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Sustainable remediation in Brazil: Development, controversies, and future perspectives

Contaminated sites management started being implemented in a more structured form in Brazil mainly in the 90's. Since then, the management strategy and techniques have evolved significantly. For example, a site-specific risk-based approach was developed to define remediation goals and new remediation technologies were developed and are applied worldwide. However, more recently, it became apparent that the application of remediation techniques might have significant environmental impacts, such as waste generation and gases emissions, besides having a high demand for energy and resources. Consequently, the idea of sustainable remediation started permeating the contaminated sites sector. In this paper we aim to present and discuss how the concept of sustainable remediation started appearing in the Brazilian context and controversies involved in its introduction and application. For example, initially there was a concern that the concept would be used to justify a non-action approach, resulting in higher exposure risks. Currently, there is an ongoing discussion on which levels should the remediation achieve, considering the need to restore impacted systems, the sustainability of the intervention actions and risks involved. Finally, we will present our perspective on the possibilities and opportunities to apply the concept of sustainable remediation, and the points that need further development.

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