

Promoting Citizen Science in the Global South: challenges and opportunities for the Brazilian Citizen Science Network

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Citizen Science (CS) initiatives are spreading globally, with interesting intersections with achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and Planetary Health. However, several challenges still hinder CS in the Global South. In 2021, the Brazilian Citizen Science Network (RBCC, in Portuguese) was launched to provide support and visibility to CS initiatives in Brazil. Here we analyze the challenges and opportunities for the network based on the discussions performed at the I Workshop of RBCC and published as an open letter at the network website (<https://bit.ly/rbccletter>). Main opportunities include a) adopting a broad CS definition which embraces diverse initiatives and facilitates comprehension by institutions and funding agencies; b) willingness by institutions to promote decentralized and democratic processes regarding science and society; c) interest of funders and public institutions to support knowledge production, with society and for society, and to promote the scientific culture; d) existing supporting materials and platforms for adaptation and re-use; e) network stakeholders, experience on inter/transdisciplinary framework, governance and research. On the other hand, challenges comprised: a) misunderstanding of CS definition (often interpreted as science communication); b) lack of funding for CS initiatives in short and medium-term and for human resources acting on CS and RBCC; c) lack of training and standardized evaluation metrics in CS; d) existing platforms are not integrated and there is no policy regarding technology and infrastructure; e) dominance of stakeholders with academic background and biodiversity experts. Strong efforts are still needed to promote CS as a structured research and practice area in Brazil and RBCC plays a key role providing institutionalization and encouraging collective action towards public participation in science. Despite the current scenario of science and technology in Brazil, where there has been a dramatic decrease in funding, RBCC presents exciting opportunities to establish CS in the Global South.