

Editorial

We should not take backward steps!

By Marcel Bursztyn, Melissa Curi, Gabriela Litre, Carlos Hiroo Saito

doi:10.18472/SustDeb.v9n3.2018.20628

Almost half of a century already passed since the first preparatory meetings for the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm that took place in 1972. This event is still considered as a milestone for the global awakening to environmental challenges that affect our Planet.

One year after, in Brazil, the environmental issue was taken to the next level with the creation of the Special Secretary of the Environment (SEMA in Portuguese) under the responsibility of the Federal Government. Besides, the Law 6.938 from 1981 that established the National Environmental Policy was a landmark for the environmental protection regulations. In the late 80's, the Brazilian institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA) was created. Since then, the environmental protection achieved an independent status and became a ministry, following an international trend. Moreover, some relevant instruments were introduced, such as: water policies, forest-related policies, solid waste policies, fight against deforestation, confrontation of anthropogenic causes of climate change, and others.

All these steps were essential for the achievement of a healthier environment, considered a citizenship right since the 1988 Constitution. For these evolutions to happen, large mobilization from the political forces was necessary. The negotiations between the representatives of a complex web of interests and visions were, sometimes, difficult to conclude. The last decades were marked by many institutional advances, international agreements and scientific advances that allowed to identify the risks and to orient strategies of mitigation and adaptation. Thus, it is not surprising for the global political sphere to use these foundations in order to adopt compatible measures. Nevertheless, the actual scenario is one of heightened levels of pessimism.

The more conservative movement is claiming setbacks, reversing the institutional developments and questioning scientific certainties, for the sake of immediate economic interests and views that can sometimes be obscurantist. Here we are in the heart of the 21st century, witnessing the rise of dogmas comparable to those that condemned Galileo Galilei for his heliocentric theory, four centuries ago.

When the British journal *The Guardian* published, on the 15th of November of this year, that the Brazilian foreign minister nominated for the new government defends that climate change is a Marxist plot[1], the parallelism with the history that took place in times of Galileo was easy. This raises concerns about the attitude of the elected government towards the Paris Agreement and the understanding of synergies between public policies and the impacts on environment and climate. In addition, the obscurantist preconceived ideas can build barriers to science development through the simple belief that research in a specific field don't effectively represent, in that respect, science. What will happen with the Brazilian Network on Global Climate Change Research (Rede CLIMA) in this context? Should we invest in studies about the Amazon forest preservation, the Low Level Jets and the rainfalls in the Pantanal and in the Prata river basin?

In its previous editorials, *Sustentabilidade em Debate* drew attention to the setbacks in environmental policy: around Trump's skepticism on climate (vol. 8, n.2, 2017) and the disciplining of the use of pesticides (vol. 9, n. 2, 2018).

There are, now, loaded clouds floating above Brazil's environmental policies. When it comes to the Ministry of Environment, its role in the future is an uncertain element. Large landowners' lobby is taking over the effective forest protection regulation, the protection of the rights of indigenous and quilombola communities, and the fulfillment of voluntary international commitments regarding climate change. The academics have the responsibility to warn about the immanent risks of these setbacks present in the political agenda.

Previous environment ministers, that actuated in the governments elected since 1992, have published an alert in the opinion column of the journal *Folha de São Paulo*, on the 22nd of October of 2018[2]. The chosen title "We cannot get off the world: Brazil should stay in Paris Agreement" also translates the fear of setbacks.

It wouldn't be safe to simply discard half century of institutional construction, scientific advances and training specialized professionals. Turnover of power is absolutely normal and foreseeable in democracy. Nevertheless, the short-term dismantling of institutional structures may result in adverse effects that will be hard to fix. We do not talk only about formal consequences, but also, and mainly, about the threats to development sustainability touching all its four dimensions in Brazil: economic, social, cultural and ecological.

SeD takes responsibility and warns its readers: We can't keep taking steps backwards!

In this edition (vol. 9, n. 3, 2018), *Sustentabilidade em Debate* incorporates the relevant stages of its internationalization strategy. Among the eleven articles published in the section *Varia*, three are in English and one in French. We hope that this will make this journal's publications more accessible all over the world, for non-Lusophone readers.

This tendency is common to the main scientific journals, that we now join thanks to the financial support received from the Research Support Foundation of the Federal District (FAP-DF). We can count with nearly 15% of our readers from outside Brazil. The goal is to make this number gradually grow. For this to happen, we rely on the comprehension of those who honor us with the submissions of their articles. During 2019, we will progressively try to reach 100% of publications in English.

Another dimension of *SeD*'s new tendencies for 2019 is that, from January onwards, a fee will be charged for articles' submission. You can find more information about it on the website, in "Authors' Guidelines". We are totally aware of the difficulties that the scientific community faces when it comes to articles' publication funding, but we cannot avoid this fee, since we do not have the means to cover the operating costs of the journal.

"Environmental perceptions, psychological conditions and inhabitants' quality of life in irregular occupation in the mangrove areas in Baixada Santista, SP, Brazil" is the first article of the section *Varia*, written by Nancy Ramacciotti de Oliveira Monteiro and Debora Santos Silva. It is a study that evaluates the perceptions of those living in the referred area, using specific instruments of data collection that will help in the assessment of their quality of life, such as, WHOQOL-bref (World Health Organization Quality of life) and ARS (Adult Self-Report for ages 18-59).

The next two articles will follow the same environment perception line. They offer an analysis about the conception and modification of landscapes. In the article "The perceived landscape in the pulsar of the Sacaí Environmental Complex, Baixo rio Branco, Roraima, Brazil", the authors Thiago Costa Alves, Sandra Noda and Juliane de Souza, focus on the Amazon agroecosystem. The other article, "Geographic reconstruction of a Central-West Brazilian landscape devastated during the first half of the 20th century: Mato Grosso de Goiás", is a publication offered by the authors Carlos Christian Della Giustina, Sandro Dutra e Silva and Eder Martins. It deals with the geographic reconstruction of an area in the Brazilian Cercado.

Wagner de Deus Mateus and Maria Inês Higuchi are the authors of the article "Structural processes of management and conservation of wildlife at risk of extinction: Amazonian cases". They analyze the structure and processes involved in the conservation and management of two Amazonian wildlife

species in danger of extinction: the Harpy Eagle (*Harpia harpyja*) and the yellow-spotted Amazon river turtle (*Podocnemis unifilis*).

The fifth article “Timber extraction and social organization in the Virola-Jatobá Sustainable Development Project, Anapu, Pará: Contrasting perceptions and discourses within an environmentally-sound land reform settlement”, is proposed by Helder Assunção and Roberto Porro. They analyze settlers’ perception of the Sustainable Development Project within the studied area, regarding timber extraction and the benefits derived from this activity.

The next manuscript “Use of benthic macroinvertebrates as bioindicators in an urban stream in Conceição do Araguaia-PA”, was produced by Maria Elisa Queiroz, Alexandre Schäffer, Ana Carolyn Vilela, Danilo Martins and Paulo Henrique da Silva. The authors assess environmental conditions and water quality of an urban stream in the state of Pará. To do so, the authors captured and classified the organisms by the Biological Monitoring Working Party Score System (BMWP) index.

The next article treats of a similar issue but under a different perspective. The authors Natacha Lecours, Johanne Sant-Chareles and Frédéric Mertense Marc Lucotte titled it “Représentations sociales chrétiennes, santé et environnement en Amazonie brésilienne” (“Christian social representations, health and environment in the Brazilian Amazon”). It focuses on understanding why some religious groups get more involved than others with health and environmental issues. For this purpose, the study takes into account social representations from catholic and evangelical groups within coastal communities located in the Brazilian Amazon.

“Environmental fragmentation in the Morro do Diabo State Park (MDSP) in Teorodo Sampaio, SP, Brazil” was written by Marta Aparecida de Moura and Alba Regina Arana. Their article is a qualitative-quantitative study. It offers an historical analysis of the public policies that determined the formation of the territory in the municipality and the environmental impacts caused since the legalization of the MDSP from 1941 to 2006.

Camila Baum and Valter Becegato are the authors of the next article. “The cemetery activity in Brazilian municipalities: Environmental impacts, legal ordinance and future perspectives” describes the environmental impacts resulting from traditional cemetery activity and the legal issues involved. Besides, it presents future possible trends for the destination of the bodies.

This December edition will end with two articles that focus on solid waste. The article “Economic valuation in selective solid waste collection” is offered by Anny Kariny Feitosa, Júlia Elisabete Barden, Odorico Konrad and Manuel Arlindo Matos. This article presents an estimation of the economic valuation of selective solid waste collection in the city of Juazeiro do Norte, Ceará, Northeast of Brazil, through the Contingent Valuation Method. The last one, “The substitution of mineral aggregates by concrete residues in asphalt pavement manufacturing”, is a manuscript written by Gabriela Garcia, Marliton Barreto and Flávio Crispim. It is a feasibility analysis of the use of concrete block waste replacing mineral aggregates in asphalt paving.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue.

Happy New Year!

The Editors