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# Water: An Urgent Matter for Brazil

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Brazil is one of the most biodiverse countries of the world (UNEP, 2019), but is going through a serious environmental imbalance, motivated by the current institutional crisis of the Ministry of the Environment (MMA, by its acronym in Portuguese), which has resulted in the reduction of Councils and decision-making bodies of the Ministry, discourses of denial of environmental policies relevance, breakdown of tools and environmental policies (CAPELARI et al., 2020). This is an unprecedented movement that jeopardizes natural resources preservation, wild fauna and flora and the planet.

Ferrante et al. (2020) highlight that the current government policies have favored an increase in fires and deforestation in Brazil, and at the same time encouraged non-compliance with environmental laws due to deliberate impunity. Likewise, data from the National Institute for Space Research (INPE by its acronym in Portuguese) indicates that the Brazilian Amazon has registered the highest deforestation rates during the last years (INPE, 2021).

It is important to emphasize that the ecosystem services of the Amazon benefit not only nature, but also human life. That is, they are not just an environmental guideline, but a civilizing agenda that will offer the conditions for future generations to enjoy a healthy planet. This region ecosystem services include the maintenance of carbon stocks and, at the same time, regulate the hydrologic systems (CLEC'H et al. 2016).

In this scenario, water scarcity is one of the main challenges to make long-term plans for different regions of Brazil. Water is an essential resource for agriculture, industrial activities, energy generation and perpetuity of the human species. There is no life without water. Despite its tremendous significance, several government actors neglect their responsibilities to achieve environmental preservation.

Environmental quality and water preservation are also responsibilities of States and Municipalities. Braz and Longo (2021) explain that in cities we find more widespread environmental problems, whether it be a high level of water, soil, or air pollution. In this way, subnational governments must create sustainability plans, based on long-term guidelines and built on participatory and collaborative processes with the aim of preserving the environment. (CONTI et al., 2019).

It is essential that local governments face the water problem as a problem that requires a systemic approach and most of the times joint actions on a metropolitan scale, with the creation metropolitan governance structures for the deliberation and management of water, as it is explained in the study by Jacobi, Buckeridge and Ribeiro (2021).

When it comes to challenges, one of the biggest obstacles of Brazilian national and subnational governments to preserve water is related to the lack of basic sanitation. Although water is a right established by the Federal Constitution, almost 35 million Brazilian citizens do not have access to clean water and a 100 million people do not have wastewater collection services in the country (BORELLI, 2020). The lack of wastewater treatment consequently provokes contamination of rivers and streams, making the Brazilian socio-environmental crisis even more dramatic.

The preservation of the environment and the universalization of basic sanitation are important variables for public health and social welfare (BOVOLATO, 2010). In

this sense, the importance of water became even more evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, since it is a paramount element for hand hygiene and, thus, prevents infections caused by the new coronavirus.

Despite this scenario, the federal government, especially, has created guidelines that are far from solving the main Brazilian socio-environmental problems, making it necessary more than ever to include the participation of Civil Society Organizations, Social Movements, and the Academia in the construction of solutions and in the development of studies that provide technical-scientific knowledge to face this crisis.

The production of scientific knowledge is key in a moment of misinformation, acting as an important foundation for decision-making, as well as for the development of public policies. Thus, we present in this session two articles that were awarded in the International Workshop entitled: *II Sustentare e V WIPIS - Workshop Internacional sobre Indicadores de Sustentabilidade*, which provide an important discussion on water.

The article **Benchmarking as a management tool to reduce non-revenue water** by Luis Otávio do Amaral Marques, Rafael Santos Carvalho, Marcelo Otani Marques de Sa and Tadeu Fabrício Malheiros, is about the benefits of reducing losses in water supply systems, including the universalization of sanitation services. The aim of the study was to gather information on the benchmarking application models, as well as to compare the performance between the countries where these models were applied or not in the field of water loss control, pointing out strategies to improve the performance of water supply systems and sustainable development.

Lavorato (2004) explains that environmental benchmarking is an important tool for the technical-managerial improvement of environmental management, used as an instrument for continuous improvement and quality increase for organizations. That being so, benchmarking helps to propose goals and discover methods and processes that can facilitate sustainable development.

On the other hand, the second article entitled: **Sustainability Assessment of Sanitation Indicators in the PCJ Watersheds 2020-2035 Plan**, by João Miguel Mercês Bega, André do Vale Borges, Cesar Ambrogi Ferreira do Lago, Jakeline Pertile Mendes, Paulo de Tarso de Azevedo, Wellington José Rocha dos Santos, and Duarcides Ferreira Mariosa, presents several variables that make up the water sustainability process, as well as the use of indicators as measurement instruments to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 6 “Clean Water and Sanitation” of the 2030 Agenda. In this way, the objective of the study was to analyze the rates of wastewater and treated wastewater present in the Water Resources Plan of the Hydrographic Basins of the Piracicaba, Capivari and Jundiaí rivers (PCJ).

The use of indicators in environmental planning is essential to make effective decisions and take actions based on objective data, and simplify, clarify, and make available aggregate information to policy makers, improving the quality of life and public services (RIBEIRO et al., 2019).

Water is a fundamental issue for Brazil and an urgent matter for human well-being and the preservation of nature, and it should be seen as a resource directly related to the sustainability of society (JACOBI; BUCKERIDGE; RIBEIRO, 2021). The relationship

between environment and health is permeated by providing better living conditions for the population. Human health cannot be protected without environmental preservation and quality, and the environment cannot be preserved without well-being and social balance (ALMEIDA; COTA; RODRIGUES, 2020).

In conclusion, sustainability is a multifaceted phenomenon and requires an interdisciplinary construction to create systemic actions to face historical and complex problems (CONTI, 2020; DE BENEDICTO et al. 2020). Thus, Municipalities, States, and the Federal Government should treat it as a priority, in order to provide living and development conditions for current and future generations.

Enjoy your reading!

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