

## ENVIRONMENT: DOUBTS AND UNCERTAINTIES ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY

MAURÍCIO WALDMAN <sup>1</sup>

The moment had everything to raise hope. Twenty years after the 1992 United Nations meeting focused on the environmental debate, - the famous United Nations Conference on Environment and Development - the city of Rio de Janeiro city hosted again an international gathering of unique importance.

Being a UN event focusing on sustainable development, this true Earth summit became known as Rio + 20, in a direct reference to the famous Eco-92. For two days, from 20 to 22 June 2012, the doubtless fact of bringing together leaders from around the world brought light to the environmental institutional agenda.

The explicit purpose of this meeting - to encourage public policies and measures to address the environmental challenge - also planned to conduct an assessment of the Earth ecological "state of the art". In this perspective, endorsing the perception, which essentially no one would dare to put in doubt, the meeting would be a 2.0 of the Rio-92.

In few words, after two decades of recognition of the concept of Sustainable Development, it would be at least obvious to have on hand a reasonable collection of successful realizations and initiatives. It was inevitable, however, to admit that even after twenty years of indefatigable preaching in favor of sustainability, there was an understanding that its progress was disappointing.

Besides, there were also unacceptable setbacks registered in many issues. As disclosed in the Global Environment Outlook report, - a document of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) - only four of the 90 most important environmental goals agreed in the last 40 years had achieved significant progress. Another 40 goals improved minimally. In addition, 24 of them showed almost no progress.

Certainly, these disappointing data were the trigger of all kinds of debates and controversies. In special, one of these problems, which reflects a diffusely spread nuisance in the memory of all who follow the path of sustainable development, has gained important role at this time.

Being more specific about this point: the issue clarified in these data are not restricted to mere unwillingness of the authorities, to logistical errors, or then, to operational failures. A further and more detailed discussion would be needed to understand the reasons these big failures in solving imminent environmental difficulties occurred.

It is absolutely clear that the severity of the scenario discussed in Rio + 20 Summit could not be ignored by Ms. Brundtland. On the contrary, following full-time the paths assumed by the concept of sustainability, Brundtland,

---

<sup>1</sup> **MAURICIO WALDMAN:** Journalist, editor, researcher, professor and anthropologist, Waldman is a veteran activist of Brazilian environmentalist movement. Waldman collaborated with Chico Mendes, participated in movements against dams, in support to waste collectors and against water pollution in metropolitan area of São Paulo. He was the Director of the Children Homeless School of São Paulo, Coordinator of São Paulo Recycling Service and Editor of the AGB (Brazilian Geographers Association). Waldman has published extensively on Ecology, Environmental education, Water Resources, Waste Management, Development and Black Africa: 500 texts, articles and papers, including 16 books. He is Post Doctor in Geosciences (UNICAMP, 2011), Post Doctor in International Relations (USP, 2013) and Post Doctor in Social Environment Field (Programa Nacional de Pós Doutorado-CAPES, 2015).

a global reference in coordinating the making of the report Our Common Future (a fundamental document of Rio-92), exposed, in an interview to the press, a long list of bitterness.

Making statements that shocked some observers, Gro Brundtland declared with rare sincerity that sustainability is still waiting for realization as a real practice. Demonstrating nonconformity, she also warned that the term is used abusively, without any connections with the intentions that guided Rio-92 Summit. And more directly, she sentenced: "Sustainable development has not happened yet".

As one knows, being the interviewee the "Mother" - as was emphasized - of the concept of sustainability - who would challenge the Brundtland's verdict? And, indeed, in a world where unsustainability became a general rule, the market offers today all kinds of "sustainable" goods. Nowadays, good services are offered, for instance, by "sustainable" cemeteries. It is also possible to use incinerators supposedly "green" to aerate and calcine all possible things.

The term "sustainable" is polysemic and includes notorious contradictions. A fact illustrates this point: recently, the US Army ordered tanks with solar panels, eco-efficient shielding and engines with low emissions of carbon. Naturally these military tanks are "green". In addition, even a "green" Nazi party operates underground in Western Europe.

In short: a theoretical and operational inconsistency of so-called Sustainable Development is under intense fire. And not by chance, in 2015 April several eminent environmentalists intellectuals, mainly Europeans and North Americans, launched the Eco Modernist Manifesto - that regardless of the acceptance or rejection of their claims - explicitly affirm the need to review the existing conceptual grid, their implications and limitations.

Today, an environmental agenda includes one way to debates that go into the roots of the issue, an important step in identifying new lines of action.

Future generations will thank you.

**MAURÍCIO WALDMAN - BOOKS & TEXTS IN KOBO PLATAFORM. SEE NOW!**

<https://store.kobobooks.com/search?Query=Maur%C3%ADcio+Waldman>

**MORE ABOUT PROFESSOR MAURÍCIO WALDMAN:**

Portal do Professor Maurício Waldman: [www.mw.pro.br](http://www.mw.pro.br)

Currículo Lattes-CNPq - <http://lattes.cnpq.br/3749636915642474>

Wikipedia English Edition: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mauricio\\_Waldman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mauricio_Waldman)

CONTACT: E-MAIL: [mw@mw.pro.br](mailto:mw@mw.pro.br)

EDITORA KOTEV



**More About this Issue:  
SEVEN TEXTS ABOUT ECOLOGY  
(Maurício Waldman, Kotev Publishing Home, 2016).**

See:

<http://kotev.com.br/?product=seven-texts-about-ecology>

