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Decolonial insurgencies for new ecological horizons

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Editorial

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Research meetings are privileged spaces for exchanging experiences, knowledge, and thoughts. Amid the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in our society, not to mention the personal tragedies, the dimension of scientific knowledge was also deeply changed. In this special political ecology issue, we offer a clipping from a pre-pandemic moment that shows how fruitful research meetings can be. We already knew at the beginning of 2019, when the III Latin American Congress of Political Ecology was held, that the context was one of extreme urgency. At that moment, there was a strong demand for the construction of a space for encounters and convergence that reached beyond the departments, disciplines, and traditions of academia. There was also an emerging possibility: the path toward decolonization of knowledge opened by different Brazilian universities over the last decades. And in this moment of urgency and innovation, it was possible to host and involve scholars, social movements and socio-environmental activists in a meeting marked by the two sides of political ecology: as a field of research and as a community of practices. The theme of the meeting was “Decolonial Insurgencies and Emancipatory Horizons”, and it already reflected Latin America’s turbulent moment. Since then, this moment has been accentuated by the health crisis and the emergence of authoritarian governments, reflected in the acceleration of extractivist policies, the re-frontierization and invasions of protected areas and indigenous lands, the denationalization of natural resources, as well as a profound reactionary turn coupled with setbacks in fundamental socio-environmental rights.

Organized by the Institute of Humanities, Arts and Sciences Professor Milton Santos, of the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), with the support of CLACSO’s Working Group on Political Ecology(s) *Desde El Sur /Abya Yala*, the Congress involved a network of collaborations with several Brazilian universities: the Federal University of Recôncavo da Bahia (UFRB), the University for International Integration of the Afro-Brazilian Lusophony (UNILAB), the Federal University of ABC (UFABC), the Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP), Chilean universities, the Catholic University of the North and the University of Chile, and social movements, with representatives of the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB), the Movement of Artisanal Fishermen and Fishermen (MPP), the Movement for Popular Sovereignty in Mining (MAM), the National Council of Extractivist Populations (CNS) the National Coordination of Articulation of Black Rural Quilombola Communities (CONAQ). It was sponsored and financed by the research promotion agencies CAPES and CNPQ and supported by the Rosa Luxemburgo Foundation, the Ecumenical Coordination of Service (CESI), SINASEF-IFBA, among other independent supporters.

The event was a catalyst of articulation and formation of resistance networks around urgent socio-environmental issues, with significant national and international participation. In a meeting of environmental defenders, in dialogues and round tables on mining, on ecofeminism and on the right of traditional populations to say no to megaprojects of extraction, it was possible to promote the exchange of thoughts and experiences between community leaders, popular environmentalists, university researchers and organic intellectuals. This facilitated the diffusion of political ecology as a relevant analytical tool among intellectuals and social movement leaders, and fostered reflection about political

ecologies for the construction of new vocabularies, theoretical tools for analysis and strategies for action.

Congresses and conferences promote encounters, and those encounters generate mid- and long-term effects that echo far beyond the event. The **Featured Topic** in this issue brings back memories of those encounters, especially through round table narratives and dialogue rounds that took place, as well as articles commissioned from speakers who stood out and whose thoughts opened new paths of investigation. The meetings also created spaces to share research findings that are included in this edition as theme-specific articles. This wide range of theories, thoughts and case studies reveals, as already announced in the Congress, that political ecology as a field has garnered attention and helped confront injustices and inequality in Brazil and across Latin America, in defense of life (in a broad sense) in the territories. Thus, the proposal of this Featured Topic, building on political ecology and the Congress experiences, is precisely to be a space for the diffusion of some of these reflections and practices. In the version we now present to readers, the issue includes two articles by guest authors, one article by the organizers, six articles and four narrative memoir pieces with reflections from the round tables that took place during the Congress.

At the time of publication of this featured topic, two and a half years have passed since the Congress took place. The political and environmental context, which was already a state of emergency at the time, has become even more severe in many respects. A serious worldwide public health crisis caused by the pandemic of COVID 19 took over, governments with authoritarian inclinations gained traction, denialism became more widespread and several disasters and socio-ecological events make it clear that we are indeed living in a moment of environmental collapse. One of the core aspects of this context is that, although these dynamics continue to have particularly violent expressions in Latin America, their connection to the international dimension is something we could not fail to address. Therefore, we open this volume with the article **“Between crises and insurgencies: the political ecology in defense of shared living”**, written by the organizers *Vanessa Lucena Empinotti, Sue A. S. Yamamoto, Isabella Lamas and Felipe Milanez*, offering a review of some theoretical paths of political ecology in recent years, pointing to possible contributions by this field of studies and to practices that may help confront the multiple crises we are living through.

The four narrative memoirs are accounts of ecological struggles in which orality is incorporated as a form of transmission of experiences. For their storytelling nature, they differ significantly from the usual academic paper format, and incorporating them in this Featured Topic is also a way of reflecting about forms of knowledge, about the ecology of knowledge and its practices, as well as understandings of life and relationships with nature that go far beyond what is deemed valid by hegemonic scientific thinking (although we always remember that science itself is a field in dispute). **“Chico Mendes Lives: Amazon women in defense of life”** is a vibrant writing experience by four women warriors of the Amazon: *Angela Mendes, Claudelice Santos, Edel Moraes, and Sônia Guajajara*, sharing reflections about their lives fighting for the commons and about the enduring legacy of

Chico Mendes, a rubber tapper and great environmental advocate assassinated for defending shared living with the forest. **“Ecofeminist Horizons”** is the meeting of *Bernadete Ferreira, Ivonne Yanex, and Stefania Barca*, organized by *Isabella Lamas*, and is an account of the experiences of environmentalist and feminist women, of emancipatory horizons and the agency of women in environmental and popular struggles around the world. In **“The right to say no: extractivisms and territorial struggles”**, environmental activists and leaders of resistance movements against extractive projects in Latin American territories of Peru, Brazil and Mexico, *Antonia Melo, Kum’Tum Akroa Gamella, Alessandra Korap Munduruku, Antenor Vaz, and Joelson Ferreira*, organized by *Felipe Milanex and Spensy Pimentel*, share the construction of alternative paths to enforce the right to say no in the face of the ineffectiveness of the formal processes of prior consultation, and the exercise of sovereignty and autonomy of the communities in their living territories. Finally, **“The crimes of mining companies and the popular struggle towards mining”** gathers the visions and experiences born from resistance movements against extractive projects led by activists in the struggle for popular sovereignty in mining, by *Tádzio Peters Coelho, Magno Luiz Costa Oliveira, Raquel Neyra, Camila Mudrek, Charles Trocate, and Carolina de Moura Campos*, offers reflections about the mining model and the major socioenvironmental crimes associated with it, such as those of Mariana, Barcarena, and Brumadinho, which threaten the integrity of the planet and human life.

The article **“Participatory Land Governance in Mozambique: Brief Review of the Legal Framework and the Implementation Challenge”**, written by the Mozambican environmental lawyer *Alda Salomão*, shows us how Mozambique, despite having a progressive model of land governance that provides for participatory mechanisms, does not implement it in practice, which leads to the disregard of the rights of communities. The complexity of the interaction between the state, the local population, and private investors often leads to conflict. Due to the similarities of the challenges faced, this case highlights the bridges of dialogue between Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa and, consequently, how forms of resistance today have the Global South as an important axis of articulation. *Beatriz Macchione Saes, Daniela Del Bene, Raquel Neyra, Lucrecia Wagner and Joan Martínez-Alier*, in their article **“Environmental justice and corporate social irresponsibility: the case of the mining company Vale S.A”**, present an original thematic conflict map of the mining company Vale, aimed at “shedding light on environmental injustices produced by large corporations whose disproportionate power in relation to other actors may prevent due accountability for the injustices imposed”. The survey is part of the project Ejatlas.org – Global Atlas of Environmental Justice, which documents and catalogs the stories of communities around the world fighting for environmental justice. The subject of environmental justice itself is an essential part of the studies conducted for the political ecologies of large corporations.

Environmental conflict emerges from extractive activities led by large corporations with a history of rights violations, but also by those disguised as green solutions to capitalism problems, as examined in the article **“Accumulation by dispossession and green grabbing: wind farms, lease agreements, land appropriation in the Brazilian semi-arid”**, in which *Mariana Traldi* presents the contradictions of the energy model offered

as an alternative to fossil fuels. In the same vein, the article “**Technoscientific reports, nuclearity and uranium production in Caetité/BA as a public issue**”, by *Israel de Jesus Rocha*, deals with the seriousness of uranium contamination, and the struggles of the movements for information.

This Featured Topic also presents exchanges between different experiences of political ecology as in the article “**Subaltern ecologies in southern Italy**”, by *Roberto Sciarrelli*, who discusses encounters between decolonial thinking and the struggles of subalternized populations in Southern Italy. As well as the article “**Decolonizing hegemonic approaches of water: exploring Latin American proposals for communality and community**”, by *Denisse Roca-Servant, Juan David Arias-Henao and María Botero-Mesa* that, from case studies in Colombia, offers a critical perspective to the hegemonic vision of water and a counterproposal for water from the commons.

A striking feature of Latin American political ecology is its deep relationship with environmental history, and two articles in this Featured Topic explore this theme in innovative ways, building bridges with both paleontology and archaeology. In “**Paleontology and Environmental Justice: making connections through Political Ecology**”, authors *Camila Neves Alves and Angélica Cosenza* analyze environmental conflicts in paleontological sites and the struggle of populations for their (paleo)territories.

“**Plunder and resistance in traditionally occupied territories of the Tapajós and Trombetas basins, Pará state, Brazilian Amazonia**”, written by *Bruna Cigaran da Rocha, Diego Amoedo Martínez, Hugo Gravina Affonso, Susan Aragon, Vinicius Honorato de Oliveira, and Ricardo Scoles*, establishes relationships between post-developmental thinking and the struggle of Amazon populations in defense of traditionally occupied territories in the Tapajós and Trombetas basins.

We have rounded up in this Featured Topic some memories, theoretical notes, and research contributions from a field that is in expansion during a tragic and challenging situation. In the encounters between research and activism, political ecologies can also make contributions, amid the setbacks in human and environmental rights and the acceleration of ecological devastation, to denounce oppressions and injustices, and to make insurgencies visible, as well as to point out alternatives and mobilize hope for the construction of projects for collective, shared, common futures and new ecological perspectives.

With this instigating and encouraging reflection, we close our 2021 Featured Topic and present the other sections that are part of this latest delivery by *Ambiente & Sociedade*.

This editorial could not close without mentioning the recent report by the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) WG1 released in August 2021, which shows very worrying data on living conditions on the planet, and provides a more up-to-date physical understanding of the climatic system. The report presented is comprehensive, and based on the systematic analysis of more than 14 thousand studies. The data analysis from a historical perspective allows us to unequivocally state that the greenhouse gases produced by humans have caused unprecedented rates of global warming. This warming is manifested by increasing extreme weather conditions, and some of these events would

be unlikely to happen without climate change.

This scenario of accentuated climate change, which has been called Climate Emergency, characterizes a new reality, as a growing number of scientists, media, governments and civil society organizations emphasize the need to recognize that the climate reality demands answers much more robust to halve emissions by the end of this decade and reduce emissions to net zero by mid-century. It is about moving forward at COP 26 towards policy responses that confront the fossil fuel industry sector that for many years has delayed the shift towards a consistent and continued process of decarbonization, which implies the rapid and sustainable expansion of renewable energy and approaches of carbon removal.

After this brief consideration, we present below the articles of the **Special Issue Energy Territories**. In this last delivery, the article: **Stakeholder participation in the formulation of Brazilian biofuel policy (RenovaBio)**, by the authors *Lira Luz Benites Lazaro and Lais Forti Thomaz*, identifies the participation of stakeholders and the efforts of interest groups in sending technical notes. The results of the study show the predominant participation of associations and companies more linked to the energy and biofuels sector. The author *Ana Lía Guerrero*, in the article: **Geopolitics of the Global Energy Transformation and Territorial Dynamics of the Energy Transition in South America**, analyzes the context of the energy transition and concludes that on a global scale the trend is towards decarbonization through actions of States, of society and companies. At the South American regional scale, the energy transition is more complex.

Also closing our **Original Articles** section, the author *Kátia Paulino dos Santos* identified the need to restructure the management of the Solidarity Economy promotion policy by government agencies, which act in isolation and without effective communication with each other, harming quality and quantity of services offered. In the article: **The women of castanha do Alto Cajari: Empowerment by the Solidarity Economy**.

In the article: **Management of agricultural pesticide packaging in the Piauí Cerrado**, the authors *Miguel Antônio Rodrigues, João Batista Lopes and Elaine Aparecida da Silva* conducted interviews with representatives of the production chain's agents in four municipalities that produce the most soy in Piauí, and found that there are still flaws in the inspection mechanisms of the public authorities with the production units that make daily use of pesticides.

Authors *Danilo Rothberg and Joanne Garde-Hansen*, in **Improving water governance in Brazil: an organizational memory approach**, sought to preserve the narratives and histories of the participation of various social, economic and political actors in the Alto Tietê River Basin Committee (São Paulo). The interviews pointed to the need to clarify the roles of the committee and its members in society, in order to strengthen authority and legitimacy.

Author *Astrid Meilasari-Sugiana*, in the article: **Industrial Wastewater Management in Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Direction to Control Industrial Pollution**, analyzed the adequacy of institutional rules and the effectiveness of tools in managing industrial wastewater discharges. The results suggest an overemphasis on prescriptive measures, a

lack of adequate coordination mechanisms, and a lack of effective policy instruments for control.

The article: **Law of Origin Integrator of Premodern-Modern production practices in Kankuamo territory of Colombia**, by authors *Yanine Rozo Leguizamón, Diego Armando Ospina Cortés, Adriana Tofiño Rivera and Antonio José López López*, contributes to the identification of productive, ancestral and innovative practices, identifying points of intersection in social, cultural, agro-environmental, political and economic activities.

Following the environmental licensing of Logistics Center 'Campo Grande', in Paranapiacaba - São Paulo - Brasil, the authors *Virgínia Hamer Campagnaro, Luciana Aparecida Farias and Giovano Candiani* identified that the social representations of the environment of the actors involved were globalizing, for civil society, and anthropocentric, for the entrepreneur. In the article: **Socio-environmental Conflicts: a study on the Logistics Center in Paranapiacaba and involved Social Representations**.

The authors *Wallan Azevedo dos Santos, Milton Erthal Junior and Renato Gomes Sobral Barcellos*, in the article: **Biocapacity of Brazilian biomes using Emergy Ecological Footprint concepts**, simulate two biomes' biocapacity (BC) scenarios: optimistic (with 100% forest cover) and pessimistic (only 10%). They conclude that the Amazon would reduce its contribution by 88% in a pessimistic scenario and the Atlantic Forest would contribute only 1.9%, however, in an optimistic scenario, it would increase by 690%.

Through qualitative research and a questionnaire applied to rural producers, the authors *Adriane Furlan Alves Ferreira and Eduardo Cyrino Oliveira-Filho* show that there is an absence of motivation to pay for the use of water resources, and that this position can be changed if the State intervenes in meeting both the demands for information and the questions raised. In the article: **Perceptions and willingness of Brazilian Federal District farmers regarding payment for use of water resources**.

The authors *Martha Isabel Mejía De Alba, Oscar Javier Obando Rodríguez, Laura Patricia Osorio Osorio and Ivonne Dayana Vargas Pinilla*, in the article: **Preliminary valuation of the environmental importance of Brazilian sites, with regards to ecological and sociocultural axes**, selected sites that presented geographic or proximity between protected areas and ethnic communities to be evaluated according to criteria of ecological and sociocultural importance. As a result, 1651 sites were identified and 249 were evaluated, resulting in 14 with high priority, 91 with medium and 144 with low.

The article: **Salty Port: Environmental conflicts resulting from the Açu port, Rio de Janeiro state, Brazil**, by the authors *Rodrigo Machado Vilani, Jose Luis Vianna da Cruz and Marcos A. Pedlowski*, analyzes the dynamics of coexistence between different actors in the environmental conflict caused by the salinization of surface water and underground water during the construction of Porto do Açu. The results demonstrate the importance of a transparent and participatory decision-making process.

The authors *Luciano Félix Florit and Carlos Alberto Cioce Sampaio* carried out a research based on the analysis of documents from two cases of the regionalization process in the state of Santa Catarina (Brazil). They concluded that within development planning it is necessary to recognize legitimate moral limits to the use of landscapes and

living beings. In the article: **Regional Social-environmental Ethics as an approach to Regional Development**.

The authors *Stella Verdasca and Victor Eduardo Lima Ranieri*, in the article: **Benefits and barriers of public transparency in the Rural Environmental Registry data**, identified that the main problem in providing information on conservation on private land was the owners' fear of the use of the declared information, while the main benefit was the contribution to the effectiveness of conservation programs.

In the article: **Environmental Assessment of the UHE Tijuco Alto Hydropower Plant: the change of the dominant order**, the authors *Amanda dos Santos Sousa and Paulo Santos de Almeida* concluded that the strategic actions of the Movement of Threatened by Dams in the Vale do Ribeira were fundamental for the visibility of the rationality of local communities and changing the dominant order in the release of projects that violate human rights.

The authors: *Amarilis Lucia Casteli Figueiredo Gallardo, Débora Mendonça Monteiro Machado and Cláudia Terezinha Kniess*, in the article **Strategic Environmental Assessment in Brazilian Academic Research**, reveal that, although under development, SEA research is characterized by a broad diagnosis of local application, contributions to a Brazilian system, little methodological discussion, and analysis of the quality of reports. They recommend that future research be directed towards building a legal framework.

The authors *Raquel Henrique and Maria Angélica Toniolo* demonstrated that the Environmental Protection Area as a territorial planning instrument promotes conservation, but it is not free from threats and does not have effective means to promote socioeconomic development. In the article: **Territorial Planning and Sustainable Development: A Case Study from the APA São Francisco Xavier-SP**.

The authors *Luíza Helena Pedra da Silva, Fabiane Nepomuceno Costa and Nadja Maria Gomes Murta*, in the article **“Not just useless bush”: food culture and spontaneous plants in the Jequitinhonha Valley, Minas Gerais/Brazil**, found that the food social space is managed by female work and has a strong territorial ties. The identified plants play a symbolic role, in addition to nutritional, and are important in food culture.

In the article: **The goals of the National Biodiesel Program: between planning and implementation**, the author *Gean Claudio de Souza Santana* demonstrates that the expectations of improvement in living conditions in rural areas, due to the implementation of the National Biodiesel Program, were frustrated: there was job losses in agricultural occupations, continued rural exodus, increased land concentration and a reduction in the number of family farmers.

Finally, to close this editorial, we present our **Reviews** section, with the text **How do community response from global south contribute to climate justice and resilience debate?**, by the author *Fabiana Barbi*, who talks about the work “Towards a just climate change resilience: Developing resilient, anticipatory and even community response”, organized by Pedro HC Torres and Pedro R. Jacobi, and states that the greatest lesson learned from it is that communities and multi-stakeholder coalitions are essential to reducing the inequities and inequities inherent in anthropogenic climate change.

Thus, we close **Volume 24 of the Revista Ambiente & Sociedade**. As always, we thank the entire editorial team, reviewers, authors and our dear readers, for their constant support of our work. Despite the adverse scenario, which includes the federal government's recent announcement of budget cuts for Brazilian science, the journal *Ambiente & Sociedade* has been making efforts to expand its reach and projection outside Brazil, especially within the Latin American, with the objective of strengthening scientific development in the region. For this, we renew our commitment for the coming year to continue promoting and disseminating the development of science, with quality and competence. We wish you all a good read!

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