

Executive Summary

Polis Institute/LogoLink
BRICS event in Sao Paulo, Brazil

After almost a year of negotiations with the Brazilian Foreign Minister, Polis/LogoLink managed hosting the meeting [“Brazil, the BRICS and citizen participation”](#) at the presidential office in Sao Paulo on November 27, 2012. The event was a partnership between FIM, LogoLink/Polis.

There were about 40 participants from some of the most important NGOs in Brazil, trade unions, civil society networks that struggle for human rights, as well as academics that research participation in multilateral organizations such as the BRICS Policy Center, among other institutions.

In the panel, we had the most important person in the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in charge of BRICS and IBSA, Ambassador Mrs. Maria Edileuza Fontenele Reis. She is the 2nd in the hierarchy of the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ambassador Guilherme Patriota, who is a Special Advisor represented the presidential office.

Both ambassadors were very open to discussions, as well as to debate about possibilities of engaging civil society organizations in the BRICS. However, they differentiated IBSA from BRICS, especially pointing out that Russia and China deal with issues of citizen participation differently from Brazil, India and South Africa.

The speakers also talked about the Brazilian international politics in recent years, and the current context in which Brazil became an important and active actor on the international scene. They highlighted the importance of developing actions in countries of the Global South. They reminded us that the BRICS group is still very new; there are many challenges in coordinating joint initiatives in the 5 countries, such as, for example, the implementation of the BRICS Bank. Despite these challenges, in general, though, the group agrees with the importance of proposing together a new global governance.

They also underlined that civil society participation should be encouraged but, in fact, they don't know how to implement it, due to the lack of experiences in these new alliances. The ambassadors opened the floor to discuss future ways of engaging civil society in the BRICS countries. This was one of the main claims from the participants, who also pointed out that there are no formal spaces of participation within this group of countries. The ambassadors highlighted that there are already a business and an academic fora; and they intend to implement a journalist forum.

We feel that the challenges of having an analytical and critical approach on BRICS issues were present at the meeting. Due to a lack of information, and also to little accumulated knowledge on the theme, we recognize that civil society participants must "mature" their positions and the timeframe for that is the 2014 meeting in Brazil.

The meeting was recorded (including the 1h30min debate with civil society). The transcript is currently being edited.