

Editorial

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Recent debates about sustainability were affected by several events that occurred during the second semester of 2013. The latest IPCC report placed human activities as the major drivers of climate change; the Haiyan typhoon caused serious and widespread destruction in the Philippines; and the new round of climate-related negotiations (the 19th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change—COP 19) in Poland was again frustrated by the failure to establish the bases for a comprehensive climate agreement to be signed in 2015.

The new IPCC report, this time using a firmer scientific base, confirmed that the world's temperatures are rising and that this is caused by human activities. According to the report, released in September of 2013, the most recent research results allow for a 95 percent certainty about human responsibility for global warming. Six years ago, when the last report was released, this certainty reached only 90 percent. The difference may seem small, but it is significant in scientific terms. It suggests that the climate models used by the IPCC have gained increased precision, a goal sought by the IPCC in order to recover the credibility it lost over the last few years. This new report results from an effort to improve upon previous reports. Information is more precise, more encompassing and more up to date. There is also increased caution when findings and certainties are stated. Precisely because of this, its predictions are disquieting. IPCC investigators also recognize that global warming went through a pause during the last decade, but they warn that this is only a temporary development and that the planet should start to heat up again in the next years.

A few weeks later, in November, the opening of the 19th COP, in Warsaw, was marked by a dramatic display of grief by the delegation (and the people) of the Philippines, caused by the massive destruction effected by the Haiyan typhoon. However, the delegation's tears and emotional reports and its petition for urgent measures against climate change were of little avail. Not a single country announced a commitment to increase cuts in emissions. Much to the contrary: Japan and Australia announced a serious departure from their previous goals and policies. This was a surprising disappointment in a meeting that was supposed to generate the bases for the expected 2015 general agreement on the matter.

Brazil added to the feeling of disappointment when it announced a 28 percent increase in Amazonian deforestation rates, in comparison to last year. This figure surpassed governmental expectations. It records the results of Brazil's deforestation monitoring calendar, which spans from August 2012 to July 2013. Meanwhile, the European Union did not fare any better. It continues to be divided between renewable energy projects and the weight of the coal and nuclear energy industries. On the meeting's last day, civil society representatives, including major environmental NGOs, withdrew from the event in order to state their protest against the failure of negotiations. They promised to reassemble with increased strength for the next meeting, scheduled for Peru, in 2014.

In this troubled and challenging setting of debates about the future of the Planet, ***Sustainability***

in Debate is releasing its eighth issue. Its main content lies within a dossier entitled “Public Policies for Territorial Development in Latin America”. The articles were selected with the help of guest editors Eric Sabourin (lead researcher of France’s CIRAD and research associate at the Center for Sustainable Development - CDS, Universidade de Brasília) and Doris Sayago, current CDS Director. These articles cover several geographic units: two of them deal with Brazil (“Ideas and Practices for the Social Management of Territories of Citizenship. The Case of the Borborema Territory, Paraíba” and “Policies for Territorial Development and Intermunicipality in Brazil: Complementarities and Tensions”); the third one deals with Uruguay (“Governance in the Operation of Environmental Management Services in Montevidean Beaches (Uruguay)”); the fourth article is continental in scope (“Internationalization and Dissemination of Rural Territorial Development Public Policies: Model Hypotheses for Latin America”).

This dossier is complemented by two texts: a stimulating debate with Octavio Sotomayor, from ECLAC’s Rural Development Unit, about the characteristics of territorial development programs in Latin America, and an interview with Tânia Bacelar, of the Universidade Federal de Pernambuco. Professor Bacelar is a respected representative of the interplay between science and politics. She emphasizes the dimensions of inequality (both East-West and North-South) inherited by Brazil and the fragility of the “territories of exclusion”, both of which require that special attention be given to the territorial content of public policies Brazilian. Bacelarenvisions the country’s regional diversity as an important asset for Brazil’s development.

This eighth issue of *SeD* contains seven other articles on varied topics. In “Unveiling Environmental Sociology Approaches: a Review of Selected Articles”, Fábio Bacchieggadiscusses how the environmental sociology arena is being developed in Brazil. The author sees this research field as a well-established one, but also argues that it needs to engage in further reflection about its theoretical framework.

Flávio José Rocha da Silva and Rinaldo Sérgio Vieira Arruda, in a text entitled “Indigenous Peoples and the Struggle in Defense of the São Francisco River”, deal with the issue of how indigenous peoples resident in Brazil’s semi-arid region are dealing with the protection of the mighty São Francisco River, in face of massive interventions by agribusiness farms and by the governmental project of transferring part of the river’s water flow into other basins.

In the article “In Search of Ecological Ethics”, Catarina Jahnel de Oliveira argues that the adoption of an ecological ethic is an alternative to sustainability strategies, because these strategies are human-centered and call into question issues like moral competence. An ecological ethic may lead to a redefinition of the relation between human beings and their natural environments.

Over the last decades, the Alto Douro Vinhateiro region, in the North of Portugal, has been facing serious difficulties that affect many rural areas in that country as well as around the world, an indication of its unsustainable management. Author José Francisco de Carvalho Ferreira wrote “Evaluating Sustainability: Limits and Possibilities in Alto Douro Vinhateiro, Portugal” to propose a methodology for the evaluation of regional sustainability.

In “Regulating Access to Genetic Resources in Brazil: Suggestions for a New Scenario”, Nilo Luiz Saccaro Junior studies the major points of discord between the use of genetic resources, social justice and the conservation of biodiversity; he outlines a new scenario which may help avoid these conflicts.

Sustainable development must be approached on the basis of the understanding the multiple causal relations that rule the natural environment and system actors. This is a pressing issue for agro-industrial systems on account of the dependency between production processes, ecosystem quality, climate regimes and physical-chemical soil traits. Adopting this approach, Jessé Moraes Pacheco and Debora Nayar Hoff wrote the article “Closing the Matter and Energy Cycle in the



Sugar/Alcohol Sector". They seek to organize the knowledge about the energy and matter fluxes in the sugar and alcohol sector, presenting a general outline of its degree of cycle closing.

In "The Current Brazilian Forestry Code (Federal Law nº 12,651/2012) and its Implications for the Prevention of Natural Disasters", authors Marcos Pellegrini Coutinho, João de Deus Medeiros, Érico Soriano, Luciana de Resende Londe, Paulo Jorge Vaitsman Leal and Silvia Midori Saito examine Brazil's new Forest Code and point out situations that require the attention of public authorities in order to define areas to be preserved and thus avoid natural disasters

Ima Célia Guimarães Vieira, Roberto Araújo O. Santos Junior and Peter Mann de Toledo wrote a special essay, "Science and Public Policies for the Development of the Amazon Region. A Tribute to Bertha K. Becker", as a tribute to the recently deceased (July 2013) Brazilian geographer Bertha K. Becker. Founding member of **SeD's** Editorial Board, Becker has left us a legacy of almost 50 years of research in the Amazon region. The authors recall that Becker insisted that preservation of the forest had to be coupled with its use and development. Those who make their livelihood from the forest must be given reasons to engage in its preservation. "The standing forest needs to have its value recognized" – this was Becker's mantra. Becker was born in Rio de Janeiro, in 1930.

SeD 8 offers also five book reviews. Their titles in Portuguese are: *Madeira de Ponta a Ponta. O caminho desde a floresta até o consumo*; *Formação rural extrativista na Amazônia: os desafios do desenvolvimento capitalista - 1720-1970*; *Sertões adentro: Viagens nas Caatingas, Séculos XVI a XIX*; *Sustentabilidade, Qualidade de Vida e Identidade Local: Olhares sobre as APAs Cantareira (SP) e Fernão Dias (MG)*; e *Análise Comparada de Políticas Públicas: Uma Agenda em Transformação*.

This issue closes with the Gallery section, containing an original essay combining text, photos, maps and graphs, under the title "Agricultural Challenges in the Brazilian Semiarid Region", by Stéphanie Nasuti, Flavio Eiró and Diego Pereira Lindoso. It describes how family farmers of that region perceive and react to climate changes. This piece is based on the answers given to around 1,140 questionnaires applied by the team of the research Project Climate Change and Regional Development (coordinated by the CDS-UnB) linked to the Brazil Global Climate Change Research Network (Rede CLIMA). The authors identify the major vulnerabilities of family farmers and describe some of their adaptive practices.

We wish that this issue provides a good reading experience to all. We also wish a happy 2014, filled with new and fruitful debates about the sustainability of our Planet!

The Editors

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