gender equality in international trade, and the reform of the WTO with a view to strengthening the multilateral trade system.

The Energy Transition and the Climate Sustainability Working Groups (ETWG & CSWG)

The Energy Transition and the Climate Sustainability Working Groups focus on the challenges related to the evolution of the energy sector and the promotion of climate sustainability. Their objectives include promoting clean and sustainable energy grids, mitigating climate change impacts, and fostering global cooperation in these areas. While they are two separate working groups, they often hold joint meetings, as their themes are recognized to be intrinsically connected.

These WGs promote discussions and develop strategic initiatives to drive the transition to renewable energy sources, improve energy efficiency, and promote climate resilient practices. Their activities include the elaboration of policies and concrete actions to reduce carbon emissions, promote sustain-

able technological innovations, and stimulate the development of green infrastructure. Collaboration among G20 member countries is key to achieve these objectives and contribute to a sustainable, ecologically responsible, global energy landscape.

G20 Engagement Groups

B20 (Business 20)

The B20 is the G20 Engagement Group for businesses. Established in 2010, the B20 operates through task forces and action councils entrusted with key themes that inform their priorities. These groups are composed of around 1,000 business representatives from G20 countries, as well as guests from select countries and international organizations.

Its mission is to serve as a platform for the business community to build consensus and set the priorities of policies designed to address global economic challenges. The goal of the B20 is to represent the interests of the business community at the G20, promote public-private sector dialogue, and offer impactful and tailored policy recommendations.

C20 (Civil 20)

Founded in 2013, the C20 is the G20 Engagement Group for civil society. Its purpose is to protect the environment, promote social and economic development, and defend human rights.

Based on the principle of economic justice, the C20 is currently organized into ten WGs: fair, inclusive, and anti-racist economies; food systems, hunger, and poverty; environment, climate justice, and just energy transition; sustainable and resilient communities and disaster risk reduction; integrated health for everyone; education and culture; digitization and technology; women's rights and gender equality; philanthropy and sustainable development, and democratic governance, civic space, anti-corruption, and access to justice.

L20 (Labour 20)

The L20 is the G20 Engagement Group for trade unions and workers. Formed in response to the 2008 financial crisis, the L20 unites trade unions from G20 countries and Global Unions. Its mission is to transmit union demands during G20 Summits through an active dialogue with Working Groups, Sherpas, and labor and finance ministers.

Its strategic priorities include: promoting the creation of quality jobs, especially in sectors such as infrastructure and care; creating opportunities for young people; guaranteeing the effective participation of women; labor formalization; stimulating sustainable growth, and the pursuit of tax justice. The L20 works to defend global policies that benefit workers and help build a more just and equitable world.

T20 (Think 20)

Created during the Mexican presidency in 2012, the T20 is a G20 Engagement Group for think tanks and research institutions. Its main activities are organizing conferences, side events, and policy briefs and submitting recommendations to governments.

The T20 aims to involve a large number of national and foreign think tanks to positively influence the G20 Finance and Sherpa Tracks. It also seeks to strengthen ties with other Engagement Groups so that the policy recommendations emerging from the T20's debates reflect a broader understanding of the issues at stake and have more support and legitimacy.

U20 (Urban 20)

The U20 is the G20 Engagement Group focused on cities. It promotes debates and political exchanges on urban economies, climates, and development. Convened by the C40 Group and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the U20 aims to draw attention to international cooperation on urban issues and offer a forum in which cities can elaborate messages collectively for the G20 negotiations. The

group was launched in 2017 and established in 2018, with Buenos Aires and Paris as its co-chairs. The U20 holds meetings of city mayors throughout the year, thus emerging as an important forum on the global agenda.

Y20 (Youth 20)

Y20 brings together young leaders from G20 countries to build their skills and networks and identify the most pressing economic challenges and opportunities for youth. This forum seeks to cooperate with future generations by offering a platform that raises the voices of young people on important issues related to the G20 agenda.

W20 (Women 20)

The W20 Engagement Group highlights the importance of gender equality in the economy. It was launched by the G20 in 2015 as a sign of its commitment to strengthen gender equality in its discussions, and it aims to guarantee that the policies and programs in diverse sectors are built to be inclusive. The W20 seeks to influence G20 leaders to recognize and reduce gender inequalities and promote changes in areas such as access to labor rights and investments in social infrastructure. Therefore, the W20 is dedicated to promoting the inclusion of women and their rights in global economic debates.

In addition to the Engagement Groups described above, there is also: the **S20** (Science 20, for scientific institutions), **Startup 20** (group of startup companies), **P20** (Parliament 20, the parliamentary speakers group), **SAI20** (Supreme Audit Institutions 20), **J20** (Justice 20, the group of supreme and constitutional courts), and **O20** (Ocean 20, which is for different interest groups involved in the ocean economy).



Brazil assumed the G20 presidency: now what?

Brazil has assumed the presidency of the G20 for the first time under the theme, “Building a Just World and a Sustainable Planet”. It will occupy the presidency from December 2023 to December 2024, which is when it will pass it on to South Africa. The G20 Summit will be held in the city of Rio de Janeiro on November 18th and 19th, 2024.

The Brazilian presidency established the following priorities:

- ▶ The promotion of social inclusion and the fight against inequalities and hunger;
- ▶ The fight against climate change and the promotion of the energy transition and sustainable development in three key areas (social, economic and environmental); and
- ▶ The reform of global governance institutions.

Who is who in the G20 in Brazil

On June 13th, 2023, President Lula issued Executive Order nº 11,561, which created the Comissão Nacional para a Coordenação da Presidência Brasileira do G20 (the National Committee for the Coordination of the Brazilian Presidency of the

G20). Composed of 39 federal government bodies, the committee will be coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRE/Itamaraty) and the Ministry of Finance, which will take care of the Sherpa and the Finance Tracks, respectively.

Sherpa Track: Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Itamaraty

The Secretary of Economic and Financial Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Maurício Lyrio, coordinates the G20 Sherpa Track.

Finance Track: Ministry of Finance

The Finance Track is coordinated by the Ministry of Finance's Secretary of International Economic Affairs (SAIN) under the leadership of Ambassador Tatiana Rosito.

Engagement Groups:

B20: Confederação Nacional da Indústria (CNI, or the National Confederation of Industry)

C20: Associação Brasileira de ONGs (ABONG or the Brazilian Association of NGOs) and Gestos (an NGO)

T20: Committee formed by the Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada (IPEA, or Institute for Applied Economic Research), the Centro Brasileiro de Relações Internacionais (CEBRI, or Brazilian Centre for International Relations), and the Fundação Alexandre Gusmão (FUNAG, or Alexandre de Gusmão Foundation)

U20: Cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo

L20: Central Única dos Trabalhadores (CUT, or the Unified Workers' Central)

Y20: Conselho Nacional da Juventude (Conjuve, or National Youth Council) and Secretaria Nacional da Juventude (SNJ, or National Youth Secretariat)

W20: Rede Mulher Empreendedora (Women Entrepreneurs Network)

S20: Academia Brasileira de Ciências (ABC, or the Brazilian Academy of Sciences)

Startup20: Associação Brasileira de Startups (ABStartups, or the Brazilian Association of Startups)

P20: Chamber of Deputies and the Senate

SAI20: Tribunal de Contas da União (TCU, or Federal Court of Accounts)

J20: Supremo Tribunal Federal (STF, or Federal Supreme Court)

Themes of the Task Forces, Working Groups, and Engagement Groups

In recent years, the macro issues that have appeared the most in the different Engagement Groups (EGs) are ‘environment and energy transition’, ‘reducing inequalities’, and ‘global governance’. Issues such as ‘technology and digital transformation’, ‘investment and finance’, ‘education and employment’, and ‘gender equality’ are also frequently raised. The list of cross-cutting themes is presented in the table below:

Table II – Cross-cutting themes addressed by the Engagement Groups		
Theme	WG / TF	EG
Education and Employment	Changing the World of Work: New employment opportunities in G20 countries	L20
	Employment and education	B20
	Education and culture	C20
	Employment	W20

Table II – Cross-cutting themes addressed by the Engagement Groups

Theme	WG / TF	EG
Gender Equality	Women and the future of work	L20
	Women, diversity, and inclusion in business	B20
	Women’s rights and gender equality	C20
	Women’s entrepreneurship	W20
Governança Global	Democratic governance, civic space, combatting corruption, and access to justice	C20
	Sustainable climate action and inclusive and just energy transitions	T20
	Inclusive digital transformation	
	Strengthening multilateralism and global governance	
Investment and Finance	Trade and investment	B20
	Finance and infrastructure	
	Reform of the international financial architecture	T20
Environment and Energy Transition	Sustainable food systems and agriculture	B20
	The energy transition and climate	
	Fight against inequalities, poverty, and hunger	T20
	Environment, climate justice, and the just energy transition	C20
	Sustainable and resilient communities and disaster risk reduction	
	Philanthropy and sustainable development	

Table II – Cross-cutting themes addressed by the Engagement Groups		
Theme	WG / TF	EG
Reducing Inequalities	Universal social security	L20
	International migration: portability of social security funds	
	Fair, inclusive, and anti-racist economies	C20
	Food systems, hunger, and poverty	
	Integrated health for all	
	Rural women, women’s leadership	W20
	Gender digital inclusion	T20
Technology and digital transformation	Digital transformation	B20
	Digitalization and technology	C20
	Trade and investment for sustainable and inclusive growth	T20

Social participation in the G20 in Brazil

The Brazilian presidency of the G20 has sought to encourage social groups to engage with the G20 through a new space called the ‘G20 Social’. This initiative invites all the engagement groups and non-governmental stakeholders to partake in a common dialogue. The goal is to mobilize these groups to participate and contribute to the formulation of G20 policies. According to the Brazilian government, around 30 G20 Social meetings are planned, in addition to other activities, which are to culminate in a Social Summit immediately before the G20 Leaders’ Summit in November 2024. Both will be held in Rio de Janeiro.

In the past, civil society organizations and social movements in Brazil have engaged in political and social advocacy work independently and autonomously, but also while at meetings and dialogues with governments. One form of political activism is the organization of the ‘Peoples Summit’. For example, in 2012, a

Peoples Summit was held in parallel to the United Nations Conference for Climate (or Rio+20) in the Flamengo Park in Rio de Janeiro, where over 100,000 people participated in workshops, convergence plenaries, and protests.

At the G20, street protests were staged during the summits in Toronto (2009), Seoul (2010), Hamburg (2017), and Buenos Aires (2018). Peoples Summits were organized as a “counter-summit” in France (2011), Russia (2013), Australia (2014), and Argentina (2018). The slogan in Argentina was “No to the G20! Down with the IMF!”. Its program was made up of activities on issues such as feminism, state violence, and policies for children and youth.



How do civil society organizations in Brazil see the G20?

In this section, we will present the different views of civil society organizations and networks – such as ABONG, Rede Brasileira Pela Integração dos Povos (REBRIP, or the Brazilian Network for the Integration of Peoples), rede Jubileu Sul Brasil (Jubilee South Brazil network), and Instituto de Estudos Socioeconômicos (INESC, or the Institute of Socioeconomic Studies), among others – on the G20 and how they have organized to intervene in and outside of the group’s official spaces.

These organizations and networks’ positions on the G20 vary. Some defend a more critical stance and believe that the financial policies orchestrated by the group are contrary to the promotion of democracy, human rights, and the multilateralism of the United Nations (UN). Others see the changes that have occurred in the G20 in recent years in a positive light, such as the expansion of themes and agendas and the opening of spaces of participation for social actors.

Between advocacy and resistance: what are their views on the G20?

Adhemar Mineiro, an advisor to REBRIP, affirms that the G20 is a space for only a select few which cannot substitute the UN, despite its efforts to expand the range of themes it addresses. Participation in the UN is open to all members of the international system and, therefore, it has greater legitimacy. The G20’s informal nature ends up facilitating bilateral negotiations between countries at the expense of the more inclusive negotiations held at the UN.

“ REBRIP has monitored the G20 since the beginning from a very critical viewpoint. This has to do with the G20’s attempt to replace the United Nations in a way that is a lot less democratic. At the meeting in Toronto in 2010, REBRIP began following the G20 meetings directly and participating in a coalition of organizations that were pretty critical of the G20. REBRIP has been following the group more closely since the two meetings in 2010: Toronto and Seoul.

Adhemar Mineiro, Advisor to REBRIP

“ What is always striking about the G20 is the fact that the Heads of State Summit is always held somewhere that is not easy to get to in order to keep civil society from participating and protesting – or there’s a lot of police. But civil society has managed, to a certain extent, to keep this debate and pressure alive.

Nathalie Beghin, member of INESC’s management board

“ The G20 is this structure that came from the financial system and, during a crisis, assumed a much broader role. In 2008 and 2009, the G20 ended up expanding [its agenda] and this G20 of the leaders tried to exercise a kind of governance that has restrictions on its operations [if compared to] the United Nations [system] (...) the countries operate through their system of alliances and use the more direct, bilateral system.

Adhemar Mineiro, Advisor to REBRIP

“ The G20 is a space for the economic agenda of the upper echelons of the global economy. A place where the sectors that concentrate wealth and income define policies that take privatizations and the pillaging of natural resources even further and reduce the State from a provider of public policies to a guarantor of the rentier interests that feed global financial capital.

Sandra Quintela, Jubilee South Brazil network

For the director of ABONG, Henrique Frota, resistance from social organizations – which began during the UN Conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 – has flourished alongside the G20 and grew stronger as the group’s activities expanded. Over the years, the “club of rich countries” – as civil society called it back then – has incorporated the discussion with different sectors into its declarations through the engagement groups. Sanda Quintela, coordinator of the Jubilee South network, recalls that the World Social Forum and the idea that “another world is possible” were born during street mobilizations, and civil society cannot afford to not occupy the streets, even while occupying spaces inside the G20.

“*The G20 was created in the 1990s (...) back then, it was a bigger group than the G7. This club of rich countries was always at odds with our human rights agenda. [ABONG’s position] was very critical at the time. We did not collaborate with the G20. We resisted it, questioned it, and there was no formal structure for participation.*

Henrique Frota, Director of ABONG

“*The history of ABONG and rights defense groups in Brazil is that these groups emerged in opposition to these institutions because of their very nature. The biggest milestone was the World Social Forum, which was an event held basically to oppose the G7 and the G20, to contest the logic of the richest countries setting up a little club and getting together to solve the world’s problems. As a political choice, it made sense to have this discussion, especially in the 1990s and 2000s.*

Pedro Bocca, International Advocacy Advisor to ABONG

“*Civil society protests in these spaces have been a constant since the protests in November 1999, during the third ministerial conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in the streets of Seattle in the United States. There was a huge uprising, which was the basis for building the World Social Forums from 2001 on. The idea was to go beyond the protests and build “another possible world”. Today, everything is much more complex, and confusion is widespread. Participate on the inside?*

Participate on the outside? Participate on the inside and the outside? We still believe that the streets are fundamental. Being out on the streets during these events to unmask the agenda of global capitalisms.

Sandra Quintela, Jubilee South Brazil network

“ *ABONG really started getting involved in the G20 in the last 2 years (...), but some of our members, such as Gestos, already have a lot of experience. Last year, ABONG was a member of the international committee. Our participation in India was more official. The turning point was the fact that the G20 has also been changing. It went from a club to a bigger structure. Participation was also growing, and the organizations perceived that this group was taking on a new function.*

Henrique Frota, Director of ABONG

Taking a stand: does an autonomous space for social struggles exist?

Despite the limitations, the C20 (Civil20) has come to be seen by some organizations, such as ABONG - which currently chairs the C20 together with the NGO Gestos - as a diplomatic space for direct participation. This space is different from the Peoples' Summit in that it has a schedule, a structure, and a dialogue with the G20 tracks in an attempt to influence and have a political impact on the G20 through recommendations and declarations. For Pedro Bocca (advisor to ABONG), the biggest difference between the G20 Social and the Peoples' Summit is that the former is tied to the official event, and the latter is autonomous. Sandra Quintela (Jubilee South Brazil network) believes that the numerous official and unofficial G20 bodies have made the process in Brazil confusing for many social movements.

“ *The Peoples' Summit is a civil society's autonomous and free willing creation; it's not part of the G20 structure. There is this whole other parallel movement that is free from government interference, and it is born from and continues in this contestatory perspective. (...) The pur-*

pose of the Peoples Summit is to question the existence of the G20, the G7, this financial structure that wants to control the world. It has no limits and emerges precisely to denounce, contest – which is legitimate and part of democracy. [...] In my view, what the C20 can't do (because of this diplomatic role), the [Peoples] Summit can do. It is healthy for both spaces to exist. There are no ambiguities or contradictions. Both spaces have something to offer, each with their own possibilities and limitations.

Henrique Frota, Director of ABONG

“ *INESC has always tried to take part in the Peoples Summit. The activities are promoted by social organizations and movements that pressure the G20 because they believe that it is better than the G7, but it's still only 20 out of 200 countries. We feel that this weakens multilateralism, as we see the UN as a more democratic space. The G20 does not have this mandate and so, the Peoples Summit is a space for resistance. And it is more than that: it is a space to protest against a development model that isn't working. Hunger, poverty, and inequalities are on the rise in the world.*

Nathalie Beghin, member of INESC's management board

“ *[Some] organizations have always preferred the structure of the Peoples Summit, which is a more alternative structure – although, in the case of the Brazilian government, even while participating and helping to organize, REBRIP has always had a constructive, though critical, relationship.*

Adhemar Mineiro, Advisor to REBRIP

“ *The concept of civil society that the G20 uses is very broad (...) If we could shape it to fit our own, all the better. [We need to] reevaluate this past and understand the possibilities for action, while understanding the G20 as part of a process that has been going on (...). The G20*

is a circus coming to town. What will remain in town after the circus leaves... that's for us to decide. That is why it is important to understand the G20 as part of a process.

Pedro Bocca, International Advocacy Advisor to ABONG

“ *The process of building the G20 in Brazil is very confusing. There are many official bodies that obscure the “locus” of the policies from the perspective of the autonomy of the social movements and organizations. There are many bodies, working groups, tracks – in other words, a lot of demand for civil society participation in these government bodies. But the question that remains is: and the decisions? Who makes them? We’re going to participate for what?*

Sandra Quintela, Jubilee South Brazil network

Organized participation in the G20 Social?

As for the G20 Social, the Brazilian government’s proposal is still not very clear. This is the first time that this space has been organized as part of the G20 process and therefore, it is seen as a “trademark” of the Brazilian presidency and may not be reproduced in other countries. There are, however, some positive aspects: a greater connection and direct dialogue among all engagement groups and the promotion of democratic and participatory practices in keeping with Brazilian tradition.

“ *The G20 Social is much more a trademark than about social participation; it’s a slogan. They are promoting a G20 Social Summit – it’s new, but we still have not managed to identify any innovation beyond what already exists (...) Now, there is one positive aspect: there is a lot more coordination between engagement groups. The Brazilian government has created spaces of dialogue and participation for all engagement groups, more than in previous years. There didn’t used to be any in-*

tegration; everyone had to fend for themselves. This year, there is still autonomy, but there's an effort on the part of the government to get these groups to interact better.

Henrique Frota, Director of ABONG

“ In Argentina, it was a massive event – marches with over 40,000 people (...) The Peoples Summit is strongly connected to the local context because we don't have the resources, so it always reflects the local context (...) The G20 Social emerges to organize the players (...) The G20 social is more about the image that the government, especially the president, wants to convey to the world. I think it has to do with the trademark, with the legacy he wants to leave. It's to be expected. Great. If this gives us room to intervene, perfect! But I think it is going to be tied entirely to the themes of the G20 and have these limitations.

Pedro Bocca, International Advocacy Advisor to ABONG

“ We might even assume that in the case of Brazil, because of its tradition, the country would look for more democratic and participatory [practices], but that's not the situation in other countries. Maybe here, the differences between the Peoples Summit and the C20 end up fading a bit, [but] in other places, this wasn't a possibility, or it was really difficult. For example, W20 [Women20] in Saudi Arabia... In sum, the host country's leadership ends up complicating things.

Adhemar Mineiro, Advisor to REBRIP

Nathalie Beghin (INESC) adds that the Brazilian presidency will make an effort in the Financial Track to accept proposals from global civil society on the issue of international taxation. Not only is this a first, but it also shows considerable openness to dialogue with civil society. Sandra Quintela (Jubilee South Brazil network), however, questions this, as she asks “participate for what purpose?”, as in the end, “who will make the decisions?”. She believes that social participation should be a bottom-up process, not the other way around.

“ This is something never seen before in the history of this bloc. Until now, the Finance Track has always been completely off limits to society, and the Brazilian Ministry of Finance is demonstrating a willingness to submit the proposals of global civil society to peers from the other countries in the bloc. If it continues like this in the coming years, that’d be great – It’s a first!

Nathalie Beghin, member of INESC’s management board

“ The issue of the Social Summit comes from the more than 19 years of experience with Mercosur, which was a demand of the social movements of the region. It is completely different from the social summit proposed by the G20, which comes from above. The question is for what? Are we going to make decisions? Are we going to influence the official agenda? Are we going to address the factors that generate inequalities? Or are we going to make the global agenda of financial capital look like a “social” one?

Sandra Quintela, Jubilee South Brazil network

Civil society networks and organizations have engaged with the G20 based on the understanding that it is a space for proactive dissent. To advance their agendas, raise questions, and exert pressure, these networks and organizations work to make their distinct voices heard in and outside of the official spaces of the G20.

“ The role of the social sector is to challenge these limits. For example, if we talk about the LGBT population in the recommendations and Saudi Arabia is there and doesn’t talk about this issue... Our role is to question and make recommendations on this.

Pedro Bocca, International Advocacy Advisor to ABONG

“ *Occupy this space [of the C20], knowing its limits and not believing that it will be the solution to our problems, investing much more in multilateralism – we fight hard for binding agreements. We are not alienated. We participate in this space from a critical stance.*

Henrique Frota, Director of ABONG

“ *The G20 and its official meetings have always been the stage for big protests. A space of protest and to expose the power of corporations, the IMF, and the World Bank, and denounce the public debt as a key guarantor of rentierism and the deepening of the financialization of everything. The fact that health is a key issue is no coincidence. In capitalism, pandemics and endemics allow even more wealth to accumulate in the hands of the rich. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the ten richest men in the world doubled their fortunes, while more than 160 million people were pushed into poverty. It is estimated that 17 million people died from Covid-19 in the world. Will the G20 be the forum for addressing this? And what about the UN, will they bury it?*

Sandra Quintela, Jubilee South Brazil network



Gender and race in analyses of issues that seem so distant from one another? Yes! Because...

By Jéser Abílio

Because studies on race, gender, and intersectionality are interdisciplinary.

In other words, they cut across different areas of knowledge, fields of application, and research. They can focus on a person's identity or structural issues (power dynamics derived from historical legacies such as colonization or imperialism). When social markers such as race, gender, nationality, religion, etc. are crossed, new experiences are created. For example, in a black woman, race and gender are intertwined – this is what we call intersectionality. Kimberlé Crenshaw, Patricia Hill Collins, and Carla Akotirene are references on this subject.

Because in international politics and Brazil's foreign policy, race and gender have been addressed more, but to different extents.

In foreign policy, gender appears more often due to the influence of feminist studies, but more needs to be done on the issue of race. When these markers appear, they do not reflect intersectionality, as they are only used as an isolated category. Furthermore, several international organizations, such as the United Nations, has appropriated the term 'intersectionality' as a result of the dialogue with black organizations and intellectuals. The latter have fought hard to hack these terms into the system in an effort from the outside in.

Because it is difficult to incorporate these issues into research and economic policies for a plethora of reasons: (i) the field of international political economy emerged with a focus exclusively on issues of the Global North; (ii) the lack of interest in the experiences of the Global South; (iii) the reproduction of studies and policies that do not delve deeply into social issues; (iv) bureaucracies that reproduce the pedagogy of erasure – that is, not naming and, therefore, not debating social issues, such as race and gender, in policymaking, and (v) the very structure of the state, which is patriarchal. Hence, the importance of activists who defend social causes: to identify these reasons and campaign against them.

Therefore, we suggest five measures to effectively address these issues in public fora: (i) mainstream race and gender into policies by actively searching for implications at different levels and in different areas; (ii) investment in awareness building, dissemination, and information by the state and organized civil society; (iii) support and invest in training courses on these themes for public employees of all government entities; (iv) guarantee the participation of civil society in international or domestic public policymaking, and; (v) monitoring and assessment of policies by the state and especially, civil society organizations. These organizations play an important watchdog role to prevent social issues from disappearing from the public debate and daily life.

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