

THE AMBIVALENCE OF DEVELOPMENT AND THE SEARCH FOR NOVEL PATHWAYS TOWARD SUSTAINABILITY

In a broader sense, development, as desired in the project of modernity, can be understood simultaneously as both positive and negative. In spite of being pursued laboriously by nations and global society, development configures itself as anti-ethical. In its perspective of standardizing the world by the occidental bias, in its consequences of marginalizing the poor, and in the full range of side effects and risks which are dealt with, the idea of development can be still seen as an underdevelopment conception. These reflections and criticisms are included in Edgar Morin's last book, published in 2013, and called "The Way to the Future of Mankind"¹. Worth highlighting is the fact that development is not necessarily a reflexive, multidimensional, and naturally self-organizing process.

The (i)rationality of economic growth, even if mitigated by measures such as income distribution and social integration, is not capable of pinpointing and suiting regional peculiarities. Likewise, it does not allow that regional deployments and impacts originated in global pressures are duly palliated. Moreover, the relentless appeal and overvaluation of economic targets, and at the same time, the possibility of meeting social demands (which constitutes itself as a myth) does not enable an integrated vision of the systemic interdependences among sustainability dimensions. At least we should be cautious on ecosystemic limits, social justice, and the very own economic feasibility.

Hence, development is neither able to consider possible side effects, nor unfair global-local nature matters, nor it is capable of contemplating a transgenerational and lasting perspective. Moreover, and according to Morin's thought, we must glimpse the substitution of the fixed idea of development for one able to encompass diverse growths, degrowths, and stabilizations.

A contemporary effort that should be taken into account is the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs – United Nations Development Program, UNDP²). The SDGs are being proposed gathering the positive experience around the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), ending this year. Thus, the SDGs become a post-2015 agenda, with the year 2030 as their horizon, motivated by the final document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, held in 2012 in Brazil. This September, 2015 the United Nations General Assembly is set to approve the final version of the SDGs. Basically, the SDGs are comprised of 17 objectives, subdivided into 169 goals. The first 16 objectives are theme proposals that dialogue among the dimensions of sustainable development (environmental, social, and economic) and its interconnections, and con-

1. Morin E. *A Via para o futuro da humanidade*. Trad. Carvalho EA, Bosco MP. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 2013.

2. Programa das Nações Unidas para o Desenvolvimento – PNUD. Os Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável. Available at: <http://www.pnud.org.br/ODS.aspx>, accessed 23/08/2015.

sidering as well the different national realities, capacities, and development levels. The 17th objective, in turn, features a strategic perspective of strengthening implementation and financing mechanisms, and also aiming to promote the revitalization of a global partnership for sustainable development.

The SDGs are a real challenge, and for this purpose they demand commitment, even for the overcoming of deeply institutionalized development paradigms. Elementary questions such as “where are we?” and “where did we come from?” become relevant to pair up with specific indicators when asking ourselves “where do we want to”. Therefore, not only conditions and trends must be understood; goals should be set in a precise way in accordance to planning and intervention contexts. This should be aimed at harmonizing sustainability dimensions by means of actions that, above all, can foster the dialog among local, regional, and national realities together with global constraints and perspectives.

If we consider, for instance, SDG7 (secure access to affordable, trustful, and sustainable energy), this presupposes an integration process by means of energy provision. However, this offer must be linked to ecosystem thresholds by prudent and workable costs. There is no need of stating that worldwide energy consumption is unequal, revealing deep iniquities. Likewise, energy obtainment is highly associated to the use of non-renewable sources. This has been marking the current global climate change crisis and given space for the debate about the use of fossil fuel and its contribution to global warming.

The settling of this subject is no simple at all, and it reveals forces and stakes associated to a development paradigm based on the use of non-renewable natural resources. Just as well, this 2015 we shall witness a significant event regarding the implementation of new principles in the search for sustainable energies, at the Conference of the Parts (COP21), to be held in Paris, France, by the members of the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC). After continuous disappointments, when little was progressed on greenhouse gases reduction goals, an emergence of leaderships for more positive outcomes is expected.

We observe that as from 2014, China, second largest economy, has been disseminating some encouraging figures, in spite of its strong search for economic growth and social integration. Examples are the use of better quality coal in its thermoelectric plants, capable of cutting greenhouse gases emission; also, the significant increase in solar energy capacity. It is challenging to overcome the ambitious search for industrialization and economic growth within the reproduction model of the conventional developmental paradigm that threatens the environmental dimension and is insufficient to promote social justice.

On the other side, probably in a positive competition for leadership as for global climate change policies, we see Barak Obama, president of the United States of America, announcing the goal of national reduction of electric energy coming from coal burning. Obama does not count with a majority in the national congress, therefore for this reduction he intends to show that these stations release atmospheric pollutants that are detrimental to the health of the North-American population. Evidently, in the U.S.A., and globally, there are forces lobbying against emission reduction of greenhouse gases, among other issues. Overcoming the development model standardized by the U.S.A. also becomes a challenge.

It is not easy at all to reconcile the sustainable development dimensions, overcoming the prevailing development logic of wealth production biased with corporate interest and capital hegemony. However, the search for new alternatives for sustainability requires many innovations, efforts, reflections, knowledge production, and governance capable of transcending territorial scales under the orientation of a new planetary ethics.

In this volume of *Ambiente & Sociedade*, we present articles that bring innovation, criticism, environmental perception studies, global-local relationship situations, and studies about access to essential services that, by the way, dialogue directly with sustainability.

Basing themselves on a documental research, the article “A great opportunity: the unions and their greening projects of Family Farming”, from authors Everton Lazzaretti Picolotto and Alfio Brandenburg, analyses how environmental topics have influenced political projects and the setting of a specific agenda within the family agriculture trade union.

Author Antonio Teixeira de Barros analyses the social-media representations of the rural environment in Brazil and Portugal, from two specific points of view: the degraded rural, and the idealized rural. The article is entitled “The rural media representations: comparative analysis of Brazil – Portugal”. The study was conducted based on a systematic revision of academic publications about environmental media coverage, ecological ideas history, communication sociology, and environmental social sciences.

The article “Mariculture and economic, social and environmental bases that determine development and sustainability”, by authors Leandro Angelo Pereira and Rosana Moreira da Rocha, disserts on the origin of mariculture as an alternative for the economic development of coastal communities, interacting with the environment where they are inserted.

Authors Gabriela Litre and Marcel Bursztyn analyse, by means of interviews with family cattle breeders from Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay, the perceptions and adaptation strategies of these workers in the face of climatic and social-economic risks at the Pampa. Read more in the article “Climatic and socio-economic risks perceptions and adaptation strategies among livestock Family farmers in the Pampa biome”.

The article “Food activism: The locavorism perspective”, by author Elaine de Azevedo, presents a conceptual study about local consumption as promoting strategy of family agriculture, tackling the social-environmental and economic dimensions in discussions about local products quality and risks, in addition to the relationships between this movement with Vegetarianism and Feminism.

Through a comparison study, authors Gesinaldo de Ataíde Cândido, Mariana Moura Nóbrega, Marília Taynah Martins de Figueiredo and Mônica Maria Souto Maior analyse two evaluation methods of agroecosystem sustainability: IDEA and MESMIS, by means of criteria such as: sustainability concept, goals, target audience, flexibility, adaptability, systemic approach, and stakeholder engagement. Check out the article “Sustainability assessment of agroecological production units: a comparative study of IDEA and MESMIS methods”.

In the article “From soil conservation to land husbandry: an ethical-affective proposal of soil use”, authors Isaías Tobasura Acuña, Franco Humberto Obando Moncayo,

Fred Alberto Moreno Chavez, Carmen Soledad Morales Londoño and María Henao Castaño discuss the affectivity relationships of traditional populations with their land, under the perspective of local culture, and from the contrast between the visions of rural producers and preservationists.

Aiming to demonstrate the feasibility of the implementation of environmental systematic monitoring, using the hydrographic basin as municipal planning unit, authors Zulma Schussel and Paulo Nascimento Neto evaluate the experience of the municipal government of Rio Negro – Paraná State in the article “Urban planning based on watersheds: From theoretical debate to municipal management”.

Authors Adriana Lustosa da Costa and Frédéric Mertens analyse the capacity of the Water Resources National Council (CNRH) Plenary to constitute itself as a water governance arena, in the context of networks and social capital movement, and in reach of the Water Resources National Policy (PNRH) goals; the article is entitled “Governance, networks and social capital in the plenary of the Brazilian National Council on Water Resources”.

The article “Exploratory analysis of potential effects of climatic change in the “Vales da Uva Goethe” explores the impacts derived from climate changes occurring in viticulture regions. For this purpose, authors Adriana Carvalho Pinto Vieira, Junior Ruiz Garcia and Kelly Lissandra Bruch evaluated regional climate data and local producers’ narrative.

The article “A historical perspective of early water policy and water and sanitation policy in Brazil” assesses how national social-economic and political development resulted in global power structures. To achieve this, authors Ney Albert Murtha, José Esteban Castro and Léo Heller appealed to classic experts such as Celso Furtado and Caio Prado Júnior to discuss how sanitation policies developed in favor of regulating water use and privileging hydropower generation.

Authors Teresa Da-Silva-Rosa, Marcos Barreto Mendonça, Túlio Gava Monteiro, Ricardo Matos de Souza and Rejane Lucena write about how environmental education can contribute to environmental disasters reduction by collaborating in citizenship capacity building, from the understanding of the risk situation under which vulnerable populations live. Read more in the article “Environmental education as a strategy for reduction of socio-environmental risks”.

The article “Contributions toward a municipal approach to water footprint: case study in a São Paulo State Coastal City” aimed to foster the establishment of a municipal approach for Water Footprint, with Caraguatatuba / São Paulo state as a case study. For this purpose, authors Bruna Vieira and Wilson Sousa Junior considered water footprints of the urban water network, the sewage production, livestock, and rural water usage.

Looking to evaluate the consequences of public offering of Minas Gerais Sanitation Company stock for the water and sewage sector, authors Thiago Guedes de Oliveira and Sonaly Cristina Rezende Borges de Lima used indicator analysis and the reflections extracted from their interviews with managers, technicians, and specialists, and crystalized it in their article “The privatization of state water supply and sanitation companies: an analysis based on the experience of the State of Minas Gerais”.

Finally, author Aline Carvalho presents her review on the book “Governança ambiental no Brasil – entre o socioambientalismo e a economia verde”, by authors Fábio de Castro and Célia Fudemma, 2015.

Ambiente & Sociedade editors and collaborators wish you all a pleasant reading.

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