

The *Estudos Avançados* journal

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THE FIRST issue of *Estudos Avançados* came out in late 1987, a year after the creation of the Institute of *Estudos Avançados* (IEA). The project for the journal was born and evolved in close connection with the new institute at the University of São Paulo (USP). Like the institute, it aimed to stimulate a *transdisciplinary practice*, which was becoming less and less feasible due to specialization in all areas of knowledge. Building bridges between the Natural Sciences and Humanities remains a key project, albeit difficult accomplish.

Added to this first objective was another of equal relevance: the journal should reinforce one of the central purposes of the IEA: *to think about Brazil*, to become deeply acquainted with its present in order to help build its future. The goal was - and still is - to create a style of development not only economic, but social and cultural, without neglecting the defense of the environment. Today, this same complex set of attributes is called sustainable development. The values of justice and democracy of a nation are not proclaimed without an objective analysis of the material and cultural conditions of its people.

This dual target, scientific and ethical, resulted in the 73 issues of *Estudos Avançados* published to date. Whether or not the task of the publishers was satisfactorily fulfilled, it is not for us to judge. Our job is to take stock of the topics and problems explored over more than two decades of uninterrupted work. Readers are left with the role to judge the program and its implementation.

In its 25 years of existence, the journal has covered an extensive array of subject, including:

- Philosophy: science theory, methodology. Ethics.
- Astronomy.
- Biology, Biodiversity and Biotechnology.
- Socio-environmental theories.
- Political Theory, Parliamentarism, Presidentialism and Marxism.
- Economics, Economic Thought, Development and dependency.
- International financial crisis.
- International Politics, Globalization, Nation, International Organizations.
- Latin America, Mercosur, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Venezuela, Cuba. USA. Eastern Europe. Russia.

Brazil:

- Dilemmas and challenges. Perspectives.

- Natural resources, water, forestry, energy sources.
- Regions: Amazon. Dry Northeast. São Paulo today.
- Agrarian issue and rural development.
- Migration.
- Public health, hunger, food security, epidemics.
- Basic education, university.
- Labor and Employment.
- Justice, public security.
- Religions.
- Human Rights. Women. Afro-Brazilians. Indigenous peoples.
- Social, political and cultural history.
- Popular Culture.
- Literature. Arts. Music. Theater. Cinema.

Amidst the topics listed, the reader will find several texts, some conceptual, some empirical, resulting from specific research.

What follows is but an attempt to cut across the areas covered by *Advanced Studies*, identifying some editorials as an example of the wide diversity of issues and approaches. The complete collection of the journal is available for consultation in full on the journal's website at the Scientific Electronic Library Online - SciELO: * www.scielo.br.

In issue 72 the reader will find a wealth of information and comments on key aspects of the economy, politics and cultural life of contemporary Cuba. The crises that followed the fall of the Soviet Union had, predictably, disastrous effects on the economic fabric of the Island. However, the creativity of its culture seems to be intact. Just read what is recorded on the pages of the journal: the maintenance of the educational system, the quality of public health, the nurturing of basic science, the interest in the various forms of popular culture, the vitality of the cinema, theater, music, literature and fine art.

The report "São Paulo today," published in issue 71, gathers articles that convert their topics into problems. Whatever the aspect chosen, the treatment leads to the form of the challenge. The city is a chain of deadlocks. Strictly speaking, it should not grow anymore, having exceeded the limits of a civilized coexistence; but who will stop the capitalist impetus in its eagerness to occupy and exploit all possible spaces treated as raw material of investment and profit? The State, which should fulfill the duty of correcting the market irrationality, works in collusion with the lobbies of developers and contractors. The pathology of the metropolis has roots in the segregation of social classes: there is no feasible urban planning where individual solutions to issues of housing, transportation, safety, environment, leisure ... prevail everywhere. What is the therapy once the diagnosis has been made? Those who collaborated in the report sought to expand the limits of the current scheme. To do so, they turn to community forums

or, at the other extreme, to supranational ones. Neighborhood associations at one end; international forums at the other. Local experience enriches global discussions. And the realization that there are solutions at global level stimulates the action of smaller groups. Hence the final call to militancy.

Issue 70 focused on one of the most remarkable achievements of contemporary science, i.e., biotechnology. In the wide range of its applications, the report highlighted three fundamental components: a) the relationship between biotechnology and sustainable development; b) the multiple interactions of biotechnology with medical, veterinary and pharmacological practices; c) the uses of biotechnology in agriculture.

We believe that the studies published in this issue are a useful reference not only for biotechnology researchers, but also for the laity, who expect from these surveys a safe contribution to sustainable development and public health care.

Issue 69 was dedicated to that open field that is conventionally called Humanities. The term is old; it comes from the philosophical and literary studies developed by the Italian and European Renaissance, or more precisely from the Italian humanists of the fifteenth century, who turned to the Greek and Latin heritage with emphasis on the human faculties: thought, memory, imagination, language, moral conscience. Hence the multiplicity that lurks in the midst of the Humanities.

We have kept the name, Humanities, to characterize the report published in that issue. The reader will find texts produced at the very frontier between literary theory and the history of mentalities; or between sociology and semantics. The cross-cutting approaches that go beyond the confines of specialized sciences are part of the program of the Institute of Advanced Studies, which the journal proposes to develop and disseminate.

And since there are no Humanities without people, we included in the report profiles of intellectuals who gave their word a meaning of ethical and political resistance: Joaquim Nabuco and Eric Hobsbawm.

Issue 68 resumes and deepens the problems related to critical situations found in Brazil. But what distinguishes the report “Socio-environmental Theories” from similar reports is the emphasis on the theoretical treatment of socio-environmental issues. *Estudos Avançados* had the honor of dedicating this issue to the eminent geographer, Professor Aziz Ab’Saber, a constant inspirer of the environmental guideline of the Institute of Advanced Studies.

Issues 65 and 66 were dedicated to the international economic crisis. The essays in issue 66 resumed and deepened the holistic approach that characterized issue 65, and are supplemented by texts focused on the effects of the crisis within the Brazilian economy. The spectrum is wide from both the point of view of reputable information, backed by accurate statistical data and the interpretation and political judgment of the global scenario. It seems consensual to include among the basic factors of the crisis the abusive practice of financial deregulation that has prevailed for at least 20 years, anchored on the principles of neoliberalism. But the interpretations are many: alongside specific approaches focused on recent disasters

in the U.S. real estate industry, we become acquainted with more ambitious hypotheses facing the entire movement of capital accumulation of the last century, with its stable moments marked by threatening imbalances. The confrontation with the great crisis of 1929 has more than one interpretation.

Regarding the Brazilian context, the situation mentioned in the texts is serious but not yet catastrophic: credit becomes scarce, productive activity slows down, unemployment reappears in some sectors, and the variable of informal employment has a greater weight. Poverty rates, however, are dropping (albeit in minimal proportions), thanks to distributive measures of compensatory effects. Anyway, *Estudos Avançados* will remain attentive to the unfolding of the crisis at global and national level.

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Note

* SciELO Brazil currently has 238 journals indexed in its database. *Estudos Avançados* is the second most visited title. The first is *Saúde Pública* (Public Health), the Journal of the School of Public Health at USP. The SciELO Brazil Advisory Committee, at its fourth meeting held on April 23, 2003, selected *Estudos Avançados* to be included in the collection.

Issue 49 of *Estudos Avançados* was the first to be indexed in March 2004. Thanks to the determination of the then director of the IEA, Professor João Evangelista Steiner, the full collection has been available online since April 2006.

From March 2004 to mid-October 2011, the number of visits to the articles published in *Estudos Avançados* reached 15,716,281 (fifteen million seven hundred and sixteen thousand two hundred eighty-one). This number of hits shows the repercussion and the social impact of the reports published in the journal both in Brazil and abroad. In 2007 the Editors began to work on the English version of the articles published in *ADVANCED STUDIES*, especially the reports. The articles are available for consultation on the website of the journal at SciELO. The number of hits to the articles translated into English from August 2009 to mid-October 2011 totaled 346,575 (three hundred forty-six thousand five hundred seventy-five). (D.L.B.).