

Travel observations in the context of the COP 30 climate conference, Belém, Brazil 10–21 November 2025

Extended report

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Franz Josef Radermacher¹

¹ Prof. Dr. Dr. Dr. h.c. Franz Josef Radermacher, Director of the Research Institute for Applied Knowledge Processing/n (FAW/n), Deputy Chairman of Global Energy Solutions e. V. (Ulm), Professor (emeritus) of Computer Science, University of Ulm, 2000 – 2018 Member of the Scientific Advisory Board at the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure (BMVI), from 2010 to February 2021 President of the Senate of Economy e. V., Bonn, since February 2021 Honorary President of the Senate of Economy e. V., Bonn, Honorary President of the Eco-Social Forum Europe, Vienna, Senior Member of the UN Council of Engineers for the Energy Transition (CEET), Member of the Club of Rome, Winterthur, and UNIDO Senior Science Advisor

Correspondence address: Research Institute for Applied Knowledge Processing (FAW/n), Lise-Meitner-Str. 9, D-89081 Ulm, Tel. 0731-850712 81, Fax 0731-850712 90, E-mail: radermacher@fawn-ulm.de, <http://www.fawn-ulm.de>

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1. The COP in Belém

Belém was a well-chosen venue for COP30. It is a large city with a population of around 1.5 million, a long history and is located on the Baía do Guajará, near the mouth of the Amazon. Belém is, alongside Manaus, the most important city in the Brazilian Amazon region. The city was founded in January 1616 by the Portuguese with the construction of a fortress (Forte do Castelo) with the aim of defending the region against attempts of conquest by the English, French and Dutch.

The mood at the COP was worse this time than in previous years. This is because political interest in global climate conferences is noticeably declining. The heads of state of countries that are particularly important for climate policy and global power relations, such as China, India, Russia and the USA, did not travel to the climate conference in Belém. The number of pavilions representing countries, organisations, companies, etc. was significantly reduced compared to previous COPs.

International print media and articles on the COP were hardly to be found in Belém. Brazilians seem to be primarily interested only in their own country and the vast majority do not speak foreign languages. There was little reporting on COP30 in the country. Other topics of national relevance, from sports to cultural events, dominated the picture. Interestingly, even in large bookshops, it was not possible to obtain maps covering the whole of Brazil. This is probably due to the enormous size of the country. Brazil covers half the area of South America (cf. 9). It is interesting to note that the temperature in the Amazon region was 10 °C below the long-term average. The temperatures were therefore relatively bearable.

The results of COP30 in Belém are rather disappointing. One notable outcome of the negotiations is the goal of tripling financial resources for climate adaptation by

2035.² However, Germany has just announced that it will halve its contribution. This less than enthusiastic assessment of the COP results is no different from the author's assessments in previous years, with the exception of Baku (COP29). In Baku, the financial support for developing and emerging countries, which was considered necessary for their contribution to fight climate change, was massively increased from USD 100 billion per year to USD 1,300 billion by 2035. A very realistic estimate. In addition, the important Article 6 of the Paris Agreement was finalised.

One positive aspect in Belém was a new clarity in the language used. The climate conference in Belém significantly emphasised the importance of international co-operation on this issue. Simon Stiell, head of the UN Climate Change Secretariat (UNFCCC), said with regard to industrialised countries that they should not believe that their purely national climate strategies would make a significant contribution to preventing ever-higher temperatures. The music is playing elsewhere. Note: Africa alone is so large that the USA, China, India and the EU could fit inside it. The philosophy of the EU, for example, of making its contributions to climate protection (only) on its own territory (and essentially spending its own money there and only there, no matter how inefficiently) is extremely expensive and does essentially nothing to reverse global warming trends. This would require much more money to be spent internationally, as the international community agreed in Baku at COP29. As Simon Stiell correctly pointed out, the industrialised countries, especially the EU, are continuing their climate strategy as if nothing had happened in Baku and as if increasing international financial transfers were not the central

² This goal is important because the climate situation is expected to continue to deteriorate. Adaptation is therefore becoming the most important strategy, especially with regard to the situation of the poorest people – both nationally and globally.

issue. As mentioned above, this involves more than USD 1,000 billion per year in the long term. Unfortunately, there is practically no movement in this direction in sight. This probably explains Simon Stiell's clarity. Despite the high sums that had been identified as necessary in Baku, climate financing remained at the low level it had been at previously. The UN Climate Secretariat had to argue against this.

The completely changed situation in Belém, such as the fact that the 1.5°C line has already been crossed, the withdrawal of the USA from the process and the opposition of the current US President to all relevant narratives and activities, were only of marginal interest. Negotiators from all over the world mainly fought the "old battles", especially the EU and Germany. For example, the demand to phase out coal and all fossil fuels instead of focusing on carbon capture as a bridge – because otherwise it will be impossible to get many countries that depend on fossil fuel exports to agree to joint decisions. And without these countries, there can be no joint programme on this issue for the international community. Many of those involved are apparently incapable of such a simple logical deduction. Fortunately, none of these aspirations are reflected in the final declaration. It has 59 points, all of which are essentially devoid of substance, apart from the decisions on the Adaptation Fund (footnote 2). As usual, the 59 points are written in barely tolerable legalese, using standard phrases that are repeated over and over again, such as: *"The first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement, for the completion of the work programme under the Paris Agreement and other decisions"*.

2. Rainforests as a topic at COP30

From the author's point of view, the attitude of the international community in Belém on the issue of "preserving rainforests" was disappointing. This essentially concerns the rainforests in Brazil, Congo and Indonesia. Given the choice of venue, one could have expected more, or even should have expected more. The central role of these forests in the fight against further global warming, but also for the preservation of biodiversity, is so obvious that there was hope that the rich countries would in Brazil finally be prepared to provide long-term, substantial financial support. But there was little willingness to do so – all these countries currently have very different concerns. The rainforest will have to wait. The only question is when the rainforest states will auction off their ecologically precious areas for economic exploitation at any price.

The "confusing" financial product *Tropical Forest Forever Facility* (TFFF) is symptomatic of political action. This instrument, which is supported by Germany with USD 1 billion over 10 years, is complicated. By combining various financing instruments, only a limited amount of money (at best USD 4 billion per year for one billion hectares of intact rainforest) will ultimately be mobilised for rainforest protection, with risks for the liable states. In return, considerable private return opportunities are opened up, ultimately at the expense of the states that are ultimately liable. At the same time, a donor round for the forests of the Congo Basin has been organised with a total volume of €2.5 billion. Overall, in the author's view, these are attempts to create the impression of substantial contributions with comparatively little money. The funds invested would have to be at least 25 times higher to have the necessary impact. Under the motto "is the glass half full or half empty?", one can of course take a positive view of the fact that, at least, something

has been reached. However, the question remains as to how long the rainforest countries' patience will last.

The Amazon rainforest is the most important rainforest in terms of size and diversity. The Congo Basin and the Indonesian rainforests are also of utmost importance. All three large rainforest areas are in danger because the rich countries are not prepared to pay adequately for their preservation, even though this is a must from the point of view of climate and biodiversity. When rainforest is burned on a large scale, around 700 tonnes of CO₂ per hectare are released above and below ground.



Franz Josef Radermacher, Christian Ruck, Estelle Herlyn and Antonia Ruck³

³ Christian Ruck is an important advisor to the German government and UNIDO Director-General Gerd Müller on rainforest issues. He has published a major study on the situation in the Congo Basin. He was in Belém to discuss this topic. His analysis, "The Congo Basin – Strategies for the Survival of the World's Second Largest Green Lung", was published by the Clean Energy Forum in April 2025. see <https://www.clean-energy-forum.org/de/publikationen/das-kongobecken-strategien-fuer-das-ueberleben-der-zweitgroessten-gruenen-lunge-der-welt>, accessed on 25 November 2025. His daughter Antonia is a lawyer researching the possibilities of the current legal system for international climate financing.

3. Belém and the Amazon estuary:

Water, water, water

Belém was a well-chosen location for the climate conference. This city of millions is located near the mouth of the Amazon. Over the last few centuries, all shipping traffic on the Amazon has been administratively controlled via the port, for example during the rubber boom with its centre in Manaus, some 2,000 km upstream. During high water, the Amazon has a width of 100 km in its estuary delta.

The Amazon is by far the world's largest river in terms of water volume. Its volume is as large as the combined volume of the ten next largest rivers, including the Mississippi, the Danube, the Volga, the Yangtze, the Indus, the Brahmaputra, etc. The average water volume of the Amazon at its mouth is about 80 times that of the Rhine in its delta near Rotterdam.

The high volume of water results primarily from the absorption of water from the Andes, which are thousands of metres high. The most important source rivers come from Peru, which also has a large part of the Amazon rainforest on its territory. The Incas advanced from the heights of the Andes along the great rivers 1,500 metres down into the rainforest and regularly fought battles with the local Indian tribes, but were unable to subjugate them permanently.

The first complete navigation of the Amazon took place in the 16th century by Francisco de Orellana in a large canoe from the Peruvian rainforest to the mouth of the Amazon in the Atlantic Ocean. Manaus is located (calculated from the Brazilian border) halfway to the mouth and forms a "large urban island" in the rainforest area. Within Brazil, this place can only be reached via the Amazon River or by plane. There is also a land route via the Transamazônica, which continues

through neighbouring states, but involves a detour of several thousand kilometres if, for example, you want to go to Belém at the mouth of the Amazon.

The Transamazônica is predominantly a natural road. In the dry northeast, it is a usable gravel road, but in the humid Amazon rainforest, it is barely passable during the rainy season. Rental tractors have to help out locally, and numerous tributaries of the Amazon can only be crossed at great risk.

4. Rainforest and Amazon in Brazil

The rainforest and the Amazon form a single entity in Brazil. It is the largest rainforest area in the world, stretching for thousands of kilometres and, fortunately, still largely untouched.

It is about 4,000 km from the mouth of the river in Belém to the Peruvian border. The rainforest then continues into Peru. Manaus, the capital of the Brazilian state of Amazonas, is located about 2,000 km upstream, halfway along the Brazilian side, and with a population of 1.7 million, forms an urban island in the rainforest.



The author in front of "giant trees" in the rainforest



An indigenous man climbs a tall palm tree in the rainforest. His only aid: a vine rope holds his feet together.

What do we know about the Brazilian rainforest from recognised sources? One key figure is Sebastião Salgado. Sebastião Salgado has brought the rainforest closer to people with his haunting images. His beautiful illustrated book "Amazônia" (528 pages) is highly recommended. This book is the "crown" of his work. The author of this report came across this book at an exhibition by Sebastião Salgado in the Papal Palace in Avignon. The book and the accompanying exhibition open our eyes to the beauty and vulnerability of the Amazon rainforest.



*Estelle Herlyn, Juliano Salgado and
Franz Josef Radermacher in Belém*

Sebastião Salgado died a few months ago in May 2025 at the age of 81. His son Juliano is continuing his work. The author met Juliano Salgado in Belém (see picture). In Belém, the Amazônia exhibition (as in Avignon) was on display at the Museum of Amazonia (Museu das Amazônias). It is currently (from 29 October 2025 to 15 March 2026) also on display in Cologne.

5. Rainforest and Amazon in Peru

Peru is known as the empire of the Incas. It was conquered for Spain by Francisco Pizarro in 1532. Pizarro arrived in Ecuador by ship from the Panama area. From there, the campaign continued on foot. The Inca Empire was located at an altitude of several thousand metres in the Andes. This is where the most important tributaries of the Amazon originate. These include, in particular, the **Rio Ucayali**, the central river of the so-called "sacred" valley of the Incas. It flows below **Machu Picchu**, the legendary mountain fortress of the Incas, which lies 700 metres above the river. The Rio Ucayali is already a mighty, rushing river there, which spreads out considerably through further tributaries and still has to overcome a difference in altitude of about 1.5 km before it slows down in the Peruvian part of the Amazon region.

The rivers from Peru flow through the Peruvian part of the Amazon rainforest. The Incas had always tried to subjugate the Indian tribes in this area, but they never succeeded in the long term.

6. The Rio Negro and Manaus

Manaus is an island in the rainforest and can essentially only be reached by boat or plane. Manaus is located on the Rio Negro (dark river). The Rio Negro has water level differences of 10-15 metres throughout the year in Manaus. The extensive port facilities are designed to cope with this. The conditions are even more extreme than in the Bristol Channel in South Wales – a point with one of the highest tidal ranges in the world (around 9 metres) – brutal conditions for sailors. However, there is one difference to note: the rise and fall of the water level in the Amazon

is a matter of days and weeks, while high and low tide in the Bristol Channel alternate twice a day.

Manaus has numerous port facilities over a distance of 20 km: for normal passenger traffic, for large ships and ocean liners, for the luxury yachts of the super-rich, etc. The Rio Negro is at least 4 km wide in Manaus, and 20 km wide in another direction.

Freshwater dolphins frolic in the waters of the Rio Negro south of the city. In the centre of the city, there is an elaborate bridge installation, a kind of "Golden Gate" to the other bank. The volume of traffic over the bridge is (still) manageable, but it allows access to the other bank of the Rio Negro. This is where industrial and tourist development is taking off. Both banks of the great river are now accessible. Hopes are pinned on further economic development.

Manaus is an important trading hub with a free port. The town had its heyday during the rubber boom. A lot of money was made here, and Manaus was very rich.

7. Rio Negro and Amazon meet

Downstream, near Manaus, the Amazon (Rio Solimões) and the Rio Negro meet. They have roughly the same average water volume there, i.e. the water volume of the Amazon doubles south of Manaus. This is followed by another 2,000 km or so to the mouth of the Amazon in the Atlantic Ocean – with numerous other tributaries. The confluence resembles a "sea of water" with a diameter of 10-20 km.



Two colours of the converging rivers Amazon (light) and Rio Negro (dark) – Encontro das Aguas

About 10 km downstream from Manaus, the two large rivers mentioned above converge with roughly equal volumes of water: the dark Rio Negro and the light Rio Solimões (Amazon). The Rio Negro originates in Colombia and is not a mountain river. It is about 2,000 km from the Colombian border to the confluence. The river is dark and earthy. The Amazon is significantly lighter in colour and, as a mountain river originating in Peru, has a much stronger current. The water flows initially run separately and are clearly distinguishable by colour (see illustration). About 30 km after the confluence of the Rio Negro and the Amazon, the huge volumes of water from the two rivers are still clearly distinguishable until they have largely mixed together. However, this process is only complete about 60 kilometres after the confluence.

Such mixing also occurs, of course, in other places, albeit on a much smaller scale. In Ulm, for example, the Iller, a mountain river from the Alps, meets the slower

and darker Danube, and it takes some time for the mixing to be complete. In Passau, the Inn, one of the most important Alpine rivers, meets the slower and darker Danube. At the confluence (the tip of Passau), where the Ilz also joins, an impressively large body of water is created by German standards. However, compared to the conditions on the Rio Negro, all this still seems "modest".

8. Manaus and its Teatro Amazonas

The role and economic influence of Manaus in the period 1890-1900 has already been mentioned. Manaus owes its Teatro Amazonas (see picture) to the conditions at that time. One might not have expected such a theatre in the middle of the rainforest. However, many people are familiar with the story of this theatre from the film *Fitzcarraldo*, starring the eccentric and in every respect extreme Klaus Kinski.



The Teatro Amazonas opera house in the Brazilian city of Manaus

Manaus has a population of around 1.7 million. The harbour quay for normal traffic is about 1.3 km long. The theatre in Manaus is a "declaration of love" to European culture. The wall panels inside the theatre feature names such as Mozart, Beethoven, Goethe, Lessing, Shakespeare and Molière. During COP30, a kind of "rainforest opera" was performed in the theatre, using many indigenous instruments. Depending on the type and treatment, wood produces very different sounds. Interesting fact: the theatre in Manaus was almost filled to capacity. Some of the visitors were dressed in "opera attire" – as is customary at European performances – alongside people dressed more casually, including some tourists.

Manaus owed its rise and wealth to the rubber boom and gold discoveries in the surrounding area. With the end of the rubber boom following the invention of synthetic rubber and its importance for the production of car tyres, the city's heyday came to an end, although natural rubber is still traded today. Manaus has retained its central logistical role to this day, located about halfway along the Brazilian Amazon route, some 2,000 km from the mouth of the river near Belém.

9. How did Brazil achieve a size of 50% of South America?

The starting point is the fierce competition between Spain and Portugal. At this point, it is worth taking a look at history. Spain was unable to prevail militarily in its attempt to defeat Portugal, which was much smaller in terms of land area. This was frustrating for the Spanish, as Portugal was a tough competitor at sea.

Portugal, with its location on the Atlantic Ocean and its focus on maritime conquests, took the lead, sailed around the Cape of Good Hope (Africa) and opened

up the route to Asia, especially to the Spice Islands. Spain, burdened by constant disputes and power struggles with its neighbouring countries, followed as a seafaring nation of conquest only some distance behind. Columbus' discovery of America is the central event here.

The Portuguese were ahead as a seafaring nation, finding their way around the tip of Africa and then to the Spice Islands. They became very rich in the process.

They initially had nothing to do with the discovery and conquest of America. Columbus found the way for the Spanish. In a very short time, something dramatic happened: the almost unimaginable conquest of the Aztec Empire by Cortés and the Spanish takeover of Mexico, combined with the discovery of endless riches in the form of gold, diamonds, etc. After crossing the strait in the Panama area, shipbuilding was rapidly established on the Pacific coast, so that after only a few years, the route across the sea to Ecuador could be chosen. From there, Pizarro conquered the Inca Empire. This was actually just as incomprehensible as Cortés' conquest of Mexico. Pizarro was able to exploit disputes between two potential successors for the leadership of the Inca Empire. Once again, the conquest was linked to the exploitation of great wealth in the form of gold, diamonds, etc. In both cases (Aztec Empire/Inca Empire), the Spanish were able to "marry" into the elites of the old empires and take over the elaborate infrastructure of large empires. It was helpful in this regard that the Spanish took hardly any women with them to America, in stark contrast to the colonisation of North America.

What was the situation in South America?

The Spanish soon realised that the west coast of South America had plenty of water and rainforest with hostile Indians, but that there was not much else to be gained, at least if large quantities of gold and diamonds were the goal. At the same time, the Portuguese and Spanish sought to consolidate and secure their spheres of influence. This is where the Pope came into play. He established a borderline in the papal bull Inter Caetera and in the Treaty of Tordesillas to separate the spheres of influence of the Spanish and Portuguese (see Figure 1). The line stretched from the North Pole to the South Pole, although it was modified several times.

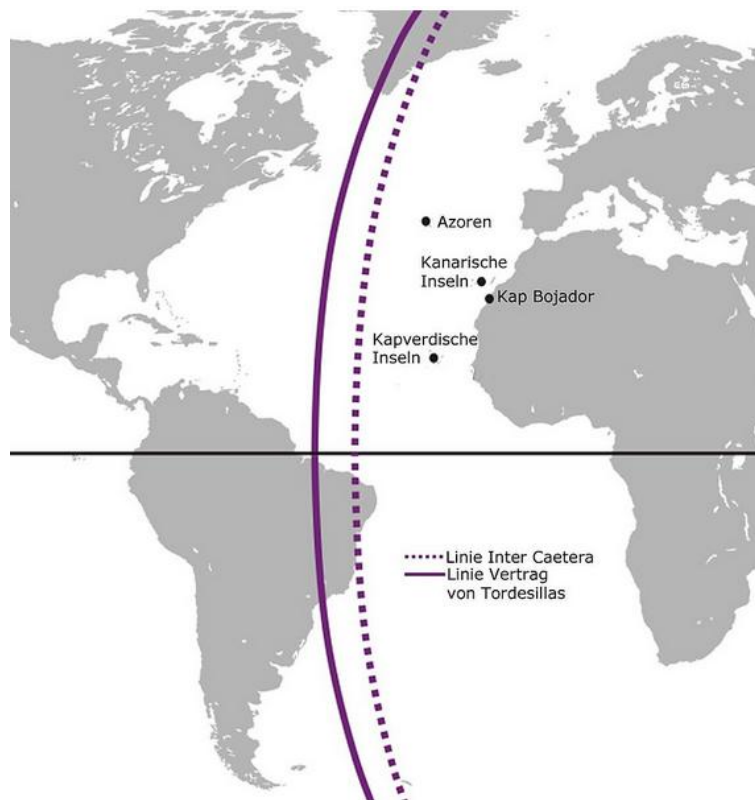


Figure 1: Inter Caetera and Tordesillas line

The line ran about 2,282 kilometres west of the westernmost Cape Verde islands. All islands and countries west of the line were to belong to Spain, and all islands

and countries on the Atlantic side east of this line to Portugal.⁴ The line was subsequently adjusted several times in negotiations and disputes. This regulation blocked the Spanish from taking the direct route to the Spice Islands around Africa. With the arduous route around Cape Horn, which was brutal from a sailor's point of view (made somewhat easier by Magellan's subsequent discovery of the Strait of Magellan), there was an alternative route through the Pacific, although compliance with the established boundaries of the spheres of influence remained a problem, partly because of the completely inadequate nautical capabilities at the time. At that time, it was not possible to determine precisely the longitude at which one was currently located. Only the latitude could be determined with any degree of accuracy.

It is clear how much the Catholic world and the Pope dominated events in South America. The conquest of the Inca Empire by the Spanish was just as central a factor as the earlier conquest of the Aztec Empire by the Spanish. The organisation of corresponding military campaigns and the rewarding of successful conquerors, in connection with the ruling of defeated empires (Aztecs/Incas), are the reason why Spanish possessions became fragmented, while the Portuguese, who had become rich through their access to the Spice Islands, for example, systematically set about taking possession of Brazil, i.e. the part of America that belonged to their sphere of influence coming from the west.

No one adhered to the Pope's line in detail at this point. The material reality was different. The territory was still unexplored. Nautical instruments were inadequate, and it was often decisive who could establish themselves somewhere first. The

⁴ Spanish ships were allowed to cross Portuguese territories in the Atlantic on direct routes.

geographical conditions in the Amazon region favoured a development from the west and thus the Portuguese were able to develop an ever-larger part of South America.⁵

The Inter Caetera and Tordesillas lines and several subsequent adjustments, as well as direct "compensation deals" between Spain and Portugal, gave Portugal its first possession in America, namely a slice of South America. Initially, this was only about one third of the current size of Brazil to the west, but from the outset it included the Amazon estuary and, for example, what is now Rio de Janeiro.

In the new Portuguese possessions, there were no pre-existing state structures like in Mexico or Peru that could be conquered. There were only small, generally hostile Indian groups that made life difficult for the Portuguese, and near Rio there were also cannibals. How do we know this? The town of Wolfhagen in the wider vicinity of Kassel has a famous "son", Hans Staden. He experienced great adventures during the conquest of Central and South America and reported *on them* in his book "*Wahrhaftige Historia: Description of a Landscape of Wild, Naked, Fero-cious, Cannibalistic People in the New World of America*"⁶. During his "journeys", he was also temporarily held captive by cannibals near Rio de Janeiro. Thanks to his medical knowledge, he was able to free himself from this predicament. He recounted all his experiences in his book, which became widely read in Europe.

The Portuguese strategy was to establish small, partly fortified settlements upstream along the Amazon and its many tributaries. Were there any valuable resources to be exploited in the rainforest? Yes, we know that later, for example,

⁵ Recommended reading: Katja Sassmannshausen & Ellen Spielmann, Brazil (Spectacular Places), Koenemann, June 2020, ISBN 978-3-7419-2282-4

⁶ Hans Staden, Wahrhaftige Historia: Description of a landscape of wild, naked, fierce cannibals in the New World of America, ed. Andreas Skrziepietz (Berlin: epubli, 2021)

precious woods were big business, followed by rubber on a large scale. Anyone who wanted to turn these goods into money had to move downstream towards the Atlantic in the Amazon basin. In other parts of South America, the situation was quite different.⁷ Control of the Amazon estuary and the Amazon itself was in any case a key issue, especially with regard to Peru. And the Portuguese were based at the Amazon estuary.

The Spanish, for example, were in Peru, 2,000 metres above the rainforest. They had little use for precious woods. The route to the Amazon estuary was blocked. The 2,000 metres of altitude from the rainforest up to the core Inca territories were economically insurmountable.

As a result, the Spanish did not develop the vast land at the headwaters of the Amazon and its numerous tributaries (about which nothing was known when the division was determined) that was rightfully theirs according to the Pope's decree. It made little sense to invest resources there. The Portuguese stepped into this vacuum, always following the same logic of exploiting local opportunities by logistically activating the waterways of the Amazon and its "infinite" number of tributaries. In this way, half of the land mass of South America eventually came to Portugal, including the beautiful bay of Rio de Janeiro (Guanabara Bay), where the Portuguese initially had to contend with very warlike Indians.

⁷ The Spanish side included territories such as Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, etc., which were able to organise their economies independently of the Amazon. Many years later, the Dutch, British, etc. were able to establish themselves in what was actually Spanish territory (e.g. Suriname). Here, questions of power mattered more than the Pope's plans for division, which were only recognised by the Spanish and Portuguese anyway.

10. Brazil – exemplary in many ways

Brazil's development was based on large plantations, e.g. for sugar cane – still a particularly important natural product in Brazil today. This is used, among other things, to produce **ethanol**, a climate-neutral fuel for (combustion engine) cars. Robust workers were needed for plantation farming. This was not feasible with the indigenous population. This led to a slave economy with numerous people from Africa, among others. The many people from all over the world led to the mixture of all races that is typical of Brazil today and to an incredible diversity of skin colours – from white to deep black.

The Brazilians have developed their country in an impressive way, also from a technical point of view. Take Rio de Janeiro, for example, and the two-part cable car to Sugarloaf Mountain. They have also taken care of nature. The huge statue of Christ stands on Corcovado Mountain in Tijuca National Park, one of the largest inner-city rainforest areas in the world – right in the middle of the city.

With Rio, the Portuguese have developed a cultural hotspot with global appeal – and not just because of the carnival.

South of the rainforest, in the Cerrado, the Brazilians have established what is now the world's largest production of organic fibre materials based on fast-growing eucalyptus. Sustainability concerns have been consistently taken into account. Today, at least 50% of the global paper industry is supplied with this Brazilian fibre material. Using their gigantic sugar cane production, Brazilians can produce large quantities of climate-neutral ethanol, thus maintaining their fleet of combustion engines and operating them with climate-neutral fuel. In their large-scale agriculture, Brazilians are the world leaders in the precise monitoring of the microbiological soil structure on a daily basis to gently supply the soil with minerals and weed

killers. Brazil is a country that consistently pursues **nature-based solutions** at a high technical and economic level.

11. Notes on social issues in the country

Overall, Brazil is a poor country. Development is not easy in this huge territory with its enormous logistical challenges posed by nature. There are massive class differences and, in some cases, bitter poverty. There are slums (favelas) in all major cities. Foreigners should not go there, especially not at night. In the big cities, it is striking that practically all houses are barricaded. Many institutions, shops, etc. have security guards at the entrances.

Brazil is primarily an agricultural country. The land was distributed extremely unevenly by the crown and its governors. Huge tracts of land went to the crown's confidants. Many landless farmers are therefore constantly on the lookout for suitable land or have to pay high flat rates (in relative terms) if they want to cultivate the land of large landowners. Sebastiao Salgado also addressed this injustice in his photography. Land reforms were attempted to bring about a certain degree of balance. The burning of rainforest for the (illegal) development of land should also be mentioned here, which depletes the soil after about 20 years. New land must be found to replace it. This was also the case in the past and is part of indigenous Native American culture. However, the population has now grown so much that this approach cannot simply be continued.

12. An ambassador for cooperation on a world tour by bicycle

Michael Evertz is a true man of conviction. He is not an activist, but an economist and sustainability researcher. He sees his life's work as motivating people to engage in cross-cultural cooperation. As a role model, he wants to make his own personal contribution to society so that we as humanity have the chance to survive under humane conditions. Because we will not be able to curb climate change with technical solutions alone, he says. What we need above all is civilisational progress. Only with a responsible and value-oriented mindset can we put our global economic system on a sustainable and resilient course and build a caring economy that protects people and nature in the long term. AI cannot achieve this either.

That is why the 66-year-old launched the extraordinary project "**EXPEDITION HOPE**" in Berlin on 22 April 2023 – International Earth Day.^{8, 9} To this end, Michael Evertz gave up his carefree life in Starnberg (Bavaria) and has since been travelling the world on his bicycle in his green cycling kit. The author has been a supporter of his ambitious project from the very beginning.

For 15 years, Michael Evertz had been working extensively and proactively on the topic of "cooperation". After all, it is humanity's most important task for the future. A recent study by the Rockefeller Foundation on the importance of global collaboration and cooperation shows that he is right:

<https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/news/rockefeller-foundation-50m-initiative-global-cooperation-34-country-survey/>

⁸ See FAW/n, Michael Evertz and COP28 – a strong message, 22 January 2024, FAW/n Ulm: <https://www.fawn-ulm.de/michael-evertz-und-die-cop-28-eine-starke-botschaft>

⁹ <https://expedition-hope.earth/das-projekt/#mission>

Michael Evertz has experienced first-hand the devastating effects of climate change on his own body during his "Tour of Hope" due to the annually rising "murderous" temperatures. Nevertheless, he managed to reach his first milestone after 222 days: COP28 in Dubai.

The following photos show his meeting with three representatives of the FAW/n in Dubai, as well as his exchange there with Dr Sultan Ahmed Al-Jaber, President of COP28, whom he urged to take care of our planet.



Dr Sultan Ahmed Al-Jaber and Michael Evertz



Franz Josef Radermacher, Michael Evertz, Estelle Herlyn and Tobias Orthen

While in Dubai, we had already agreed to meet again for COP30 in Brazil in November 2025. Michael Evertz then continued his journey by bicycle, crossing a total of 26 countries.

From Dubai, he cycled via Oman to Cairo. Upon his arrival there, he was ruthlessly robbed of everything he owned.



Although this was a very hard blow, he did

not let it get him down. At 50.9 degrees Celsius in the shade, he battled his way through Egypt (up to 69 degrees Celsius in the sun), the highest temperatures ever recorded in the MENA region. Current scientific forecasts indicate that these

temperatures will rise to as high as 56 degrees Celsius in the shade over the next 20 years. This will make the region uninhabitable and trigger an unstoppable wave of migration. Instead of cultural cohesion, we can expect a clash of cultures .



Michael Evertz has also brought his message to many indigenous peoples, such as the Nangatom in the Omo Valley in Ethiopia, the Maasai in Tanzania, the San in Botswana and the Himba in Namibia.

In Nairobi, Michael Evertz was received at the headquarters by the Executive Director of UNEP, Ms Inger Andersen.



On his way, he also met with high-ranking personalities and diplomats and called on ministers to work more intensively for international cooperation:



Jordanian Princess Rym Ali and Michael Evertz



H.E. Dr Abdullah bin Ali Al-Amri (CEO of the Environmental Authority Oman & UNEA President) and Michael Evertz

In Arusha, he was able to motivate Mayor Maximilian Iranghe to launch a campaign against plastic waste. This took a lot of time, patience and persuasion, says Michael Evertz.



Parallel to COP29 in Baku, Michael Evertz even climbed Africa's highest mountain, Kilimanjaro (5,895 metres), with an urgent appeal to the international community. It was an exhausting feat of strength. However, his greatest motivation was to give children "hope" that a better world is possible.



To this end, he repeatedly visited schools and showed children that we can realise the vision of a "better world for EVERYONE".

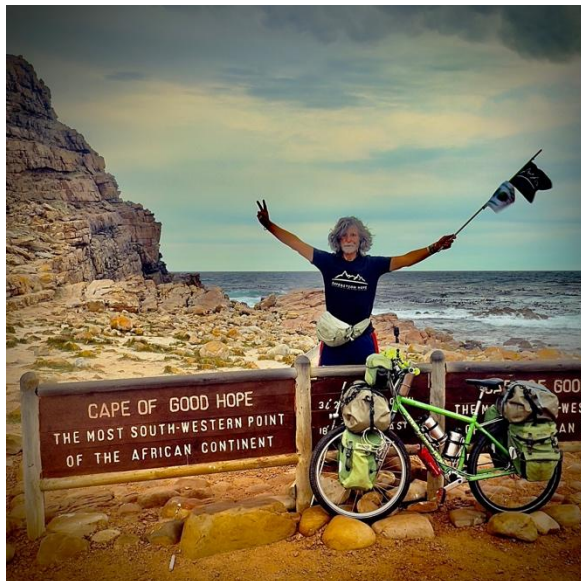


Seedling School, Nairobi (Kenya)



St. Constantine's International School, Arusha (Tanzania)

After 29 months and 26,000 kilometres, Michael Evertz reached the Cape of Good Hope at the end of August 2025.



He travelled from South Africa to Rio de Janeiro by plane because it was not possible to cross by ship. From Rio, he then cycled another 3,000 kilometres to COP30 in Belém. A bite from a poisonous spider almost prevented him from arriving on time, as Mr Evertz was bedridden with a high fever for several days.



However, at the COP on 14 November 2025, the agreed meeting with the "Green Man", Mr Michael Evertz, took place with great joy.



Estelle Herlyn, Michael Evertz and Franz Josef Radermacher

As at COP28 in Dubai, Michael Evertz persistently called on many international decision-makers in Brazil to finally turn words into action. Since the first United Nations Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, it has been "proclaimed" that we can only tackle climate change together and that the future can only be shaped together.



André Do Lago (COP30 President, Brazilian diplomat and Secretary of State for Climate, Energy and Environment in the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs) together with Michael Evertz



Marina Silva (Brazilian Minister of the Environment) with Michael Evertz

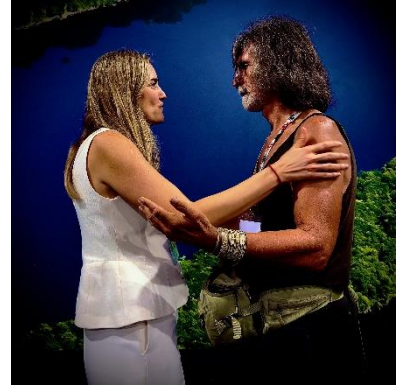


Sônia Guajajara (first Minister for Indigenous Peoples in Brazil) and Michael Evertz



Annalena Baerbock (President of the United Nations General Assembly) and Michael Evertz

Mr Michael Evertz received particular support for his appeal from the Spanish Minister for Ecological Transition (Environment Minister) and Deputy Prime Minister **Sara Aa-
gesen**. She then expressed her appreciation in a very "warm" manner:





The author has always admired Michael Evertz's tireless willpower. Michael Evertz has not allowed anything to deter him from spreading his important message to the world, neither a life-threatening accident in Dubai, nor attacks in Cairo and Nairobi (he was robbed several times), nor by the (geo-)political conflicts he found himself caught up in, such as the Israel-Gaza conflict or the riots in Nairobi last June.

Since Michael Evertz set out on his journey, the global political situation has become even more threatening. Although global cooperation is the most important task facing humanity in the future, Michael Evertz is not receiving the necessary and appropriate support he needs for his commitment and important mission. His experiences over the last 32 months clearly show that we are miles away from global cohesion. Therefore, he is not surprised that the state of the environment is worse than recently feared. This is demonstrated by a recent UN report:

<https://www.tagesschau.de/wissen/klima/un-umwelt-bericht-100.html>

He says he has never done anything more meaningful in his life. And that is precisely why Michael Evertz is very disappointed in politics and politicians, the media and media makers, but also in some scientists and other actors. We don't just need "prominent do-gooders", we need every single person, says Michael Evertz. The author agrees.

Due to insufficient financial support, Michael Evertz is unfortunately unable to continue his mission and his worldwide "Tour of Hope" at the moment. The author finds this very regrettable. Because we need role models like Michael Evertz.

However, it is unreasonable to expect people to fight the greatest threat to humanity on a voluntary basis, using their own financial resources, and in doing so find themselves in financial difficulties. A wise person once said very aptly: "It is difficult to save the world *on a voluntary* basis when others are destroying it *full-time*."

To ensure that all this has not been in vain, Michael Evertz would like to use his experience as an ambassador of hope and values to inspire children and young people to become socially engaged as ambassadors of hope and values, starting in 2026.

To this end, he wants to embark on a tour of Germany, cycling from city to city and school to school. This school campaign could possibly be extended to Austria and Switzerland.

This would be a truly worthy project. The author therefore calls on his readers to actively support Mr Evertz in his endeavour: with contacts, press and social media publications, media support and recommendations. Appropriate financial support and donations are particularly important.

Please help Michael Evertz with this project. As you can all see, Michael Evertz doesn't just talk. He takes action. This is encouraging and gives many people hope. The only thing missing is sufficient financial support. But that shouldn't be a stumbling block. After all, the financial resources he needs are very moderate and manageable. If many people make a collective contribution, we will see amazing things! Let's show the whole world what humans are capable of when we cooperate. Michael Evertz is also available to give lectures to interested parties.

Here are his (donation) accounts:

Kreissparkasse München Starnberg Ebersberg

Account holder: Michael Evertz

IBAN: DE19 7025 0150 0022 5835 38

or

PayPal account: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/expeditionhope>

(Please make donations via "Payment to friends" to avoid unnecessary fees)

You can also contact Michael Evertz directly at his **email address**

michael.evertz@expedition-hope.earth

or

on his mobile number +49 152 53995360 (also WhatsApp).

Acknowledgements

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