

## EDITORIAL

2013 was a year of important achievements for **Environment & Society** which is now published on a quarterly basis and in a bilingual format. The journal encompasses a wider range of topics and remains highly relevant in the context of interdisciplinary socio-environmental issues. In this context we are pleased to present the first edition of 2014, number 17-1.

Once again, the topics covered here address current dilemmas. In Brazil, the start of 2014 has seen many regions affected by prolonged dry periods, amounting to the longest drought in six decades, particularly affecting São Paulo, one of the largest metropolises on the planet with a population of over 20 million. The system which supplies 45% of the metropolitan region's water is operating at less than 20% capacity. The situation could not be more different in the North region where the Madeira River rose to a historical high point of 18 metres above its normal level, essentially cutting off the state of Acre.

If we look around the planet, since January 2014 we have seen a whole series of extreme events in Europe, the USA and South East Asia. Could we have forecast these events? Perhaps not directly. On the other hand, we have been constantly warned by experts about the possibility of extreme events occurring as a result of the effects of climate change. However, the methodologies employed in their studies have not been successful in responding to problems on a regional level, making it difficult to predict localized events. What is beyond question is the variability in rain patterns, one of the consequences predicted by climate change models.

This flags up the gulf that exists between the production of knowledge concerning current socio-environmental problems - fraught as it is with uncertainties - and how this knowledge is transmitted to and used in decision-making processes, whether political, economic or social.

With the aim of increasingly drawing together the scientific research of the different actors involved, in a process of understanding and searching for alternatives to socio-environmental problems and their inherent risks, **Environment & Society** presents nine articles in this edition, written by both Brazilian and international authors. The topics covered are of crucial importance to the dilemmas society faces today and include the reuse of water, sustainability, environmental education, socio-environmental conflicts, ecology, environmental management tools and risk awareness.

In the first article, "Sustainability and sustainable development: a taxonomy in the field of literature", the authors Simone Sartori, Fernanda Latrônico and Lucila M.S. Campos present the results of a literature review concerning the issue of sustainability. Covering the period from 1984 to 2012 they identify the main topics, types of approach, gaps and challenges for future research.

Another feature of this edition is the topic of environmental education. In “The political-pedagogical macro-trends in Brazilian environmental education”, Philippe Pommier Layrargues and Gustavo Ferreira da Costa Lima consider Political Ecology theories and Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of Social Field, presenting three macro-trends vying for symbolic and objective hegemony in the field of Environmental Education in Brazil: conservationist, pragmatic and critical.

In the article “From opposition to emancipation: an analysis of environmental conflicts from below”, “From opposition to emancipation: an analysis of environmental conflicts ‘from below’”, Alice Poma seeks to understand the cultural processes which lead to changes in beliefs and attitudes, showing that environmental conflicts are important experiences of emancipation.

Silvia Helena Zanirato and Beatriz Ramalho Ziober, in their article “Actions to safeguard biodiversity during the building of the *Itaipu Binacional hydroelectric plant*”, reveal some of the consequences of this venture, such as a loss of biodiversity, the transformation in the dynamic of the river, the destruction and fragmentation of habitats and the loss of the scenic Sete Quedas landscape. The article analyzes the guidelines drawn up by the company responsible for the project under a developmentist context. This document steered the establishment of local flora and fauna inventories.

Camila Ferreira Pinto das Neves and Gionara Tauchen, in “Ecology Graduate Courses in Brazil: paradigmatic approaches”, show that the theme of Ecology has diversified and grown since the end of the 19th century and this is clearly reflected in pedagogical proposals on graduation level courses in Ecology. Each course is analysed as an expression of the thoughts and actions of a particular scientific community, influencing the development of professional conceptions and research contexts and forms.

“Social discourses in environmental issues: Water and mining in the centre-west region of Argentina” by Lucrecia Soledad Wagner, Leticia Saldi and Diego Escolar sets out to investigate representations of nature, culture and society as they are expressed in documents proposing environmental policies for large scale mining and water distribution in the province of Mendoza, Argentina. The study also analyzes the actual participation of different local resident groups in drawing up and implementing these policies.

Jessica Santos da Silva and Victor Eduardo Lima Ranieri, in “The legal reserve areas compensation mechanism and its economic and environmental implications”, analyze the criteria used for this compensation mechanism, pointing to ways of ensuring that economic interests do not prevail over the environmental benefits expected to result from this management tool.

Finally, Joao Sganderla Figueiredo, Cátia Aguiar Lenz and Margarete Fagundes Nunes, in their article “Considering risk theories in relation to a case study in the south of Brazil”, address the topic of the perception of environmental risk, by means of a theoretical revision and analysis of the statements of different actors in the Vale do Rio dos Sinos, in the context of the tanning industry in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. The authors recognize that despite the fact that the perception of risks is inherent to the social, historical and cultural development of the local community, the dynamic of industrialization

as a basis for progress means that these risks are, in part, denied or silenced by economic dependence (employment and income) on the industrial sector.

We would like to take this opportunity to say that **Environment & Society** will publish a special edition in the final quarter of 2014 (17-4) on the issue of *Natural and Socio-environmental Disasters*. In this context, the main question to be addressed relates to the capacity and means available to societies to prevent disasters, taking into account the huge differences between countries or the inequalities within particular societies. This special edition will be organized by our editor, Pedro Roberto Jacobi, in collaboration with professors and experts in this area, including Prof. Antonio Aledo Tur, connected to the *Instituto Universitario de Investigaciones Turísticas da Universidade de Alicante* [University Institute for Tourism Research, University of Alicante] (Spain), and Prof. Jeroen Warner, connected to the Disasters Studies Group at the University of Wageningen (Holland). Contributions from researchers in Portuguese, Spanish and English with a conceptual and/or empirical focus will be accepted. The deadline for sending articles, in the format outlined on the **Environment & Society** website in the section on guidelines for authors, is 30/5/2014.

We hope you enjoy reading the journal!

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