


The Long 2022: The Year We Breathe Again

Fernanda Cimini

This fourth issue of CEBRI-Journal closes its first quarterly publication cycle, which started in 2022. Not long ago we were building the pillars of this journal surrounded by the uncertainties of a seemingly endless pandemic. Science allowed us to develop a vaccine, and Brazil's Unified Health System (SUS) allowed us to gradually reclaim our freedom to occupy public spaces and breathe.

We use that breath of fresh air to focus on the urgent discussion about our survival in the Anthropocene period,¹ heeding Professor Bruno Latour's tireless warning (he sadly left us in October 2022). Among so many "Latourian lessons," I emphasize the need to overcome two assumptions that pervade the current climate debate: (a) the opposition between humankind and nature that underlies the anthropocentric fiction that we are the sole agents in action in contrast to the passivity of the earth and of other living things; and (b) the abstract vision of a globalized planet Earth disconnected from the place we live in (Latour 2020a). According to Latour, these assumptions hinder rather than help think about the current climate *mutation* as they

1. The Anthropocene is a concept that remains incipient in the scientific arena. It refers to a new geological era supposedly underway that sees the end of the relatively stable climate that allowed humans to develop agriculture and livestock farming and, with it, to spread around the planet. In this new era, the degree of human intervention supposedly reached a deeper biogeochemical level to cause instability throughout the Earth system: geosphere, biosphere, anthroposphere, and technosphere (Junges 2021, Veiga 2019).

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see nature as a distant and apolitical landscape. That is why Latour invited us to “ground ourselves,” that is, to build a new perception as *earthlings*, to learn that we are part of this tangle called Earth and to realize that we have nowhere to run to – even if some insist in denying that (Latour 2020b).

We have now reached the mark of eight billion *earthlings*.² Eight billion of us share this planet with not the slightest guarantee that we will ever return to the “world as it was before.” For some, that farewell is in full swing. Climate change displaced some 60 million people in 2021 alone, more than the number of refugees due to armed conflicts in the same period, according to a warning issued at an Instituto Igarapé report (2022), we have “nowhere to run to.” The number of climate refugees may reach 1.2 billion as early as mid-century, most of them in the developing world (idem).

While the world celebrates the increase to one billion inhabitants, *earthlings* of the highest economic, social, and political echelons meet in Egypt to discuss whether the goal of keeping global warming at no more than 1.5°C already is a chimera. A United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report published on the eve of COP 27 predicts the continuation of current emissions patterns will cause an increase of 2.8°C by the end of the century. An optimistic scenario where emission reduction promises are fully kept will likely see an increase of about 1.8°C (UNEP 2022).

That is a hard but unsurprising truth. The hurdles to progress in climate negotiations have long been known: the need to invest in renewable energy, path dependence on fossil fuels, unequal access to clean technologies, inadequate institutional capabilities, etc. And if unlocking negotiations requires diplomatic dexterity and political pragmatism, here’s some good news: Brazil can take the lead.

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2. <https://www.unfpa.org/8billion>.

“geopolitics of climate change” theme. The symbolism of 2022 is a starting point. We commemorate the bicentennial of Brazil’s independence, the thirtieth anniversary of the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit and the fiftieth anniversary of Brazil’s diplomatic environmental efforts. In his text, Ambassador Rubens Ricupero reports the nuances of negotiations since Stockholm in 1972 and their subsequent developments such as the Amazon Cooperation Treaty (TCA), his assignment to coordinate the organization of the 1992 Earth Summit and his tenure as Minister of Environment (1993-1994). Ricupero offers a passionate testimony and shows his mettle by shunning a “win or lose” approach in favor of an apocalyptic truth: “the game of life has a time limit.”

Diplomat Eugênio V. Garcia subsequently looks at the last 200 years to reflect on Brazil’s foreign policy (PEB, as the acronym is used in Portuguese) for the next one hundred years. If social and economic pragmatism is maintained, the coming agenda should be dominated by technology and sustainability based on a green-digital economy. PEB must be urgently aligned with the Brazilian innovation ecosystem while the digital transformation continues in full swing. The great challenge for the new PEB is to go beyond the social and economic substrate based on the production of commodities. The decade of 2021 will define the direction Brazil must take at the risk of being trapped in a “late smartization” trap.

Reflecting on this immediate future, the strategic agenda proposed in researcher Karin Costa Vazquez’s policy paper rests on three pillars: (i) acceleration of public policies within the scope of the 2030 Agenda; (ii) repositioning Brazil to better react to major global transformations such as Asia’s increased geopolitical significance, the technological-digital revolution and the energy transition; and (iii) regaining Brazil’s international leadership by re-engaging with regional and multilateral forums. Vazquez thinks that achieving these objectives will require reactivating institutional players left dormant in the preceding administration, including not only the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but other entities that have the experience and administrative capabilities to act at the strategic, tactical and operating levels.

Ricupero, Garcia and Vazquez offer an overview of the historical and institutional bases of Brazil’s diplomatic capacity to regain international protagonism by reconciling development and sustainability. The empirical substrate for Brazil to take the lead in the climate regime is examined by Matilde de Souza & Leandro Gomes Ferreira, Larissa Basso & Eduardo Viola, and Gilberto Câmara et al., who discuss Brazil’s current energy transition status and emissions from deforestation.

Brazil’s relatively low-carbon energy mix puts us in a uniquely favorable position in the decarbonization path in comparison both with BRICS and with South Amer-

ican countries. If, on the one hand, energy self-sufficiency and the abundance of renewable sources confer natural advantages on Brazil, on the other hand, political oscillations in governance and funding arrangements for the low-carbon transition raise obstacles to achieving bolder and more effective goals.

In Souza & Ferreira's opinion, Brazil is in a "moderate" transition scenario in which natural gas functions as a short-term substitute for hydropower plants and "dirty" road transportation continues to prevail. For them, the slow progress of wind and solar power generation is due to Brazil's current energy mix, which discourages new investments; territorial extension, which increases the cost of transmission lines; and, finally, to the lack of clear political incentives for the transition.

Basso & Viola consider deforestation the major culprit for Brazil's greenhouse gas emissions. In their analysis, policies to regulate land use and agriculture, monitoring and enforcement are key for Brazil to remain on a favorable decarbonization path. Indeed, Câmara et al. report that deforestation rates decreased by 84% between 2004 and 2012, when Brazil implemented a more active environmental control policy. That success allowed the country to present at the 2015 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) climate targets that were more ambitious than those of other BRICS countries. But the subsequent rapid increase in deforestation rates jeopardized our ability to honor the goals set in Paris.

An unprecedented survey to identify illegal deforestation areas reported by Câmara et al confirms that. Comparing maps made by the National Institute for Space Research (INPE) with Rural Environmental Registry (CAR) and National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) databases, the survey found legal and illegal deforestation to have significantly increased from 2019 to 2021 as a direct result of the Bolsonaro administration pulling down environmental control framework. Câmara et al. also use the statu-

tory reserve deficit and surplus profile to estimate Brazil's capacity to honor its commitments under the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC). This diagnosis is crucial for the next administration to put adequate incentives in place that enforce the Forestry Code, as it will face resistance from large and medium-scale landowners challenged by significant restoration costs.

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In contrast with other BRICS countries, Brazil will gain an ever-greater leading role in the climate regime if Brazil manages to overcome those challenges and to retake the path followed from 2004 to 2012. That is what the world expects of us. In the interview included in this issue, Professor Jeffrey Sachs posits that President Lula's election as Brazil prepares to assume the G20 presidency in 2024 puts Brazil in the spotlight thanks to the synergy between Biden's environmental policy and Lula's favorable view of regional and multilateral climate cooperation. Although prospective funding by the U.S. government remains uncertain, Brazil can benefit economically and politically and position itself as a regional leader in negotiations concerning the Amazon region.

There is also room for improving relations with Africa. Mozambican Minister of Economy and Finance, Ernesto Max Elias Tonela, also interviewed in this issue, draws attention to Mozambique's significant natural gas output and huge reserves (the third largest in the world). Mr. Tonela further mentions other renewable assets that, jointly with Mozambique's gas potential, can boost energy transition in the Southern African region. Mozambique faces a great challenge in the conflicts in Cabo Delgado and has received the support of the international community to implement projects that promote social and economic stability in the region. Brazil has a long history of bilateral cooperation with Mozambique and can become a strategic partner in stabilizing Mozambique and in pushing for climate justice.

All of the above takes place on a geopolitical chessboard that will require peripheral countries such as Brazil to use finely balanced diplomacy to deal with the opposing interests of Washington and Beijing. That requirement is discussed in the policy paper written by fellow editors of this journal, Hussein Kalout and Feliciano Guimarães. In their opinion, Brazil must urgently regain its regional protagonism so that Brazil can implement a pendulum hedging strategy at the extra-regional level. As the climate regime turns from a soft to a hard politics issue with direct implications for the survival of States, the capabilities associated with this agenda tend to gain more weight in the pendulum logic of the game.

Our special section theme also includes a review of Mary Robinson's book *Climate Justice* (2018), an important work on the topic. The review by Professor Pascoal Teófilo Carvalho Gonçalves highlights the author's emphasis on women's role in the search for solutions to mitigate or adapt to climate change and in sustainable development initiatives. The reviewer draws attention to the daily concerns of those who will be directly affected by the changes underway and underscores the urgency of coordinated action by world leaders.

The matters addressed in this special issue – protection of the Amazon region, Bra-

zil regaining leadership in the environmental regime, search for climate justice – are aligned with CEBRI’s climate agenda. Throughout 2022, CEBRI organized debates with leaders from the government, academia, civil society, the private sector, and indigenous and environmental activists to support the construction of proposals to guide Brazil’s reintegration into climate geopolitics. I refer the reader to the Policy Paper publication *Development and Climate Change: Brazil’s role in the environmental-climate agenda*, written by Minister Izabella Teixeira et al. (2022), whom I wish to thank for providing valuable insights for this issue.

In the academic papers section, Ariel González Levaggi continues the debate initiated in our preceding issue about the war in Ukraine. Levaggi describes the risks and challenges the conflict creates for the South Atlantic region focusing on three dimensions: the risks the strategic competition between major powers involves, how regional players respond to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, and how the conflict affects the economic development agenda.

This issue also includes Ambassador Gelson Fonseca Jr.’s homage to the diplomatic and intellectual work of José Augusto Lindgren Alves, who left us in this long year of 2022. It is in part thanks to Ambassador Lindgren’s intellectual and diplomatic contributions, including at the United Nations, that we today see human rights and sustainable development as part of the same struggle. I am particularly grateful to him for, when I was an undergraduate student, introducing me through his book *International Relations and Social Issues: The Decade of Conferences* (Alves 2001) to the profound transformation international relations went through in the 1990s. Gelson Fonseca Jr. describes Ambassador Lind-

Assuming the responsibility to lead such a complex agenda does not mean turning a blind eye to our many social, economic, and political challenges or relinquishing our sovereign interests. On the contrary, it means Brazil should legitimately use its capabilities and duties to assume an independent position in claiming rights and justice. That is what the world expects of a nation like Brazil, that which boasts an ancestral legacy and such a rich biodiversity. That is what the world expects of humans grounded in their territory and willing to assume the position of earthlings.

gren's tireless efforts in the struggle for human rights and his sensitivity to social injustice, which are indispensable legacies for current times.

Finally, our last issue of 2022 could not fail to refer to the *Doctor Honoris Causa* degree the São Paulo State University Board (UNESP) granted to Celso Lafer, CEBRI Founder and Member of this journal's Advisory Board. To mark that event, Lafer shared with us the speech he gave in the ceremony of November 23, 2022, making reference to his diplomatic career and to the two times he held the office of Minister of Foreign Affairs. At a time of academic-scientific denialism and anti-democratic actions, Lafer stresses the value of knowledge for decision-making in public policy. Lafer himself is an example of excellence in connecting knowledge with diplomatic action.

The legacies of Lindgren Alves and Lafer and the thoughts developed in our special section show how important it is to fight the obscurantism that haunts our democracy. Recovering our capacity to think about public policies is a *sine qua non* condition for Brazil to realistically regain a responsible international role. Assuming the responsibility to lead such a complex agenda does not mean turning a blind eye to our many social, economic, and political challenges or relinquishing our sovereign interests. On the contrary, it means Brazil should legitimately use its capabilities and duties to assume an independent position in claiming rights and justice. That is what the world expects of a nation like Brazil, which boasts an ancestral legacy and such a rich biodiversity. That is what the world expects of *humans* grounded in their territory and willing to assume the position of *earthlings*. 🇧🇷

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