



2 Feature - Interview with Jean-Pierre BRIOT, former representative of CNRS in Brazil

Jean-Pierre Briot opened the representative office of CNRS (*Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique*) in Brazil 5 years ago. Why Brazil? Why Rio de Janeiro?

Jean-Pierre Briot is French, born in 1957. He is senior researcher (*Directeur de Recherche*), specialized in computer science at **CNRS (*Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique*)**, in France.

He is member of the Laboratoire d'Informatique de Paris 6 (LIP6), the joint Computer Science Research Laboratory between Université Pierre et Marie Curie (UPMC – Paris 6) and CNRS, in Paris, France. He is also a permanent visiting professor at Computer science Department (DI) of **Pontificia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio)**, in Brazil.

He defended his PhD in 1984 and his *Habilitation à diriger des recherches* (HdR) in 1989, both in computer science at Université Pierre et Marie Curie.

He created the permanent representative office of CNRS in Brazil in 2010 and was Director until December 2014.

Click [here](#) to contact **Jean-Pierre Briot** or [here](#) to consult his researcher page.

As for February 2015, the new CNRS Brasil director will be **Olivier Fudym**. Click [here](#) to contact him.

The representative office of CNRS in Brazil, named “*CNRS Brasil*” has been created in January 2010, as the 9th permanent representative office of the French research organization at the time. Note that most of CNRS representative offices abroad are regional, that is they cover a region and more than one country (e.g., USA, Canada and Mexico for the Washington office; Japan, South Korea and Taiwan for the Tokyo office,). *CNRS Brasil* is one of three national offices, which are dedicated to only one country. This illustrates the importance and priority of our partnership with Brazil. The rationale behind the creation of CNRS Brasil is the recognition of the recent major progress of Brazil on the international scientific scene, which makes it a partner of choice. In addition, scientific relations between Brazil and France are old and strong. *CNRS Brasil*'s general objective is to help foster scientific partnerships between CNRS (and France) and Brazil to flourish.

CNRS Brasil is located in Rio de Janeiro, within the Casa Europa, the building hosting Consulates from France, Germany and Finland. The location has been a difficult choice, with Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo being the two main candidates contemplated. Rio de Janeiro hosts federal institutions such as the Brazilian Academy of Science, Fiocruz and IMPA (*Instituto Nacional de Matemática Pura e Aplicada*, where one CNRS UMI is located *) and is also the major destination of CNRS missions.

What were your roles and daily responsibilities?

The first responsibility, as a representative office, is representation, not only of CNRS in Brazil but also of Brazil's potential and opportunities in France (for instance, to inform French stakeholders about the Science without Borders Brazilian mobility program). This includes regular contacts with Brazilian and French institutions, as well as presentations, seminars, articles and participation in various events. The second responsibility is accompaniment, to help construct and consolidate joint scientific projects, with a particular focus on what we call structured cooperation, as such projects are long-lived (4 years or more) and carefully selected. CNRS's main structured cooperation tools are joint laboratories* (LIA) and joint networks* (GDRI). Our actions include both upstream and downstream accompaniment, such as informing Brazilian and French researchers, the institutions involved, organizing missions in Brazil or in France for decision makers, finalizing the conventions to be signed, finding additional funding, and if needed, constructing new bilateral cooperation programmes. The third responsibility is to provide institutions and researchers with information through our [website](#) (on calls, events, etc.) and internal reports to inform decision makers. The fourth responsibility is assistance to Brazilian



Discover the [CNRS international cooperation tools](#):

International Associated Laboratory (*Laboratoire International Associé - LIA*), is an International Lab "without walls". It brings together two partner institutions that contribute human and material resources to a jointly-defined project. Its duration is 4 years, renewable.

International Research Network (*Groupement de Recherche Internationale - GDRI*). It brings together several laboratories from two or more countries to coordinate research on a specific topic. Its duration is 4 years, renewable.

International Joint Unit (*Unité Mixte Internationale - UMI*), is a single location Joint Lab with permanent CNRS staff. Its duration is 4 years, with two renewals possible. **UMI is the highest level of international cooperation.**



and French researchers, mostly day-to-day practical information about funding programs (bilateral programs, fellowships and scholarships programmes, chairs,), information on how to build cooperation projects and assistance to solve administrative issues (visas, regulations, etc.).

The awardee of the Fields Medal 2014, the Franco-Brazilian Artur Avila, carries out part of his research at CNRS. This is probably one of the most notable achievements of the recent Franco-Brazilian scientific cooperation. Looking back at your experience, what are the greatest successes of your 5 years at the head of CNRS Brazil?

I have been fortunate to accompany the steady growth of scientific partnership between CNRS and Brazil. In five years' time, the number of structured cooperation (joint labs and networks) has multiplied by five! Obviously, the Fields Medal awarded in 2014 to Artur Avila provides extra lightning to the excellence of Brazilian science and to the excellence of scientific partnership between France and Brazil. Artur Avila represents just by himself a wonderful example of our Brazil-France partnership. Artur, a Brazilian citizen, holds a PhD from IMPA, in Rio de Janeiro, carried-out a post-doc in France, became permanent researcher at CNRS, and last year acquired French citizenship. He now divides his time between his lab in Paris and his lab in Rio de Janeiro, within the framework of the joint CNRS UMI* within IMPA and thanks to a **European Research Council (ERC) Starting Grant**. Lastly, in addition to the excellence of Artur as an individual, let us be reminded of the role of his training institution, IMPA, with a special mention of Jacob Palis for his pioneering role in the Brazilian school of mathematics, and also with a mention of Jean-Christophe Yoccoz, who welcomed Artur as a post-doc in Paris.

Where do you see the biggest opportunities for increased cooperation between Europe and Brazil?

This question is a difficult one! Thematically, within virtually all fields there already exists either a strong cooperation between Brazil and Europe or good potential for such cooperation! If I had to select one field, I would point out **marine science**, where I think there is great potential of further growth and structuring of already excellent cooperation, the two reasons being: the excellent level and structure of research in Europe, for instance via the European Network of Marine Research Institutes and Stations (MARS), and the growing interest and investment of Brazil in marine sciences, for instance demonstrated by the recent creation of a national hydro-oceanographic institute (INPOH).

In your opinion, what could be done to further enhance the mobility of international researchers between Europe and Brazil?

Firstly, obviously bureaucracy should be lightened as much as possible in order to make application and entrance of scientists quicker and more fluid, in order to facilitate brain circulation. Secondly, there are several programs supporting researchers' mobility, but they are mostly outbound (from Brazil abroad) for PhD students. We need more mobility programs to support inbound (from Europe to



Brazil) mobility of PhD students, as the brain circulation is hopefully now becoming more and more balanced.

You will now go back to research and will start cooperation with PUC-Rio. What is your project about?

My five years as creator and head of *CNRS Brasil* were intense; an incredible and wonderful experience. I managed to keep some contacts with research colleagues in France and in Brazil and have also maintained a little background scientific activity (including publication). I am fortunate enough that my colleagues both in Brazil and in France are heartily welcoming me back and offering me the opportunity to join various research projects. I also still have some suspended projects of my own and some new interests started from discussions with scientists and readings during the last five years.

Now, going back to your questions, yes, I will cooperate with my dear colleagues at PUC-Rio as well as with some other Brazilian universities. About my project, I am now interested in cooperative systems combining human actors and artificial agents, using ideas from artificial intelligence and decision, advanced software and distributed systems. Examples of applications I have been working on are collaborative support for environment management and interactive music collaborative systems. Thus, I will continue in this general direction, but on the other hand I do not want to decide my exact future projects too quickly and will let things come naturally. Motivation is essential in research!

What motivates you as a researcher?

The same motivation as for life, curiosity! And the pleasure to share and confront ideas.

Thank you very much for your time.