



The challenges for evidence-based public policy in Brazil

BRUSSELS, JUNE 5

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CONTEXT

Policymaking is inherently political. Decisions are shaped by:

- Electoral incentives
- Party ideology
- Pressure from interest groups
- Public opinion

Even when strong evidence exists, it competes with **values and power dynamics**.

HOW IT MANIFESTS

- Selective use of evidence ("cherry-picking")
- Ignoring evidence that conflicts with political agendas
- Policies justified by narratives rather than data

WHY IT IS HARD TO FIX

Political systems reward **short-term, visible results**, whereas evidence often points to **long-term or complex solutions**.

As a result, evidence becomes **one input among many**, rather than the dominant driver.

2) Weak Interaction Between Researchers and Policymakers

CONTEXT

Researchers and policymakers operate in **different worlds**:

- Researchers prioritise methodological rigour and publication
- Policymakers prioritise speed, feasibility, and communication

They have different timelines, incentives and languages (technical vs practical).

HOW IT MANIFESTS

- Research findings are too technical or abstract
- Policymakers rely on summaries or intermediaries rather than original studies
- Limited co-production of knowledge

WHY IT IS HARD TO FIX

There are few institutional mechanisms that **systematically connect the two communities** (e.g. knowledge brokers).

Building trust and collaboration requires long-term engagement, which is often missing.

3) Limited Access to Timely and Relevant Evidence

CONTEXT

The "supply" of research does not match the "demand" from policy:

Academic research is slow

x

Policy decisions are urgent

HOW IT MANIFESTS

- Evidence arrives too late to influence decisions
- Policymakers rely on outdated or incomplete data
- Heavy dependence on consultants or internal judgement

WHY IT IS HARD TO FIX

Changing research systems (funding cycles, publication norms) is difficult.

Producing rapid, policy-ready evidence without sacrificing quality remains a major challenge.

4) Institutional and Capacity Constraints

CONTEXT

Effective evidence use requires:

- Data systems
- Analytical skills
- Organisational routines

Many governments lack these, especially under-resourced ministries and decentralised systems.

HOW IT MANIFESTS

- Poor data collection and monitoring
- Limited capacity to interpret statistics or evaluations
- Weak advisory bodies or fragmented expertise

WHY IT IS HARD TO FIX

Capacity-building requires:

- Long-term investment
- Training
- Institutional reform

These are costly and politically less visible than policy outputs.

CONTEXT

Evidence does not directly translate into policy. It must be:

- Interpreted
- Adapted to context
- Negotiated among stakeholders

This process ("knowledge translation") is complex and underdeveloped.

HOW IT MANIFESTS

- Research remains in reports and journals
- Lack of actionable recommendations
- Misinterpretation or oversimplification of findings

WHY IT IS HARD TO FIX

Knowledge translation requires:

- Specialised skills (communication, synthesis)
- Continuous interaction between actors
- Incentives for researchers to engage beyond academia

These elements are often missing in both policy and research systems.

CONTEXT

Even when a policy is evidence-based, real-world implementation involves:

- Multiple organisations
- Diverse local contexts
- Administrative complexity

Evidence often comes from **controlled settings**, not real-life environments.

HOW IT MANIFESTS

- Policies work in pilots but fail at scale
- Variation in implementation quality across regions
- Resistance from frontline staff or institutions

WHY IT IS HARD TO FIX

Implementation depends on:

1. Resources
2. Leadership
3. Coordination
4. Local adaptation

These factors are difficult to standardise or control across large systems.

THANK YOU!



Climate Agenda



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