

THE DEBATE ON THE TERRITORIAL APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT: An Introduction to the Topic

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ABSTRACT

This text has a threefold purpose: first, to introduce the debate on the territorial approach to development, presenting arguments from some authors and principles that can be considered guidelines for a theoretical corpus on development with a territorial focus; second, to refer to a set of articles submitted in this issue of the journal *Desenvolvimento em Questão*, which deal with the territorial approach to development, highlighting their contribution to the debate on the topic; third, to recall a set of theoretical currents that converge with the concept of territorial development. Therefore, methodologically, this is a text with characteristics of both an essay, if we consider its first purpose, and a descriptive-bibliographical text. Access to this article can serve as a guide and stimulus for reading the other articles in this issue, in addition to highlighting a diversity of thematic axes useful for deepening the topic of the territorial approach to development.

Keywords: territory; territorial approach to development; territorial focus; territorial development.

O DEBATE SOBRE ABORDAGEM TERRITORIAL DO DESENVOLVIMENTO: UMA APRESENTAÇÃO DO TEMA

RESUMO

Este texto tem um triplo propósito: primeiro, introduzir o debate sobre abordagem territorial do desenvolvimento, apresentando alguns princípios que possam ser consideradas balizas de um corpus teórico sobre desenvolvimento com enfoque territorial; segundo, rememorar um conjunto de correntes teóricas, tratados ou não pelos artigos referidos, que tenham convergência com o que chamamos de corpus teórico, ou mais precisamente, com a noção de desenvolvimento territorial; terceiro, referir-se a um conjunto de artigos submetidos neste número da revista *Desenvolvimento em Questão*, que tratam da abordagem territorial do desenvolvimento, destacando sua contribuição no debate do tema. Portanto, metodologicamente, trata-se de um texto com características tanto de ensaio, se considerarmos seu primeiro propósito, quanto descritivo-bibliográfico. O acesso a este artigo pode servir como guia de orientação e estímulo para a leitura dos demais artigos desta edição, além de evidenciar uma diversidade de eixos temáticos úteis para o aprofundamento do tema abordagem territorial do desenvolvimento.

Palavras-chave: território; abordagem territorial do desenvolvimento; enfoque territorial; desenvolvimento territorial.

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INTRODUCTION

The call for papers to be published in a special issue on a specific topic in a qualified scientific journal such as *Desenvolvimento em Questão* is an invitation for an open and proactive dialogue with researchers dedicated to studying the topic. The topic of development with a territorial focus, or “the territorial approach to development”, has been mobilizing researchers from different areas of knowledge, especially from the humanities, natural sciences, social sciences, and applied social sciences, who, based on disciplinary or interdisciplinary knowledge, have sought to establish an epistemological, theoretical and methodological framework capable of supporting the debate and enabling empirical studies. Despite the progress made, it is clear that there is still much to be done, especially in terms of developing an epistemic-theoretical basis and methodological tools suitable for analysis from a territorial perspective.

This text serves as a presentation of the Special Edition of the Journal *Desenvolvimento em Questão*, with the theme *Territorial Approach to Development: Genesis, epistemic basis, and convergent theoretical-methodological approaches*. The organization of this edition had the collaboration of several researchers in the composition of the Editorial Committee: Ademir Antonio Cazella – UFSC; Argemiro Luis Brum – Unijuí; Arilson da Silva Favareto – UniABC; Cidonea Machado Deponti – Unisc; Edemar Rotta – UFFS; Iván Geraldo Peyré Tartaruga – Universidade do Porto-Portugal; Marcos Aurelio Saquet – Unioeste; Mário Lúcio de Ávila – UnB – rede RETE; Mireya Eugenia Valencia Perafan – UnB; Pedro Luís Büttenbender – Unijuí; Valdir Roque Dallabrida – Bolsista Sênior CNPq – Unijuí e Redeteg.

Before referring to the theme of this edition, it is necessary to situate the sociocultural and academic context that served as the central motivation for its proposal. Since March 2020, beginning during the period of interruption of academic activities caused by the COVID Pandemic, the Ibero-American Network of Studies on Territorial Development and Governance (REDETEG) started a series of virtual Thematic Seminars (Webinars), featuring lectures by scholars from Brazil, Portugal, Spain and Latin American countries. During the Webinars, the Brazilian Network of Research and Management in Territorial Development (RETE) and several Postgraduate Programs from Brazilian universities and countries covered by Redeteg joined as supporters or co-promoters. Among the topics discussed dominated the debate on the territorial approach to development, both in the speakers’ speeches and in the interaction with the participating audience, including researchers, undergraduate and graduate students, and the general public.

As a result, throughout the Webinar series, the topic of territorial development, or related topics such as territory, territorial governance, and territorial heritage, was disseminated among the hundreds of participants, which initially motivated the integration of more than thirty researchers in a research project called *Territorial heritage as a reference in the process of development of territories or regions*, popularly known as the ProPAT Project. The execution of ProPAT provided opportunities for studies, which had as their central focus the explanation of epistemic-theoretical-methodological assumptions convergent with the territorial approach to development.⁵

⁵ Throughout the text, mention will be made of the results of the execution of the ProPAT Project.

However, as interest in the topic was awakened and studies were carried out, it was found that the topic “territorial approach to development” deserved to be explored in greater depth, seeking its genesis, its epistemic-theoretical-methodological bases, as well as other convergent theoretical approaches. It was from this debate that the initiative of professors who were coordinating Redeteg in Brazil resulted in the editors of the magazine *Desenvolvimento em Questão*, proposing the creation of a Special Edition on the subject. The magazine immediately accepted and the calls were made, resulting in the submission of more than thirty-six articles, of which the Scientific Committee selected twenty-two, which make up the edition.

Referring to the territorial approach means conceiving the territory as a fundamental reference when proposing the analysis of a given spatial section. The territory is conceived as a social construction resulting from accumulations, inherited from a distant or more recent past, which are expressed contemporaneously in the social, economic, natural, cultural, institutional, human, and intellectual dimensions, which constitute the territorial heritage. Therefore, the territorial approach to development, in short, serves a central purpose, namely, to be an alternative to overcoming analyses of spatial sections, whether rural or urban, centered on disciplinary and/or sectoral procedures, in addition to presenting itself as a condition for carrying out territorial studies that assume an interdisciplinary, multidimensional, multiscale perspective, of totality and complexity.

The structure of this text is divided into three parts, each with its own purpose: (i) the first, to introduce the debate on the territorial approach to development, presenting arguments from some authors and principles that can be considered guidelines for a theoretical corpus on development with a territorial focus; (ii) the second, refers to a set of articles submitted in this issue of the journal *Desenvolvimento em Questão*, which deal with the territorial approach to development, highlighting their contribution to the debate on the topic; (iii) and the third, recalls a set of theoretical currents that converge with the concept of territorial development⁶.

Therefore, methodologically, this is a text with characteristics of both an essay, if we consider its primary purpose, and a descriptive-bibliographical text. Access to this article can serve as a guide and stimulus for reading the other articles in this issue, in addition to highlighting a diversity of thematic axes relevant to the deepening of the theme “territorial approach to development”.

IN SEARCH OF A THEORETICAL CORPUS ON DEVELOPMENT WITH A TERRITORIAL FOCUS

Introduction to the debate

Most authors who refer to the territorial approach to development, or territorial focus, accept that, internationally, one of the fundamental works was the publication by Bagnasco

⁶ This text, in addition to serving as a presentation of the Special Edition, contributes to meeting one of the goals set out in the research project “Validação de metodologia com enfoque territorial e aproximações com abordagens convergentes” (Chamada n. 32/2023 - Processo n. 171742/2023-0) and contributions from the research project “Cooperativismo no desenvolvimento de territórios ou regiões” (Chamada n. 09/2022 – Processo n. 312164/2022-0) funded by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPQ). Both projects are linked to the Postgraduate Program in Regional Development at UNIJUI.

(1977), which dealt with the “territorial problem of development”, referring to the Italian experience. Although less mentioned, it is not considered less important for that, another Chilean economist, Sergio Boisier, is a Latin American reference in the debate on territorial development. Among his extensive work, a publication made in Brazil stands out, in which he proposes the alternative of territorial development based on the construction of what he calls “synergetic capital”, referring to the societal capacity to promote actions directed towards collective and democratically accepted territorial ends (Boisier, 1999). There is a coincidence between the two authors, as they break with a traditional view of development: the valorization of intangible factors present in the territory, such as sociocultural or symbolic factors.

Nonetheless, it would be unfair not to mention the Brazilian economist Celso Furtado since many of his publications converge with the theoretical stance of overcoming the traditional view of development. Just to mention one of his arguments, Furtado (1982, p. 149) states that

[...] however, experience has amply demonstrated that true development is primarily a process of activating and channeling social forces, advancing associative capacity, exercising initiative and inventiveness. Therefore, it is a social and cultural process, and only secondarily economic.

In other words, development is produced intentionally, since “development means the genesis of effectively new social forms” (Furtado, 1982). And where is the exercise of associative capacity and collective action possible, if not in a territory? Therefore, this author also has a theoretical stance that serves as a generator of what has become known as the territorial focus, or territorial approach to development.

Geographer Milton Santos (1996), at the end of the last century, highlighted that the territory is the arena of mediation between the market and civil society. Sometimes this mediation process needs to have a protective or contesting character, as market networks transport the so-called verticalities, in the form of selfish and utilitarian rules and norms, serving only the interests of hegemonic actors.

Among the different Brazilian publications, I highlight some that underline with greater emphasis the importance of focusing development on the territory: (i) Etges (2005), presenting the notion attributed to the territory as a paradigm of sustainable territorial development; (ii) Saquet (2018), when referring to the territorial approach, presenting the territory as a fundamental component of locally-based, cultural and ecological development, highlighting the need to qualify “class and place consciousness”, in the activation of territorialities focused on cooperation, solidarity, struggle and political resistance, in the face of the interests of hegemonic actors, national and international; (iii) Favareto et al. (2022), when proposing the territory as a unit whose logic is always driven by the dispute between different social actors for the control and use of its resources, tangible and intangible, in which several interdependencies operate (endogenous and exogenous factors – society and nature – different coalitions of social forces).

Paraphrasing the aforementioned authors, thinking about development with the territory and its territorial heritage as a reference implies understanding the territorial environment as a locus for the exercise of associative capacity and collective action aimed at promoting actions directed towards collective and democratically accepted ends locally, including the power game aimed at contesting the exclusively mercantile interests of hegemonic actors and the dispute between different social actors for the control and use of territorial resources.

From the introduction of the debate to the proposition of necessary advances

The economist José Eli Veiga (2002), when referring to the “territorial face of development”, concluded that the rhetoric of “territorial development” was a small advance in relation to the notion of local or regional development. However, he questioned whether it had overcome the traditional sectoral divisions (primary, secondary, tertiary) and an integrated treatment of the spatial division (countryside vs. city). More than twenty years later, if we consider a significant part of the literature that mentions the category of territorial development, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the sectoral, spatial, and dimensional dichotomy has not been completely overcome, even if we point out the small advances that have been made.

This suspicion was confirmed by Favareto et al. (2015), when they stated that, even in research, a normative approach still prevails, with the understanding of territorial development as an attempt at intervention. Thus, according to the authors, few studies are dedicated to understanding the social and economic fabric of territories and how they matter in shaping the long-term development trajectory in these spaces.

In short, a vision consistent with the interdependencies and complexity of the territorial fabric that sustains the contemporary world needs to go beyond the dichotomy approaches that characterize much of the tradition of sociology and rural economics, or the continuum present in studies with an urban bias on space and territory, moving towards a truly relational approach (Favareto et al., 2015, p. 21).

Expanding this debate, Favareto and Lotta (2022) state that approaches with a territorial focus need to advance because: (i) even when policies are called “territorial”, there is a sectoral bias in investments and territories are taken only as a planning unit, as a scale; (ii) local actors and social structures are not yet given an active role in explanatory schemes on the relations between the State, territory and public policies; (iii) even if a “discursive innovation” is perceived, with the association between public policies and territories, it still needs to be improved in the scientific field with the creation of concepts and analysis frameworks that allow it to operate substantively, beyond the mere juxtaposition of territories as a simple object or space for the incidence of public policies, as is still the case today. In this sense, the authors propose that the territory be considered a “synthesis category”, of a spatial nature, used to delimit a unit formed by social and natural systems, which are interdependent⁷.

Carrière and Cazella (2003) state that a dynamic of territorial development cannot be established without the creation or reinforcement of networks and new forms of cooperation. The creation of networks can occur through the intensification of exchanges between researchers, civil associations, private companies, and public bodies, thus becoming an essential component of the process of designing innovative development projects in municipalities, regions, or territories.

Territorial development thus presupposes cooperation between actors whose interests are not identical, but who can find areas of convergence in new projects, in such a way that everyone benefits from the ‘atmosphere’ conducive to generating unusual initiatives (p. 37).

⁷ Favareto deepens this debate in a paper that constitute part of this issue of *Desenvolvimento em Questão*.

Several other contributions from Brazilian authors and authors from other countries that address the topic of territorial approaches could be mentioned⁸. Despite the contribution of such publications, it is considered that an epistemic-theoretical basis and methodological tools suitable for analysis from a territorial perspective still represent a challenge that has not been effectively addressed.

It was precisely with the purpose of advancing the debate on the territorial dynamics of development that studies were carried out between 2021 and 2023 (ProPAT Project)⁹, with the central objective of developing studies, proposing and validating a methodological framework to contribute to the elaboration of territorial diagnoses that allow the prospecting of innovative and sustainable development alternatives, using territorial heritage as a reference. The studies carried out in the ProPAT Project were inspired by constant reflections in previous publications, in particular three of them: Dallabrida (2015); Dallabrida (2020a; 2020b).

Initially, the ProPAT Project resulted in two publications: (i) Dallabrida, Rotta, and Büttenbender (2021), which presents epistemic-theoretical assumptions regarding the territorial approach to development; (ii) Dallabrida et al. (2021), which explains the conceptual categories and methodological assumptions that converge with the territorial approach to development. The first stage of the ProPAT Project was completed in 2023, with publications in journals (e.g. Dallabrida et al., 2023a)¹⁰ and a book (Dallabrida et al., 2023b)¹¹.

The main result of the studies carried out in the ProPAT Project was the proposal of an index to measure the activation stage of territorial resources and heritage, to serve as a reference in the prospecting of territorial development strategies. This is the Multidimensional Index of Territorial Heritage Activation (IMAP)¹².

The IMAP proposal is supported by a set of principles, based on the epistemic-theoretical framework used in the ProPAT Project. These principles can be considered as guidelines for a theoretical corpus that converges with the territorial focus, having repercussions on the analytical perspective required in a spatial analysis, as well as methodological implications. Among an extensive set of principles, six of them are considered essential: (i) environmental sustainability: prioritizing alternatives that can have uninterrupted replicability, with respect to life in all its forms of manifestation; (ii) inclusion and equanimity: prioritizing alternatives that serve a greater number of beneficiaries, with special attention to traditional peoples and populations expropriated from their way of life, from the perspective of personal and spatial equanimity; (iii) innovation: prioritizing alternatives for solving challenges that meet the perspective of innovation and creativity; (iv) totality: prioritizing respect for territorial specificities, while analyzing solutions and alternatives that consider reality in an integrated and contextualized manner (regional, national, global); (v) multidimensionality: prioritization of solutions

⁸ In Dallabrida et al. (2023a; 2023b), reference is made to a considerable set of publications that approach the topic.

⁹ This is the study process carried out in the context of the research project *O patrimônio territorial como referência para o desenvolvimento de territórios e regiões* (CNPQ).

¹⁰ The publication of two thematic dossiers stands out, one in 2022 in the Brazilian Journal of Management and Regional Development (v. 18, n. 1) and another in 2023 in the journal *Desenvolvimento em Questão* (year 21, n. 59).

¹¹ In 2023, the stage of proposing the theoretical-methodological framework was completed, and its validation will be part of the second stage of studies, scheduled for 2024 and 2025.

¹² As summarized in Dallabrida et al. (2023b) and in the dossier published in the journal *Desenvolvimento em Questão* (year 21, n. 59).

and alternatives that meet the perspective of multidimensionality, considering their possible articulations and connections; (vi) **autonomy**: prioritization of solutions and alternatives that favor autonomy and territorial power, allowing the expression of their specificities (Dallabrida, 2022).

In short, these principles are references that delimit a field of study that converges with the territorial approach. Thus, it is understood that, with the initial reflections of this text, complemented by those of a set of texts selected for this edition, an important step is being taken in the attempt to structure a theoretical corpus on development with a territorial focus.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE ARTICLES IN THIS SPECIAL EDITION TO DEEPEN THE DEBATE ON THE TERRITORIAL APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT

This issue of the journal *Desenvolvimento em Questão* welcomes a set of articles that propose an epistemic-theoretical-methodological debate, in addition to analyzing experiences, with the territorial approach to development as its theme. The purpose of the call for articles was to provide researchers, students, and public and private administrators with the opportunity to learn more about the epistemic-theoretical-methodological parameters, in addition to deepening their understanding of the challenges of practicing the territorial approach. The articles are listed below, with a summary of their possible contribution to the debate on the topic in question.

- **Approaches to territorial development: emergence and recent perspectives** - Approaches to territorial development: emergence and recent perspectives - the text provides a history of how regional science was established, how the territorial issue emerged in international literature, and then discusses the territorial dynamics that operate around the notion of “territorial resource”.
- **The urban bioregional world under construction: the territorialist approach to bioregional planning and design** - based on the Italian planning experience, the authors emphasize the “territorialist methodology”, proposing the “heritage of territorial resources”, redesigning the territory, following the “bioregional model”.
- **The territorial turn and the strong and weak uses of the association between territory and public policies** - the text begins by stating that there has been a certain trivialization in the use of the territorial approach, in addition to the fact that territories are taken passively, only as a place of incidence of public policies, presenting different patterns of situations.
- **The territory beyond social construction: subject-cosmos synthesis and involvement in favor of life** - the author states that the category territory is used in a superficial, confusing, and inadequate way, given its complexity, proposing the integration of science, popular and original knowledge, in each process of territorial involvement.
- **Territorial governance and commons: new perspective for collaborative governance** - the author states that collaborative territorial governance mechanisms, built as common goods, play an important role in organizing collective action, suggesting ways to renew public action, and highlighting the role of facilitators.

- **Transversality and multidimensionality as the focus of territorial action: experience of Rafaela in Argentina and the ProPAT Project in Brazil** - in the text, transversality is understood as territorial action that has the capacity to integrate different dimensions or disciplinary perspectives horizontally, referring to two experiences (Rafaela-Argentina and ProPAT Project-Brazil).
- **Distinctive market signals and territorial development: consensus and dissent** - the author states that the creation of distinctive market signals (e.g. IGs) are sometimes taken excessively as new ways to develop territories, and foster innovation and social cohesion, deserving critical reflection.
- **Territorial quality income: from French theory to Brazilian studies** - the text deals with the so-called Territorial Quality Income as an alternative to territorial development, resulting from the differentiated income of goods and services with territorial specificity, referring to the original studies in France and potential in Brazil.
- **Territorial development in perspective: territorial governance and the basket of territorial goods and services (CBST) in Brazilian literature** – reaffirming that the theoretical-methodological framework of CBST and its influence on territorial development depends on the synergy of multi-actor initiatives, the text analyzes Brazilian literature to understand the role of different configurations of territorial governance.
- **Systemic and inter-scalar approach to regional and rural territorial development: Approaches, experiences and learning in Latin America** – the text systematizes the conceptual and methodological debates on development as a systemic, multi- and inter-school process in Latin America, comparing and evaluating systematized territorial experiences, seeking to identify their implications for public policies and governance processes.
- **Agrotourism interfaces with the focus on the Basket of Territorial Goods and Services** – the text analyzes the relationship between agrotourism and the valorization of specific territorial resources in the form of CBST, referring to an experience in the Serra Catarinense, highlighting challenges arising from the action of external entrepreneurs and their fragile articulation with local initiatives.
- **Landscape and sustainable development in mountainous territories** – an alternative to traditional development strategies based on exogenous capital is to value local products and services identified with the territory, such as the promotion of sustainable development in mountainous territories, is what the article proposes.
- **Listening and sound dimension in the territorial experience** – this essay presents and discusses the sensory and affective aspect in the relationship with the territory, specifically with regard to the experience of listening and sound environments, drawing attention to the importance of taking such aspects into account in research with a territorial focus.
- **Native seeds fair festivals: building a praxis of resistance against conventional agriculture** – the theme of native seed fairs is treated in the text as spaces for exchanging knowledge, articulating actions in defense of agroecology and agrobiodi-

versity, in addition to becoming arenas of territorial praxis and spaces of contestation against the conventional agricultural model.

- **For an “epistemological rebellion”:** notes on urban development and planning from the perspective of indigenous and quilombola intellectuals – the bibliographic review summarizes the perspective of indigenous and quilombola intellectuals on urban development and planning, expanding the decolonial and counter-colonial discussion, proposing a pattern in which nature and culture are intertwined.
- **Immersed markets as a promotion of territorial development: the case of the quilombola territory of Ribeirão Grande/Terra Seca** – the article highlights that in the debate on the uniqueness and appreciation of products and services of territories, the theme of immersed markets appears, and that, through the analysis of a rural quilombola territory, female protagonism, support for sustainability, and strengthening of governance were found.
- **Participatory methodology for constructing a basket of territorial goods and services** - using a participatory methodology for inventory and qualification of specific territorial resources, the article reports on a study carried out in the municipality of Paulo Lopes in order to support the construction of a Basket of Territorial Goods and Services, as a strategy for social and environmental innovation.
- **Capacity of territorial public governance to involve community-based tourism in sustainable local development: an analysis of the case of Paraty/RJ** – this type of tourism is seen in the article as a way of managing tourism aimed at local development, in the case of Paraty, showing that full scope has depended on interaction with other territorial actors, in addition to advancing, from the perspective of co-promotion of the endogenous and sustainable development of territories.
- **Territorial development through the construction of a basket of goods and services: perspectives on rural tourism in Porto Vera Cruz/RS** - rural tourism as a driver of territorial development, as long as it can involve sectors of the local production chain and stimulate a range of CBST-type products and services, is what the article discusses, as a prospective study in a municipality in RS.
- **Methodological proposal for evaluating creative events in municipalities as a local development resource** – the article begins by stating that the cultural dimension of territories needs to be considered in the local and regional development process, with emphasis on the creative economy. However, it finds that municipalities have difficulty measuring results, for which a methodological model is proposed.
- **Regional development policies in Brazil: a critical analysis** - the article aims to understand the trajectories, highlight the objectives and advances achieved over the years, verify the similarities and differences, and study the future possibilities of regional development and territorial planning policies in Brazil.
- **Understanding the territoriality of urban governance: the network, ties and webs in Florianópolis** – the article results from a study that aims to understand the urban governance of Florianópolis, based on multi-actor action, seeking to contribute with a territorialized and situated perspective of governance, by identifying and analyzing its networks, ties and webs.

THEORETICAL TRENDS CONVERGING WITH THE TERRITORIAL APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT

The main theoretical trends that present significant convergence with the territorial approach to development, or territorial focus, are mentioned below, including a quick summary and some reading suggestions. The theoretical trends on “basket of territorial goods and services” and “territorial quality income” are among those that present a strong convergence with the territorial approach to development. These theoretical trends are addressed in articles on this issue, which makes it unnecessary to mention the topic in this part of the text.

Bioregional Paradigm: from Bioregionalism to Eco-territorialism

Epistemologically, the notion of Bioregionalism summarizes an integrative and historical relationship between humans and the environment. According to the literature on the subject, it was Peter Berg who, in the 1960s, coined the term “Bioregionalism” to refer to an ecology of human interactions with the place (environment), considering its bioregional specificities. Eco-territorialism, on the other hand, is an expression developed in studies and research/action carried out at the Italian Territorialist School from the 1990s onwards. According to this notion, the territory and its heritage are considered central, as alternatives to the processes of deterritorialization and hegemonic urbanization promulgated by economic-financial globalization as an option on planet Earth. The foundation in 2011 of the Territorialist Society in Italy strengthened the multidisciplinary nature of the approach, proposing the “urban bioregion” tool as its operational component. The prefix “eco” denotes the priority given to the ecological issue, to the relationships between humans and non-humans, living and non-living beings, in the processes of regeneration of the places in the world that we are trying to activate (Silva, 2023).

One of the main proponents of the notion of the bioregional paradigm, Magnagui (2020) states that the territory is the “common good” par excellence, encompassing cities – small, medium, and large –, villages and towns, agroforestry and environmental systems, and urban and rural infrastructures. Understood in this way, the territory constitutes a true living being, whose genes, personality, and beauty are the result of co-evolutionary processes between human settlement and the environment sedimented throughout history. The territorial principle dialogues with an interdisciplinary perspective and with multi-actor territorial action. By pointing out this perspective, the author proposes “returning to the territory”, as a political act, with its planning guided by new forms of “community democracy”, as a possible way out of overcoming the divorce between nature and culture, which has led us to the alienation represented by unlimited growth. Returning to the territory – to the land, to the mountains, to urbanity, to local socioeconomic systems – means rediscovering the rules that allow us to deal with the production of space as “human environment”, using methods that are also capable of strategically addressing the profound global ecological crisis that we are experiencing. The author concludes by reaffirming the need for growth in “awareness of place”, which ranges from the collective recognition of heritage values to the integration of hydraulic, environmental, urban, agroforestry, energy, and productive cultures in a bioregional project, thus constituting an important indicator for guiding the construction of a future “eco-territorialist civilization”.

At the core of the bioregional paradigm, several thematic axes converge with the territorial focus of expenditure, or territorial approach, such as: from the natural region to the bioregion, bioregional planning, ecosystem services, human ecology, sustainable landscaping, geodiversity and agroecosystems, heritage and territorial heritage¹³, socio-environmental vulnerabilities, alternatives to environmental collapse, mosaics of protected areas, among others. For the study of these themes, some other references: Magnaghi, 2023; Martins, 2017; Marzocca, 2023; Poli, 2020. All of these are themes that dialogue with the territorial approach to development.

Finally, it is important to mention three publications, introducing a theme that in part dialogues with the perspective of an “eco-territorialist civilization” and the “bioregional paradigm”.

The first, Rivera Cusicanqui (2018), associating the discussion on the bioregional paradigm with the challenge of cultural decolonization¹⁴, refers, in particular, to the colonialist stance that still prevails in the relationship between Latin American social elites and governments and indigenous society. He states that “we are all Indians as colonized people” and that decolonization means ceasing to be Indian and becoming a person. He refers to “internal colonialism,” which he claims is still present in Latin American countries as a reproduction of historical colonialism, typical of caste societies. The adherence of his argument to the bioregional paradigm is expressed in his desire to see “a world of bioregions,” not of nations, of river basins, not of regions or provinces, of mountain ranges, not of value chains, of autonomous communities, not of social movements.

Brazilian geographer Rogério Haesbaert (2021), when addressing the theme of “territory and decoloniality”, states that de(s)colonizing, more as a verb than as a noun, is, at the same time, a perspective of looking at/reading and experiencing/practicing the world. In other words, de(s)coloniality, much more than the result of an academic requirement, a new paradigm or “theoretical body”, is a demand from the lives of real people/groups who call on us as partners in search of not only answers, but also concrete actions that help them build another world, or open horizons to other possible worlds. He refers to what he calls the “original sins” of the modern colonial capitalist system, such as the increasingly universalized privatizing economic exploitation and commodification, the political-cultural (or racist-patriarchal) oppression of a standardized civilizing model, the expropriation of life and nature that eliminates cultures and biodiversity. Considering these aspects, it concludes that decolonization is, in practice, an ongoing process of resistance that accompanies, at different levels and scales, the entire history

¹³The theme of heritage is addressed in different ways. However, its closest connection to the theme of territorial approach to development occurs insofar as it constitutes a process of attribution of value and reaffirmation of the feeling of collective belonging, contributing to the weaving of territories, reaffirming their identity dimension (Di Méo, 2014), involving both the heritage characterization of the territory and the territorial characterization of heritage (Martínez Yáñez, 2008), thus serving as a stimulus to the solidification and evolution of territorial production systems. The theme is addressed with this meaning by the Italian authors Daniela Poli and Giulia Luciani, in one of the articles in this issue.

¹⁴This topic is generally addressed by the so-called “decolonial turn,” a theoretical approach that is addressed by different authors, but which addresses the same issue: it opposes colonialist positions. Depending on the author, in Portuguese, sometimes the term “decolonial/decolonialidade” is used, other times “descolonial/descolonialidade.” To clarify the meaning of the use of one or the other term, with its derivations, we suggest a publication with texts by more than a dozen reference authors - Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel (2007) -, a book that is available for free access. Another publication on the topic by a Brazilian author: Balestrin (2013). There are authors who criticize the approach given to the topic: Silva (2024).

of capitalism. Decolonization can be even more than “decapitalization”, in the sense of fighting against the dis-order of capital, economic exploitation, and the annihilation of subjectivities, inherent to the “colonization” of all spheres of life promoted by this system.

Dorrigo, Danner, and Danner (2022), when referring to African decolonization and what is still present in Brazilian indigenous literature, highlighting the cultural issue, argue that: (i) colonialism is the structuring axis of the production of black and indigenous people as racially justified minorities, leading to their invisibility and silencing; (ii) decolonization, which can only be carried out by the colonized subject-group, gives full protagonism to this same smaller subject-group which, from this condition as a racially founded wound and stigma, publicizes its voice and dynamizes its critical-emancipatory praxis; (iii) aesthetic-literary production becomes the place of normative self-constitution and thematization of the epistemic-political conditions that produce-reproduce political-cultural minorities, becoming a fundamental political instrument for confronting Eurocentrism-colonialism-racism. Decolonization, by emphasizing the voice and protagonism of and by the smaller subject-group, deconstructs the naturalized idea of black, indigenous, white, etc., showing them as politicality, relationality, normativity, and historicity.

Therefore, the theoretical reflections proposed by the authors Rivera Cusicanqui, Hasbaert and Dorrico, and Danner and Danner, are significant contributions to thinking about the possibility of another world, with greater attention to the territory and the people who live there, with greater respect for nature, with fewer regions and more bioregions.

The theory of symbolic sites of belonging

The theory of symbolic sites of belonging (SSP) has as its main authors Hassam Zaoual (2010, 2006a, 2006b); Latouche, Nohra, and Zaoual (1999); and Panhuys (2006), among others. For Thiollent (2003), the theory articulates knowledge from philosophy, economics, and social sciences, from the perspective of a radical critique of the development models imposed by rich countries on others, in addition to denouncing the failure of development models transposed to others, in which the free market imposes itself over the other dimensions of human life, such as different cultures, diversity and respect for the environment.

For Zaoual (2006a, p. 32), “[...] each site is an entity that permeates the whole of life in a given environment”. It includes beliefs, myths, values, and past experiences, conscious and unconscious, in addition to ritualizations. These intangible aspects are joined by empirical and/or theoretical knowledge, and all the social knowledge accumulated during the historical trajectory of the resident population. In other words, territorial actors operate according to their own know-how, techniques, and models of action.

Studies in Brazil, such as Dorigon (2022), associate the notion of SSP with convergent approaches, such as the Basket of Territorial Goods and Services (CBST) and Territorial Quality Income (RQT). While the CBST approach is based on the identification and valorization via markets of the specificities of territorial resources and assets, which can generate an RQT, in the SSP approach, the imaginary structure of economic and social coordination allows for the integration of different dimensions, with markets being just one of them. The author believes that the sense of belonging to a given territory and culture gains relevance and can be incorporated into products and services that value territorial attributes, such as landscapes, know-how, culture, trajectory, and history of certain social groups. In experiences of this nature, the relevance of qualified territorial governance practices is reaffirmed.

The Eco-Marxism

The eco-Marxist approach is the one that believes it is necessary to reconceptualize the analytical categories of Marxism in order to address the environmental issue in capitalism. It refers, in particular, to the tendency of the capitalist production system to devour, dispose of, and degrade nature to the point of threatening the basic material conditions of human reproduction, since, in its different moments of transformation - extraction, refinement, distribution, and use - the productive sector causes varied forms of resource exhaustion and pollution. In short, it refers to the self-destructive appropriation of space and external nature, that is, the environment, by capitalism. Eco-Marxism advocates overcoming such situations (Dallabrida, 2017).

Thus, eco-Marxism or ecosocialism argues that the expansion of the capitalist system is the cause of social exclusion, poverty, exploitation, and environmental degradation. This argument is supported by Carl Marx's classic statement that nature is a source of wealth for capital, and thus the two sources from which all wealth emanates are the land and the worker. The so-called "surplus value" appropriated by the employer through the payment of wages is associated with the appropriation of nature for the sole purpose of capital accumulation (Montmeller-Filho, 2000)¹⁵.

The main point of convergence of this theoretical current with the territorial approach is its systemic and non-economistic view of development, in addition to its strong association with environmental issues.

The Ecofeminism

The Ecofeminist Movement is supported by the defense of the environment, the perspective of contributing to the environmental sustainability of communities, and the social, economic, and natural components. The term ecofeminism arises in France in the 1970s, with the founding of the Ecology and Feminism Movement. The relationship between science, women, and nature would be among the first concerns of the ecofeminist movement, highlighting similarities between feminism and ecology, uniting the women's movement with ecological movement, from a new worldview, detached from socioeconomic conception and domination. (Dallabrida, 2017).

The general principles of ecofeminism are thus described: (i) from the economic point of view, there would be a similarity between how Western thinking sees women and nature, that is, the domination of women and the exploitation of nature would originate from the same logic, interest in reducing costs and capital accumulation; (ii) the understanding that society without the exploitation of nature would be a necessary condition for the liberation of women; (iii) the argument that scientific and technological development policies have not been neutral from the point of view of gender and environment, thus historically presented a tendency to exclude women from the areas of knowledge, so not contemplating their vision of the world (Siprandi, 2000).

¹⁵Other references on the theme: O'Connor (2000); Mies and Shiva (2021); Hernández (2010).

Vandana Shiva (1991) advanced in discussions, demonstrating through studies conducted in India such as violence against women and nature originated in material bases. Thus, forms of domination over peoples, whereby development programs with nature destruction were oriented, would result in the deterioration of women's survival conditions, for example, through the extinction of water sources, food, and biodiversity.

However, Puleo (2019) maintains that the feminist criticism of science reaches its maximum intensity with the ecofeminist theory, because, in this, the analysis of androcentrism¹⁶ is associated with the attempt to overcome anthropocentrism. Thus, ecofeminism advocates a scientific model that replaces the paradigm of the domain of nature characteristic of the hegemonic technoscientific complex. In considering that there is still a gender gap in the world of science, the author states that the modern epistemological paradigm of subject/object separation and the repression of feelings, prints an androcentric bias to scientific practices, favoring a distorted and split vision of nature and humanity.

Ecofeminism converges with the territorial approach in many ways, in particular, it is a vision of development sustained in the principles of environmental sustainability, inclusion, and equanimity, as well as advocating a new worldview, which overcomes the domain of nature by technoscientific hegemonic standards.

Focus on Ecovillages

The term Ecovillages is generally used to refer to small, self-sufficient communities that live by and for the natural environment. They are located primarily in rural areas and their inhabitants build societies based on cooperation, self-consumption, renewable energy, and ecological materials. Therefore, in addition to the principle of self-sufficiency, sustainability is understood in its deepest sense.

Dias et al. (2017) state that the notion of sustainability is largely appropriated by capitalism; for example, it is used as a synonym for sustainable development, favoring a questionable pattern of economic growth, to the detriment of ecological and social sustainability. For the author, sustainability is related to “[...] temporal continuity and, consequently, with responsibility in actions, not only towards future generations, but also towards current ones, and not only towards humanity as an isolated species, but as part of a complex geobiophysical system” (p. 81). Furthermore, sustainability ideals also incorporate the quality of this permanence, which is evident, for example, in concerns regarding social justice. Thus, the practical implications of the search for sustainability are still insufficiently assumed.

Roysen and Mertens (2018), when conducting a study on ecovillages in Brazil, conclude that the ecovillage niche, although creating “protected spaces”, contrary to the dominant understanding, is not isolated from political and social processes, and is an important actor to be included in debates on the paths towards sustainable development.

¹⁶Androcentrism is a term coined by American sociologist Lester F. Ward, which refers to perspectives that take men into account as the focus of analysis. Androcentrism is literally related to the notion of patriarchy. See a more in-depth look at the topic in Grecco (2018).

Therefore, what we can see is that the focus on Ecovillages converges with the epistemic-theoretical perspective of the territorial approach to development, especially due to its emphasis on ecological and social sustainability¹⁷.

Approaches to Agroforestry and Agrifood Systems¹⁸

Among the theoretical approaches to territorialized development, it is necessary to highlight the approaches to Agroforestry and Agrifood Systems.

Agroforestry Systems (SAFs) refer to concentrations of productive activities characterized by the use of trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants, combined with agricultural or foraging species, with or without the presence of animals, but necessarily associated with forest species, territorially integrated, generating multiple uses of the soil and, at the same time, new alternatives for work and income. In both cases, the service sector may or may not be integrated, for example, with activities related to tourism (rural, historical, or environmental), gastronomy, and hotels, as well as environmental consulting companies, tourism companies, or environmental service management companies (May; Trovatto, 2008).

The environmental benefits of agroforestry systems include: (i) providing habitat for species of fauna and flora; (ii) providing a more productive and sustainable alternative to conventional systems of exploitation of natural resources; (iii) creating ecological corridors, stepping stones, or buffer zones, favoring the conservation of sensitive species of flora and fauna; (iv) providing ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration, improving air, water, and soil quality, in addition to conserving biodiversity (Radomski; Lacerda; Kellermann, 2014; Schemberg et al., 2017)¹⁹.

SAFs increase the multifunctionality of agriculture, contributing not only to the food and productive sovereignty of thousands of families but also to the community economy and the protection of biodiversity. These systems have demonstrated resilience to extreme climate events, and the spread of agroecologically based SAFs can have a positive impact on the subsistence, resilience, and sovereignty of agricultural communities. Success will depend on the use of a set of practices that, in addition to product diversification, favor the best use of local resources and value human capital through training (Altieri; Nicholls, 2011).

Localized Agrifood Systems (SIAL) refer to concentrations of rural producers and small food processing or service companies, anchored territorially, based on the specific assets and resources of a territory, whose integration dynamics are sustained by partnerships between public and private actors. The concept of SIAL was introduced to highlight the capacity of some communities of agrifood producers to value local resources and develop innovations resulting from interactions between producers, local institutions, and consumers. The focus on SIAL, from the beginning, was considered an analytical tool, when studying the processes of territorial anchoring of agricultural and food production, considering the specificities of the territories. These are processes in which territorial socio-economic organizations intervene in production

¹⁷Other references on the theme: Majerowics, Togashi, and Valle (2017); Cunha (2010).

¹⁸The approach taken in Dallabrida (2017) is repeated.

¹⁹Specifically on the topic of biodiversity and geosites, two publications: Brilha (2005; 2016).

processes, in the ways of valuing resources, and also in the construction of symbolic value of products and the valorization of consumer representations (Muchnik; Sautier, 1998).

In theoretical approaches to SIAL, some authors emphasize the idea of creating a territorial development instrument based on the identification and activation of specific resources of a territory. Others emphasize the articulation of the productive sector with the territorial dynamics of development, giving rise to a development model that values the specific resources (natural and human) of the territory, from the point of view of sustainability (Fournier; Muchnik, 2012). Other authors point out, in addition to the factors already mentioned, the SIAL system as an alternative for the dynamization of family farming (Borges de Souza; Fornazier; Delgrossi, 2020)²⁰.

Both approaches - agroforestry and agrifood systems - have in common the option for a systemic approach in relation to production systems, converging in this and several other aspects with the territorial approach to development. Even if not disregarding contributions from other approaches related to the dominant production system, such as those mentioned here, the approaches on SIAL and SAF have a special appeal in the perspective of overcoming the “paradigm of the domination of nature typical of the hegemonic technoscientific complex” (Puleo (2019). It is an important step towards overcoming the “productivist” perspective. This is also a debate that needs to be held when we highlight the territorial approach to development²¹.

The six theoretical currents presented in this part of the text, as mentioned, to a greater or lesser extent, converge with the territorial approach to development and the conception of territorial development. The deepening of these theoretical approaches, as well as the report and analysis of practical experiences inspired by them, presents itself as a possible new focus of study to be carried out at another opportunity.

TO CONCLUDE

To conclude, we would like to emphasize that the significant number of articles submitted to this special issue of the Journal and the quality of those selected for publication attest to the assertiveness of the editors and the Editorial Committee in their proposal. The contributions proposed here for dealing with the theme of the “territorial approach to development” will certainly give rise to fruitful dialogues within the scientific community and among professionals who work with the theme in their daily practices of producing diagnoses, planning, and implementing public and private development policies.

As a main result, we hope that our undergraduate and graduate students (Masters and Doctorate) will begin to use more intensively the epistemic-theoretical basis presented in this Special Issue to support their empirical analyses in municipalities, regions, and territories. Enjoy the reading.

²⁰Perafán et al. (2022), with a set of texts by researchers from Brazil and Latin American countries, address the topic of SIAL as an alternative for territorial development within the scope of family farming. See also Grass-Ramírez, Cervantes-Escoto, and Palacios-Rangel (2016), with a methodological approach on SIAL.

²¹See the approach to this topic in: Dallabrida and Benedetti (2016).

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