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ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES, INTERDISCIPLINARITY, SOCIAL THEORY AND INTELLECTUAL PRODUCTION IN LATIN AMERICA

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1. INTRODUCTION

One can safely say that environmental sociology emerged as a field of research at the beginning of the 1960s on the tide of movements of social contestation that brought to the public scene the dramatic situation of natural resource degradation resulting from the development of industrialism.

The increasing popularity of environmentalism in the 1960s took sociologists by surprise, for at that moment the social sciences did not dispose of both a theoretical body and empirical tradition that could shed light on intricacies of the

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relation between society and nature. It goes without saying that the founding fathers of sociology (Durkheim, Marx and Weber) had approached the question in a seemingly tangential manner; likewise, sociological works focusing solely on the matter had been so insignificant that a consistent accumulation of knowledge turned out to be impracticable, thus preventing the consolidation of a theoretical field of environmental sociology.

Mainly during the 1960s, although in varying forms and national contexts, research groups of sociologists began to highlight the relevance of the environmental problematic. That was the time when environmental concerns found their way to the agenda of governments, international organisms, social movements and business sectors all over the world.

Ever since, environmental sociology played a key role in inquiring into the myriad conflicts and actors embroiled in contentious around nature, probing into their possible causes and implications.

From the mid-1980s onwards, while boosted by the renewed popularity of environmentalism around the world, this type of research agenda had successfully contributed to the theoretical reinvigoration of sociology.

This article aims at discussing the relevance of interdisciplinarity in environmental studies while paying close attention to the Latin American academic context.

2. ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY: TOWARD INTERDISCIPLINARITY

We are now faced with the increasing appearance of specific groups of social scientists, united around the investigation of the Environmental Issues. One can reflect on where the opportunities for creative experimentation could be. Here, one can only point out a few situations at very different points of intellectual production in the area of the Environment and Society interface.

The discussion of interdisciplinarity is the object of constant controversies, although a consensus on it is never reached. What can be said about this is that, all in all, there have been two ways of approaching this problem: the first of them strives to bridge the gap between scientific disciplines with the intention of enlarging the explanation of the disciplinary objects of knowledge, as in the case of environmental sociology, where one seeks to theoretically interact in some converging fields. The second vision regarding the interdisciplinary construction is restricted to the field of thematic research, opposing the vision of progressive assimilations among disciplines. This vision recognizes the disciplinary specificity but adopts a type of deliberated collaboration of disciplinary knowledge on previously defined themes (FLORIANI, 2004).

In this sense, we can point out some hypotheses that orient intellectual reflection in the area of environment and society in Latin América. In the first place,

all things indicate that the emphasis on this transversal area migrated from the inglorious search for a preferential actor of social change in the economic and environmental order to a generic question delineated around the preoccupations with the human dimensions of environmental changes, independent of judgments of their value. Presently, this question is broken down into other derivations regarding the governability and the social and cultural or normative orientations for the resolution of universally known problems, considered politically pertinent.

Along this line, discussions and reflections on the area's different branches center on objects that interrelate in order to deal with problems such as normativity, institutionality and the emergence of new academic institutions in the environmental area. In second place, and not less important, is the fact that both the production in the area in its period of formation (1960s) and later on, as well as the discussion of interdisciplinarity, winds up influencing and being influenced by the contemporary social theory.

There are authors, Leis (2000), for example, who argue that, in the Brazilian case, the majority of the time, we would not be developing theoretical perspectives in relation to the theme, but responding to a rampant demand of civil society in relation to the grave Brazilian environmental problems.

However, the theoretical and methodological discussion developed by Ferreira (2006) seeks to show that, in the Brazilian case, there are also sectors of the academic community influenced by the lines of thought connected to reflexive modernization: the risk theory (BECK, 1992) and ecological modernization (SPAARGAREN, BUTTEL & MOL, 2000), as well as the constructionist perspectives and the coevolution and social structuring (YEARLEY, 1996; HANNIGAN, 2000, REDCLIFT, & WOODGATE, 1997).

This discussion also seeks to demonstrate that in the works of environmental sociology at the international level, there is a materialistic Durkheimian focus, in other words, realistic, expressed in the works of Catton and Dunlap (1998) and their influences in the area of environment and society in Brazil. Furthermore, there are works strongly influenced by the materialist Marxist focus, exemplified mainly in the works of Schnaiberg (1980) and O´Connor (2003) and their influences in Brazil.

It is also considered that influences of interdisciplinarity exist in the work developed in the area. If, on the one hand, since the decade of 1970, the environmental crisis revealed the complex relations between biosphere and technosphere on a planetary scale, in a type of "common future", on the other hand, first in the field of contemporary science and technology, and then in the field of human sciences, the need to treat the problems in an integrated manner began to be considered, that is, beyond the disciplines that characterize modern science and technology.

Despite the insistence of political and institutional society in maintaining universes such as environment and society separated and juxtaposed, they must be thought together and the socio-environmental knowledge already produced allows

one to go beyond the question of the impacts of technical progress on the natural and constructed environment in order to face the themes that lead the biological and social sciences to converge in search of a shared operational logic and of a transfrontier language.

As occurs with all theories, according to Floriani (2003), sociology is also harassed by theoretical-methodological disputes, associated to different philosophical matrixes and epistemologies. The author affirms that this also appears to be the case of environmental sociology. Sociology, as a more than one-hundred-year-old theoretical body, had its birth influenced by positivism, by marxism, by functional-structuralism, by phenomenology and each one of the epistemological marks divided into other sub-species, that is, in hybrid models.

According to this same author, the area of environment and society can also be formulated from these same matrixes, but what is perceived as innovative in the effort of some authors and in their proposals is the reconstitution of the theoretical and methodological trajectory of this area by means of a renewed dialog between natural and social sciences.

Consolidation of the studies in the area of Environment and Society in Latin América only occurred in the 1980s and 1990s, when intellectual work was in full mutation. The policy of post-graduation, however, had to be constructed upon an incomplete and fragmented tradition. For this reason, the discussion of academic quality is delicate among us. It is silent about determined aspects of our history. The symbolic field was constructed upon institutional foundations since the necessity of the financing organs establishes rational criteria for a better distribution of resources.

In all areas, scientific production, including the area of environment and society, is a complex process that unfolds beyond that which habitually appears in the terms and practice of the research project. It is also fitting to mention that the universities and research centers are perhaps among the few places of present society where this relative degree of liberty can express itself and, in the case of Latin América, the area of environment and society could advance, not only because of good ideas but also due to the development of research centers dedicated to the area, the publishing of academic journals, and congresses, in short, a set of practices that gave support to the research.

3. ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY IN LATIN AMERICA

At this point, permit us to make a small digression regarding the term "sustainability" in order to comprehend the area's different theoretical approaches. From the historical point of view, the term "sustainability" was created for the purpose of remitting us to the word "sustain", in order for that which is "sustained" to have conditions for perennial permanence, recognizable and fulfilling the same functions indefinitely, maintaining its stability over time.

Among the innumerous concepts of sustainability that have been elaborated over the last few years, what is intended, in short, is to encounter the mechanisms of interaction in the human societies that occur in a harmonious relation with nature.

In the light of recent data, definitely breaking with the hypothesis defending that the causes of resource exhaustion fall exclusively upon populational growth, we are searching for alternatives to production and consumption that respect the natural cycles in their own temporalities. The acceleration of the bio-geo-ecological processes in function of the speed at which human consumption increases represents non-sustainability and, hence, the question resides in finding means to avoid the scarcity and exhaustion of natural resources.

Anthropological studies emphasize some human societies that live in extreme conditions of survival and present elements that indicate the presence of basic sustainability criteria. Shiva (1993) furnishes indications showing that these societies do not perceive themselves as dissociated from nature, in a relation of exteriority, as occurs in modern society.

Retreating to the past, the same can be said in relation to the Greek pre-Socratic society, in the IV century BC. Greek mythology is filled with references based on nature, as is emphasized by MacCormick (1992) and, in the author's words, there is the acceptance of natural forces and not the propensity to substitute them. This propensity to substitute the natural norm by the human norm could lead to hybris, which was the theoretical reference to disorder, instability, destructionism, disharmony and disequilibration; the result of transposition of ecosystemic limits which, in the worst case, cause the exhaustion of natural resources.

Yearley (1996) emphasizes that there is a distinction between ecological sustainability and environmental sustainability: the first refers to the climax stage of a natural ecosystem, where the flux of input and output of materials and energy remain equivalent over a long period, configuring the system's maturity, spontaneously, due to nature itself. The second, however, parting from the same principal, involves human intervention through environment management, producing energetic balances that are artificially equilibrated, counterbalancing the stocks of energy and material that are utilized as raw material in the human productive sphere.

At the same time, Spaargaren, Mol, and Buttel (2000), discoursing on methodologies for environmental accounting, identify the existence of two lines of thought regarding the delimitation of natural resource exhaustion. One follows the pattern of weak sustainability, in which it is believed that the absolute substitution of natural capital by material capital is possible, where technology has perfect conditions to promote the transformation process and the other, that follows the strong sustainability pattern, in which the two forms of capital are not substitutable and, therefore, economic growth would necessarily be conditioned to the constant maintenance of natural capital stock.

A tone of very pronounced technological optimism is perceived in the first case, since it considers that there is a technological *quantum* at the disposition of the risk society (BECK, 1992), sufficiently elevated to avoid the negative collateral effects of human intervention in the biosphere, which, in the worst case, disobliges the need for implementation of preventive policies. In any case, the authors emphasize that these considerations show that the level of natural capital consumption is an important indicator of sustainability, although the environment is still incipiently valued by the market. In other words, the use, the exhaustion and the degradation of natural resources are not inserted into the production and consumption costs.

Operationally, Guimarães (2001) suggests that, in the first place, in a case of management of renewable natural resources, two principals stand out as fundamental. On the one hand, the utilization rates must be equivalent to the replacement rates. On the other hand, the rates of effluent emissions must be equal to the assimilation capacity of the ecosystems into which these effluents are discharged. Therefore, the incapacity of maintaining these rates must be treated as capital consumption, that is, non-sustainable.

In second place, for the case of non-renewable resources, considering that the very character of 'non-renewable' impedes an indefinably sustained utilization, the rhythm of the utilization must be limited to the development or discovery of new substitutes.

Therefore, the author affirms that for renewable natural resources, the weak sustainability pattern can be considered while, for the non-renewable natural resources, strong sustainability is indicated. When focusing the panorama of resource scarcity, an important distinction must still be made between two other concepts: there is absolute scarcity, which refers to the actual exhaustion of resource stocks, and there is relative scarcity, which refers to the non-sustainable patterns of production and consumption that actuate as limiting factors of exhaustion.

At this moment, one must remember that Morrison (1995) and Cahn (1995) identified that both the consumption patterns of poverty and of wealth contribute together to the deterioration of the planet's support capacity. However, they emphasize that the dominant propelling force of the exhaustion of natural resources is situated in the consumption pattern of the highly industrialized countries. Consequently, attention must be dislocated from the technological question as the understanding of absolute scarcity and return to the political and sociological question to face relative scarcity.

From this consideration, we can see with greater clarity that the purely environmental dimension of sustainability can be transcended and can involve some political-institutional parameters regarding the social norms and criteria for appropriation of the natural capital. We can then perceive that the sustainability referred to in the official ecological discourse refers exclusively to environmental sustainability and does not incorporate its various dimensions.

In this sense, the idea of sustainability can be strongly associated with three other social dimensions, already established in the political thought of the XX century: democracy, equity and efficiency (FERREIRA & VIOLA, 1997).

The question of scale must also be taken into account. Can variables be considered for finer scales and other variables for more global and regional scales? Should variables that transit through various scales occur - which ones? How are they related? In applied terms, how does the regional-global relation occur from the institutional view point and from scientific knowledge?

In this way, for reflection on intellectual production in the area of environment and society in Latin America, it can be suggested that - on a continent having the largest indices of biodiversity in the world and, at the same time, extremely high rates of social inequality (UNITED NATIONS, 2006) and, mainly, a recent democracy, still under construction - there should be specifics in this production and the discussion itself on sustainability realized above is an element of clarification of this process.

In this article, a partial synthesis of the intellectual production of some Latin-American centers in the area of environment and society will be presented. The centers analyzed until the present moment are: Amazonian Institute for Investigations (**IMANI**), subordinated to the National University of **Colombia**, Latin-American Center for Social Ecology (**CLAES**), in Uruguay, The United Nations Program for the Environment (**PNUMA**), in **Mexico**, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (**CEPAL**), in Chile and the collectaneas published by the former group of Ecology, Politics and Society of the National Association of Post-Graduation and Research in Social Sciences (**ANPOCS**), in **Brazil**.

Taking into consideration the accumulation of information and the extensive database gathered by now, containing articles, research and books (also electronic files), the titles considered most relevant within their respective research centers were selected for this work.

Naturally, this choice had to follow some criteria and, consequently, the authors and researchers presented are those who possess more tradition and experience in the environmental thematics and similar areas, representing their study nucleate and the principal intellectual lines of socio-environmental thought in Latin America.

There are diverse lines of socio-environmental thought and to give a brief panorama of these lines, the classification in large groups, prepared by Herculano (2000) and Ferreira (2006) are presented below:

- Materialist Durkheimian focus, realist. For example: Catton and Dunlap;
- Materialist Marxist focus. For example: Schnaiberg and O'Connor;
- Post-materialist focus. For example: Inglehart;
- Constructivist or constructionist focus and co-evolution and social structuration. For example: Hannigan, Yearley, Redclift and Woodgate.

In addition to these large groups, the paradigm of Reflexive Modernization can also be emphasized as an important line of thought in the interior of Environmental Sociology, paradigm that subdivides itself between ecological modernization (Mol and Spaargaren) and the concept of risk society (Beck).

Synthetically, the different focuses mentioned can be grouped and contemplated by Environmental Sociology and by the Contemporary Social Theory, although they are lines of thought that interact and dialog among themselves and, in determined points, work on the interface between Environmental Sociology and the Contemporary Social Theory, given the interdisciplinary character of the environmental theme and the hybrid models.

The Contemporary Social Theory brings in its theoretical body the sociologists who contributed to the diversification of Environmental Sociology and who worked with the question of the high-modernity societies, such as Habermas (1987), Touraine (1997), Giddens (1991), Beck (1986) and Castells (1999), among others.

Following these main lines of thought, a first analysis with a classificatory bias of Latin-American intellectual production was elaborated.

4. PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF LATIN-AMERICAN INTELLECTUAL PRODUCTION

In this part of the work, results of a first classification of the intellectual production in the Latin-American centers studied will be presented. In this way, the main intellectual lines of socio-environmental thought in Latin America are shown in the tables below. It is not our objective to make a closed classification of each center, fitting them into one or another line of thought. The intension is to point out which line of thought exercises greater influence and, in this way, determine a certain concentration of the research around it. At this moment of research, there is also no pretension of a comparative analysis among countries, since the data surveyed at the moment have not been crossed.

Table 1
Latin-American Center of Social Ecology - CLAES / Uruguay

Over the last years, the CLAES has shown remarkable dynamism, mainly in its more practical regional activities. The table below shows some authors who contributed to the analysis of the environmental question at the CLAES.

In the Works performed at the CLAES, there is a predominance of the influences of the materialist marxist approach as well as historic approaches.

AUTHOR	DATE	THEMES
Werner Raza	1998	Theory of regulation and its political, ecological and economical implications
Eduardo Gudynas	1999	Reform of the State sustained development,
Antonio Miglianelli	2000	Social Ecology
Alain Lipietz	2002	Political crises, globalization, concepts on ecology and politics
Immanuel Wallerstein	2003	Ecology and form of capitalist production
Roberto A. Follari	2004	Human development, modernity, post-modernity
Alberto Costa	2004	It's not worth wasting gun powder on chickens.
Susan George	2004	Neoliberalism, social movements, ecological sustainability

Table 2
Amazonian Institute for Investigations - IMANI / Colombia

By 2005, the IMANI published approximately 40 scientific works since its creation. However, 9 works were cited on the theme of environment and society and, of these, three titles that relate more directly with the socio-environment interface were selected.

In the themes dealt with in the selected works below and in their analysis, it can be said that the constructionist approach, coevolution and social structuring exercise a strong influence on these works.

AUTHOR	DATE	THEMES
Pablo A. Palácios Thomas R. Defler	2001	Zoning and territorial order in the Colombian Amazon
Rosa C. Couto; Edna R. de Castro; Rosa A. Marin	2002	Health, environment and work, and public policies
Germán Palácio Astrid Ulloa	2002	History and environmental discourses

Table 3
United Nations Program for the Environment - PNUMA Mexico

• Environmental Formation Network for Latin America and the Caribbean

Within the United Nations Program for the Environment (PNUMA), the production of the Environmental Formation Network for Latin America and the Caribbean, with headquarters in Mexico, is outstanding. The PNUMA is a Latin-American reference center, bringing together important lines of research, making a great contribution and bringing a pioneering spirit to the intellectual and political debate around the environmental question.

It can be argued that, in the case of the PNUMA, the diversity of the theoretical-methodological influences in the selected works below calls attention, from the works that already incorporate ecological modernization to those in which the pertinence of interdisciplinarity is emphasized for the analysis of the relation between Environment and Society.

AUTHOR	DATE	THEMES
Julio Carrizosa	1998	Construction of the sustainability theory
Joan Martinez Alier	1998	Ecological, environmental economics and political ecology
Arlindo Philippi Jr., A; Tucci, C.; Daniel Hogan, Raimundo Navegantes	2000	Research and environmental formation programs in Brasil and Latin America
Héctor Leis	2001	Globalization, environmental development, complexity and limits and Ecological Modernization progress
Fernando Tudela	2004	The syndromes of sustainability in the development. The case of Mexico.
Enrique Leff et al.	2002	Economic distribution, social justice, political democracy and sustainability

Table 4

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean - CEPAL / Chile

• Division of Sustainable Development and Human Settlings - DDSAH

The DDSAH has presented extensive publications on the environmental question, resulting in diverse studies and in the development of the intellectual debate in the interior of the Commission and in all of Latin America. In the table, some authors were selected due to their contributions to the consolidation of the environmental question as an important object of study for the CEPAL.

In the case of the CEPAL, we can also observe the diversity of the theoretical-methodological approaches, but here we emphasize the importance of hybrid and interdisciplinary approaches for the study of the socio-ecological problematics.

AUTHOR	DATE	THEMES
Osvaldo Sunkel	2000	The sustainability of current development in Latin America
Roberto P. Guimarães	2001	Territorial and Bioregional Planning. Agenda 21 in the world; Modernity and ethics
Marianne Schaper and Valérie O. de Véréz	2001	Evolution of commerce and of foreign investments in environmentally sensitive industries: Andine Community, Mercosul and Chile (1990-1999)
Ricardo Jordan and Daniela Simioni	2003	Urban management for the sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean
Gilberto C. Gallopín Laura Ortiz Malavasi Andrés R. Schuschny	2005	Evaluation of industrial emissions in Latin-American countries; contamination risk
Gilberto C. Gallopín Cecilie Modvar	2005	Challenges for science and technology; Sustainable Development

Table 5

National Association for Research and Post-Graduation in Social Sciences / ANPOCS

Group for Ecology, Politics and Society / Brazil (data up until 1996)

There are two moments in Brazilian intellectual production that delineate the directions of the aggregation of intellectual demands in the field of interactions between Environment and Society in Brazil. In the first, a phase that may be considered

inspired by Buttel (1996) as formation, there are four collectanea that deserve attention - Ecology and Politics in Brazil (1987), organized by José Augusto Pádua, Worldwide Economics and Politics (1991), organized by Héctor Leis, Socio-Environmental Dilemmas and Sustainable Development (1992), organized by Daniel Hogan and Paulo Freire Vieira and Uncertainties of Sustainability in Globalization (1996), organized by Leila Ferreira and Eduardo Viola, in addition to the pioneering work of Roberto Guimarães (1984; 1991, among others).

For a first analysis of Brazil, we will utilize the collectaneas and the Guimarães paper mentioned.

In the Brazilian case, the diversity of theoretical-methodological influences can be clearly observed, but what is interesting is that since the end of the 1980s, a significant influence of constructionism can be seen and, in the decade of 1990, some works were already inspired on reflexive modernization in its two branches, both ecological modernization as well as those inspired by the risk society concept. Here you can see the hybrid and interdisciplinary approaches for the study of the socio-ecological problematics.

AUTHOR	DATE	THEMES
Roberto Guimarães	1984	Ecopolitics in urban areas: the political dimension of the indicators of environmental quality
José Augusto Pádua	1987	Origins of the ecology and politics in Brazil
Eduardo Viola	1987	Origins and institutionalization of the ecological movement in Brazil
Héctor Leis	1991	International relations and environment
Roberto Guimarães	1991	International relations and environment
José Augusto Pádua	1991	Origins of the Green Policy in Brazil
Leila Ferreira and Lúcia Ferreira	1992	Public Policies and New Social Movements in the Brazilian environmental area
Eduardo Viola and Héctor Leis	1992	Environmental Policies in Brazil
Paulo Freire Vieira	1992	The environmental problems and the social sciences in Brazil
Daniel Hogan	1992	Demographic Dynamics and Environment in Brazil
Haroldo Torres	1992	Environmental Crisis: case study (Brazil)
Donald Sawyer	1992	Amazonian themes
Sônia Barbosa	1992	Quality of life (case study, Brazil)
Eduardo Viola	1996	Globalization and environment
Héctor Leis	1996	Globalization and environment
Octavio Ianni	1996	Globalization and environment

AUTHOR	DATE	THEMES
Franz Brüseke	1996	Globalization and environment
Leila Ferreira	1996	Environmental Policies: (case study, Brazil)
Daniel Hogan	1996	Demographic Dynamics and Environment: (Brazil)
Pedro Jacobi	1996	Environmental Perceptions (case study, Brazil)
Lúcia Ferreira	1996	Conservation and environment (case study, Brazil)
Antônio Carlos Diegues	1996	Conservation and environment (case study, Brazil)
Clóvis Cavalcanti	1996	Ecological economy

5. PRELIMINARY FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The technical and economic changes - with their social, cultural and political effects in our time - passed as a hurricane over the institutions constructed at the beginning of the century. Utopia and melancholy are two words, for example, that describe the lost world of the end of the XX century (FERREIRA, 1997).

These concepts can help clarify some fundamental questions relative to the loss of our old ideals and, consequently, to better comprehend the elaboration of the mourning of those who leashed themselves to utopic projects and became their orphans.

In this perspective, one of the most intriguing phenomena of this new century is that we are living the apparent disappearance of the so-called "critical thought" from the sociological scenario. It can be argued that, with extremely rare exceptions, the critical "Latin-American" social thought had enormous difficulty in introducing new themes in their analyses, due to various questions already introduced in the preceding items.

However, the environmental question (among other themes relevant to contemporary sociology) had, by its specific (interdisciplinary, recent in the social thought; and complex) the merit of placing before the social scientists in general conceptual and paradigmatic "problems" that were, to say the least, instigating.

As can be observed in the data previously presented, this also occurred on the level of the Latin-American continent, as in the case of the environmental sociology and even the contemporary social theory.

In addition to the variety of themes treated, as can be observed in the tables previously presented, there are various theoretical-methodological approaches in the diverse works cited that must be mentioned.

Since the beginning of the decade of 1980, in all of the analyzed centers, we can observe studies firmly established in constructionist perspectives, by both the perspective of ecological modernization, in its two branches and ecological modernization and the risk society.

It should be emphasized that the works mentioned previously also present materialist marxist approaches and are, many times, still inspired by the approaches of political ecology. It should be stressed that, in various centers, one can observe works that discuss interdisciplinarity and utilize these approaches in their empiric perspectives.

It is fitting at this moment, still quite preliminary of the data obtained by the recent work, to simply suggest some questions that should be discuss in the next steps of the research:

1) Recognize various forms of knowledge and the practices that sustain them in order that they be incorporated in a horizontal, non-relativist, argumentative relation that, with other knowledge, constitutes a special position for this type of reflection: it is an analysis that is constructed temporally, that refuses the control of fragmentation and dispersion, that does not substitute.
2) The objects of sociological reflection are already established, but are placed in another epistemological field - the field of radically contemporary of the occurrences.
3) What are the specificities of the Latin-American production in the area of environment and society as have been accompanied in the international debate? Not only in terms of very diverse empirical contexts but, mainly, in its position as the "field for scientific disputes".

There are still various questions that the present work will have to face but just the data presented previously show that the investigation will be worthwhile.

It is worth noting, however, that even at the beginning of the first decade of the new century, a significant change can be observed in the interests of this Latin-American nucleus, more strongly aggregated around the field of reflections on the interface between society and environment.

In the Brazilian case, a good indicator of this divergence of emphasis can be found in the aggregation of intellectual demands imposed on the National Association for Post-Graduation and Research in Environment and Society. The program of its first three meetings delineated the following themes for debates in the ambit of work groups and round tables: international environmental regimes, human dimensions of biodiversity; consumption and safety of food and energy, local dimensions of the environmental changes, sustainable cities, environmental education in societies on the knowledge and climatic changes, aside from the already traditional themes, such as interdisciplinarity, demographic dynamics, environmental risk, environment policies, theory and environment.

On the other hand, one can observe that the intellectual production in Brazil was also strongly influenced by the contemporary social theory (particularly by Beck, Giddens and Habermas) and more recently by environmental sociology (in the constructionist perspective as well as the reflexive modernity in its different branches), as one can also observe in the articles published in the collectanea cited above.

In addition, the data obtained in the other Latin-American centers show us the theoretical-methodological diversity utilized by the authors, aside from an organic bond with the socio-environmental interface that characterizes this production.

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