

Letter to Editor

Socioenvironmental justice: challenges and perspectives in a changing world

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Diverse environmental topics are studied in a world of constant adjustment due to the different ways of exploration. There are numerous conflicts and legal disputes regarding the use of natural and urban spaces. Amid these transformations, the most vulnerable communities often face the greatest impacts, such as climate change and unsustainable land exploitation practices. Land degradation, deforestation, and irresponsible agricultural expansion increase greenhouse gas emissions, displace local populations, and exacerbate socioeconomic inequalities.

There are many challenges to be addressed, which are linked to the lack of specific legal norms, the fragmentation of legislative approaches, and the need for judicial interpretations that consider the intersection between human rights and cross-cutting sustainability issues. Within these issues, the theme of socioenvironmental justice emerges, which seeks to ensure that the benefits and costs of development are distributed equitably, protecting both the environment and the rights of affected communities (Rabbani *et al.*, 2020; Bentirou Mathlouthi; Pomade, 2023).

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The term "socioenvironmental justice" is very recent, and it can be said that its concept is still under construction. It originates from the conceptual fusion between social justice and environmental justice. In general, it is considered synonymous with "environmental justice", given that it is increasingly evident that it is impossible to treat environmental issues in isolation from the social context. It is believed that the environmental crisis can be faced without the promotion of social justice, because, with social inequality and ownership of environmental resources, the instruments of power over environmental control tend to increase environmental inequality. There is no way to segregate the search for minimal equitable social conditions from the struggle for access to the right to an ecologically balanced environment for all people (Neto, 2017).

In other words, socioenvironmental justice can be understood as the expression of social inequality in appropriating the environment and its resources. It is an analytical instrument that refers to the genesis of the production of goods by the hegemonic system and serves to know the unequal access to the advantages and disadvantages that it engenders (Ribeiro, 2017), or even, constitutes a theoretical and practical framework that aligns with the principles of equity, sustainability, and human dignity.

This permeates crucial or effective public policies that can ensure the fair distribution of development benefits and costs, ensuring that no group is disproportionately affected by negative impacts. Themes that touch on socioenvironmental justice permeate the different areas of knowledge and practices, promoting an interdisciplinary dialogue, from which possible alternatives can emerge that can help in public policies, business practices, and community actions (Figure 1).

Figure 1 - Main areas of knowledge that dialogue with the theme of Socioenvironmental Justice.



Source: The authors, (2024).

When we enter into the issues of socioenvironmental justice linked to the notion of climate emergency, it can be understood in two ways: 1. in the objective of rescuing the memory of social struggles in their relationship with nature, recalling the importance of movements and organized civil society in the debates for the elaboration of laws; 2. It is related to looking at the community practices of people and social movements. By exploring the contradiction between development and nature, the concept of socioenvironmental justice puts a magnifying glass on socioenvironmental conflicts, revealing the power relations that overlap territories, as well as the webs and networks that intertwine the chains and production of damage, as well as the articulations of different entities and groups in the defense of violated rights (Isaguirre-Torres; Maso, 2023).

Understanding socioenvironmental conflicts also requires observing how strategies have been built to respond to the demands of the affected groups, whether they are carried out in the judicial field or outside it. The promotion of socioenvironmental justice requires an interdisciplinary approach, and it is necessary to integrate knowledge from different areas,

such as social sciences, natural sciences, economics, and law, to develop effective solutions and mediation and integration actions (Zanfardini *et al.*, 2023).

In this context, environmental justice is intrinsically associated with the issue of gender and traditional communities, as all these elements play a crucial role in promoting equity and sustainability (Isaguirre-Torres; Maso, 2023). Women, especially in rural and traditional communities, are often the main managers of natural resources, and their inclusion in decision-making processes is essential for developing fair environmental policies (Huguenin, 2024; Matos; Garcia; Santos, 2023; Andrade, 2020). Traditional communities, which have a deep and ancestral knowledge of the sustainable management of ecosystems, are fundamental in biodiversity conservation and adaptation to climate change (Alves; Oliveira, 2023).

Regarding global climate change, vulnerable communities face the greatest impacts of weather changes. Environmental degradation and the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources exacerbate social inequalities, putting the livelihoods and health of traditional and marginalized populations at risk. Furthermore, the lack of participation of these communities in decision-making processes worsens socioenvironmental injustice, perpetuating a cycle of vulnerability. Thus, it is necessary to observe climate change, not only in its alterations in a natural environment but also from the point of socioenvironmental justice to develop equitable and inclusive policies that not only mitigate climate effects but also promote empowerment and resilience of affected communities, ensuring a sustainable future for all (Bentrou Mathlouthi; Pomade, 2023; Isaguirre-Torres; Maso, 2023).

Not far from the contemporary, the Campos Neutrais Journal in its dossier entitled "Socioenvironmental Justice: multiple dimensions and perspectives", v. 6, provokes scientific dialogue with socioenvironmental justice as a central issue for the construction of a sustainable environment. This issue covers a wide range of dimensions, including social justice, sustainability, economic equity, and governance.

Studying this phenomenon from multiple perspectives allows for a holistic understanding of the challenges we face, as well as the potential solutions to current problems regarding socioenvironmental issues. Conducting interdisciplinary studies provides the theoretical and empirical foundation necessary for the development of more effective norms, the creation of legal mechanisms tailored to local realities, and the

consolidation of a legal understanding capable of positively influencing the formulation of public policies.

The dossier has the participation of Brazilian and foreign researchers, which reflects the role of Campos Neutrais Journal as a space for reflection in this context of tensions and contemporary events in society. Thus, the Journal exercises the use of public reason, in the face of a world in instability, providing a space of refuge to reflect and cultivate a sense of knowledge (Pase; Brito; Spode, 2024), advancing academic discourse and promoting equitable environmental practices.

Therefore, studying socioenvironmental justice equips us with the tools necessary to face future challenges. So, this dossier contributes to the public and scientific debate, to promote a critical understanding of socioenvironmental justice events. By disseminating interdisciplinary knowledge and promoting inclusive dialogues, we can significantly advance the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2024), ensuring a fairer and more green future for all.

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