

Editorial – Interconnected Ibero-America: territorial and socio-environmental challenges

Editorial – Iberoamérica en red: desafíos territoriales y socioambientales

Pedro JIMÉNEZ-PACHECO^{1*}

Organizer

The contemporary configuration of Ibero-American territories demands a critical perspective on the asymmetries imposed by the global development model. Tensions among urban expansion, ecosystem preservation, and the guarantee of a dignified life for local populations have intensified. In this context, this special section of *Desenvolvimento e Meio Ambiente* (DMA) emerges from the VIII Workshop of the Ibero-American Network for Territorial Observation (RIDOT) and the XIV National Symposium on Urban Development and Territorial Planning (SNDU/PT). Under the theme “Territories: Transformations, Resilience, Decentralization, and Security for the Care of Life”, this interdisciplinary gathering – organized by three universities (Universidad de Cuenca, Universidad del Azuay, and Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja) and held in Cuenca, Ecuador, in June 2025 – established itself as a space for collective reflection among academia, experts, and the public sector. The eleven articles gathered herein systematize several of the discussions from this event, addressing from multiple perspectives the complexity of territorial processes in the face of climate change, the dynamics of capital, and the urgent need to rethink local governance. These contributions are structured around four fundamental axes of discussion that engage directly with the debate on socio-environmental metabolism promoted by this journal.

The first set of works critically examines the frameworks of governance, strategic planning, and territorial resilience. In light of climate and social urgencies, the work by Gudiño and Bersosa Webster highlights the weak institutional framework of territorial planning in Argentina and Ecuador, demonstrating how the incorporation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is often merely formal rather than systemic, disconnected from effective territorial plans. In a different temporal and spatial vein, Postigo Vidal, Pueyo Campos, and López Escolano conduct a longitudinal analysis of strategic planning in Spain toward 2030, revealing an evolution that has transitioned from purely integrative approaches to a strong

1 Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo, Universidad de Cuenca, Cuenca, Provincia de Azuay, Ecuador

* Contact e-mail: pedro.jimenezp@ucuenca.edu.ec

orientation toward digitalization and sustainability. For these plans to materialize, Castañeda Rodríguez et al. propose a dimensional framework to evaluate urban resilience in Latin American territories, emphasizing that the social dimension and territorial justice must act as the articulating core for any adaptive public policy.

A second block of articles delves into the production of space, extended urbanization, and socio-spatial conflicts. Moving away from traditional dichotomies, Vega-Medina analyzes the urban-rural interface in Ricaurte (Cuenca, Ecuador), demonstrating how the subordination of the territory to the logics of capital fragments ecological infrastructures while simultaneously triggering vital community resistance. This expansion of extractive and urban frontiers is also analyzed by Orellana Iñiguez and Verdugo-Molina in the Ecuadorian Amazon, who expose how extended urbanization marginalizes and impoverishes educational infrastructures, confronting children with divided realities between local tradition and forced modernization. From the Global North, yet sharing the critique of the commodification of space, Guevara Fernández and Ulloa Chacha study the Malasaña neighborhood in Madrid, illustrating the duality of art as a tool for social emancipation, but also as a catalyst for speculative processes and gentrification.

This special section proposes a third reflective axis on innovation, participatory tools, and the right to the city. Caro Moreno challenges hegemonic, technologically and economically driven models of innovation to propose Territorial Innovation oriented toward Sustainable Territorial Life, returning the power of organized management to local actors. In the realm of services and the right to mobility, Flores-Juca and Chica Carmona analyze the institutional fragmentation hindering sustainable urban mobility in Ecuador, positing universities as knowledge infrastructures (through observatories and laboratories) capable of bridging gaps in information and experimentation. This compelling need for grassroots data is the core of the research by Galvão and Feitosa, who evaluate collaborative mapping as an irreplaceable methodological and political alternative for producing information in precarious settlements, granting visibility to self-built territories.

Finally, two articles warn against anthropogenic pressure, risks, and socio-environmental vulnerability. Based on case studies in Brazil, Guerra, Abrantes, and Ranieri reveal a concerning reality in the State of São Paulo: the buffer zones of Protected Areas exhibit landscape conditions equal to or poorer than their outer zones due to aggressive agricultural expansion – primarily sugarcane – thereby undermining their ecological function. Meanwhile, in the urban-port environment of Paranaguá, Tonetti et al. highlight the vulnerability of the peripheries, identifying neighborhoods with high exposure to technological risks, stemming from both abrupt hazards (flammable explosions) and recurrent ones (poor air quality), providing vital inputs for disaster mitigation.

As a whole, this volume of the DMA journal constitutes a call to re-think our methodological approaches to the territory. The contributions demonstrate that Ibero-American socio-environmental issues cannot be resolved through isolated sectoral policies; rather, they require an understanding of space as a social product in constant dispute. We invite the scientific community to closely follow these pages, which not only diagnose the multiple crises of our century but also outline alternatives toward a tangible socio-spatial justice.