Business Leaders Shaping the Global Policy Landscape: Analyzing the Role of B20 in G20

Cristina Elsner de Faria

Abstract: This article explores B20 Brasil's innovative approach to policy-making, rooted in policy cycle theories, bounded rationality, and agile principles. B20 Brasil prioritized actionable recommendations addressing socioeconomic issues while adapting to the dynamic global landscape. The methodology encompassed transitioning leadership, formulating policies, and advocating strategies. B20 Brasil's legacies include initiatives tailored to Brazil's context, advancing socioeconomic goals and strengthening the G20 policy agenda.

Keywords: policy agenda setting; cross-sector collaboration; business diplomacy; private sector engagement; public-private articulation.

Líderes empresariais moldando o cenário de políticas globais: analisando o papel do B20 no G20

Resumo: Este artigo explora a abordagem inovadora do B20 Brasil para a formulação de políticas, enraizada em teorias de ciclo de políticas, racionalidade limitada e princípios ágeis. O B20 Brasil priorizou recomendações acionáveis abordando questões socioeconômicas, enquanto se adaptava ao cenário global dinâmico. A metodologia abrangeu a transição de liderança, a formulação de políticas e a defesa de estratégias. Os legados do B20 Brasil incluem iniciativas adaptadas ao contexto do Brasil, promovendo metas socioeconômicas e fortalecendo a agenda de políticas do G20.

Palavras-chave: formação da agenda política; colaboração intersetorial; diplomacia empresarial; engajamento do setor privado; articulação público-privada.

As the world moves towards the adoption of sustainable practices to tackle climate changes and experiences an unprecedented pace of the digital transformation, governments face an interconnected challenge given its impacts on the overall organization of societies and the future of professions. In this scenario, international dialogue and cooperation arise as indispensable tools to explore possible avenues for global economic cooperation and policy-making across all areas.

In this spirit, the G20 Presidency annually sets priorities and welcomes substantial contributions from social engagement groups. The aim is to develop a comprehensive set of recommendations that can be considered by G20 members to address key challenges related to those priorities. Under the Brazilian Presidency, the G20 renewed its commitment not just to address essential economic issues, but also to integrate deep humanitarian concerns related to social inclusion and fighting against hunger, the energy transition and sustainable development, and the reform of global governance institutions.

At the heart of this global forum, the Business 20 (B20[1]) has been established since 2010 as the official engagement group of the private sector with the G20. Composed of Task Forces that bring together senior executives

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1. Established in 2010, the B20 is among the most prominent G20 Engagement Groups. Its working proceeding is based on Task Forces and Action Councils entrusted with key thematics that drive the priorities of each B20 edition. The B20 officially conveys its final recommendations to the G20 Presidency at the B20 Summit. More information available at https://b20brasil.org/

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from companies and multinationals of the G20 members and invited countries, the B20 presents high-priority topics for the private sector. Aiming at the development of policy recommendations to G20, the B20 responsibilities extend beyond the mere representation of business interests. They also include informed support to the G20 policy-making process and the promotion of fruitful dialogue between the private and public sectors concerning the prioritized agenda. Propelled by Brazilian leadership, eight task forces were set in place to organize the business community' contributions to the G20 process, as detailed in Box 1.

Trade and Investment

Employment and Education

Energy and Climate Transition

Digital Transformation

Finance and Infrastructure

Integrity and Compliance

Sustainable Food Systems and Agriculture

Action Council for Women, Diversity and Inclusion in Business

Box 1: B20 Brasil Task Forces

This collective effort counted with the participation of over 1,200 business representatives from 42 countries and 21 economic sectors. Demonstrating a commitment to diversity and inclusion, 57% of the participants were male, while 43% were female, with women occupying 39% of B20 Brasil's leadership positions.

Practical and innovative solutions were explored beyond an advisory role. They materialized into collaborative actions among governments, businesses, and communities, considering five guiding claims: promoting inclusive growth; increasing productivity through innovation; enhancing the resilience of global value chains; accelerating a just transition to carbon neutrality; and enhancing human capital. These approaches embody the holistic vision that guided the B20 positioning at the task forces debates and when engaging with the G20 working groups.

ANALYTICAL FOUNDATION

Considering the G20 Brasil context and taking into account how societal demands are identified and framed within a policy agenda, this article aims to explore the dynamics of agenda construction as led by the B20. As outlined by Michael Howlett, M. Ramesh and Anthony Perl (1995), policy-making reflects a technical-political process that aims to define and reconcile means and ends among stakeholders taking part in these processes. The technical dimension is essentially instrumental, focusing on the selection and use of tools available to achieve desired outcomes, while the political dimension features a more ambiguous outline. The definition of what constitutes a problem or not is, in itself, subject of debates, as well as the analysis of challenges and solutions. These definitions are inherently limited by the extent of knowledge available at the time of decision-making.

Charles Lindblom (1959) reinforces this concept by stating that public policy is not decided upon once and indefinitely. On the contrary, it requires constant and periodical reformulation. This cyclic thought, which underpins the incremental decision-making model for public policy, reflects the dynamics of the G20 working groups and, consequently, the methodology adopted by B20 in elaborating the policy recommendations.

James March (2009) brings another layer to this debate of comprehending the public policy-making process. He posits that stakeholders do not operate on complete information nor possess an extensive understanding of the issues under discussion. Employing the theory of bounded rationality, March suggests that individuals have cognitive limitations that restrict their capacity to conduct a fully rational analysis of problems, alternatives for political action, and especially anticipate the expected outcomes. Even though the planning of political actions occurs systematically, as suggested in the public policy cycle process[2], this approach highlights the temporality of decisions given their intrinsic connection to a specific political, economic, and social context (Sabatier 1991).

While the Policy Cycle offers a structured approach to policy-making, in practice, agenda setting and policy formulation are often non-linear processes. This underscores the complexity of the policy-making environment, where various factors can influence each step of the cycle, potentially leading to reformulations, adaptations, or even the stalling of policies. The model serves as a heuristic device

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2. The Policy Cycle is a framework that delineates the process of creating and implementing a public policy. Originally developed by Harold D. Lasswell, in his work "The Decision Process: Seven Categories of Functional Analysis", the model is most commonly articulated through six iterative phases which repeat in cycles: 1. identification of problems; 2. agenda setting; 3. formulation of policy alternatives; 4. decision making; 5. implementation of policy actions; and 6. evaluation of process and results.

to understand the general process, but real-world applications require flexibility and responsiveness to dynamic political, social, and economic contexts in which they are inserted.

Incorporating the theoretical insights discussed previously, this article delves into the dynamics of technical and political interactions between governments and the business sector within a global forum like the G20. It aims to dissect the collaborative mechanisms that underpin the agenda setting and policy-making processes, revealing how businesses influences are shaped as a collective response to contemporary global challenges that require countries to work together to find innovative solutions.

USE OF AGILE METHODOLOGIES WITHIN THE B20 BRASIL POLICY FORMULATION CYCLE

To adequately respond to the global challenges prioritized by the G20 Presidency, businesses leaders needed to move beyond traditional planning for setting an agenda and proposing innovative policy recommendations. Inspired by the Agile Manifest, agile practices (Baranda et al. 2023) were adopted in order to incorporate responsive and iterative experimentations into the B20 dynamics for formulating the Policy Papers.

Several studies have been exploring how agile methodologies can be implemented in areas not related to IT (Santana et al. 2023). In general, these studies reveal the use of agile practices within the scope of specific projects or program development, with a significant impact on changing the organizational culture and in the public service. Despite the growing use of these practices, the application of agile methodologies to the processes of agenda setting and policy formulation, which is the central object of discussion explored in this article, still remains under-explored in the literature.

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The discussion on the application of agile methodologies in high-level global forums holds considerable relevance due to the potential of such approaches to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness of international collaborative platforms, in special the G20 and the B20. Agile approaches emphasize iterative,

collaborative, and adaptive processes. These elements are inherently suited for navigating the complex and fluid landscape of global political challenges.

Through the integration of agile principles into the B20 process, which includes continuous feedback, frequent iteration, and robust collaboration between businesses leaders, a more dynamic and responsive environment was fostered. This not only allows for more responsive discussions to the evolving debates within the G20 working groups, but also promotes proactive engagement that can swiftly adapt to emerging trends and insights.

B20 BRASIL POLICY FORMULATION METHODOLOGY

As each G20 cycle lasts for one year, B20 dynamics follows the same pace. In 2024, B20 Brasil innovated in the methodology used for the formulation of policy recommendations by adopting agile practices into the traditional policy-making cycle. The methodology consisted of three major phases: the structuring phase, the content development phase, and the advocacy phase.

At the structuring phase, the process initiated with a transition from the preceding B20 Indian Presidency, led by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), to the Brazilian National Confederation of Industry (CNI). This phase marked the establishment of B20's strategic orientations for the G20 priority themes, the definition of a working methodology and the deliverables for the B20 Brasil. It was also the moment for a global business community mobilization to join the G20 Brasil cycle, considering its organization in task forces.

The second phase of content development was structured based on agile principles and a participatory methodology, assuring that all business members had the chance to express their concerns and contribute to the Policy Paper formulation process. Figure 1 reveals the dynamics of the sprint process applied to the B20 Policy Paper development, as the planned cycles repeated five times from February to July 2024, following the five rounds of debates. A third phase of advocacy, which encompassed the delivery of an executive communique, the official publication of B20's Policy Papers, and the organization of advocacy meetings and events, was also structured. Its intention was to broadly promote the recommendations and actively engage with policymakers.

Five rounds of debates, termed sprints, unfolded the second phase, as detailed below:

Sprint 1: Inception meeting to identify key trends and challenges, facilitated by consultants from expert knowledge partners, in which B20

members were invited to pinpoint priority themes through an open and participatory vote.

Sprint 2: First Technical Meeting to pinpoint business pains and re-prioritize key topics discussed at the inception meeting.

Sprint 3: Second Technical Meeting to settle on pressing issues and brainstorm general policy recommendations.

Round 4: Third Technical Meeting to finalize recommendations and conceptualize Policy Sprint to address identified concerns.

Ad hoc Sprint: Some task forces conducted an ad hoc meeting to hold deeper discussions. Those meetings sought to refine potential Policy Actions and their short-term applicability, taking into account the diverse socioeconomic realities of G20 countries.

Sprint 5: A final meeting to validate the policy document and establish Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for monitoring and tracking progress of suggested Policy Actions.
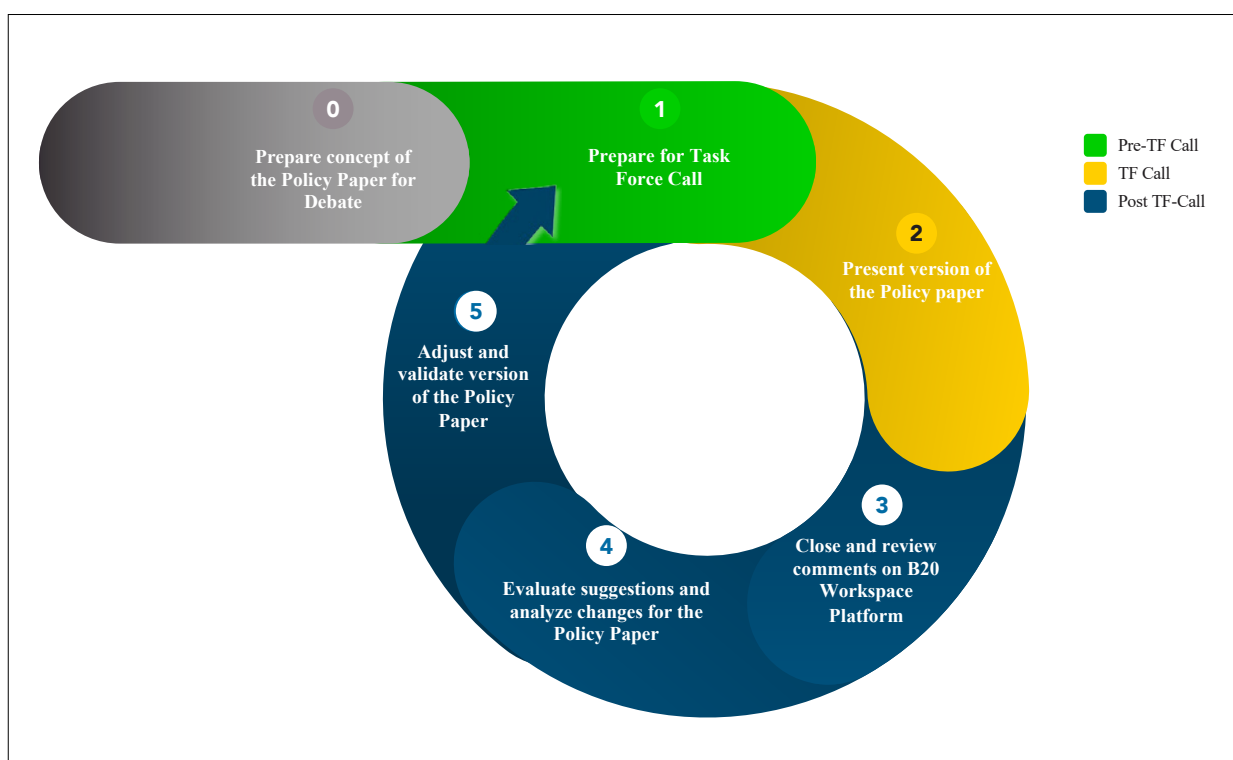

Figure 1: Sprint process applied to the B20 Policy Paper development. Source: B20 Brasil Guidelines for Knowledge Partners

To facilitate effective discussions and generate actionable Recommendations and Policy Actions, certain guiding principles were adhered to. The first principle was to ensure discussions and proposals foster and maximize positive impact across sectors and regions. The second, to avoid a pure local agenda or centered on a specific sector/organization interests. A third principle required all discussions and recommendations to be guided with fact-based content. Fourth, to foster simple and actionable proposals that all G20 countries can easily implement, avoiding complex statements. Finally, the fifth principle was to ensure recommendations have near-term implementation impact, considering SMART (specific, measurable, actionable, relevant, time-bound) indicators.

A digital workspace platform allowed a participatory approach focused on consensus building. The platform acted as a collaborative environment for both administrator and member. Overall, 1,695 contributions to the policy recommendations were received. The thematic analysis methodology was chosen to examine and categorize the contributions collected via the platform. This method is geared towards uncovering participant viewpoints, opinions, experiences, or values based on qualitative data derived from written and oral submissions, which were recorded.

There are various approaches to implementing thematic analysis, with a frequently cited six-step process (Braun & Clarke 2013). However, for the purposes of systematizing the members' contributions through the B20 platform, each sprint was composed of five analytical stages:

Stage 1: Familiarization with the data, initial reading, and preliminary analysis.

Stage 2: Coding of suggestions received.

Stage 3: Generation of overarching themes and grouping of suggestions.

Stage 4: Refinement of contributions, assuring the adherence to the guiding principles.

Stage 5: Final approval of the text.

As each task force progressed through its series of debates and technical meetings, there was a continuous loop of feedback, analysis, and evolution of ideas. By breaking down contributions into thematic axes and overarching narratives, the thematic analysis methodology enabled a nuanced understanding of the collective vision developed by the B20 Brasil. It laid a foundation for identifying convergence

points where objectives and strategies aligned, which empowered the B20 Brasil with a more impactful and cohesive position. To that end, the digital workspace platform allowed collaboration and focused contributions by the B20 members, enhancing the collaborative dynamic of the task forces and their debates.

This fluid exchange of perspectives ensured that the policies reflected the current realities, as they were shaped by a varied group of experts. The results of the B20 agenda setting and policy formulation process identified synergies across the eight task forces, as detailed in Figure 2, reflecting the adaptive and iterative nature of the agile methodology adopted. The meetings held with B20 members from diverse industry sectors and backgrounds, throughout the various stages of the Policy Paper development, fostered an environment that allowed the sharing of insights, challenging assumptions, and collectively refining the direction of the recommendations.
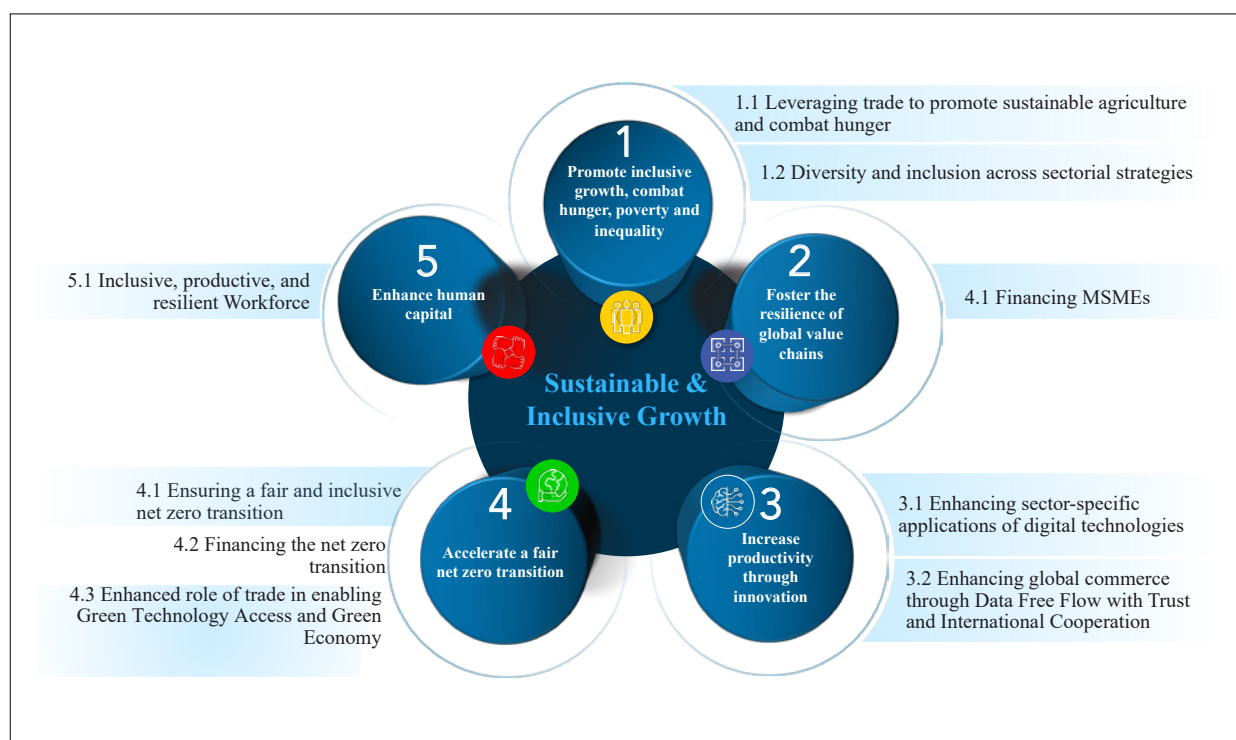

Figure 2: Synergies identified across the B20 task forces. Source: B20 Brasil Synergies Presentation

ADVOCACY STRATEGY FOR GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

The importance of advocacy cannot be overstated, particularly when championing collective interests of the global business community within the G20. By hosting and participating in more than 50 side events under the G20 Brasil cycle, including the B20 Summit, the B20 Brasil employed a proactive science diplomacy

oriented towards business outcomes, with in-person approaches, skillfully navigating international relations.

Each event served as an opportunity to articulate the B20's positions, forge strategic relationships, and build consensus around pivotal issues. These gatherings provided platforms for inclusive dialogue, enabling B20 Brasil members to connect with a wide array of stakeholders, from policymakers and industry experts to civil society representatives and academia. The success of these advocacy efforts was further amplified by the strategic use of network partners, like the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Business at OECD (BIAC), the International Organisation of Employers (IOE), Basel Institute, and Bloomberg, among other key institutions.

Network partners collaborated to align their advocacy efforts with those of the B20 Brasil, generating momentum around key policy recommendations and enhancing the reach of these propositions across different geographic and sectoral domains. By engaging directly with influential counterparts and contributing with a cohesive business perspective to the multilateral dialogue, B20 Brasil's approach reinforced its advisory capacity. It ensured that the concerns and aspirations of the business sector remained at the forefront of G20 considerations.

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RESPONSIVENESS ANALYSIS OF THE B20 INFLUENCE ON THE G20 AGENDA

In a context where international collaboration is key to addressing global challenges, the business community represented by B20 stands as the collective voice of an influential group of stakeholders in the policy formulation process. To assess its influence in the overall process, a responsiveness analysis methodology was developed to assess the extent to which the B20's recommendations align with and influence the strategic objectives and agendas of the G20.
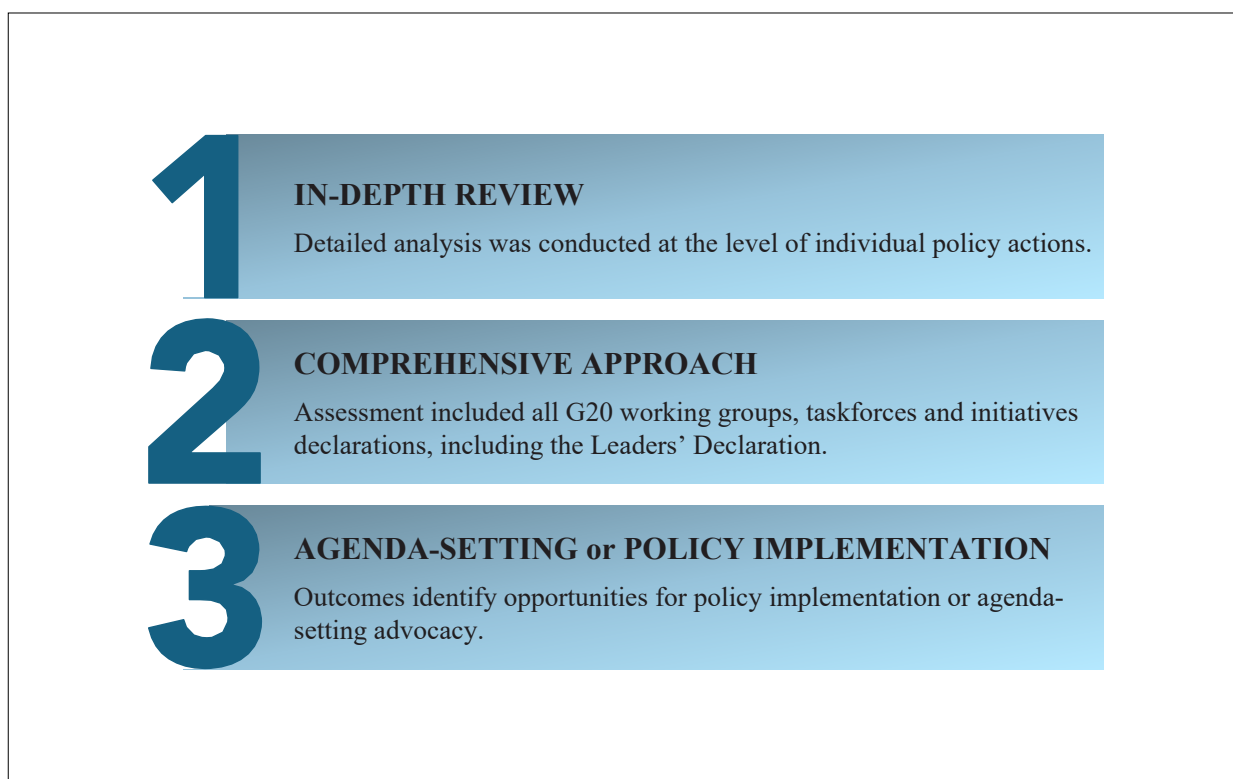
1 IN-DEPTH REVIEW
Detailed analysis was conducted at the level of individual policy actions.

2 COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH
Assessment included all G20 working groups, taskforces and initiatives declarations, including the Leaders' Declaration.

3 AGENDA-SETTING or POLICY IMPLEMENTATION
Outcomes identify opportunities for policy implementation or agenda-setting advocacy.

Figure 3: Assessment approach. Source: B20 Brasil Responsiveness Report

As a result, a Responsiveness Report was produced. It provides an in-depth analysis of the B20 recommendations' adherence and alignment with the strategic objectives and statements made by the G20. To achieve this outcome, the proposed methodological framework utilized the B20 Final Communique and the 8 Policy Papers as benchmarks against the G20 reference documents, including the ministerial declarations, annexes and statements, and the Leaders' Declaration. Figure 3 reveals the assessment approach used by the B20.

A comparative exercise was held in four phases: i. mapping G20 official reference documents; ii. cross-referencing G20 and B20 documents, to ascertain areas of explicit support, levels of responsiveness, and unaddressed themes demanding further dialogue; iii. qualitative assessment and classification of the B20 Recommendations, categorizing alignment as fully, partially, or not referenced; iv. qualitative assessment of the B20 Policy Actions, expanding this analysis to grade the actions on a scale from fully aligned (100%) to not addressed (0%).

The B20 Brasil's Responsiveness Report delivered a comprehensive overview of synergies and identified potential domains for forthcoming policy implementation. It further highlighted the critical importance of foundational agenda-setting, particularly in prioritized sectors not yet addressed in the G20's final outcomes. The

Report underscored the strategies with high alignment for tackling pressing issues like climate change, social inequality, skills mismatches, and the digital divide.

Acting as a barometer for assessing how closely the G20's declarations resonate with the B20's strategically framed priorities, the report revealed that innovation and technology are pivotal for resolving the global concerns prioritized under the G20 Brasil Presidency. Figure 4 reveals that 15 of 24 B20 Brasil Recommendations are fully aligned to the G20 Leaders' Declaration and 10 to G20 Working Groups.
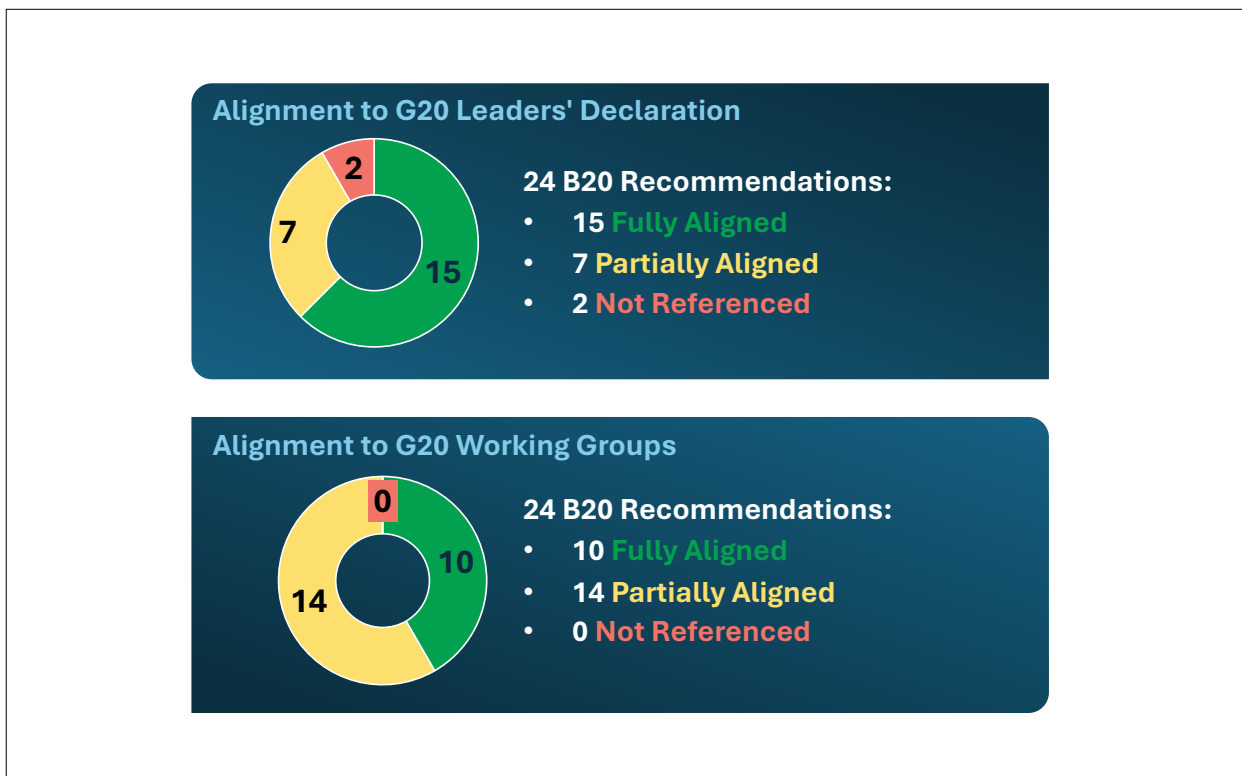
Figure 4: B20 Recommendations alignment with G20 Leaders' Declaration and Working Groups. Source: B20 Brasil Responsiveness Presentation

Through this approach and methodological steps, the Responsiveness Report delivered a tangible assessment of B20's sway in influencing the G20 policy formulation. The depth provided by the Report clearly demonstrates the dynamic interaction between global business leaders and policymakers, reinforcing the assertions of the B20's theoretical foundation. Policy-making is an evolving process with various stages whereby stakeholders incrementally shape the agenda based on available information and the pragmatic consideration of practical limits to their knowledge.

The agility required to navigate a multifaceted political landscape, embodying principles of iterative development and rapid responsiveness, was achieved by

adopting agile principles in the B20's policy development process. By incorporating continuous feedback loops, frequent reassessments, and collaborative decision-making, the B20 demonstrates a contemporary approach to formulating policies that are more likely to gain traction within the broader G20 agenda.

STRATEGIC UTILIZATION OF THE RESPONSIVENESS REPORT RESULTS

The B20's influence on the G20 policy trajectory is a key concern to the global business community. Considering it, the Responsiveness Report stands as a strategic tool for steering future policy dialogues and actions within successive B20 cycles, as it provides inputs for the implementation of tangible policy actions, the monitoring KPIs development and the identification of thematic areas necessitating further exploration.

Drawing from the theoretical foundations of agenda setting and policy cycle theories, the strategic application of the report's findings can serve as a catalyst for effectively guiding the B20's influence on the G20 agenda. The report not only provides a comprehensive analysis of the current state of alignment but also sets forth a roadmap for subsequent focus, ensuring that B20's policy interventions continue to resonate powerfully within the G20 members. This roadmap proposes the utilization of results as segmented in the three following strategies:

Strategy 1: B20-G20 Fully Aligned Recommendations

For fully aligned recommendations, the report identifies areas of synergy where B20 priorities have been explicitly endorsed and comprehensively addressed within G20 materials. These areas represent potentially successful collaboration and could be further strengthened and built upon. Therefore, the follow-up strategy proposes a sustained monitoring of KPIs and cooperative advancement through the implementation of joint policy actions:

- Rigorous monitoring of the implementation of these recommendations, alongside the evaluation of associated KPIs;

- Contribution towards the assessment of policy actions, pinpointing areas of shortfall or emergent trends;

- Facilitation of partnerships that bolster resource sharing, expertise exchange, and the attainment of shared objectives across business and government sectors.

Strategy 2: B20 Partially Aligned Recommendations with G20

For partially aligned recommendations, the report maps out themes that are partially covered, facilitating the identification of both convergences and differences in B20 and G20 proposed policy approaches. This information can be used to refine and align strategies, and to foster dialogue on areas of divergence in future cycles. In this case, the follow-up strategies suggested are alignment and iteration:

- Map out aligned themes that G20 countries are implementing and apply the follow-up strategy of monitoring specific KPIs and joint activities developed;

- Identify differences in policy approaches, with comprehensive documentation of these distinctions for future strategizing and implementation;

- Engage business and governments representatives in debates to review and gain insights into these themes, understanding the implications;

- Refine the proposed policy approach, when suitable, reiterating the recommendations and actions that were not incorporated;

- Communicate the revisited approach to the business community, securing understanding and endorsement from involved members.

Strategy 3: B20 Recommendations Not Referenced by the G20

For not referenced recommendations, the report points to potential gaps or overlooked issues that require additional prioritization in future policy discussions. This entails a specific follow-up plan for taking these recommendations from gap to impact:

- Exploration of unreferenced recommendations and policy actions to assess reasons for their omission;

- Prioritization of the identified gaps based on factors such as their potential impact, feasibility and alignment with strategic goals;

- Engagement of relevant stakeholders in the development of an action plan to bring these identified gaps into the G20 policy debate and agenda with the support of relevant data that justify their inclusion.

Therefore, by understanding the level of alignment between B20 recommendations and G20 commitments, stakeholders from both groups can strategize and prioritize their efforts more effectively. In that sense, the levels

of alignment evidenced by the Responsiveness Report inform the agenda for future B20 presidencies in their drive to bolster the impact and acceptance of B20 recommendations.

SUSTAINING IMPACT AND PROMOTING ACTION THROUGH THE B20 BRASIL LEGACIES

In the pursuit of sustaining its impact and tangible actions, the B20 Brasil legacies were conceived to ensure that the collective efforts of each edition continue to resonate into the future. Therefore, the legacies were structured in three layers: from B20 Brasil to B20 South Africa, from B20 to society, and from B20 to Brazil.

B20-B20 Handover to continue impact

To secure the ongoing influence of the B20 recommendations, a series of mechanisms have been established to guide the governance of future B20 cycles. Firstly, the B20 Brasil Secretariat has laid out the structure, guidelines, and methodologies that have underpinned the success of the B20 processes and governance in this cycle, cultivating a template for subsequent editions.

As a handover strategy, in-person and virtual sessions were conducted between the Brazil and South Africa B20 teams to facilitate a collaborative transition, with consistent follow-up touchpoints to provide support and share best practices. Finally, an innovative dashboard is being introduced to monitor the efficacy and progress of implemented recommendations and initiatives, enabling real-time assessment of their impact.

B20-Society: Action oriented legacy initiatives[3]

A suite of private sector initiatives has been launched to drive actionable change, bringing into practice the B20's guiding claims:

- **She Leads B20** – A commitment to enhance female representation in B20 forums, implemented in partnership with IOE, OECD, BIAC and ICC;

- **Women In Trade** – An initiative led by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), OECD, and International Trade Center focused on knowledge production and advocacy for inclusive trade policies;

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3. B20 to Society is comprised of action-driven initiatives that aim to go beyond the Brazilian Presidency of the B20. Each initiative has its own stated goal and line of action. Information about the initiatives is available at https://b20brasil.org/b20-brasil-legacy

- **B20 Climate Hub** – A repository of best practices curated by Bloomberg NEF to facilitate the execution of B20 climate recommendations, considering climate news and data-driven inputs to accelerate climate plans;

- **Carbon Center of Excellence** – A continuity of B20 Indonesia platform on carbon markets offering new content and insights to navigate the carbon market, also led by Bloomberg NEF;

- **Collective Action Hub** – Hub for the visibility of collective action initiatives implemented to address corruption challenges, raising the standards for integrity and fair competition in business, with free advisory services from Basel Institute of Governance team;

- **B20 Platform on AI** – A comprehensive platform with B20 position on artificial intelligence (AI), showcasing best practices for productivity growth as conceived by Tupy, Stefanini and Google;

- **Reducing Food Loss and Waste** – A global mobilization focused on identifying projects on Food Loss and Waste (FLW), conceived by ICC.

B20-Brasil: Recommendations for the Brazilian context

Contextualized recommendations have been crafted to align with Brazil's national trajectory, centered on agenda-setting for influence and impact. They address a strategic compilation of industry priorities, reflecting all task forces, and design a pitch deck to captivate and engage institutions around 10 priority themes:

- Promotion of future fuels (e.g., biogas, biomethane, biofuels);

- Promotion of Data Centers, digitization, and AI development for the Brazilian scenario;

- Financing of decarbonization projects in industrial chains;

- Promotion of the circular economy;

- Financial models to stimulate sustainable agriculture;

- Brazilian carbon market;

- Gender equality in leadership positions, promotion of safe and inclusive work environment and bias-free selection processes;

- Resilience infrastructure planning (e.g., preparation for natural disasters);

- Mitigation of restrictive trade measures against Brazilian exports;

- Enhancement of digital skills, professional retraining, and business digitalization.

These themes reflect areas where Brazil can and should exert global leadership, such as energy transition, digital transformation and innovation, circular economy and bioeconomy, and social inclusion and development. The B20 Brasil legacy serves not only as a beacon of the country's capabilities but also as a call to action for public-private alliances in areas that are essential for national socioeconomic development. ☰

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