

NOSS RETHINKING PLASTIC POLLUTION

VOLUME **3**

SINGLE-USE PLASTICS IN BRAZIL: ACTOR MAPPING

ESCOLA DE ARTES CIÊNCIAS E HUMANIDADES

noss

Núcleo de Pesquisa em
Organizações, Sociedade
e Sustentabilidade

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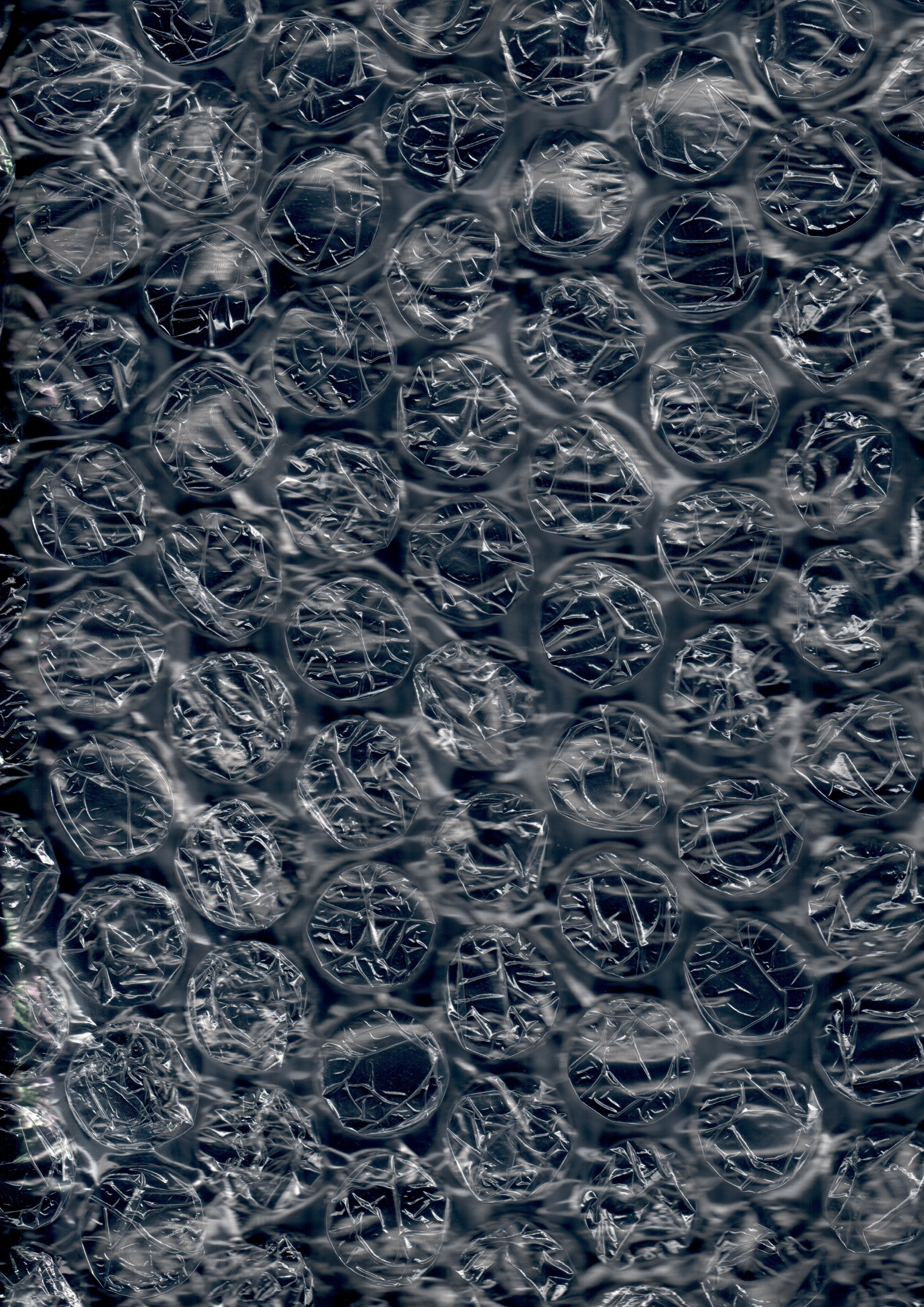
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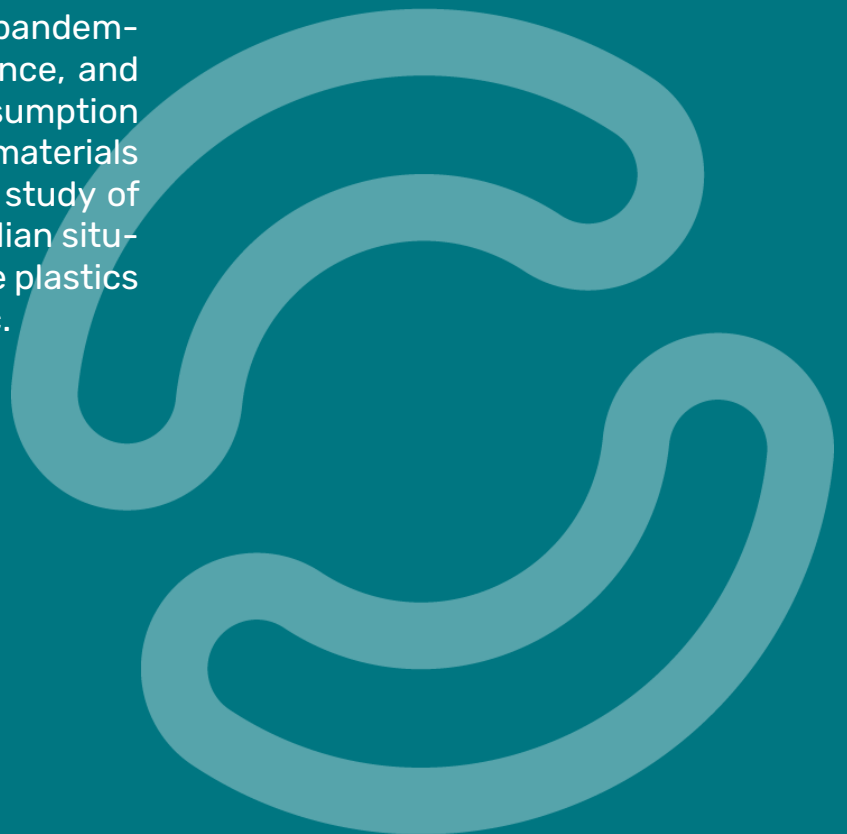
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FOREWORD

This collection of Bulletins is one of the results of the project *“Rethinking Plastics Governance in a Post-Covid World”*, funded by the University Global Partnership Network (UGPN). This project is a collaboration between researchers from the University of São Paulo, the University of Surrey and the University of Wollongong, who together form part of the *UGPN Rethinking Plastics Network*.

Through an interdisciplinary team, the project aimed to verify policies on plastic pollution before, during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. To this end, regulations, governance, and oversight structures that affect consumption and society’s perception of plastic materials were examined. This is a qualitative study of secondary data that brings the Brazilian situation in the governance of single-use plastics in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic.



SINGLE-USE PLASTICS IN BRAZIL: ACTOR MAPPING

Brazil produces about 11 million tons of plastic per year, which makes it the fourth largest producer of plastic waste in the world (FUNDAÇÃO HEINRICH BÖLL BRASIL, 2020). In addition, only 1.28% (that is, 145 thousand tons) of all plastics produced in the country is effectively recycled (FUNDAÇÃO HEINRICH BÖLL BRASIL, 2020). Among disposable plastics, or so-called single-use, are the ones that cause the greatest impacts. In Brazil, there are still no federal laws that regulate these types of plastics, but there is a consensus and mobilization of some actors in society (government, NGOs, population) about the environmental and human health problems they cause.

The plastic production chain is extensive, global, and complex, including a diversity of actors involved in each stage, ranging from petrochemical companies,

plastic processing companies, food companies, consumers, recyclers, public authorities, unions and associations, NGOs and social movements, among others. Each of these actors adopts different positions in relation to plastics, articulating themselves in two large groups, one that is favorable and the other that is against plastics.

Therefore, to understand the consequences of these arrangements, laws and policies that address plastics in the country, it is important to understand the strategies adopted by these groups and their narratives. It is necessary to identify who makes decisions and how actors articulate so that their ideas are established. Thus, this bulletin intends to present a brief mapping of the actors involved with plastics in Brazil, as Figure 1 summarizes:

¹This is a non-exhaustive mapping, which focused on the analysis of narratives found on institutional websites, news from newspapers and magazines, and documents available for free and online.

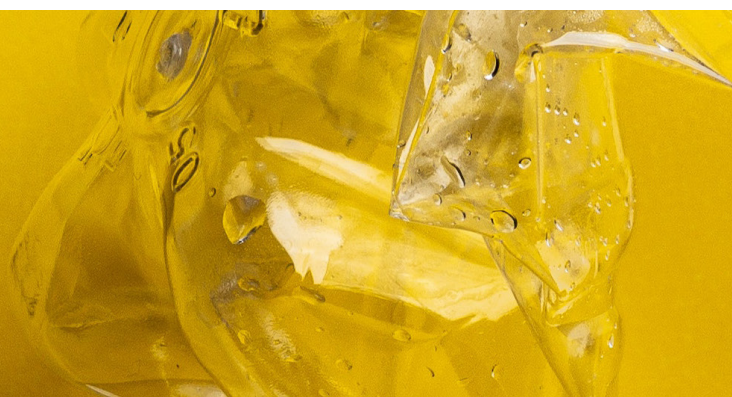





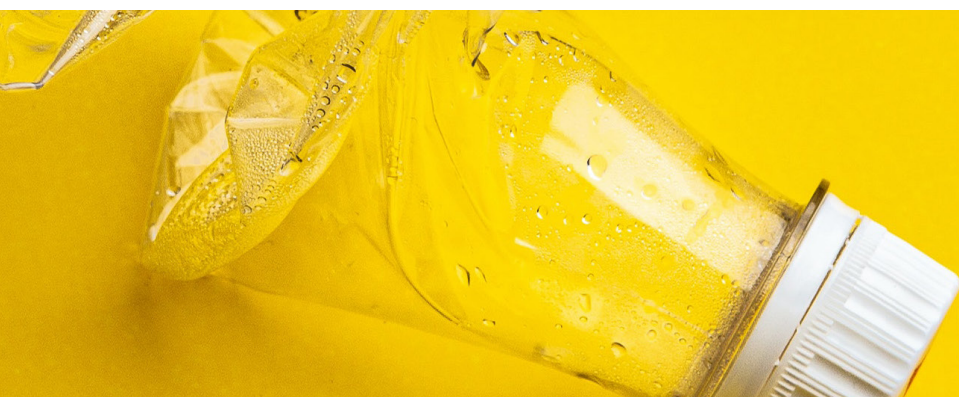




FIGURE 1: Actors involved with the stages of production, consumption, and recovery of plastics. Source: Análise Dalberg, Jamberck at al (2014), Banco Mundial (2018), SITRA (2018).

	DESCRIPTION	KEY ACTORS
 <p>PLASTIC PRODUCTION</p>	<p>Production of virgin plastic from chemical substances from fossil fuels by a process of polymerization or polycondensation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Petrochemical companies; • Oil and gas companies;
 <p>PLASTIC USE</p>	<p>Use of plastic from the transformation of materials into specific products to the disposal of the product as waste by the end user.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plastic transformers²; • End customers (individual, institutional and commercial);
 <p>WASTE COLLECTION</p>	<p>Rescue of plastic waste discarded by the end user and separation of waste in several cycles for treatment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End customers; • Local or national authorities; • Waste management companies; • Plastic transformers;
 <p>WASTE TREATMENT</p>	<p>Treatment of separated plastic waste through various methods such as landfill, incineration, recycling and dumping.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local and national authorities; • regular bodies; • Plastic producers; • Waste management companies; • Plastic transformers;
 <p>SECONDARY MARKETS</p>	<p>Reuso do plástico dentro de uma economia após o reprocessamento do resíduos em material secundários.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plastic recyclers; • Plastic transformers;

² Notes: Producers of plastic products in all plastics markets (eg packaging, construction, transport) that transform virgin plastic into specific products for use within the economy. These plastic products can be combined with other non-plastic materials during the transformation process.



MAPPING OF KEY ACTORS FOR PLASTICS IN BRAZIL

The mapping of actors is relevant to understand the policies and laws that are established and to identify patterns of articulation between actors and their consequences. Thus, in this section, we present the key actors that influence decision-making in relation to single-use plastics in Brazil.



1

CONSUMERS

They are the first actors involved in the waste management process, as they are responsible for separating, packaging, and removing the plastic waste generated (MONTEIRO, 2017).

The pandemic caused by the new coronavirus has intensified the consumption of plastics, especially single-use ones, due to the increase in delivery services (CARRANÇA, 2021). A Brazilian delivery app makes an average of 48 million deliveries per month, and in each order 5 plastic items are sent, resulting in the monthly accumulation of 250 million plastic items in the environment (BORGES, 2021).

According to a survey carried out by Intelligence in Research and Consulting

(IPEC) with a thousand users of these services, between March 6 and 14, 2021, **72%** of consumers would like to receive their orders without the presence of disposable plastics, **15%** reported that they do not use delivery anymore due to the large amount of plastics received; and **86%** of respondents believe that app companies are as responsible as restaurants in relation to free deliveries of single-use plastics, requiring their union with retailers to provide packaging alternatives (BORGES, 2021). Finally, **out of 100 respondents, 88 would not like to receive single-use plastics in their orders. The research shows a change in the habits and perception of consumers in relation to single-use plastics, which mobilized the sector.**



2

ORGANIZATIONS OF WASTE PICKERS, AUTONOMOUS WASTE PICKERS AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

In Brazil, waste pickers' organizations and autonomous pickers are important actors for circularity of materials, as they are responsible for recovering a large amount of waste feeding the recycling production chain (GONÇALVES-DIAS et al., 2020).

For the PET production chain (the most recycled plastic in the country), it was estimated for São Paulo that:

- 26% are collected informally – non-qualified cooperatives and autonomous waste pickers;
- Of the 4% formally collected – 1.9% pass through qualified collectors' cooperatives.

However, despite the crucial role of these actors in plastics governance, shared management between public authorities

and waste picker organizations presents great difficulty for example in terms of contracts, with low resources employed, as well as in terms of labor guarantees (GRIMBERG, 2005).

This absence of rights and a solid bond made these actors even more vulnerable in pandemic contexts. According to the National Movement of Waste Pickers (2020), the suspension of waste collection and recycling in several Brazilian municipalities left thousands of waste pickers without income. In view of this, social movements were important in claiming rights and guarantees for safety at work, such as emergency aid, campaigns for the donation of food and partnerships for the purchase of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (MNCR, 2020).





3

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS (CSOs)

QUADRO 1: Examples of CSOs that act through the mobilization and awareness of the population to the problem of urban solid waste, especially to the impacts of plastics and their inappropriate disposal in the environment. Source: Elaborated based on IPESA (2021), Radio Brasil, (2020), BFFP (2021), Instituto Lixo Zero Brasil (2021), Parker (2020).

BRAZILIAN ORGANIZATIONS



Institute for Social and Environmental Projects and Research

NGO working towards sustainability; UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Develops actions that expand and strengthen selective collection in Brazilian municipalities, through adequate logistical planning for the collection of materials; organization of sorting and forwarding of materials for recycling; Environmental education focused on reduction, reuse and recycling technical training and qualification of waste pickers, which allows for autonomous and efficient management (IPESA, 2021)

Instituto Pólis *Instituto Polis*

Civil society organization with national action, constituted as a non-profit, non-partisan and pluralist civil association.

In 2018, in an interview, Elisabeth Grimberg, coordinator of the Institute's Solid Waste area, stated:

"We have 8 million tons in the oceans, and other impacts on cities, the improper disposal of these items causes flooding due to their accumulation in manholes (...) there are several movements in the world working to ban single-use plastics." (Radio Brasil, 2018).



INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS WITH HEADQUARTERS IN BRAZIL



*Zero Waste
Institute Brazil*

Autonomous, non-profit CSO, pioneer in the dissemination of the Zero Waste concept in Brazil.

They promote events, lectures and documents about the environmental problems caused by plastic pollution and seek to engage civil society in Zero Waste practices, and the non-use of single-use plastics (INSTITUTO LIXO ZERO BRASIL, 2021).



An international organization focused exclusively on the oceans, dedicated to promoting measurable change through specific national campaigns with a scientific basis, defined deadlines and articulated objectives.

They present diagnostic reports on the situation and impacts of plastics. According to Ademilson Zamboni, General Director of the Organization in Brazil:

“We hope to deepen and qualify the debate on single-use plastics from a national portrait, as well as contribute to the implementation of measures that make our oceans clean and abundant again” (IWANICK; ZAMBONI, 2020).

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS



The Heinrich Böll Foundation is a non-profit German political organization. Their fundamental principles are those of ecology and sustainability, democracy and human rights, self-determination, and social justice.

Responsible for the publication of Atlas do Plástico (2020) which presents the plastic chain and how it has become indispensable and the Brazilian panorama in relation to this plastic problem. The material also highlights the role of corporations and civil society in the management, consumption, regulation, and recycling of plastic.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

#breakfreefromplastic

Global movement that seeks a future free from plastic pollution through values of environmental protection and social justice.

BFFP operates worldwide through “Plastic-Free” projects and the articulation of citizens in the collection and auditing of brands of plastic items found in the environment. According to the organization itself:

“They work together [with other actors] through a holistic approach to promote systemic change under the basic pillars of plastic” (BFFP, 2021).



Ocean Conservancy®

Headquartered non-profit environmental advocacy group. The organization helps to formulate science-based, peer-reviewed ocean policy and promotes river and beach clean-up actions around the world.

They publish reports on the presence and impact of plastics in river and marine environments. They promote the World Day for Cleaning Rivers and Beaches.

In 2019, plastic packaging surpassed cigarette butts in the number of items collected from the environment. According to Nicholas Mallos, director of the action:

“The first place that food packaging has taken only serves to highlight the unsustainable production of disposable packaging of this kind” (PARKER, 2020).

There are also **46 local civil society initiatives in the state of São Paulo that collect or evaluate data related to marine pollution and promote citizen awareness and sensitization** (TURRA et al., 2020).

On the other hand, there are CSOs that present ideas and values that favor the logic of production and consumption of plastics in Brazil (Table 2).

These CSOs produce research, reports, opinions, data and discourses on the production, use, and importance of plastic in modern life. In Table 2, they are presented as well as the speeches and positions on plastic materials.



TABLE 2: Examples of groups that act in line with interests of plastics industries.

plasticivida

It is a socio-environmental plastics institute and works collaboratively, through environmental education, to disseminate accurate and scientific information about plastics - their properties, applications, recyclability, in addition to responsible use and proper disposal - in order to contribute to social and environmental development. It was created by the Brazilian Chemical Industry Association (ABIQUIM).

"If single-use plastics were created to increase people's hygiene and safety, why can't we create responsible consumption habits and proper disposal so that we can continue to use these products to our benefit? If, during the COVID-19 pandemic, we learn to wash our hands properly, I believe that we are perfectly capable of acquiring the habits of contributing to recycling with the correct disposal of products, preventively thinking about our health and the health of the Planet, without having to relinquish the security these items provide us"

"society cannot give up the health benefits promoted by plastic products, not today, in a pandemic season, nor at any time". (JORPLAST, 2020; PLASTIVIDA, 2020).



It is a non-profit association dedicated to promoting the recycling of solid waste in the country, aiming at the reduction of waste and the proper use of materials, maintained by private companies from various sectors.

"Promote post-consumer recycling, waste reduction, the use of waste as raw material of economic and social value and circular economy practices" (CEMPRE, 2020).



OSCS
TAMPINHAS
PLÁSTICAS

They are CSOs that collect bottle caps and convert the proceeds from the sale to social entities.

They are sponsored by the "Movimento Plástico Transforma", and maintained by various associations of the plastics industries, e.g., SIN-DIPLAST, ABIEF.

According to the Program's website, its mission is:

"To bring plastic closer to society by motivating, inspiring and connecting various segments of society through actions that modify mass behavior in order to increase levels of clarification regarding the proper destination of plastic waste" (TAMPINHA LE G AL, 2021).



4

BUSINESS INITIATIVES

PLASTIC PRODUCTION COMPANIES



Responsible for the insertion of plastic materials in the consumption chain. It is estimated that 7.1 million tons of plastics were produced in 2019 (ABIPLAST, 2019). For example, in the third quarter of 2020, there was an 8.8% increase in the production of flexible plastic packaging compared to the previous quarter, totaling 562 thousand tons.

PLASTIC PRODUCTS DISTRIBUTORS

SUPERMARKETS



Are the establishments most impacted by the ban on the circulation of plastic bags. In an interview with Agência Brasil (2020), the president of Asserj said that the goal of the supermarket sector is to reduce 2 billion plastic bags in one year. According to him, collection proved to be the most effective instrument in the fight against plastic bags worldwide. “And here [in Rio de Janeiro] it was no different, as has already been proven”. The president believes that by not distributing the first two bags free of charge, the consumption of 2 billion plastic bags should be reduced in just one year. Before the law, the state of Rio de Janeiro consumed 4 billion plastic bags a year. The establishments that charged for returnable bags joined the “Deplastifique Já!” movement, launched on June 25, 2019.

RESTAURANTS



Policies banning straws and other single-use plastic items directly affect the bars and restaurants sector, the draft laws and legislation that have emerged in recent years have already shown some effects as is the case with McDonald’s – **it has destined more than 345 tons of materials for recycling in Brazil in 2020, and that, in 2021, the company announced the elimination of almost 150 tons of single-use plastic this year throughout Latin America.**



FOOD COMPANIES THAT USE PLASTICS IN THEIR PACKAGING

Are considered the biggest plastic polluters in the world (BREAK FREE FROM PLASTIC, 2020).

The Coca-Cola representative states:



"Globally, we are committed to recovering all bottles by 2030, so none of them end up as waste or in the oceans and the plastic can be recycled into new bottles (...) Bottles with 100% recycled plastic are now available in 18 markets around the world, and this is continually growing." (Business Season, 2020)

PepsiCo through a spokesperson said:



PEPSICO

"The company is taking steps to address packaging through 'partnership, innovation and investment'", and that it has "goals of 35% reduction of virgin plastic in beverage packaging by 2025."

The company has also increased the refilling and reuse of single-use plastic bottles and expects to avoid 67 billion single-use packaging by 2025. They added that the company was investing in partnerships to increase recycling and collection infrastructure, pledging more than US\$ 65 million since 2018.

Nestlé:



"We are stepping up our efforts to make 100% of our packaging recyclable or reusable by 2025 and to reduce our use of virgin plastics by a third over the same period. So far, 87% of our total packaging and 66% of our plastic packaging is recyclable or reusable."



5

COMPANIES THAT PROVIDE THE URBAN CLEANING SERVICES

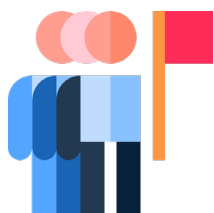
Responsible for selective collection and street sweeping, normally in Brazil, are executing actors of a private nature and external to the public administration, and therefore, they need formal links between them and public agencies (GAMBI, 2018). The positioning of these companies goes in the direction of **guiding the consumer and citizen for the separation and disposal of plastic waste.**



6

FORMAL AND INFORMAL INTERMEDIARIES

These are actors who obtain their income through commercial mediation between selective collection activities carried out by organizations of waste pickers and autonomous pickers and industrial activity.



7

UNIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS OF PRIVATE COMPANIES

These are groups articulated especially in defense of their economic interests, and in general they present ineffective solutions to deal with the socio-environmental impacts caused by plastics. These collective actors have an important role and very relevant influence in the strategic management of plastics governance in Brazil.



BRAZILIAN ASSOCIATION OF PLASTIC INDUSTRIES (ABIPLAST)

Published in January 2021, a document about the impact of the law that prohibits the use of single-use plastics in the city of São Paulo. The association immediately positioned itself:

“The municipality says the intention of this new law is to create a solution to the pollution caused by plastics, but you cannot treat a product as a problem. The issue is the absence of public policies that raise society’s awareness of consumption reduction and the correct destination of plastic waste” (ABIPLAST, 2021).

“The solution is not to ban the use of single-use plastic, but to ensure that it is properly disposed of and recycled. This will benefit the environment by reducing the waste of natural resources like oil and energy.”

“(…) prohibition laws bring legal uncertainty, interfere with the competitiveness and financial planning of companies, impacting investments, job creation and even the maintenance of industrial activity (…) banning disposable plastics is an immediate measure that generate an increase in pollution, inflation, unemployment, and health insecurity” (ABIPLAST, 2021).



Another ABIPLAST position is the promotion of the idea of plastic as a “lifesaver”, especially in relation to COVID-19:

“medical-hospital utensils from the plastic chain are of fundamental importance to promote asepsis and prevent the spread of diseases” [because they are] “non-toxic, resistant, light and safe, which helps to avoid contamination, increasing protection” (ABIPLAST, 2020).

“If it weren’t for disposables, how would the healthcare area be served? And this hygiene issue is not only valid for the pandemic” (FONTES, 2020).

UNION OF THE PLASTIC MATERIAL, TRANSFORMATION AND RECYCLING INDUSTRY OF THE STATE OF SÃO PAULO (SINDIPLAST)



Simultaneously with the ABIPLAST initiatives, promoted an action to suspend the law banning the supply of disposable plastics in the city of São Paulo. Faced with this argument, the São Paulo Court of Justice (TJ-SP) suspended the law that would enter into force at the beginning of 2021, declaring that plastics “meet the hygiene and safety needs in the prevention of COVID-19” (SOURCES), 2020).

BRAZILIAN ASSOCIATION OF FLEXIBLE PACKAGING INDUSTRY (ABIEF)



According to Rogério Mani, the increase in plastic production during the pandemic should be **celebrated**, as they demonstrate the “vital importance” of packaging in the pandemic context. According to the businessman, plastic was once again seen as a material of “immeasurable value in people’s daily lives”, responsible for protecting food and guaranteeing access to medicines (DEMAJOROVIC, 2021).

UNION OF THE PLASTIC MATERIAL INDUSTRY OF THE STATE OF RIO DE JANEIRO (SIMPERJ)



“Bags and other disposable plastic products are the safest material alternative when transporting your food now because they contribute to reducing the spread of the new virus”.

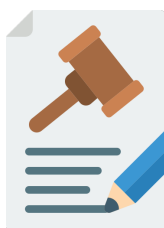
“Unlike reusable bags, no contamination was found in disposable plastic bags, based on a study of hygiene conditions in supermarkets in California” (SIMPERJ, 2020).



8

EXECUTIVE POWER

Responsible for the provision of MSW management services, must pay financially for them, and meet collective needs. Its performance in the implementation of several public policies (MARQUES, 2013), especially those related to single-use plastics, is also noteworthy.



9

PUBLIC MINISTRY

Ministry is responsible for monitoring and enforcing laws and policies.



PUBLIC MINISTRY



The Public Ministry has produced important effects on MSW management policies based on its role in defending diffuse rights (MARQUES, 2013).

“The environmental impacts caused by [the incineration of solid waste] are greater than those of the dumps themselves, in addition to directly interfering in the reuse, recycling and composting processes, generating social and economic problems” (Technical Opinion No. 191 of 2013- BRAZIL, 2013).

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE PUBLIC MINISTRY (CNMP)



Prepared and released a document with the objective of addressing technical and legal guidelines for selective collection and sorting services for recyclable materials, in order to assist local authorities and public managers with minimum conditions of work safety of waste pickers and recyclable and reusable material pickers.

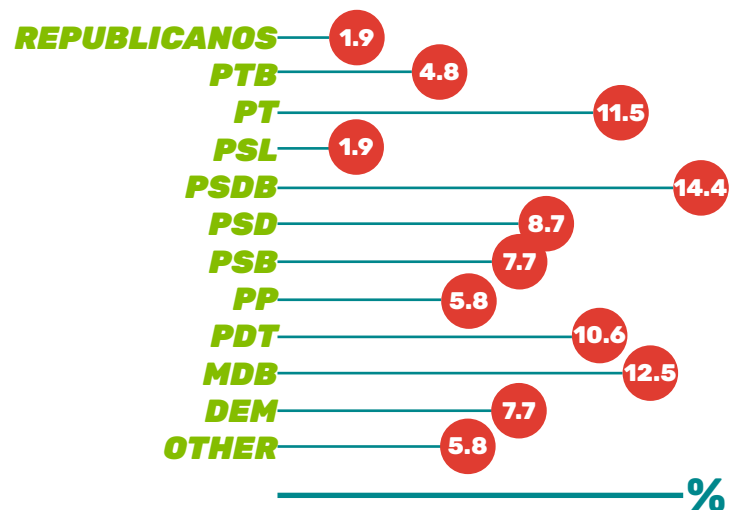


10 LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

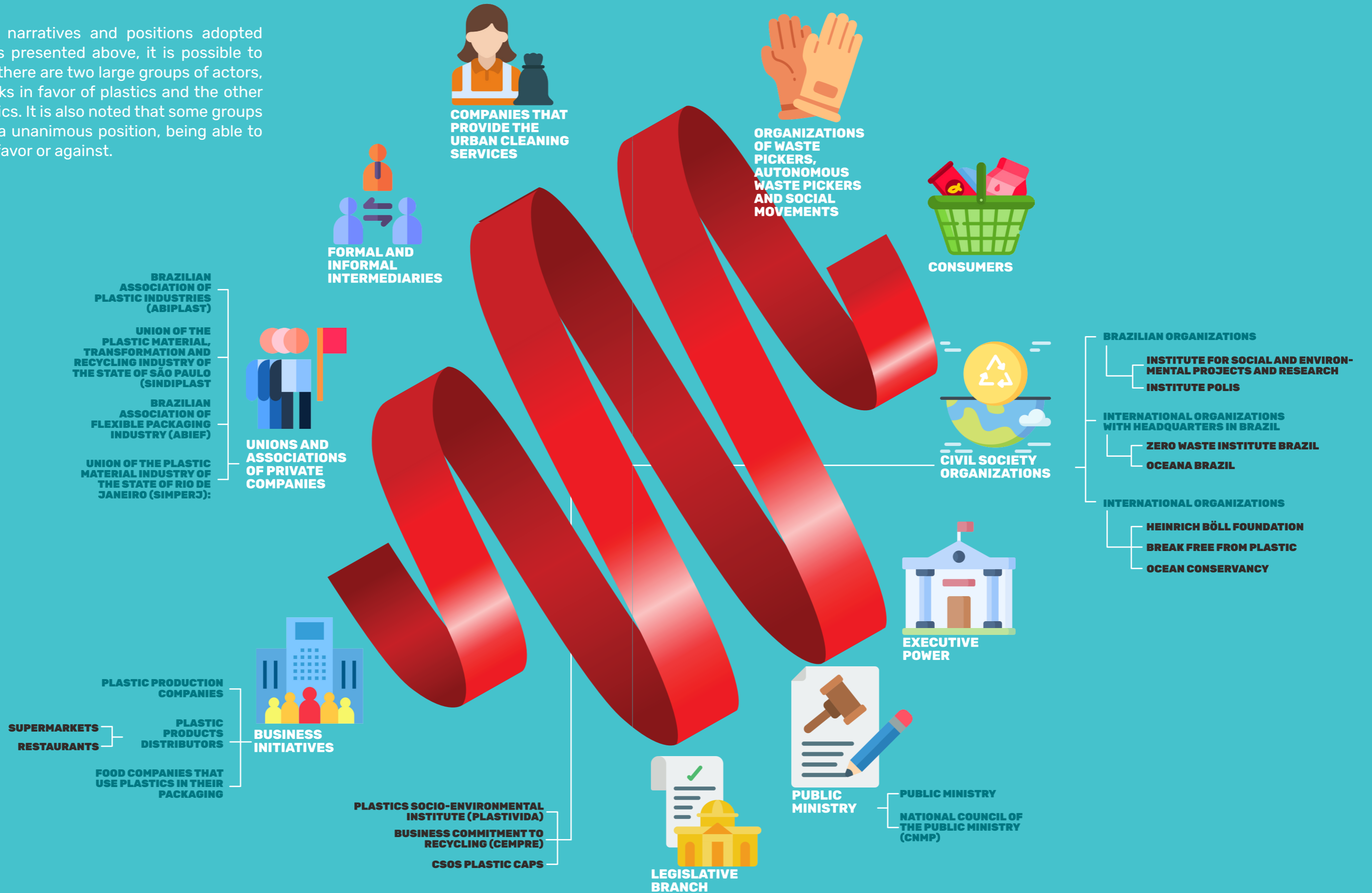
These are the politicians and parties responsible for creating laws and public policies that incorporate the governance of single-use plastics.

It is noted that the issue of single-use plastics is part of the agenda of a variety of Brazilian political parties, with different political agendas and positions. This is believed to be due to pressure from other actors, such as consumers and/or organized civil society, who take a stand against single-use plastics and their impacts.

FIGURA 2: Main political parties that have been active in the production of public policies at the federal level on single-use plastics. Source: Elaborated based on the Federal Senate (2021) and Chamber of Deputies (2021).



Through the narratives and positions adopted by the actors presented above, it is possible to identify that there are two large groups of actors, one that works in favor of plastics and the other against plastics. It is also noted that some groups do not have a unanimous position, being able to act either in favor or against.



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